

The RED LAMP



By MARY ROBERTS RINHART

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August 31.

After all, one can find the mysterious where it does not exist. I may not yet know why Halliday considers it necessary to watch the main house at night. But I do know the reason for Livingstone's extraordinary visit.

Mrs. Livingstone, sitting with Jane during her convalescence, read the letter from Evanston, and is eager to form a similar circle, to sit in the house itself. And poor Livingstone is opposing it and is making, for some reason or other, quite a business of it. Mrs. Livingstone has apparently some absurd idea that we may receive "a clew, or something," as she vaguely puts it; and on my firm refusal departed indignantly convinced that I have lost a great opportunity to solve our mystery.

Later: Halliday wants the seance! Nothing has so surprised me in years as his willingness to join the table-tippers. But I suspect in him some purpose not far removed from Mrs. Livingstone's, although just what she hopes to discover baffles me entirely.

"Why not?" he said, when I told him. "After all, we have to keep an open mind on this thing, and we've had enough already to make something of a case for the other side."

"The other side of what?" "The other side of the veil," he explained gravely, and then, seeing my face, was obliged to laugh.

"There is a pleasure in being mad, which none but madmen know," he quoted at me. "I've heard you say that Descartes advises us to seek for truth, freed from all preconceived ideas. Who are we, to stand in the way of truth?"

"And we are to search for it, sitting around a table in the dark?" "Precisely that, Skipper," he said, with sudden gravity, and has left me to make what I can of it.

Twelve days have now passed since the murder here, and the police know no more than they did on the morning of the twentieth.

Now and then a car stops outside the gate, but our curious crowds are gone. Save that some nocturnal relic-hunter has chipped a corner off the sun-dial, the place is much as it was before. All this water over the dam, and it has brought us nothing.

September 1.

I dare say there is no type of investigation in which the grave—no pun here—is so mixed with the gay, as in this particular psychic search on which we are at present engaged. For, let Halliday use it for such purposes as he will, to Jane, Edith and Mrs. Livingstone it is a deadly serious matter.

Their reactions are peculiar. Jane accepts it stoically and without surprise; it is almost as though, from the beginning she has known that it was to happen. But she is nervous.

Edith shows a peculiar and rather set-off intensity. Whether she knows that something quite different lies behind it, or only suspects it, I do not know.

Halliday, also, is grave and quiet. He is less interested, however, in the manner of the sitting than in its dramatic personae. The list he has made out himself; Hayward, the two Livingstones, Jane, Edith and himself. On my pointing out a slight omission, namely, myself, he told me cheerfully that I belonged among the Scribes and Pharisees.

"The Scribes, anyhow," he said. "You are to sit by the red lamp and make notes. I am particularly anxious to have notes," he added.

On the other hand, Mrs. Livingstone has entered into it with extraordinary zest. She appeared this afternoon, slightly wheezy with the heat, carrying a black curtain of some heavy material and demanding a hammer and assistance before she was fairly out of her car. As it was apparently to me to furnish both I did so, but anything less conducive to a spiritual state of mind than the preparations which followed at the main house it would be hard to find.

To stand on a ladder in the heat and darkness of the den, and to nail up that curtain across a corner with no more ritual than if I had been hanging a picture; to place inside it a small table and a bell on it, while beside it leaned an old guitar, resurrected from the attic and minus two strings, struck me as poor psychological preparation for confronting the unknown.

The sun was low before we had finished, and as we sat resting from our labors dusk began to creep into the house. And with it came—self-created, of course—a sort of awe of that cabinet I had myself just made; it took on mystery; behind its heavy folds almost anything might happen. It brooded over the room, tall and

with a sense of some unseen life behind them.

I left Mrs. Livingstone placing chairs about a small table and went out into the air!

The arrangements are now complete. Mrs. Livingstone has brought over a phonograph, with a collection of what appear to be most lugubrious records; she also promises Livingstone, alive or dead.

"I left him sulking," she said. "But he will feel better after he's had his dinner."

And to this frivolous measure we start the night's proceedings.

