

DONALD DONALDSON, JR.

Being a True Record and Explanation of the Seven Mysteries Now Associated With His Name in the Public Mind, and of an Eighth, Which is the Key of the Seven

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CHAPTER I THE PROBLEM.

I HAVE known Donald Donaldson, Jr., ever since he was born; indeed, I may say, much longer. There is an entry about him in my diary under date of March 10, 1877, and that is about four years before he saw the light and nearly two years before I first heard of either of his parents or they of each other, in plain words, he was an ideal of mine, a subject of speculation and study, a dweller in my brain before he had an actual existence, so that he might be a tenant of my heart.

It is singular that two romances, many mysteries and a very startling tragedy should hang upon so small and commonplace a peg as this which I shall show you. Twenty odd years ago I made an appointment with Stephen Hackett, then my partner and since deceased, to meet him in a New York bookstore, choosing the place simply because it was convenient. I was ahead of him and of the hour, indeed, and while waiting I took up a volume entitled "Psychic Marvels," by an English writer whom I now perceive to have been both credulous and mendacious, a man to believe a good lie and improve it in the telling. In those days, however, I had read little, and the book appealed to me as a scientific presentation of a subject of great interest and importance too often shunned by practical men and left to be the sport of impostors.

When Hackett arrived, I was sitting on top of a small stepladder on rollers, a device common in bookshops, while two polite clerks were vainly endeavoring to gain my attention for the purpose of telling me that the business of the establishment was suffering for lack of that ladder. I bought "Psychic Marvels," and we devoted the evening to it, Hackett and I, in the library of my house in Tunbridge, N. J.

Now, if you please that was the cause of Donald Donaldson, Jr. If I had not suggested the bookstore as a place of meeting, if that particular volume had not caught my eye, perhaps even if the stepladder had not been placed handily for me to sit upon there would be no story for me to tell. But some one built the store, and some one wrote the book, and some one else was the father of the author, and another was his grandfather, and so on back to the monkey who was the ancestor of them all, not to go further. Tracing causes is a famous old amusement of our race, though we know already that the whole past of the universe is the cause of every blade of grass, even as that blade itself is an essential prop of the whole future. It is a worthy effort, however, to see as much of this vast skein as we can, and he is wisest who sees most, provided that he does not fancy that he sees all which exists even in the small portion that is under his eye.

To resume my story, Hackett and I spent a studious evening with "Psychic Marvels," sitting up so late that neither of us was fit for business on the following day, and we were led to read many other books and to engage at last in a practical, common-sense investigation of an interesting subject.

The firm of Hackett & Harrington manufactured carpets—still does so, in fact—and keeps the name, though my partner long since closed his earthly account and went to meet another which could not have been one to shame him. I hope my own may be as good, for it must soon be closed. Tunbridge people began to call me "old" John Harrington a matter of ten years ago. However, in the days of which I am now writing I was a young man of forty-two, and Hackett was not much older. We had made a good bit of money in our business, and both of us had been fortunate in outside investments, so that we felt very secure.

The time had come when we might afford to relax the pressure under which we had labored since boyhood and to take more ease and pleasure in the world. But the opportunity to enjoy is one thing and the power is another. I had little appetite for amusements, and Hackett had none. We were uneducated men, with narrow social interests, and to be brief about it, we really did not know what to do with ourselves. Unlike many others in the same situation, however, we knew what was the matter with us—we needed mental exercise. This decision we had reached before the Englishman's book fell into our hands and offered an acceptable suggestion. If we had not chosen to investigate psychic phenomena, the hidden wonders of the human mind, we should have followed some other line, with a less definite result perhaps.

It would be singular if two trained business men, with thoroughly practical minds, accustomed from their youth to deal with hard facts, should fall to accomplish anything in such an undertaking. We approached the subject without prejudice. When we discussed the matter in the light of the blazing sun in my library, Hackett would be the skeptic on a Tuesday evening and I on a Wednesday. We never agreed in those early stages except upon a statement of the first essential of the investigation. As to that, it was

offered. We decided to base our work upon the wisdom of the old proverb which says, "First catch your rabbit, and then cook him." There is no doubt whatever that nearly all mankind had tried to cook this particular rabbit before catching him.

