

# The RED LAMP



By MARY ROBERTS RINHART

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August 23.

Halliday saw a red light in the house the night Bethel was killed. He has just told me.

He ran out, after I telephoned him, and from the foot of the lawn he saw it. It was gone almost at once.

He has asked me to experiment with him tonight, using the lamp from the attic closet. I have given him the keys. Apparently what he wishes to discover is the approximate location of such a light. I have no idea of his purpose.

I understand that the guards who have been watching the house at night have been withdrawn, and that hereafter only such watch will be kept as will suffice to keep away the curious crowds that still throng here in daylight hours.

Today Annie Cochran and Thomas have been putting the house in order, preparatory to its final closing. I shall never open it again. Thomas has already painted the window boards and put some of them in place. Let us pray that they keep inside what should be inside, and outside what should be out!

August 24.

"The strings of small bells, fastened across the closed and shuttered windows, frequently vibrated as though a hand had been drawn across them." (From "Eugenia Riggs and Her Phenomena.")

Any coherent record of our last night's experiment is difficult today; not only do last night's alarms always seem absurd in today's sunshine, but I am not at all certain now that I did not build up, out of my recent reading and what I knew about the house, a bugaboo of my own.

And yet—what a night! A man is a fool who, preparing to spend a night in a haunted house, where a terrible crime has been recently committed, reads during the early evening the idiotic imaginings which other men have conjured out of their own disordered fancies. Or out of their disordered digestions, according to the newest theory.

Isn't it Wells who has the dyspeptic Mr. Polly sitting on a stile between two threadbare looking fields, and hating the world in general and his own home in particular, after a meal of pork, suet pudding, treacle, cheese, beer and pickles? And Fraser Harris who attributes "the transcendent nonsense of the post-impressionists" to the absinthe in their blood?

So, last night, I must needs poison my mental digestion in advance; pick up a book which should be suppressed, or sold only to large ladies of a tympanic type, to read with a box of caramels. And with it fill myself with elementals, hideous masses of matter given temporary life and strange forms; demons, summoned by the diabolical rites of the Black Mass; and ghosts of foul crimes, come to seek revenge on their slayers!

Even before I started the untimely ringing of Clara's alarm clock, upstairs, set my nerves to jangling. And there was a certain psychological preparation for me in the very steps I was obliged to take in order to get out of the house. For a man of my age to put on his pajama coat, and retire into his bed otherwise fully dressed, was an act of deception nerve-racking enough in itself. But when Jane came in after I had retired, tardily remembering a missing button, and demanded the shirt I was still wearing, I broke into a cold sweat.

It was with difficulty that I got her away, shirtless, and coddled down to wait until the house was quiet.

Halliday had opened the main house, and the red lamp was already in the den. Owing to the fact that the windows were boarded from the outside, we had no scruples about lighting it; but although it was better than complete darkness it added very little to the general gaiety. Halliday was quiet and somewhat strained, the house itself hot and airless, and with all outside sounds cut off, depressing to still. I lighted a match and glanced into the library; it was a ghost of a room, the floor bare, the furniture and pictures once more swathed in white.

Only the prisms of the glass chandelier reflected the light and seemed as it flickered, to be quietly in motion. Halliday had little to say.

Kip: "Where did Dr. Spoff make all his money?" Kim: "In the stork market, I believe."—The Pathfinder.

"I'm sorry the cream is sour," said Evelyn. "Everything in the refrigerator appears to be spoiled," commented Jack.

"It's the ice man's fault. He will bring around artificial ice, and I can't tell it from the genuine."—The Pathfinder.

"I would like," he explained, "to reproduce conditions as nearly as they were the night you saw the figure here." He smiled. "I don't suppose you really want to go and stand at the head of that staircase, Skipper, but I'm going to ask you to, just the same."

I looked up the staircase nervously. "If you are going to reproduce the previous conditions," I protested, "you may recall that I had a revolver at that time!"

"I also seem to remember that you fired it," he said, and grinned at me. "It will answer every purpose, and be considerably safer, if you will merely point your finger at me and say 'crash!'"

But no amount of lightness on his part or mine could do more than temporarily lift the gloom; the shadow of tragedy hung over everything at which we looked. Halliday felt it, and suggested that "we get to work and then get out."

The question in his mind, he said, was this: I had said that, a second or so after the shot and the disappearance of the figure, the red light had died out in the den. If, as he believed was possible, this glow came from the lamp upstairs, brought down for some reason, or from a similar lamp, this required that the man I saw had time to go into the den, extinguish the lamp and conceal it, (since it wasn't in evidence later on) get back to the library, and be ready to leave by the broken window before he, Halliday, had turned on the light.

"It's a matter of time," he said. "I was by the terrace when I heard the shot. I figure it took me ten seconds to pick up the chair, run to the window and smash it."