Notes Made During First Seance.

Sept. 1st; 11:15 p. m. Present: Jane, Edith, Hayward, the two Livingstones, Halliday and myself. Livingstone and Edith examining house. All outside doors locked and windows boarded. The red lamp on small stand in corner diagonally opposite cabinet and my chair beside it.

11:30 p. m. All is ready. Mrs. Livingstone at end of table, next to cabinet. On her left Jane, Hayward and Mr. Livingstone. On her right, Halliday and Edith. A red silk handkerchief over lamp makes light very faint. I have started phonograph, according to instructions. I was right about it; it is playing: "Shall We Gather at the River?"

11:45. Small raps on the table, and one strong one, like the blow of a doubled fist.

11:47. The table is moving, twisting about. It ceases and the knocks come again.

11:50. The curtain of the cabinet seems to be moving. No one else has apparently noticed it. I have stopped the phonograph.

11:55. The curtain has blown out as far as Mrs. Livingstone's shoulder. All see it. Edith says something has touched her on the right arm. To my inquiry: anyone has relaxed his grasp of the hand he is holding, no one has done so.

12:00. The bell inside the cabinet has been knocked from the table, with such violence that it rolls out into the room.

12:10. Nothing since the bell fell. Livingstone has asked if less light is required, and by knocks the reply is "Yes." I have put out the lamp.

(The following notes were made in the dark and are not very distinct. I have supplemented them from memory.)

All quiet since the last entry. There is a mouse apparently playing about in the library. Edith says that Jane seems to be in a sort of trance. She is breathing heavily. More raps, apparently on the door frame into library. I am cold, but probably nerves.

There is a sense of soft movement in the library; the covers are rustling; the prisms of the chandelier can be heard.

Edith says her chair is being slowly lifted. It has crashed to the floor. A hand has apparently run over the guitar strings. All complain of cold. I am alarmed about Jane.

I noticed the herbal odor again; no one else has, apparently.

(Note: At this point, Jane's breathing continuing labored, and my apprehension growing, I insisted on terminating the seance.)

September 2.

Jane shows no ill effect from last night, and indeed appears to have no knowledge of the later phenomena.

"I think I must have fallen asleep," she said this morning. "How silly of me!"

She has no idea of her entranced condition and I have not told her.

She accepts the idea of a second sitting tonight, without enthusiasm, but apparently with the fatalistic idea that what must be must be.

As to what Halliday had hoped to discover, I am as completely in the dark as ever. On my decision to end the seance, and on turning on the lights as I did without warning, the group was seen to be as it had been at the beginning, except that Mrs. Livingstone's chair appeared to have been pushed back, and was somewhat nearer the cabinet than before.

Hayward, so far as I can tell, had not changed his position. His attitude throughout seemed to me to be one of polite but rather uneasy skepticism. Livingstone, on the other hand, showed strong nervous excitement from first to last, but certainly never left the table.

He is ill today, which is not surprising, but I understand the intention is to carry on the experiment without him tonight.

Regarding the phenomena themselves, what can I do but accept them? Certainly they showed no connection with what Mrs. Livingstone likes to call the spirit world; on the other hand, either they were genuine, or they showed an experience in trickery utterly beyond any member of our small group.

An who would trick us? and why? Livingstone was right, however, as to the ps. chological effect of the preliminaries in spite of myself they influenced me. The music, the low light followed by darkness, the strange and fearful expectancy of something beyond our ken, all added to the history of the house itself and its recent tragedy, had prepared us for anything.

The billowing of the cabinet curtain was particularly terrible. Skeptic as I am, I had the feeling of some dreadful thing behind it; something one should not see, and yet somehow might see.

Both Crawford and Cameron believe that certain individuals have the ability to project from their bodies rod-like structures of energy, invisible to

the naked eye but capable of producing levitations, raps and other phenomena. They believe that these structures are utilized by outside spirits, or "controls." My own conviction is, that if such powers exist, they are not directed from outside, but by the medium's subconscious mind. In that case, of course, it is possible that Jane was the innocent author of last night's entertainment.

