

The RED LAMP

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

Copyright by Geo. H. Doran Company WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Events of the story, from June to September, as set forth in the journal of William A. Porter, professor of English literature:

JUNE—The professor's uncle, Horace Porter, died under somewhat mysterious circumstances at his home, Twin Hollows, which is now Professor Porter's property. Jane, the professor's wife, has psychic qualities. She insists Uncle Horace, then dead for a year, was at his class reunion, and a snapshot she takes seems to prove her right. Cameron, a fellow professor of Porter's and president of the Society for Psychical Research, inclines to the idea of psychic photography. Mrs. Porter shows a pronounced disinclination to spend the summer vacation at Twin Hollows. A letter Horace Porter had been writing at the time of his sudden death, reveals he had been interested in spiritualism and makes mention of some implied "danger," and of the "enormity of an idea." A "small red lamp" is also mentioned. Mrs. Porter's reluctance to live at Twin Hollows cannot be overcome, and, with Edith, Porter's niece, they take up their residence in the Lodge house of the estate, Warren Halliday, in low-lying Edith, comes to live in a boat-house near the Lodge. A reference Professor Porter had once made to a certain cabalistic design returns to plague him. He finds in the village a superstition that there is something mysterious about the red lamp. There are mysterious happenings, and Mrs. Porter is sure Uncle Horace's spirit is hovering about them. A number of sheep are killed in the vicinity, by some unknown person.

July 1.

More sheep were killed last night. The Livingstones have lost a dozen of their blooded stock, and several farmers have suffered.

In each case the method is the same; the sheep are neatly stabbed in the jugular vein and then as neatly laid out in a row.

We are buying no mutton from the local butcher!

I assured Thomas this morning that I had not lighted the red lamp again, but he did not smile. He is quite capable of believing, I dare say, that I have summoned a demon I cannot control.

But he tells me that a county detective from town, sent by the sheriff, is coming out to look into the matter. And there is a certain relief in this. It seems to me that we have to do with some form of religious mania, symbolic in its manifestation. The sheep is the ancient sacrifice of many faiths.

This belief is strengthened by Thomas' statement that in each case save the first one there has been left on a nearby rock or, in one instance, on a

fence, a small cabalistic design roughly drawn in chalk.

Eight p. m. I feel like a man who has dreamed of some horrible or grotesque figure, and wakes to find it perched on his bed post.

The detective sent by Benchley, the sheriff, has just been here, a man named Greenough, a heavy-set individual with a pleasant enough manner and a damnable smile, behind which he conceals a considerable amount of shrewdness.

He had, of course, gathered together the local superstitions, and he was inclined to be facetious concerning my ownership of the red lamp. But he was serious enough about the business that had brought him.

"It's probably psychopathic," he said, "and the psychopath is a poor



A Small Cabalistic Design Roughly Drawn in Chalk.

individual to let loose in any community, especially when he's got a knife."

My own suggestion of religious mania seemed to interest him.

"It's possible," he said. "It's a queer time in the world, Mr. Porter. People seem ready to do anything, think anything to escape reality. And

from that to delusional insanity isn't very far. Now I'll ask you something. Did you ever hear of a circle, with a triangle inside it?"

I suppose I started, and I had a quick impression that his eyes were on me, shrewdly speculative behind his glasses. But the next moment he had reached into his pocket and drawn out a pencil and an envelope. "Like this," he said, and drawing the infernal symbol slowly and painstakingly, held it out to me.

To save my life I could not keep my hand steady; the envelope visibly quivered, and I saw his eyes on it.

"What do you mean, hear of it?" I asked. And then it came to me suddenly that that ridiculous statement of mine had somehow got to the fellow's ears, and that he was quietly coaxing me. "Good Lord!" I said, and groaned. So you've happened on that too!"

"So you know something about it?" he said quietly, and leaned forward. "Now, do you mind telling me what you know?"

He had not been coaxing me. There was a curious significance in his manner, in the way he was looking at me, and it persisted while I told my absurd story. Told it badly, I realize and haltingly; that I had picked up a book on Black Magic somewhere or other, and had as promptly forgotten it, save for one or two catch phrases and that infernal symbol of a triangle in a circle; how I had foolishly repeated them to a group of women and now seemed likely never to hear the last of it.

"As I gather, the Lear woman has spread it all over town," I said. "She dabbles in spiritualism, or something, and it seems to have appealed to her imagination."

"It has certainly appealed to some body's imagination," he said. "That's the mark our friend the sheep killer has been leaving."

He was very cordial as he picked up his hat and prepared to depart. He was sorry to have had to trouble me; nice little place I had there. He understood I was fighting shy of the other house. He would do the same thing; he didn't believe in ghosts, but he was afraid of them.

