

The RED LAMP

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

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June 18.
I feel tonight rather like the man who had caught a bull by the tail and aren't let go. And yet I am certain there is a perfectly natural explanation.

The difficulty is that I cannot very well go to Jane about it. If it is what it appears to be, and not a double exposure, it will frighten her. If it is a double exposure, she will wonder at my inquiry, and think I am watching her.

But certain things are very curious; she thought she saw Uncle Horace marching onto the field with his class. So much did this upset her that, when she stood up to take her picture, the camera shook in her hands. Then she takes the picture, and instead of the eight old men of the class of '70 there are nine.

And she knows it. Why else would she hide the print, and pretend that she had mislaid it? It was that fact which made me suspicious.

"I'll look them up for you later, William," she said. "You aren't in a hurry, are you?"

"In the bright lexicon of vacation there is no such word as hurry," I observed, brightly. And she who usually smiles at my feeblest effort turned abruptly away.

So Jane had lost her picture. Jane, whose closets are marvels of mathematical exactness, who keeps my clothing so exactly that I can find it in the dark, save for that one incident, duly noted in this Journal, when I unfolded a washcloth at the president's dinner, having taken it from my handkerchief box.

And shortly after Jane went out for a walk, Jane who never exercises save about her household. Poor Jane, I feel tonight, face to face with the inexplicable and hiding it like one of the seven deadly sins.

There are nine men in the picture; there is no getting away from it. And there is no denying, either, a faint difference in the ninth figure, a sort of shadowiness, a lack of definition. Under Jane's reading glass it gains nothing. The features, owing to the distance, are indistinct, but if one could imagine the ghost of old Horace, in his brocaded dressing gown and slightly stooped to cough, in that glare of noise, shouting and sunshine, it is there.

Later: I have shown the picture to Zear, and he says it is undoubtedly a case of double exposure.

"I don't think she ever took a picture of him in her life."

"Well, somebody has," he said, and handed the print back to me. "If you



"I'm Certain of One Thing. The Less Said About It the Better."

don't believe me, show it to Cameron. He's a shark on that sort of thing."

(Note: Cameron, Exchange Professor of Physics, at our University. A member of the Society for Psychological Research, and known, I understand, among the students as "Spooks" Cameron.)

But I have not show. It to Cameron, and I do not intend to. I hardly know the man, for one thing. And for another, Lear is right. The University looks with suspicion on the few among the faculty who have on occasion dabbled with such matters.

"Personally," he said, "I think it's a double exposure. But whether it is or not I'm certain of one thing, the less said about it the better."

June 19.
Curious, when one begins to think on a subject, how it sometimes comes up in the most unexpected places. I dropped into the dining room for

tea this afternoon after Jane's bridge party, to find Jane looking uncomfortable and an animated conversation on spiritualism going on, with Helena Lear leading it.

"Ah!" she said when she saw me, "here comes our cynic. I suppose you don't believe in automatic writing either?"

"I should," I replied gravely. "I have seen as many as fifty men taking notes while in a trance in my lecture room."

"Nor in spirits?"
"Certainly I do. And in the Smoke of Prophecy, and the Powder of Death."

She looked rather blank, and Jane flushed a trifle.

"What is more," I said, a trifle carried away by the tenseness of the room, perhaps, "I know that if I take a piece of chalk—have you any chalk, Jane—~~and draw on the floor here the magic circle, and a triangle within it, no evil spirits can approach me. Get the chalk, dear; I promise I shall not be disturbed by so much as one demon.~~

In the laughter which followed the subject was dropped. But Helena Lear, when she gave me my tea, eyed me with amusement.
"You and your circle!" she said. "Don't you know that half these women more than half believe you?"

"And don't you?"
"You don't believe yourself."

"Still," I said, remembering von Humboldt, "I am not an out-and-out skeptic. I admit that Jock there, who is acting as a vacuum cleaner under the table, can hear and see and smell things that I cannot. But I do not therefore believe he communicates with the spirit world."

"But he sees things you don't see. You admit that?"

"Certainly. He may see further into the spectrum than I do."

"Then what does he see?" she said triumphantly.

A fortunate digression enabled me to escape with a whole skin, but I think there was something rather quizzical in her smiling farewell. After all, if Jock does see things I do not, what does he see? I'm blessed if I know.

June 20.
Jane knows that I have seen the picture, and that I know it lies behind her refusal to go to Twin Hollows for the summer. When I came back from Larkin's office today, the final papers having been signed, I could see her almost physically bracing herself.