Mrs. Livingstone suggests that if we secure anything of interest tonight, I consult Cameron with a view to his joining us later on.

Notes of Second Seance.

Sept. 2; 1 a. m. Largely from memory, since all the later part was held without light, but made immediately following seance. Present: Jane, Edith, Hayward, Halliday, Mrs. Livingstone and myself. Livingstone absent.

I have moved lamp out from corner, and am now near door into hall.

Doors from den and library into hall closed. Door into library open.

11:10. Table moves almost immediately. Edith says it is rising from floor. It has risen, but one leg remains on floor.

11:15. All remove hands, and table settles down.

11:20. Loud raps on table. Constructed as demand for less light. Handkerchief thrown over lamp. Curtain of cabinet billows into room. Guitar overturned inside cabinet. All quiet now.

No phenomena whatever for about ten minutes. Jane very quiet. Hayward feels her pulse; is fast but strong. Mrs. Livingstone asks if too much light, and rap replies "yes." I have put out the lamp.

(Note: From here on I was able only to jot down a word or two in long hand, the previous night's experiment of making stenographic notes in darkness having shown its practical impossibility. The following record I have since elaborated from memory.)

The bell in cabinet rings violently and is flung across room, striking door into hall.

A small light, bluish-white, about a foot above Jane's head. It shines for a moment and then disappears.

It has flashed again, near the fireplace.

A fine but steady tattoo is being beaten, apparently, outside of the door to hall. A tap or two on metal, possibly the fender. Silence.

Jane apparently in trance.

The sounds extend into the library, and there is movement there. The covers seem to be in motion as before. The prisms of chandelier tinkle like small bells. From where I sit I can see a small light over bookcase in library. It is gone.

The herbal odor again.

Jane is groaning and moving in her chair. Mrs. Livingstone and Hayward having trouble holding her hands. She calls: "Here! Here!" sharply.

Hayward says something has touched him on the shoulder. "Something floated by me just now," he says, "on the left. It touched my shoulder."

A crash on the table. I notice the herbal odor once more. Silence again. Something is in the hall. It is groping its way along. It is at the door beside me.

My notes end here. I had reached the limit of my endurance and, as the switch was beside me, I turned on the lights. As before, Mrs. Livingstone's chair seemed somewhat nearer!

FARMER HAS RIGHTS

(Gastonia Gazette)

Judge Shaw plainly indicated the rights of watermelon farmers at this week's term of court here when he declared that a man has no more right to steal watermelons from a farmer's patch than he has to enter his corn crib or chicken house. He plastered a fine on one young fellow for stealing melons and sent another youngster to the roads for four months for assaulting the owner of the melon patch with a rock when he attempted to haul down the thief and take him before an officer.

This community in particular needed just such a lesson. There is entirely too much of this sort of vandalism going on. We know many Gaston county farmers on the outskirts of the city who have had to quit trying to raise watermelons on account of the depredations of a certain class of boys around here. The Stanly News-Herald says:

"A farmer's field is his place of business. His watermelon patch is his bank vault, his warehouse. He has a right to see that such are protected. Folks sometimes think that going into a farmer's fields and taking apples, or berries, or watermelons, or anything of that kind, is not theft. It is exactly the same in the eyes of the law as breaking into a store or a bank. And the farmer has a right to protect his property from the ravages of thieves just as the merchant or the banker has to protect his goods or his money. We must learn to respect the farmer and his property rights more, otherwise we have no one to blame but ourselves if the farmer takes the law into his own hands."

EXAGGERATION

"When I told Seabert that story he almost cracked a rib laughing."

"George! Haven't I told you a million times not to exaggerate like that?"

THE SURE WAY

"What's his number?" asked Bilkins, as he picked up the receiver. "Main 5044," answered his friend. "Operator," said Bilkins into the mouthpiece, "don't give me Main 5044."

no other changes in position. Except that Halliday had gone out to search hall and lower floor. The bell was on the floor near door into hall, and lying on table, "Smyth's Everyday Essays."