Suppose we take the psychic problem in its simplest form, which used to be called clairvoyance, and I still think that that is the best term for it. Is there upon record one single genuine case of it, proved beyond doubt? Hackett and I read fifty books and failed to find an instance based upon such evidence as we would accept in our business. Yet where there is so much smoke there must be a little fire, and using this crystal of popular wisdom as a touchstone in the matter, I would be willing to assert that one ten-millionth of the labor wasted in baseless discussion of doubtful facts would have sufficed to give the world enough genuine facts to satisfy all candid minds.

Have patience with me; I am getting the philosophy of the subject out of the way as fast as I can. The essential point is that Hackett and I went out to catch a real rabbit—in other words, a human being who had had a genuine "supernatural" message. We did not care where it came from or what it was about or how it was transmitted so long as it could be proved that it came and that no known organ of this mortal body could have enabled the individual to receive it.

When I was a boy, I used to hunt rabbits in a piece of woods which was supposed to be a particularly good place for them. All youthful hunters went there, and as a result (visible to me in these mature years) all sane rabbits had gone over into another county. One day, when the snow had come and the rabbits had put on their winter coats, some jester set up the corpse of a white cat in the edge of the woods in an absurdly conspicuous position. I saw it and blazed away, though my common sense should have told me that it could not be a rabbit because such a preposterously reckless rabbit would have been shot long ago. Yet I wasted my powder, and, having done so, I set the creature up again in the same place, and every mother's son that came that way exercised his marksmanship so long as there was anything to shoot at. And next day, in a different spot, but equally conspicuous, the joker played the game once more. I remember that for a long time afterward all the boys were ashamed to be seen going into that piece of woods with a gun.

It took Hackett and me about a year to discover that genuine psychics are not found in the edge of the woods beside the beaten path; that it is hard to find them even when one knows where they are, for they lie low, and, like the rabbits, they imitate the natural color of the surroundings. You may accept this as a general rule: When your fellow man takes you by the button of your coat and leads you into a corner to tell you of a prophetic dream or a mysterious psychic message, he does not believe the story himself. Perhaps he may be trying to believe it, but no one has to try to believe in a real experience of that kind after he has had it. He knows. And the chances are good that he will not talk of it to his closest intimate. It is ever the element of doubt that leads to talking.

Our hobby gave to Hackett and me an excuse for study, an aim in travel and an opportunity of meeting cultivated men and women. As it was an elected hobby and not the result of congenital mental distortion, we rode it calmly and were never mistaken for cranks except by cranks. It is true that some of our earlier experiences were more or less absurd, but we were saved from serious error by the business man's faculty of turning from the impracticable to the practical. When we encountered an impostor, we promptly charged him up to "profit and loss" and passed on to the next item.

It was while engaged in a fruitless though not uninteresting investigation in Boston that we came quite by accident upon the most important information. We made the acquaintance of a young physician named Harold Whiting, who was then and is today one of the most honest minded men in the world. I believe that Whiting would not lie even to himself, and there are few of whom so much can be said. He was amusing himself with experiments in the matter of peculiar capacities and knowledge exhibited by persons in the hypnotic state, but confessed that he had found no facts upon which conclusions of any importance could be based.

We discovered that his thought had been turned into this channel by a remarkable occurrence which he had witnessed, but we had considerable difficulty in persuading him to say anything more upon the subject. It appeared that he was under some sort of pledge in the matter.

"There is a friend of mine, now in New York," said he, "who received a psychic message from his brother, who was then upon the other side of the world. This thing happened under circumstances which make doubt impossible. I was present when the message

was received. I know the details, but I cannot give you the facts nor tell you the man's name because I gave him my word that I would not disclose them."