"So it's all set, my dear," I said. "And if we can get Annie Cochran to clean the place a bit—"

"Would you mind so very much," she asked, almost wistfully, "if we don't go there?"

"But it's all settled. Edith is coming back on purpose."

(Note: The "Edith" of the Journal is my niece, who makes her home with us. At this time she was absent on a round of house-parties. A very lovely and popular girl, of whom more hereafter.)

"It's too large for us," said Jane. "I need a rest in the summer, not a big house to care for."

And there was a certain definiteness in her statement which ended the conversation. As a result, and following our usual course when there is a difference between us, we have taken refuge in a polite silence all day, the familiar armed neutrality of marriage.

Lear has told Cameron about the picture. I met Cameron while taking Jock for his evening walk tonight, and he reintroduced himself to me. After today's repression I fear I was a bit talkative, but he was a good listener.

Evidently he has a certain understanding of Jane's refusal to go to Twin Hollows, although he said very little.

"Houses are curious, sometimes," was his comment.

But on the matter of the picture he was frankly interested.

"There is," he said, "a certain weight in the evidence for psychic photography, Mr. Porter. Of course it is absurd to claim that all the curious photographs—and thousands of them come to me—are produced by discarnate intelligences. But there is something; I don't know just what."

Jane has gone to bed, still politely silent, and I am left alone to wrestle with my two problems; where to spend the summer, and why Jane finds the house at Twin Hollows what Cameron describes as curious.

A mild term, that, for Jane's feeling about the house. Actually, she hates it. Has always hated it. She has had no pride in our acquisition of it; she has even steadfastly refused to bring away from it any of that early American furniture with which old Horace had filled it.

Yet she collects early American furniture. I write tonight at an utterly inadequate early American desk, because of this taste of hers. And yet she will have none of Uncle Horace's really fine collection.

Nor is she of the type to listen to Annie Cochran's story that the old portion of the house is haunted by the man killed there.

(Note: An old story and not authenticated, of the shooting of a man many years ago as he hid to escape the excise. As a matter of fact, none of our later experiences in the house bore out this particular tradition at all.)

If she has a distaste for it, it may possibly relate to the occupancy of the house by the Riggs woman before Uncle Horace bought it. But even here I am doubtful, for Mrs. Riggs was caught in most unblushing fraud and entirely discredited as a medium.

June 21.
Edith is back. She came in this

morning, kissed Jock, Jane and myself, Jock first, demanded an enormous breakfast and all the hot water in the house, and descended gaily a half hour later to the table.

"Well," she said, attacking her melon, "and when do we go to the haunted house?"

"Ask your aunt."

She glanced at me and then shrewdly at Jane.

"Good heavens!" she said. "Don't tell me there's any question about it?"

"It isn't decided yet," Jane said uneasily. "It's a big house, Edith and—"

"All the more reason for taking it," said Edith, and having finished her melon flung out her pretty arms. "Grass," she said, "and flowers, and the sea. I shall swim," she went on. "And old Father William shall fish, and Jane shall sew a fine seam. And at night the ghosts shall walk. And everything will be lovely."

She turned to me.

"You do believe in ghosts, don't you, Father William?"

And somehow even Jane caught some of the infection of her gaiety. "Ask him about the triangle in a circle," she said.

"What's that?" Edith inquired.

"The triangle in a circle, drawn around you, will keep off demons," I explained gravely. "Surely you know that?"

"How convenient!"

"And that the skins of four frogs, killed on a moonless night, will make one invisible if worn as a cap? And that the spirits obey Solomon's seal—not the plant, of course! And that if you eat a stew of the eyes of a vulture, and the ear-tufts of an owl, you will be wise beyond all dreams of wisdom?"

Jane got up, and I saw that my nonsense had had its effect. She was smiling, for the first time in days.

"If you care to go out and look at the house tomorrow, William," she said, "I will go."

And perhaps Edith had sensed a situation she did not understand, for she kissed her, and as I left the room I heard her requesting Jane to bring back with her marketing some frog skins and the ear-tufts of an owl.

So this afternoon things are looking brighter. And thus does man deceive himself!

The town is very quiet tonight. The annual student exodus is almost over, although still an occasional truck goes by, piled high with trunks. The Lears intend to stay. Sulzer and MacIntyre are off for the Scottish lakes, and Cameron, I hear, is going soon to the Adirondacks, where he spends his summer in a boat, and minus ghosts, I dare say.

I have mailed him the picture today, and can only hope Jane does not miss it.