It was nervous work going up the staircase, but I managed it and took up my position. He stood below.

I fired—theoretically—and he did what the figure had done; moved toward the door, still facing me, turned and went into the library. I heard him moving about and the light went out. Then in the darkness he ran into the library again, where he struck a match.

"Twenty seconds," he called.

His voice trailed off; his shadow extended through the den doorway into the hall, and as I watched it, it shows the condition of my nerves that it did not seem to be his shadow at all, but something quite different. For all the world like an old man in a dressing gown. Then the match went out and I heard him coming out into the hall again.

"Did you move a minute ago?" he asked.

"Move!" I said. "I wouldn't move for a million dollars. Strike a light."

"Funny," he said. "I thought I heard something."

He groped his way back to the den, and the red lamp looked actually cheerful after the complete darkness. I heard him go into the library again and apparently stand there and listen, and very shortly after he reappeared and asked me to change places with him.

"See how you can make it, Skipper," he said.

I came down rather more rapidly than I had gone up, and Halliday took my former position. I did as Halliday had done, moved to the library door, turned and then, more or less holding

my breath, I dived into the library and through it to the den. I brought up there, close to the red lamp, caught my foot in the cord and jerked it from the socket. Instantly we were in darkness again, and in absolute silence. Halliday, I believe, was still leaning over the stair-rail, waiting for me to complete the movement, and the sudden plunge into darkness had startled me more than I care to remember.

But I do remember that in a sort of panic I got down on my knees to feel for the connection, and that at that moment, whether due to overstrained nerves or not I cannot say, I distinctly heard a soft movement in the library. Trying to analyze that movement today I find it difficult. It was as though the linen coverings in the library has been set in motion, a soft and quiet motion, like that perhaps of a woman with a fan, and above that the faint clink of the rings of small bells. But whatever had caused it, it was dying away when I noticed it. As if somehow the extinction of the light had taken away its source of power.

(Note: It is to be observed that we secured this phenomenon later, during the seances. As no explanation of it has ever been given, it remains a portion of that unsolved factor in our equation to which I have referred previously.)

I knelt there, my face covered with a cold sweat, staring in the direction of the library door. I felt that if I looked away, if I were to lower my guard for an instant, something would come through that door.

I was, in effect, holding it back with my eyes!

And Halliday had made no sound. He, too, I now know, was listening.

This, as accurately as I can record it, was the situation last night when the next move came. The house was absolutely silent again. Halliday was upstairs, and I was watching the door into the library, when the location of the sounds changed. Protected by my eyes, in front, I was attacked from the rear, so to speak. At the window above and behind me, something was trying to get in. I could hear its hands sliding slowly over the wood of the shutter, keeping on that blind and dreadful groping, until finally some sort of hold was secured and the shutter was shaken.

And with that every last ounce of my self-control left me, and I leaped into the hall as if I had been fired out of a gun.

"Halliday!" I shouted. "Halliday!"

He came downstairs; rather he leaped down the stairs. He says he found me in a corner, gibbering, and I dare say he did, but I must have told him my story with sufficient clearness, at that, for he left me alone again in that damnable place and ran outside. And as I had no intention whatever of being left alone again for the remainder of my life, I ran also. There was nobody outside the window, but the fresh green paint was the thing that, according to Halliday, saved me from being sent today to some sanctuary for the mentally deranged.

It showed unmistakable signs of entirely human investigation. At least a hand with the usual equipment of thumb and fingers has left more than one impression on it.

Later: And now where are we? I am willing, even anxious, to accept Halliday's verdict, that the sounds we both heard in the library were due to an east wind blowing down the chimney, plus the settling and creaking of the old portion of the house.

But we have just returned from an inspection, in broad day, of the marks outside the boarded-up window of the den.

There is a complete imprint of the hand on it, and it shows a broad short thumb and a curved little finger. What is more, there is a complete absence of the usual whorls and ridges of the ordinary hand. One could take this imprint and put it side by side with the one in the bowl of putty. They are identical.

Halliday seems to have seen a great light from somewhere, but to me the situation is as absurd as it is maddening. It is as outrageous as that, out of some forgotten corner of my memory, I should have dug up a triangle within a circle, to find it cropping up soon after as the signature to a crime.

August 25.

Five days have passed since the murder, and we are apparently as far from its solution as ever.

What work is being done is now centering about the county detective bureau in the city. A deputy constable keeps up a more or less casual surveillance of the property during the day, but is careful to depart before twilight. The dragging of the bay has once more been stopped, and Benchley's idea of an unknown enemy of Bethel's has apparently been abandoned in favor of Gordon as the killer.

At the same time we are not without developments, of a sort.

Although he is reticent on the subject, Halliday seems to feel that the experiment the other night, incomplete as it was, negatives the theory that the man I saw escaped by the broken window in the library.