Perceiving our disappointment, he expressed sincere regret, and by way of atonement he gave us the name of a young woman in New Haven whom it might be worth our while to see.

"I received a letter about her some time ago from an instructor in psychology at Yale, an old friend of mine," said he. "My friend and several other members of the faculty are investigating the case, and they regard it as genuine and important. The girl's name is Dorothy Vaughn. She is an orphan and lives with her aunt, Mrs. Eustis, who has had certain occult experiences herself, as I am told."

He gave us the address of Mrs. Eustis and the name of his friend. His reference to the fact that unusual powers appeared both in the aunt and the niece led to a general discussion of the restriction of such powers and their persistence in families. No one who has given the subject any study can doubt that these traits are handed down from generation to generation. Often a vague family tradition leads back to the true psychic whose powers, weakened by admixture with a common strain, reappear to flicker uncertainly in the present day.

Hackett seemed to find much material for thought in this conversation. He did not contribute largely to it, being a man of a slow mind and of few words, but some days later, while we were on the way to New Haven, he suddenly emerged from a reverie to say:

"I wonder what would happen if two of them should marry?"

When I had found out what he was talking about, I agreed with him that the experiment would be very interesting if there were any way of making it. Hackett suggested that we should go forward into the smoking car, and when we were there and he had smoked a part of a long cigar he said:

"I don't see why there isn't."

I replied with the argument that two persons of opposite sexes, possessing powers, now commonly called occult, must be naturally antipathetic, so that a marriage between them could not be brought about, for, if this were not so, the whole human race would have become "psychics" long ago. The clairvoyant power, not to go further in the matter, is an obvious and great advantage and would certainly have been utilized by evolution to the extent of crowding from the earth all other kinds of men unless nature had set up some sort of barrier, and where should we look for it except in the realm of that attraction which we call love?

As we were running into the station at New Haven, Hackett remarked that there might be something in what I had said.

"I'm sorry, too," he added, "for it seemed to me as if I had an idea."

As a matter of fact this idea had long been in my mind, and at intervals during the space of nearly two years I had jotted down notes in my diary regarding an imaginary child whose parents should both be psychics, but I had never discussed the subject with Hackett. His idea of this experiment in heredity was therefore entitled to the credit of an independent discovery.

CHAPTER II UPON THE MOTHER'S SIDE.

MR. BURNHAM, the instructor to whom Dr. Whiting had referred us, proved to be a pleasant fellow, well worth meeting, but we had no sooner made known our errand than he became much distracted.

"A most unfortunate thing has happened," he said. "Since the date of my letter to Dr. Whiting Mrs. Eustis has died. Miss Vaughn is in deep grief and in a very trying position, too, poor child. Her aunt left nothing but debts, and—well, some of us are trying to see what we can do for her. She hasn't a penny or near relative in the world, and nobody seems to be con-



It was an ordinary cabinet photograph lying forward to help her except us, and we're men, you see, and it's very embarrassing. She isn't the sort of girl to take help from any one, and it looks as if it might end by her taking up some confounded occupation that she isn't fit for. We are all very busy about it."

I have no mystic power to read the mind or the heart of another, but I perceived clearly enough that Mr. Burnham was in love with Miss Vaughn and that she did not find herself able to respond. To settle this point I ventured to say that I had heard she was quite lovely.

That's hardly the word, I—I happen to have a portrait of her."

And he pretended to forget which pocket it was in. It was an ordinary cabinet photograph, but it showed a most extraordinary face, a dainty composite of womanly and childish qualities. I would not have been able to decide from this picture whether Miss Vaughn was fifteen years old or twenty-five, and after my first glance I looked up at Burnham and asked, "How old is she?"

He laughed.