One wonders about men like Cameron. Slight, almost negligible, as is my acquaintance with him—I would not know him in a crowd, even now—there is something of Scottish dourness in him. He neither smokes nor drinks; he lives austere and alone. He has a reputation as a relentless investigator; it was he who exposed the hauntings at the house on Sabbathday lake, in Massachusetts.

But he is a believer. That is, he believes in conscious survival after death, and I suspect that he has his own small group here. Among them little Pettingill. It would be a humiliating thought, for me, to feel that after I passed over, as they say, little Pettingill might hale me to him, in the light or a red lamp, and request me to lift a table!

Warren Halliday is on the veranda with Edith. I can hear her bubbling laughter, and his quiet, deep voice. After all, I dare say we must make up our minds to lose her some time, but it hurts.

And it will not be soon. He has not a penny to bless himself with, nor has she. I think, if I were very rich, I would provide an endowment fund for lovers.

But something is wrong with our university system. It takes too long to put a man on a wife-supporting basis. Halliday is twenty-six; he lost two years in the war, and he has another year of law. Truly, Edith will need the eyes of a vulture and the ear-tufts of an owl.

June 22.

All houses in which men have lived and suffered and died are "haunted houses." But then, all houses are haunted. Why, then, did Jock refuse to enter the house at Twin Hollows today, but crawled under the automobile and remained there, a picture of craven terror, until our departure?

Old Thomas, the gardener, met us in Oakville with the keys, and we drove out to the house. I sensed in Jane a reluctance to enter, but she fought it back bravely, and we examined it with a view to our own occupancy. It is in excellent condition and repair, although the white covers over the library furniture and in the den behind gave those rooms a rather ghostly appearance. Jane, I saw, gave only a cursory glance into those rooms, and soon after plunging the chill inside, moved out into the sunlight.

Edith, however, was enchanted with it all, and said so. She danced through the house, shamelessly courting old Thomas, selecting bedrooms for us all, and peering into closets, and I caught up with her at last on the second floor, looking at the boat-house on the beach beyond the marsh.

"What's above it?" she asked "Rooms?"

"When the old sloop was in commission, the captain slept there," I told her.

"How many rooms?"

"Two, I think, and a sort of kitchenette."

"Are they furnished?"

Old Thomas, being appealed to, said they were, and Edith's face assumed that air of mysterious calculation which I have learned to associate with what she calls "an idea." Whatever it was, however, she kept it to herself, and I left her selecting a bedroom for herself, and putting into it sufficient thought to have served a better purpose.

It is a curious thing, to go into a house left, as Twin Hollows has been, without change since old Horace died, and not to find him there; his big armchair near the fireplace in the library, his very pens still on the flat-topped desk which is the only modern piece in the room, the books he was reading still in the desk rack. I had a curious feeling today that if I raised my voice, I would hear the little cough which was so often his preliminary to speech, from the den beyond.

I threw back the covering which protected the desk top, and sat down at it. Just there, in all probability, he had been sitting when the fatal attack took place. He may have felt it coming on, but there was no one to call, poor old chap. We had not been overly close, but the thought of him, writing perhaps, or reading, the sudden consciousness that all was not well, an instant of comprehension, and then the end—it got me, rather. I think he had been reading. Among the other books on the desk was the one with a scrap of paper thrust in it to mark the place, and a pencil line drawn on the margin of the page to mark a paragraph. But it gives me rather a new line on him. I had always thought that his purchase of a house locally reputed to be haunted, a reputation considerably enhanced by the Riggs woman's tenancy, was a rather magnificent gesture of pure Calvinism.

But tonight I am wondering. The marked paragraph is in a book entitled "Eugenia Riggs and the Oakville Phenomena," and I have brought it home with me. It is a creepy sort of thing, and I find myself looking back over my shoulder as I copy it into this record.

"It is to be borne in mind that the room was always subjected to the most careful preliminary examination. Its walls were plastered, and no doors

or windows (see photograph) were near the cabinet. As an additional precaution strings of small bells were placed across all possible entrances and exits, which were also closed and locked.

"It is also to be remembered that the medium herself was always willing to be searched, and this was frequently done by Madame B—. This had been done on the night when the hand was distinctly seen by all present, reaching out and touching those nearest on the shoulder, and later making the impression in the pan of soft putty left in the cabinet.

"It is to be borne in mind, too, that, except when the controls rapped for no light, there was always sufficient illumination for use to see the medium clearly. A small red lamp was found to offer least disturbance and was customarily used.

"There was occasional fraud, but there were also genuine phenomena." The last few words are italicized.