And so out onto the drive, leaving me with a full and firm conviction that he suspects me of killing some forty odd sheep in the last few nights, probably in the celebration of some Black Mass of my own psychopathic devising.

July 2.

Larkin thinks he has rented the house. I made a telephone message from him the excuse to go to town this morning. Mr. Bethel, the prospective tenant, was not present, but his secretary was, a thin boy with a bad skin and with his hair pomaded until it looks as though it is painted on his head. He smoked one cigarette after another as we talked.

If tomorrow is fair, Mr. Bethel will motor out and look over the property. It appears that he is in feeble health. If it is not, Gordon, the secretary, will come alone. It develops that, although the boy is a local product, and not one to be particularly proud of, Mr. Bethel comes from the West. Cameron's note to Larkin merely introduced him, but assumed no responsibility. As, however, he offers the rent in advance, the matter of reference becomes, as Larkin says, an unimportant detail.

I get the impression from the secretary that the old man is writing a book, and wishes to be undisturbed, and if his choice of a secretary fairly represents him, he will be.

From Larkin I learned that he had heard of the circle in a triangle from Helena Lear herself, at a dinner table, and that he has no idea that it is at all widespread. He regards the use of it by the sheep-killer as purely coincidence, which greatly cheers me.

Nevertheless, I went to the Lears and lunched there. Helena has agreed to spread the thing no further, and I came away with a great sense of relief. Into the bargain, Lear tells me that Cameron, after studying the photograph I sent him, is inclined to think it is the result of a double exposure.

No more sheep were killed last night. I understand Greenough has put guards on all the nearby flocks, and advised outlying farms to do the same thing. Maggie Morrison told us this morning that they were doing it, but in, I gathered, a half-hearted manner. Most of them believe that, by his very nature, the marauder is impervious to shot and shell.

One curious thing, however, has been brought in by Starr, who stopped on his way past today. In a meadow not far from the Livingstone place two large stones, which had lain there for years, have been moved together and stood on their edges, and a flat slab of rock laid across them. On top of this, when it was found, there lay a small heap of fine sand.

One can figure, of course, that here is an altar, erected by the same unbalanced mind which has been killing the sheep. But no offering has yet been laid on it.

Later: Halliday spent the evening here, and I walked back with him. He tells me that on his first night in the boat-house, he saw a light moving over the salt marsh, about three hundred feet away.

At first he thought it was some one on the way to the beach, with a flashlight or a lantern, and he watched with some curiosity. Earlier in the evening he had himself walked along the edge of the swamp and decided it was not passable. But light shined through the marsh the light stopped and then disappeared.

"I decided the chap, whoever it was, was in trouble," he said, "so I called to him. But there was no answer,

and the light didn't appear again."

"Marsh gas, probably," I explained. "Methane, C. H., of course."

"Marsh gas burns with a thin blue flame, doesn't it? This was a small light, rather white. I waited an hour or so, but it didn't show again."

I have, since my return, looked up the book on the Oakville phenomena which I discovered on the desk of the main house. It is not significant, but it is interesting, to find that Mrs. Riggs produced fleeting lights, sometimes of a bluish-green, from the cabinet, again a sparkling point which generally localized itself near her head. But I cannot find any record of a light persisting for any length of time, or following a definite course.

July 3.

The house is rented. As it rained this morning, the secretary came alone, and seemed very well satisfied.

But at the last moment my conscience began to worry me, and perhaps too, for none of our motives are unmixed, I was afraid he suspected something. He made some observation about the rent being low for a property of that size, and glanced at me as he said it, so I plunged.

"I think I'd better be honest with you, even if it costs me money," I said. "The house is cheap because it—well, it isn't an easy house to rent."

"Too lonely, eh?"

"Partly that, and partly because—a portion of the house is very old, and there have been some stories about it circulating in the neighborhood for years."

"Ghost stories?"

"You can call them that. I don't believe anyone claims to have seen anything. The reports are mostly of raps and various noises."

He seemed to take a peculiar, almost a furtive, enjoyment out of my statement, my confession, rather.

"Hot dog!" he said. "Well, raps won't bother me, and Mr. Bethel's got a deaf ear; he can turn that up at night if they worry him."

So the house is rented, unless something unexpected turns up, and I have done my part. But I confess to an extreme distaste for the secretary and Edith may find herself with a small problem on her hands. For just before we left he spied her on the float, and gave her a careful inspection.

"That looks pretty good to me," he said. And although his gesture embraced the water front his eyes were on her.

I have arranged with Annie Cochran, following Gordon's query about a servant, to resume her old position at the main house. She refuses to remain after dark, but I presume this will be satisfactory. She will also commence tomorrow to get the house in readiness.