"You'd be as much puzzled if you saw the original," he said, and this proved to be no exaggeration. "The youth, I think, is in the lower part of the face. What a pretty mouth and chin! Did you ever see such a pretty mouth and chin? There's all the dimpled sweetness, all the quick sensitiveness of girlhood, and yet so weak. But there's a calmness in the forehead and eyes—the eyes a bit long, as you notice, with very delicately marked brows. The eyes are deep blue and all the coloring exquisite. Her hair is like the gold of Ophir. It may seem had taste for me to run on like this," he added suddenly, "but Miss Vaughn's beauty is such a simple and natural thing that one feels no hesitation in speaking of it. Why, even in her presence I sometimes find myself—however, that's neither here nor there. You asked how old she was. She'll be eighteen next week."

"If the young lady's peculiar powers are of interest to science," said I, "it would seem as if some financial arrangement might be made whereby—"

"We've suggested that, but she won't listen to it," he interrupted. "The queer part of it is that Miss Vaughn insists that she has no powers which are not shared by all our species. She has, though."

We had reached Burnham's lodgings by this time, and there we conversed for an hour or more upon the subject of the experiments which had been made in the case of Miss Vaughn. They seemed to me to possess the vague and unsatisfactory character which I had learned to associate with common fraudulent practices. The young lady answered questions concerning matters of which she was supposed to have no knowledge, peculiarities of persons whom she had not seen, incidents in the lives of the questioners or of their friends. It was notable that she passed into no state of trance or mesmeric sleep. She remained entirely normal, not even exhibiting the excessive fatigue which usually follows such manifestations. She did show repugnance, however, and was always more pleased when she failed than when she succeeded. After a series of failures she would laugh almost hysterically and display a childish relief and delight. Her successes depressed her. The best of them, so far as I could learn, were not conclusive, but there were some that were hard to explain upon any natural hypothesis, and they must have been extremely startling to the inquirers.

As Burnham continued to speak I became less hopeful of Miss Vaughn as a possible subject of investigation, less interested in her as a psychic, but far more interested in her as a woman. Somehow the words of this fiery but hopeless lover, this poor little, thin, dark, ugly faced fellow, who had no right to crave a beautiful woman—except that he couldn't help it—built up before my mind's eye a very charming personality.

I talked the matter over with Hackett, and we agreed that Miss Vaughn was undoubtedly worthy of substantial assistance, if it could be rendered without offense. Her situation was certainly most lamentable and involved no fault of her own. Having heard of this case, we could hardly "pass by on the other side," as Hackett expressed it. The fact is that my partner had been playing the role of the good Samaritan in many towns that we had visited, and mostly to the underserving, I am afraid.

We decided that I should call upon Miss Vaughn, and so I asked Burnham to secure her permission; but he told me very promptly that he did not care to undertake the errand.

"I couldn't lie to her," said he. "She'd have to know the object of your visit here, and then she wouldn't see you."

Incidentally I learned during this conversation that Miss Vaughn was an intellectual prodigy, having been the youngest girl ever graduated from Smith college. Indeed, she would probably not have been admitted to that institution if her age had been correctly stated, but her aunt had misrepresented the matter to the authorities. Her record had been exemplary, both for scholarship and conduct.

"She might teach," said Burnham, "but I really don't see how she's going to live till we can find her a position." After leaving Burnham's room I went at once alone to the Eustis residence, which must have been considered quite a grand house in its day. A dependent old woman answered my ring and admitted me into a chilling, gloomy atmosphere and eventually into a small room at the rear of the hall. It had the look of neglect, as if it had not been used in some weeks. My eye was attracted by a small table unlike the other furniture and awkwardly placed near a window. It was littered with loose sheets of writing paper, which were dusty, and some of them were covered with scrawls in pencil as if a child had played with them.

I thought that I knew why this table was there. Clearly Miss Vaughn's psychic messages were written with a pencil. I was displeased. This scrawling hand looked like the usual counterfeit. And yet I would have given my head upon the honesty of the face in the photograph. Well, we may all be deceived by a face. I began to regret having sought an interview with Miss Vaughn, and my mind was deflected from her to the unknown man whom

Dr. Whiting had mentioned. A strong inward conviction that that man was the true psychic, worth a thousand Dorothy Vaughns to the cause of science, arose to prominence in my consciousness, and I was striving to think of some means by which I could learn his name when a very pleasant voice spoke my own.

