

The RED LAMP



By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

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"The chances are," he said today, "that the fellow crept upon him, quiet-like, and leaped into the launch."

"But he was unarmed, too," I said remembering the knife under our slip.

It seemed to me that Peter not only heard that with surprising distinctness, but that he shot a stealthy glance at me.

"He had an oar," he said, and fell back into his customary taciturnity.

In our fore-rigging hangs our riding light. It should be white, but as in a burst of energy this evening I scraped a supper plate over the side, I also scraped off the lantern. So it is red, our red sailing light. It reminds me of the lamp at home. I think about light in general. What do I know about light, anyhow? That it is a wave, a vibration, and that only within a certain fixed range can it be perceived by my human sensorium; that, below the infra-red, and above the ultra-violet, are waves our human eye cannot perceive. Then, all around us are things to which our human senses do not react. How far dare I extend that? From invisible things to invisible beings is not so far, I dare say.

What is reality and what is not? Only what we can see, hear, touch or taste? But that is absurd. Thought is a reality; perhaps the only reality.

But can thought exist independent of the body? The spiritists believe it can. And undoubtedly the universe is full of unheard sounds; all the noises in the world go echoing around our unhearing ears for centuries, and then comes the radio and begins to pick them up for us.

But the radio requires a peculiar sort of receiving instrument, and so with the sights and sounds beyond our normal ken. Jane may be such an instrument. So for all I know may be Peter Geiss, snoring in his pup tent. Even myself—

(Note: I fell asleep here, and the entry is incomplete.)

July 12.

Just what did Peter Geiss see last night?

If I were asked to name, in order of their psychic quality, the three persons on this boat, I would put Jane first and Peter last.

He is a materialist. Not for him the interesting abstractions, the controversial problems of the universe. The life of the mind, the questions of the soul, are hidden from him. His food, his tobacco, the direction of the wind, the state of the tide, these cover the field of his speculations and anxieties. And yet—Peter saw something last night.

It was about one o'clock in the morning, and he had wakened and crawled out of his pup tent, with, according to him, "the feeling that we were in for a blow. There was a cold wind across my feet."

So he rose, and he saw that our red lantern was burning low, and gingerly stepping across me, reached into a locker for the oil can. When he straightened up he saw a shadowy figure standing in the bow of the boat, directly under the lantern.

He thought at first that it was I, but the next moment he had stumbled across me as I lay supine, and the oil can fell and went a-rolling. The noise did not disturb the figure, and Peter gave a long look at it before he howled like a hyena and brought me up all standing.

It was only then that it disappeared. "Just blew to windward," according to Peter. I never saw it at all.

Peter did not go to bed again all night, but sat huddled by the wheel,



A Queer Old Figure of Terror Without Hope.

starting forward, a queer old figure of terror without hope. And I admit I was not much better.

For Peter says that it was that of a man in a dressing gown, and that "it looked like the old gentleman." By which he means my Uncle Horace.

July 13.

Ellis landing.

We have had bad news, and are preparing to land and take a motor back.

Edith wires that Halliday has been hurt. She gives no details.

July 14.

Halliday's condition is not critical, thank God.

We found him (Note: In my bed room here at the Lodge) with Edith and Helena fussing over him, and with his collar bone broken, the result, not of the attack but of his ditching the car.

For he is the indirect victim of an attack.

On the evening of the 12th he was on his way to the station at Oakville to meet Helena Lear and Edith, who were in town on some mysterious feminine errand which detained them until the late train.

At eleven o'clock, then, he took the car and started off, and as he was early took the longer route through the back country. The one by Sanger's mill and the Livingstone place. It was near the drive into Livingstones' that a man carrying a sawed-off shotgun stopped the car and asked for a lift into town. He was, he said, one of Starr's special deputies, watching for the sheep-killer.

It was very dark, and he could only see the outlines of the deputy. But as, all along, he had come across men similarly armed—"The fence corners were full of them," he says—he thought nothing of it, and told the fellow to jump in.

"I hadn't seen him," he said, "but I got an impression of him. You know what I mean. A heavy square type, and he got into the car like that, slowly and deliberately. I think he had a cigar in his mouth, not lighted; he talked like it, anyhow."

Once in the car the man was taciturn. Halliday spoke once or twice, and got only a sort of grunt in reply, and finally he began to be uneasy. He had, he says, the feeling that the fellow's whole body was taut, and that his silence was covering some sort of stealthy motion, "or something," he adds, rather vaguely.

"And of course he had his gun. Lying across his knees as well as I could make out."

They had gone about a mile by that time, and then Halliday began to smell a queer odor.