With that strange swiftness with which news travels in the country, already the word has gone out that the place is rented, and I lay to that our sudden popularity this afternoon. The first to arrive was Doctor Hayward, nervous and jerky, fiddling with his collar, and when for a moment excluded from the talk, gnawing abstractedly at his finger ends. He addressed himself mostly to Jane—there is a certain type of medical man who wins his way into families by the favor of women, and is more at his ease with them than with its men folk—and only beat a circuitous route to the subject uppermost in his mind, which clearly was that an el-

derly invalid had taken Twin Hollows and would probably require a physician.

In the course of this roundabout talk, however, I came finally to the conclusion that, like the detective he was watching me. And, as had happened with Greenough, I became absurdly self-conscious. Once I mentioned the matter of the sheep, but he rather dexterously sidestepped it, and finally brought the talk around to the renting of the house. But I am confident that Greenough has been to him about me, and has asked him to give him an opinion on my mental balance.

I was on guard after that; determined to exhibit myself in my most rational manner. But there is some thing upsetting in the mere thought that one's sanity is being brought in to question.

Hayward left finally, when the Livingstones arrived.

"You must take good care of this fine husband of yours, Mrs. Porter," he said, holding her hand in the paternal fashion of his type. "He's probably been overdoing it a bit." The result of which is that Jane herself has taken to watching me quietly, and that she suggested this evening that I take a course of bromide for my nerves.

(Continued Next Week)

Add Windy Scribbler

First prize for descriptive expressions having been already awarded by the Greensboro Daily News to the one who recently called disorderly conduct "blustery behavior," we beg to present a close second in the person of the paragrapher of the Raleigh Times, who called the man giving a worthless check "a windy scribbler." Brother, we call that picturesque language.—Roxboro Courier.

AUTO KNOWN BETTER

Here lies the chap who died for a motto—
He made the blindfold test while driving an auto.
—The Pathfinder.

They haven't the Daughters of the Revolution in Mexico, but we fancy the mother must live down there somewhere.—Boston Transcript.

QUEER QUIRKS in HUMAN DESTINY

By HARRY R. CALKINS

WNU Service

The Birth of a Republic

WITH Napoleon III the captive of the Germans and Paris surrendered, the French people in February, 1871, elected a majority of monarchists to the national assembly because they wanted peace, although they really favored a republic, and thus was precipitated the brief but bloody war known as "the Commune."

France, and especially Paris, was in miserable condition. Napoleon III had plunged the country into war with Prussia, and the tremendous war machine of Bismarck had blasted his hopes. Paris had been besieged for five months and its inhabitants reduced to abject suffering.

After the city's surrender and the capture of Napoleon III at Sedan, a truce was granted to allow formation of an assembly to treat for peace. The monarchist party, supporters of the Bourbon family, favored peace at most any price, but republican leaders wanted to renew the war. The people, normally for a restoration of the republic, nevertheless were sick and tired of war. They elected 500 monarchists to the assembly and 200 republicans.

During the great siege there had been set up in Paris a directing committee of workmen, most of them Socialists, who joined with another committee of Republican guardsmen in taking over the actual government of the city. This government included bourgeois radicals and Anarchists as well as Socialists.

The national assembly sat at Versailles and ordered resumption of payment of rents and notes, which had been suspended during the siege, and stopped the daily wages of the national guardsmen. This worked hardships on the thousands of unemployed. The commune of Paris revolted and declared Paris a free and sovereign city, proposing that France should consist of a loose federation of self governing communes.

Nearly all of France arose against this blow at nationalism, and the assembly sent troops against Paris, already the most cruelly battered city of modern times. The brief battle was terrible in its ferocity. Public buildings were fired, the archbishop was assassinated, prisoners were massacred, piles of dead lay everywhere. More than 15,000 Parisians were destroyed and hundreds were deported or imprisoned after two months of war.

New School Bill Had Many Daddies

Lots of people have been wondering who really wrote the new school law for North Carolina. The Raleigh correspondent of the Greensboro News gives the following information in his Saturday letter:

President B. B. Dougherty, of the Appalachian Training School, is not the author of the new school bill, universal as the tradition has become in two weeks, but he is the author of sections 15 and 10 which make the law existing regarding salary schedules of teachers and superintendents, he told the Daily News bureau today. And he believes he should be crowned with bays rather than pelted with bad eggs.