To the best of my knowledge this book was in the library at the beginning of the seance.

No signs of disturbance in library or hall, to account for sounds I heard. But an unfortunate situation has arisen, owing to Mrs. Livingstone's failure to lock door from hall to drive. She had pushed the bolt, but as the door was not entirely closed, it had not engaged. We found this door standing open.

This, however, although Hayward seems uneasy, hardly invalidates the extraordinary phenomena secured tonight.

Jane exhausted, and Edith with her.

September 3.

I have seen Cameron, and he will come out. He has evidently been seriously ill, but it shows the dominance of the mental over the physical that he brushed aside my apologies and went directly to the matter in hand.

But it is a curious thing to reflect that, a short time ago, it would have been I who was the skeptic and Cameron who would have been ranged on the other side. Today it was I who was excited, and Cameron who was to be convinced!

"This Edith, of whom you speak," he said, "how old is she?"

"Twenty."

"A nervous type?"

"Yes, and no. Not hysterical, if that's what you mean."

Certain of the phenomena, too, seem to puzzle him. The table levitation, the lights and other manifestations were not unusual, he said, with a strong physical medium present, and this he imagined Jane to be. The book, however, particularly attracted his interest. Over my notes on that he sat thinking for some time.

"You say it crashed onto the table?"

"At the last, yes. But Doctor Hayward, who was nearest the library door, says that after my wife called, 'Here!' he felt something pass his shoulder. Float past, is the way he puts it. He thinks it was the book, and that it dropped onto the table after that."

"About what you heard in the hall; was this hall dark?"

"Yes. There were no lights anywhere in the house."

"You heard footsteps?"

"No. It was like something feeling its way along. You know what I mean."

Toward the end of the conference he leaned back and studied me through his glasses.

"What started you on this, Porter?" he said.

He did not remind me, although he might well have done so, that my previous attitude, to him and his kind, had been one of a sort of indifferent contempt; that, during his entire time at the university, I had never so much as set foot in his rooms, nor asked him into my house; that on the two or three times only when we had met, I had taken no pains to hide my rejection of him and all that he stood for.

But it was implied in his question, and I dare say I colored. I told him, however, as best I could, and he smiled.

"I rather imagine," he said, "that when we pass over, our interest in this plane of existence is impersonal; we may hope to educate it as to what is beyond. But we hardly carry our desires for revenge with us."

Of all that I had told him, however, the Evanston matter interested him most. Over the letter he sat for a long time, his heavy, almost hairless head sunk forward as he read and reread it.

"Curious," he said. "What do you make out of it?"

"A great deal," I told him, and detailed my discovery of the letter behind the drawer of the desk, and my theory as to old Horace Porter's death. I had brought that letter also, and he studied it as carefully as he had the other.

"The enormity of the idea," he repeated. "That's a strong phrase. And he threatens to call in the police! Have you any notion as to what this idea may have been?"

"Not the slightest," I said frankly.

"I would like to keep this for a while, if you don't mind," he said at last. "I have a medium here in town—but I forget. You don't believe in such things!"

"I don't know what I believe. But you are welcome to it, of course."

It was only after this matter of the letter that he finally agreed to come out the day after tomorrow.

September 4.

The words "making trouble," lightly underscored on page 24 of "Smyth's Everyday Essays," are the key to Gordon's cipher. The entire sentence is: "It is often the ingenious rather than the malicious who go about the world making trouble."

In a few hours, then, we shall have solved our mystery, or at least such portion of it as is locked in the diary. Read with this key we have already translated the sentence I recorded here on the twenty-second of August. Although we cannot interpret it without the context, it becomes:

"The G. P. stuff went big last night."

In the same way the scrap of paper found in my garage is now discovered to read, "Smyth, P. 24." Edith's single error lying in the number, which she had remembered as 23.

Halliday suggests that the G. P. above may refer to George Pierce, but makes no attempt to explain the reference.