I turned and saw a slight, girlish figure, all in black. There was the puzzling, childish, womanly face that the picture had shown, the perfectly open innocence quaintly combined with a serene wisdom such as I might imagine in an angel. Yet this serenity was wholly intellectual. I could see that the poor girl's body was racked with nervousness and apprehension. Loneliness in this old, decaying house, from which she could see no way out into the brighter world, had told upon her; I cannot remember that my sympathy ever went out so suddenly and so strongly toward any other human being.

She had seen that I was looking curiously at the table, and I observed that



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she shuddered at the sight of it. Yet, as if the thing exerted some sort of fascination, the poor girl advanced directly toward it, and I heard the pencils click in her nervous fingers as she gathered them up.

"Miss Vaughn," said I, "it is in my mind to offer you employment. I have heard that you need it. With this purpose in view, will you permit me to ask you a few questions?"

She sat down in the chair by the table as if she lacked the strength to stand. In the few seconds that elapsed before she answered me her nervousness increased. She began to mark upon the sheets of paper with one of the pencils, though I am sure she had no consciousness of doing so.

"What is the nature of this employment?" she asked.

There was a longer pause than before. I could see clearly enough what the poor little girl expected. Burnham and others had suggested her peculiar powers as a means of earning her living, and she felt that I had come upon the same errand. Seeing how she shrank from that theme, I had not the heart to take it up.

"You have heard about me," she said. "You think I am some phenomenally gifted person. Really I am nothing of the sort. I am just like any other girl. I can guess things. So can every woman. My aunt was interested in—in that subject, and so I did it. I am not interested and shall never do it again."

It was a pitiful protest, and it carried the day with me.

"I think you mistake my errand," said I as gently as possible. "Have you ever had any experience in teaching?"

She dropped the pencil and stared at me.

"We are planning to open an evening school in the town where I live," I continued. "A great part of the population consists of people who work in my factory, the Hackett & Harrington carpet mills. Some of these people—and I am thinking now of the young women especially—have lacked educational training in their childhood. We are going to give them a chance to recover the lost ground. They are obliged to work in the daytime, but many of them will welcome the opportunity to study and to acquire some simple accomplishments in the evening. We are not slave drivers. Our people do not have to drop exhausted into their beds as soon as they have eaten their supper."

At this point Miss Vaughn interrupted me by suddenly falling forward, with her head in her hands. I think it must have been five minutes that she wept and sobbed, and I was both distressed and alarmed, though she kept assuring me that she was not ill and that she was very happy. When she had recovered some share of self command, she begged me to give her a trial in the school.

"I should so love that work," she said over and over again. "I know I should succeed." The idea seemed to enchant her. She spoke of her own powers with confidence. She became brilliant, enthusiastic, splendid—in fact, precisely the sort of girl to inspire the right feeling in our young women of Tunbridge who must take up too late in life the heavy mental tasks of childhood.

I was greatly embarrassed and a victim of that nervous dissatisfaction which comes to a rational, practical man when he blunders into a good and judicious action. It is a species of imposture. I perceived that it was a most fortunate thing for both of us that I had come to call upon Miss Vaughn, and it distressed me to know

that she would always credit me with a kindness, even though I should confess in the most open manner that I had come upon a wholly different errand.

While I hesitated the poor girl was on the rack. Her nervousness was uncontrollable. She began to scribble with the pencil and to twist the sheets of paper in her fingers without knowing what she was doing. Seeing this, I came straight to the point.

"It's a simple matter of business," said I; "rather sudden, of course, but you mustn't mind that. The position is yours if you'll take it, and, for my own part, I'm more than content. We'll make the salary satisfactory and let it begin immediately, though the school doesn't open for some weeks."