Mr. Dougherty discloses the daddyship of that bill. It has many fathers. Judge Nat Townsend wrote a whole bill from which the new measure received much help. Senator Tom Johnson, now Judge Johnson, wrote section four which imposes upon the equalizing board the duty of studying and comparing the cost of operating the public schools in the several counties of the state, as assembling such information and data, relative to cost of school supplies, equipment and current expenses of operation, material which is designed to ascertain for the board of equalization what should be the proper standard of cost for operating the public schools of each of the several counties in the state. This section further provides for examination into the several county budgets, into supervision and cost of transportation, and provides for refusal to pay any voucher to any county that fails to conduct its school administration in a business like manner.

Senator B. S. Womble, a third father of the bill, put the teaching standards into the bill, and former Representative A. McL. Graham, of Sampson, member of the equalizing board, wrote the sections relating to distribution of the fund. A. E. Woltz, another member, put his hands to the plow and did not look back. Frank W. Hancock, Granville representative, revised the whole bill after it was given to him; State Superintendent A. T. Allen put in sections 16 and 17 at the bequest of the senate, these sections dealing with the number of teachers and the number of pupils in the elementary and high schools. Mr. Dougherty put in the provision that there should be a fund of \$300,000 to lift the teaching personnel up to the average. He added this in section 10, then put on section 15, which fixes the schedule of salaries recommended by the state board of education, making the law what hitherto had been advice.

Senators Brawley and Weaver added the sections which take out the

seven big cities of the seven richest counties not participating in the fund, thus making them a law unto themselves.

FARM LANDS AND TAXES

(Sanford Express)

Looking over the columns of the Harnett County News a few days ago we noticed that practically all of one page of that most excellent county paper was devoted to the publication of land sale notices. We had thought that Lee county was in bad enough shape in this respect, but we have reached the conclusion that conditions are much worse in Harnett if we are to judge by the columns of that paper.

It looks like many of the farmers throughout this section are going to lose their farms and become renters, or that they will have to quit farming and drift into the towns, as many have done during the past few years. We had thought that the ability to borrow money from the Federal Land Banks would prove a blessing to the farmers, but we are forced to the conclusion that in many instances it has proven a hindrance instead of helpful. When this money was borrowed from the Federal government it was understood that it was to be used in improving the farms and making them more productive. Had this been done in every instance the farmers would have been greatly benefitted by it and in much better shape today. We are told that some of the farmers have bought automobiles with these loans, and are unable to keep up the interest to say nothing of paying back the principal. We know of one farmer who owns one of the best farms in this part of the State who secured a loan from a Federal Land Bank. He has been forced to quit farming, move to another state and engage in some other kind of business in order to raise the money to pay off the debt on his farm. The farm has been handed down from generation to generation and he is loath to give it up. Some farmers have used the loan in the right way and are better off by it. The government would prefer that the farmers keep their land and not become renters, but it must protect the interest of the tax payers who have made it possible for it to make these loans.

The big taxes which farmers have to pay on their land has made the ownership of much of the farm land undesirable. The tax value of the land is in many instances entirely too high, so high in fact that the land cannot be sold at all. It is frozen property. Often the land cannot be rented for enough money to pay the taxes. A few years ago everybody wanted to buy farm land, now nobody wants to buy it, and the government would rather not own it.

for Economical Transportation



before you buy your next automobile

learn why over 300,000 have already chosen the New Chevrolet Six

Since January first, over 300,000 people have chosen the Chevrolet Six. And every day sees an increase in this tremendous public acceptance—

—for the new Chevrolet not only brings the enjoyment of six-cylinder performance within the reach of everybody everywhere, but gives the Chevrolet buyer a greater dollar value than any other low-priced car.

Just consider what you get in the Chevrolet Six! The smoothness, flexibility and power of a six-cylinder engine which delivers better than twenty miles to the gallon. The beauty and luxury of bodies by Fisher with adjustable driver's seat. The effortless control of big, quiet, non-locking 4-wheel brakes and ball bearing steering. Then consider Chevrolet prices! And you will discover that this fine quality Six can actually be bought in the price range of the four! Come in. Let us prove that anyone who can afford any car can afford a Chevrolet Six!

ECONOMY MOTOR CO., Siler City, N. C.

STOUT MOTOR CO., Goldston, N. C.

MILLS MOTOR CO., Pittsboro, N. C.

A SIX IN THE PRICE RANGE OF THE FOUR!

The COACH	
\$595	
The ROADSTER	\$525
The PHAETON	\$525
The COUPE	\$595
The SEDAN	\$675
The Sport CABRIOLET	\$695
The Convertible LANDAU	\$725
The Sedan Delivery	\$595
The Light Delivery Chassis	\$400
The 1 1/2 Ton Chassis	\$545
The 1 1/2 Ton Chassis with Cab	\$650

All prices f.o.b. factory, Flint, Mich.

COMPARE the delivered price as well as the list price in considering automobile values. Chevrolet's delivered prices include only reasonable charges for delivery and financing.