"He was not trying to anesthetize me," he is certain. "He'd had it in his pocket, and something had gone wrong; the cork came out, perhaps. Anyhow, all at once it struck me that ether was a queer thing for one of Starr's deputies to be carrying, and I felt I was in for trouble."

He took his left hand quietly from the steering wheel, and began to fumble in the left hand pocket of the car, where he had put his revolver. And although he is confident he made no sound, the fellow must have had ears like a bat, for just then Halliday saw him raise the gun, and as he ducked forward the barrel of it hit the seat back behind him with a sickening thud.

But he had somehow turned the wheel of the car, and the next moment it had left the road. Halliday made a clutch at it, but it was too late; he saw, as the car swung, the lights of another car ahead and coming toward them; then they struck a fence, and the machine turned over.

He had been found, by the people in the other car, unconscious in the wreckage, and brought to the Lodge. No sign of the other man was discovered.

But this story, curious and ominous as it is, is as nothing to my sensations today when I visited my small garage, where my car is awaiting insurance adjustment before undergoing repairs.

The point of the matter is this: Greenough has already been to see our invalid, and has assured him that he has been the victim of an ordinary attempt at a hold-up.

So Greenough dismisses the possibility of any connection between Halliday's trouble and the unknown malefactor; in a word, my absence has probably not altered his suspicion of me a particle. Or had not, for within the next half hour I propose to show him that an absolute connection exists between the two.

On the right-hand cushion of my car, which during the salvaging of it was thrown upside down into the rear, there is marked an infinitesimal circle in chalk, enclosing a crude triangle. I have sent for Greenough.

Later: Truly the way of the innocent is hard.

Doctor Hayward was making his afternoon call on Halliday when the detective came, and as I feel confident that the doctor is in Greenough's confidence I was glad to spring my little bombshell on them both like Bunyan's Man in an Iron Cage. "I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it."

Edith was on the veranda when the detective came, and young Gordon was with her. During our absence he has struck up with her an acquaintance of sorts, but she dislikes him extremely. She has, Jane tells me, nicknamed him Shifty.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

Ishka—That Veerhoff girl claims to have mastered French.

Bibble—Idon't beleive it.

Ishka—Nor I either. She's studied it three years and still when I ask her she didn't even know the French word for "attaboy."—The Pathfinder.

A BOY AND THE "Y"

How tragically short are the years when the boy is turning into man. On how little depends in those years which way the man is turning. Sometimes it is a question of avoiding shipwreck and achieving success, but more often it will be a matter of a young man's deciding between things that are not bad and things that are really good, between getting by and being useful. Ideas count in those formative years—out of them come

ideas. About the time we begin thinking of those things and growing a little frightened by the numbers of young men going up to lead the community and manage the world, we begin to think of the Y. M. C. A. For that is a club whose history has given it insight into the minds of young men. It is an organization open to most men for less money than it costs to supply its facilities. For its society is based on what a man has in him rather than what he has in his purse.

That is why it is fair for the Y.M.C.A. to go into the future of the community asking citizens who care about the future of the community to make up the balance that these young fellows cannot afford to pay.—Milwaukee Journal.

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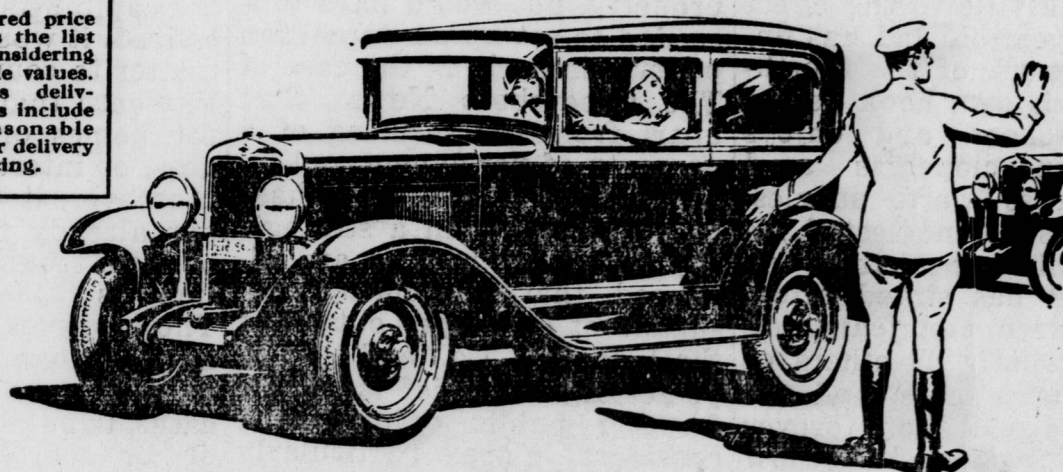
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