The crazy pencil stopped, and the dear child who has been like my own daughter from that moment looked up into my eyes while the tears shone upon her cheeks.

Now, this may seem a small matter to cause so much emotion, but it must be remembered that Dorothy had been at her wit's end since her aunt's death. We forget sometimes that the term "a living" has close connection with the verb "to live." Whether a penniless girl is alone in the world or a man fighting in the heart of a mob feels a pistol pressed against his head, it is much the same. We should not look for perfect calm. And that is the evil of our present social system, that it puts the poor and the distressed ever at their worst and their weakest. It is grand to see a human being stand unmoved in deadly peril, but as a business man I cannot say that we produce the best possible results in this world by making life one long, mortal emergency for the majority of our species.

While I was endeavoring to make Dorothy understand that I was no angel sent from heaven, but only a carpet manufacturer from Tunbridge, N. J., my glance happened to fall upon the sheets of paper on the table, and I observed with surprise that she had been writing a man's name. She must have written it, in whole or in part, at least a hundred times. It was Donald Donaldson.

"I was only scribbling," she said, detecting me in the impertinence of reading over her shoulder. "That's nothing at all."

"Do you mean that it's a fictitious name?" I asked, greatly surprised.

"It's nobody that I know," she said, with a glance of quick inquiry at me.

I assured her with all sincerity that the name was a total stranger to my ears. It was such an awkward, tongue-twisting name that no one could forget it.

"Did you fancy that it might have been suggested by my mind to yours," I asked; "that I might have been thinking of this man?"

"Oh, no!" she cried hastily. "That is impossible—certainly impossible for me. I am a normal minded girl, just like any other. Whatever I have done in—in that way is only what all people can do if they are silly enough to try. Please, please don't ask me about it!"

I was very anxious to do so, being thoroughly convinced that I had stumbled upon a genuine and remarkable manifestation of occult power, but Miss Vaughn was in a state of great nervous tension, and it would have been cruel to press unwelcome questions. So we talked a little while about the school, and she was soon at her best—happy, hopeful and earnest. Her mind was as bright and quick as a bird's eye, and she loved the sunny and pure heights.

That evening, in Mr. Burnham's room, I mentioned the incident of the name. There were present a half dozen of the instructor's friends who had assisted in the tests that had been made of Miss Vaughn's power, and they were all sincere men with trained intelligence. They were greatly interested by the occurrence, and they questioned me closely. It was with much difficulty that I convinced them that I had never known a man named Donald Donaldson and could not have influenced Miss Vaughn in this matter. Various views were expressed, though none was of any great importance, but when Hackett and I had gone to our hotel and were smoking together before retiring, my partner, who had preserved an almost complete silence during the evening, said:

"I have an idea."

"What is it?" I asked eagerly, but he would not tell me.

"Wait till tomorrow," was all that I could get out of him.

While we were at breakfast on the following morning a messenger boy brought a telegram to Hackett. He opened it and glanced at the contents. Then he took a bit of paper from his pocket and laid it before me, saying:

"I sent that last night, and this is the reply:

I read as follows:

Dr. Harold Whiting, Boston: Have learned that Donald Donaldson is the man whom you referred to in your talk with us. Can you give us his present address? S. K. HACKETT.

And this:

S. K. Hackett, New Haven: Not at liberty to do so. Don't let Donaldson think that I gave you his name. This is important. HAROLD WHITING.

Hackett chuckled softly.

"Of course his address was easy enough to get," said he. "There's a New York directory in this hotel. Donaldson is a clerk at 46 Wall street."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

False Pretenses.

"Why does he always begin with the statement, 'To make a long story short'?"

"Oh, that's just to encourage you to think he's going to do it."—Chicago Post.

Correctly Misrepresented.

"Is this the way to Warehous?"

"Asked the man with blankets on."

"It's how I've always worn 'em."

Read associated feature items.

—Ballantine American.