So tonight I am wondering. Does one find, as life goes on, that the lonely human spirit revolts at the thought of eternal peace, and craves a relief in action in the life beyond? Would I not myself, for instance, prefer even coming back and lifting little Pettingill's table to the unadulterated society of the saints?

(Continued Next Week)

Marriage Bill Passes Senate

The state senate Tuesday passed the bill, already passed by the house, requiring five days notice of intention to marry. Only one amendment was adopted, providing that when application for license is made five days before it is issued, the register of deeds must immediately notify parents of the contracting parties. Other amendments designed to "protect" magistrates near the Virginia line who get a good deal of business from out of the state were defeated. All the bachelors in the legislature voted against the bill.

When a man is buying something for himself, he never has it sent out on approval—but he never buys for his wife without making sure she will be permitted to exchange it.

Nineteen Cents Profit From Each Tested Hen

Raleigh, March 13.—The 1,828 hens on which records are being kept by poultrymen cooperating with the office of poultry extension at State College paid a net profit of 19 cents per hen above feed costs in January. "At the present time we have eleven farms in five counties of North Carolina keeping records of all facts about their poultry business," says P. A. Seese, assistant poultry specialist. "The owners of these farms are sending up complete details about all eggs laid, feed given, feed costs, eggs sold and profits made. There are an average of 166 hens on each of the eleven farms. In January, the average number of eggs was 11.5 per hen with an average price of 40 cents a dozen. The highest price received for eggs by the owners of these hens in January was 51 cents and the lowest 33 cents a dozen. The average feed cost per bird was 19 cents and the average net profit per bird was 19 cents."

Mr. Seese says that while these records cover only a small part of the State, they are from widely separated sections and give some idea as to what is going on actually in the poultry industry. Too little grain feeds is being given for this season of the year is one fact found in the records, states Mr. Seese. To have birds in shape for heavy spring production, body weight must be increased during the winter.

At the present time, Mr. Seese says the most common question reaching the poultry office is how to feed baby chicks. The kind of feed is not nearly so important, as the system of feeding, he says. Either a good home-mixed feed or a good commercial baby chick feed will give good results but, the chicks must not be fed until they are 48 to 60 hours old. Milk is excellent. A little time teaching the chicks to eat and drink is well worth while because many incubator chicks die before they ever learn. Feed frequently and sparingly during first two weeks.

A new park is planned in Detroit about the end of the new Ambassador international bridge. Evidently it is believed Detroiters returning home from Windsor will need a deal of navigation room.

Of interest to every car owner: A statement of General Motors' Policy by Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., President

THE public has been visiting the automobile shows in the larger cities of the country to see new models.

Suppose you could drop a curtain over the 1929 automobile shows and raise it immediately upon the shows of ten years ago. How vividly the changes would then appear!

Go back five years, or even three, and the contrasts are amazing. So fast have the improvements followed one another that every year has offered you more for your automobile dollar—in performance, in comfort, in safety, in beauty and in style. Never was this fact quite so impressive as in the cars now on display.

This is real progress, and inevitably General Motors has been a leader in it. You cannot have hundreds of engineers, in one organization, thinking and working day and night without knowing more about making automobiles than was known the year before. You cannot have great Research Laboratories, the Proving Ground and the unmatched resources and skill of Fisher body without developing constantly better processes and new ideas. The patronage of the public makes possible all

this machinery of betterment; so the public is entitled to each improvement as promptly as it has been proved.

In this way came the self-starter, the closed body, durable Duco finish, four wheel brakes. By the same process one of the remarkable feats in industrial history has just been effected: Chevrolet has been transformed into a six-cylinder car within the price range of the four—almost overnight. Similarly, the new brakes and transmissions of Cadillac and LaSalle are a fundamental improvement; while the new models of Buick, Oldsmobile, Oakland and Pontiac all represent values that could not have been offered before.

Such progress, born of the inherent ambition of an organization of active minds to do better and to give more, is of benefit to all. It offers you more for your money with each succeeding year. It gives you more value for your present car when you trade it in.

This is our policy. This is real progress.

Alfred P. Sloan
ALFRED P. SLOAN, Jr., President

Detroit, March 1, 1929

AN INVITATION

General Motors would like you to see the progress which it has made during the past year and which is represented by its new models. More than that, it invites you to peep behind the scenes at the methods employed to assure further progress. Simply check on the coupon below the products in which you are most interested. Full information will be sent without obligation plus a valuable little book which tells the inside story of the General Motors institution. This book—"The Open Mind"—has real value to every one owning or planning to buy a car.

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