Halliday's story of his discovery is interesting; certain portions of the two seances he apparently accepts without comment save: "It was the usual stuff," and lets it go at that. Although "usual" is hardly the word I should myself use in that connection, but the book was, as I gather it, not the usual stuff.

"There was something about the way it came that night of the seance," he says, and makes a gesture. "Mrs.



"The G. P. Stuff Went Big Last Night."

Porter called it, and it came. Like a dog," he says, and watches me to be sure I am not laughing at him.

However that may be, the book and the strange manner of its arrival in our midst had interested him, and he had spent some time over it. Thus, he found where it belonged in the library, and tried to discover some significance in that. But there was none.

"I drew a blank there," he says. "I examined the wall behind, but there was nothing. You see, it couldn't have been thrown in; it wasn't possible. And when Hayward said it touched him, both his hands were being held. In other words, he didn't put it there."

All the time, I gather, he was feeling extremely foolish. He would pause now and then, in order to assure me that he felt "a bit silly." He didn't believe in such things; when there was a natural phenomenon there was a natural law to account for it. Maybe telekinesis, or whatever they called it.

"But there had to be some reason for that book," he says. "I just sat down and went through it."

He has taken the key words to the city, and has just telephoned (2 p. m.) that the detective bureau has put a staff to work on it.

"It will be several hours," he said. "It's slow work. But I'll be out with the sheets as soon as they've finished."

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

NOTICE OF RESALE OF TIMBER

NORTH CAROLINA: CHATHAM COUNTY:

Under and by virtue of an order of the Clerk of the Superior Court in the special proceedings therein pending entitled "Bessie S. McIntyre vs. John C. Futrall, et al.," the undersigned will on the

21st day of September, 1929, offer for resale at the Courthouse door in Pittsboro, North Carolina, to the highest bidder for cash all of the merchantable timber measuring twelve inches in diameter at the stump, twelve inches from the ground when cut, upon the following land situated in Hickory Mountain Township, Chatham County, and lying on Rocky River:

Beginning at a red oak, John S. Headen's corner, and running west 160 poles to a stake and pointers in Aaron Berk's line, thence South with his line 32 poles to Rocky River, thence down the same its various courses about 240 poles to a white oak, thence leaving the river South 51 degrees East 72 poles to a stake, thence East 13 poles to a stake, thence North 63 degrees east 118 poles to a wild cherry, thence South 20 degrees West 22 poles to an ash on the bank of the river, thence down the same about 60 poles to a hickory, thence leaving the river South 85 degrees East 11 poles to a post oak in People's line, thence North with his line 151 poles to a small hickory and pointers, thence West with John B. Headen's line 156 poles to a hickory said John B. Headen's corner, thence North his other line 145 poles to the beginning, containing 310 acres more or less, said tract of land being the same conveyed by deed registered in book "AO" at page 57, from N. M. Alston and wife, September 25th, 1869.

Another tract containing 13 1/2 acres lying on Rocky River, said county, beginning at a stake in B. F. Headen's line and running east with his line 25 poles to a stone, thence North 11 1/2 degrees east 30 poles to a stone, thence north 50 poles to a dogwood, thence west 27 poles to a stone in said B. F. Headen's line, thence with his line to the beginning, being the same land conveyed by deed from John B. Headen to B. F. Headen, December 8, 1861, registered in Book "BO" page 483.

Said timber on the said land must be cut and removed within two years from the confirmation of the sale.

Terms of sale: Cash.

Time of Sale: 12 o'clock, noon.

This the 4th day of September, 1929.

W. P. HORTON, Commissioner

A boy follows in his father's footsteps by taking after his mother.