"Then where did he go?" I asked.

"That's the point," he said. "Where did he go? When we've answered that we'll have answered a number of things."

But he tells me, surprisingly enough, that he has taken up a sort of temporary residence in the house.

"Whoever tried to get in the other night may come back again," he says. I have offered to stay with him, but not, I dare say, with any enthusiasm. But he declines with a smile.

"You are too psychic, Skipper!" he says.

But it is perfectly evident that he does not want me.

This morning, going unexpectedly into the boathouse, where this conversation took place, I found him sitting by his table, and spread out before him the bit of linen, the cipher, the broken lens and the top of the ether can which constituted our various exhibits before I was gently eliminated from the case. But he also had a box of figs and a hand mirror before him, and when I entered unexpectedly he was studying himself in the glass.

As he immediately asked me if I cared to go fishing, which I did not, I saw that he was not prepared to make any explanation.

The other development, although it does not solve the crime, or touch on it, came to me through Lear today, and throws a new and interesting light on poor old Bethel himself.

Lear did not like his errand; he prefers a presumptuous skepticism to an irrational credulity, and knows no middle ground. Those things which lie beyond his understanding he refers to as "poppycock," a favorite word

of his. And today he prefaced his business with a small lecture to me, taking me into the drive to deliver it.

"You don't look like a man who has been on a vacation," he began, surveying me. "I know you've had a bad time, but after all, it's no possible responsibility of yours."

"I rented him the house. And I knew I had no business to rent it to anybody."

"Poppycock!" he said, and cleared his throat.

He had fallen into step with me, but at that he stopped and faced me. "Now, see here, Porter," he said. There's a good bit of talk going around. Some of your friends are saying that you and Jane are laying the blame on some d—n fool nonsense about the house itself. That's poor hearing, and it's ridiculous into the bargain. The Morrison girl was not killed in the house."

"I'm not sure she wasn't. At any rate, he was. And I believe the same hand killed them both."

"But a human hand, of course? You're not going to say—"

"Oh, I admit that," I said. "But there are a lot of curious things. If you think the house is normal, spend a night there and see."

"Normal!" he snapped. "Of course the house is normal. It's the people in it who aren't." And warming to his subject: "You and Cameron should be locked up together. And Pettigill," he added.

Which brought him to Cameron, and his errand.

Immediately on Cameron's return from the Adirondacks he had gone to bed with an infested hand, which had been torn by a fishhook, and had been too ill to look at the accumulation of mail. But the day before, although still very weak, he had gone through his letters, and there found one from Mr. Bethel, dated late in July.

In this letter Bethel recited various "abnormal conditions in the Twin Hollows house, and asked Cameron, at the earliest possible moment, to go out and investigate them."

"And he wants to come?" I asked Lear.

"I tell you he's been sick," Lear said impatiently. "He wants to know about showing it to the police. He doesn't want to be dragged in, if he can help it."

"You've seen it?"

"Yes. There's nothing in it except what I've told you."

"He doesn't describe these abnormal conditions?"

"No. But he said he had made some experiments of his own, and was anxious to have his results verified."

"Experiments? Using a red light?"

"He didn't say," Lear said, with some asperity. "A red light! What heaven's name has a red light to do with the immortal soul!"

He enlarged on that savagely. He said, had been off in a corner saying, "om, om" to herself half the summer, and when she dozed off in so doing, would waken to claim that her astral body had been off on some excursion or other.

"I can't appeal to her reason," he said with a shrug of his thin shoulders, "but I have appealed to her decency. I've asked her if it is fair to intrude into the privacy every human individual is entitled to at times. But it's no good. She keeps a record, and I'm convinced it would jail her."

The only advice I could send Cameron was to use his own judgment concerning the letter. Personally, I do not see what value it has, save to corroborate my own ideas concerning the house. But it has suggested to me the advisability of asking Cameron to come here quietly and look the place over.

I rather think he wants to do so.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

Feeding Is Important During Molting Period

The time for the hens to molt will soon be here. It is unfair to expect very much in the way of production while they are changing their coat of plumage. We, therefore, should strive to help a hen pass through the molt quickly by good feeding.

Just because a hen ceases laying when she starts to molt does not permit one to cut down on the feed. The building of an entirely new coat of plumage in two or three months is an enormous strain on the bird's system. Feathers roughly represent 5 per cent of the total weight and are largely composed of protein.

With late molters it is also important that the ration have an ample supply of heat producing feed to keep the hen comfortable in the absence of feathers.

Give the birds during the molt a ration that is easily digestible and one that nourishes all parts of the body. Poultrymen have found that using half egg mash and half growing mash makes an excellent molting mash. It brings the birds through the molting period faster and keeps them in better health and in better condition. It shortens the molting period a month or more and gets the birds back in production while egg prices are still good.