NOTICE OF SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE

Under and by virtue of the power and authority upon him conferred by an order of the Superior Court of Chatham County made in the special proceeding therein pending, entitled "In the matter of Pearl Windham and her husband, B. G. Windham, A. L. Womack, and others," the undersigned commissioner will on

Thursday, October 10th, 1929,

on the premises of the lands hereinafter described, at the dwelling house on said lands in which Mrs. Stella Wicker Holt, deceased, formerly resided, in Merry Oaks, North Carolina,

at 12:00 o'clock, noon,

sell, at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, the following described tracts of land in Cape Fear Township, Chatham County, N. C.:

FIRST TRACT: Beginning at a white oak, Esquire Holt corner in Willis Byrd line, running North 65 poles to a stake in Esquire Holt's line; thence West 80 poles to a stake in Willis Byrd's line; thence South 3 degrees West 65 poles to a stake; thence East 81 1/2 poles to the beginning; containing 31 1/2 acres, more or less.

SECOND TRACT: Beginning at an iron with a post oak pointer, Alfred M. Tucker's corner, and running from thence North 1 chain 50 links to a rock, John B. and S. E. Womack's corner; thence West with their line 5 chains 50 links to a rock with black jack and post oak pointers; J. B. and S. E. Womack's corner; thence North with Willis Byrd's line 6 chains 95 links to a rock with two black gum pointers, Byrd's corner; thence East with Byrd's line 5 chains 50 links to a rock with a post oak bush pointer; Byrd's corner; thence North with Willis Byrd's line 8 chains 95 links to a stake with two white oak pointers; thence South 80 degrees East with Byrd's line 12 chains 50 links to stake with pine and white oak pointers in Henderson Holt's line; thence South with Holt's line 7 chains 62 1/2 links to a stake with white oak and post oak pointers; Alfred M. Tucker's corner; thence South 56 degrees West with Tucker's line 14 chains 5 links to beginning; containing 19 1/2 acres.

THIRD TRACT: Beginning at a stone in J. B. Womack's line, running with said line and A. M. Tucker's line to Tucker's corner; thence nearly North 6 poles to stone; thence West 22 1/2 poles to stone; thence South 25 poles to stone; thence East 32 poles to beginning, containing 4 acres 13 rods.

FOURTH TRACT: Beginning at a pine in R. & A. R. Co. line, running East with said line 12 1/2 poles to stone; thence North 13 poles to stone; thence West 12 1/2 poles to stone; thence South 13 poles to beginning; containing 1 acre.

FIFTH TRACT: Beginning at a pine in Womack and Byrd corner, thence West with said line to a stone 166 links; thence North 22 degrees West to Womack's line; thence East with said line to Womack's corner; thence South 22 degrees East to beginning; containing one-half acre.

SAVING AND EXCEPTING FROM SAID LANDS, HOWEVER, 1 1/2 acres conveyed to Pearl Windham, 1 acre conveyed to A. L. Womack, and 2,000 square feet conveyed to Board of Education heretofore.

This 9th day of September, 1929. DANIEL L. BELL, Commissioner.

NOTICE OF SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Under and by virtue of the power of sale made and entered in a certain judgment rendered in the Superior Court of Chatham County, North Carolina, entitled the Federal Land Bank of Columbia vs. A. M. Riddle et al., the undersigned commissioner will, on

Monday, the 7th day of October,

1929, at 12 o'clock noon, at the Court House door in Pittsboro, Chatham County, North Carolina, offer for sale to the highest bidder on the following terms: One-fifth cash, and the balance in five equal annual installments, said installments bearing interest at 6 per centum per annum, the following described real estate, to-wit:

All those certain pieces, parcels or tracts of land containing 354 1/2 acres, more or less, situated, lying and being on the Moncure Road about 4 miles South from the town of Pittsboro in Center Township, Chatham County, N. C., having such shapes, metes, courses and distances as will more fully appear by reference to a plat thereof made by R. B. Clegg, surveyor, in 1918, and attached to the abstract now on file with the Federal Land Bank of Columbia, S. C., the same being bounded on the North by lands of B. Noe, N. B. Gunter, W. B. Harper, on the East by lands of Lonnie Womble, R. L. Johnson; on the South by lands of Lonnie Womble and B. Noe and Luther Jacobs; and on the West by lands of N. B. Gunter and Joe Womble.

TIME OF SALE: Monday, October 7th, 1929, at 12 o