Let the hens eat all the mash they want and feed Scratch Grains once a day, just before they go to roost. Feed one quart of Scratch Grains to 12 hens or 14 pounds to one hundred hens through the molting period.

"The MacTavishes — certainly an economical couple. They eloped to save themselves the cost of a wedding."

"But they don't look very happy."

"No, they're not; they're only living together to save the cost of a divorce."—The Pathfinder.

## Bear Creek News

Mrs. J. S. Moore, who was reported as sick last week, is improved, as we are glad to state.

Mrs. T. C. Vestal was carried to the St. Leo's Hospital, Greensboro, last Wednesday. Her condition is very serious, as her appendix bursted before reaching the hospital. Her recovery is somewhat doubtful.

Mrs. H. L. Fields of Siler City was carried to a Greensboro hospital last week for an operation.

Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Norwood and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Phillips and Mrs. W. F. Norwood visited Mrs. T. C. Vestal, who is in a Greensboro hospital during the week-end.

Mrs. S. S. Cromer (formerly Miss Mary Willett), after spending several weeks with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Willett, has returned to her home in Greenville, Miss.

Miss Bettie Moffitt is visiting her father in Bonlee for a few days.

Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Coggins and family of Hallison, were Sunday visitors in the home of W. A. Coggins.

Miss Mildred Coggins was a recent visitor in the home of her sister, Mrs. N. W. Hilliard of Durham.

S. G. Norwood, of Greensboro, is visiting his father, M. F. Norwood.

G. T. Hart had the misfortune to get hurt very badly last week, but he is improving nicely, we are informed.

J. W. Avent of Apex was a visitor in the home of Mrs. C. J. Rives last week.

The Meroney building program will be completed this week if work is not hindered, therefore the new rooms added will be ready for use next Sunday.

## NOTICE OF SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION

NORTH CAROLINA, CHATHAM COUNTY, Vannie Miles vs. George Miles

To George Miles, the defendant above named—Greeting:

You, George Miles, will take notice that the above entitled action was commenced in the Superior Court of Chatham County, North Carolina, on the 24th day of August, 1929, by the plaintiff, Vannie Miles, for the purpose of obtaining an absolute divorce on the grounds of five years separation and adultery.

The defendant will further take notice that you are required to appear before the Clerk of the Superior Court of Chatham County, North Carolina, at his office in Pittsboro, North Carolina, within thirty days from the first publication of this notice, which date will be the 28th day of September, 1929, and answer or demur to the complaint of the plaintiff, which is filed in the office of the said clerk, or the relief demanded by the plaintiff will be granted.

This the 24th day of August, 1929. (Signed by) CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT A. C. Ray and F. C. Upchurch, Attys. for plaintiff. Aug 29, Sep 5, 12, 19)

## KUDZU AGAIN

Barton Advises Immediate Purchase of Seed—\$4 Buys Seed for an Acre—Lasts Forever.

Again we are clipping Kudzu dope from the Monroe Enquirer. Read every word of the following. The planting of kudzu on Chatham lands now means doubling land values within a year or two. Says the Enquirer:

"C. L. Newman, associate editor of the Progressive Farmer, has the reputation of being a 'kudzu crank.' He says 'it has all the resistant and luxurious growth that our vining honeysuckle has and the good qualities for animal feed that are combined in velvet beans, sowpeas, soybeans, lespedeza and sweet clover.'"

"Furthermore Mr. Newman says he has had it to grow seven feet and a little about in a week."

"Here comes W. H. Barton, county agent of Edgefield, S. C., saying: 'Believe it or leave it—Greatest Opportunity for Hill Country!'"

"Kudzu seed enough to plant an acre of this world's greatest legume for pasture and hay crop, can now be bought of importers, for only \$4.00."

"Once established, Kudzu lasts forever unless you kill it."

"Any 10 acres of idle hill land in Edgefield county when well set to kudzu, is easily worth \$100 per acre, and it will cost less per acre the first year than cotton, and will cost nothing thereafter. It will graze 2 to 4 cows per acre or cut 4 to 10 tons of hay, depending upon the land and the treatment it gets, and the land will grow richer every year it exists."

"I have just received an inquiry from Iowa, wanting information relative to locating a large stock farm in this country, and I have made the statement to him that the cheap hill lands of Edgefield when set to kudzu will be the greatest stock country in America."

"The tragedy in Edgefield, as well as in the whole south, is that our people do not believe that the golden opportunities afforded them, are real. They can't believe that such statements are more than 'hot air.'"

"The result will be that people from Iowa and the middle west will sell their \$150 and \$200 dollar land and get rich improving our lands which we thought were worthless."

"For God's sake, let's wake up before it's too late and our children and our grand-children become hirelings to these people."

"Kudzu seed are limited in quantity, and should be ordered now!"



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