

THE WITCH OF DAHLGREN

A Witch In Fancy, but Not In Fact

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The three traveling men drew closer around the hot stove in the parlor of the little hotel at Dahlgren, Pa. Benton, the cigar salesman, was continuing a conversation that had begun at the supper table a short while before.

"Gentlemen," he said impressively, "I know it sounds mighty fishy, but I actually did see what they call 'The Witch of Dahlgren!'"

"When?" asked Cooper, the clothing drummer.

"On my last trip to this forlorn hole," was Benton's caustic reply.

"And that was?"

"Last April. It's a short story. Want to hear about it?"

"Yes, go ahead," urged the third member of the group, Joel Gifford, who represented a great wholesale grocery house. He was a tall, good looking, quiet sort of man, well liked everywhere. There had been a tragedy in his life which many had guessed at, but few knew the real facts in the case.

Benton passed the cigars around and lighted one for himself.

"Now, gentlemen," he began, "please understand that I shall not feel in the least offended if you do not believe what I am about to tell you, but it really happened to me in this town. Last April I arrived here in the regular course of my travels and put up at this same hotel. I was the only guest that night, and after supper I got to talking with our host, whom you may have sized up to be just what he is—a narrow minded country bumpkin."

"You're right," agreed Cooper promptly.

Joel Gifford smiled and shook his head. "I can't express an opinion, Benton, because I haven't seen the chap. This is the first time I've covered this territory."

"You haven't missed much in not making his acquaintance," growled Benton, continuing his narrative. "As I said, I fell into conversation with Linden and asked him a question that had been on the tip of my tongue for several hours—in fact, ever since I had heard a woman threatening her children with the wrath of the old witch on the crossroads. 'You certainly haven't got a witch in this common-place town?' I asked him jokingly.

"For a moment he was silent, and then he stroked his long black beard and muttered: 'We certainly have, Mr. Benton. The crossroads is a good place to keep away from.'

"Why? I demanded.

"Because there is an old woman there who can work a charm or cast an evil spell over anybody. Man, I know it! And the old fellow got quite excited.

"You're joking, Bill Linden," I laughed.

"He scowled like the villain that he must be from his looks. 'Mr. Benton, when I tell you that that woman has ruined my life you'll understand that I know what I'm talking about. She ought to have been hanged years ago—that's the way they did with the witches in the olden days. If I had my way she'd hang high now! And he fell to muttering to himself and cursing.

"Guess I'll go and have a look at her," I said half jokingly.

"You better not," I was warned.

"She keeps a gun and winged Mason Smith when he got drunk one day and attacked her house. Just opened her window and took aim, and Mason went around with his arm in a sling for three months after that."

"Is she an old woman?" I asked.

"Must be, was the reply. 'Hair as white as snow.

"Where did she come from?" I inquired.

"Nobody knows. Suddenly appeared in that little deserted house on the crossroads about five years ago. Never comes out in daytime, but I've seen her face at the window, and some say that she rides at night on a snow white horse. I don't know whether to believe that or not."

"You might as well believe the whole thing while you're about it, my friend," I grinned at him, and I immediately went down to the crossroads and took a stroll along the lonely way that cut through dense woods. Why, they must be back of this hotel!"

Benton paused to relight his cigar and to marvel for a moment on the idea that had just taken possession of him. Then he resumed: "About a mile down the road I saw a lonely little house—more of a cabin than a house—set back in the woods and overgrown to the very door with underbrush. Smoke curled from the chimney, and I was staring at the windows when all at once a face appeared at one of them. I could not see whether she was young or old, but the face was white as a sheet and on either side of it hung two heavy braids of snow white hair. The great dark eyes were turned toward me, and two arms were lifted either in supplication or malediction.

"For an instant I was rooted to the spot, and then I rubbed my eyes in wonderment, for suddenly she jerked backward, almost as if some one was behind her compelling her away from the window. She disappeared from view, and I walked on, quite convince-

ed that the apparition I had seen was that of some crazed person. Nevertheless there was an air of mystery about the whole matter, and the village gossip concerning the so called witch determined me to stroll around there late in the evening. I did so near midnight and was rewarded by a strange sight.

"Just as I paused in front of the little house, which I could locate only by a glint of light from one curtained window, I heard the tramping of horses' hoofs and there broke from the tangled growth in front of the house a dim white shape that I knew to be a horse and a suggestion of dim white above that I was convinced must be the face and hair of the witch of Dahlgren. Beside her rode a black bulk that must have been another rider on a black horse, and for the instant I thought the witch must be riding with her master, the devil himself.

"I had to fall back in the bushes to save myself from being trampled upon, so furious was their dash into the road. They turned away from the village toward the open country and disappeared. Gentlemen, I was curious enough to remain there until their return an hour later, when a pale moon peeped from the drifting clouds.

"They were riding slowly now, and the woman was pleading with the other rider, a man. I could see her wringing her white hands, and her voice, a low, sweet contralto, did not sound like that of a deranged person. Her accents were cultivated, but the man spoke roughly in reply, and I heard her break into sobs as he hustled her toward the house and they disappeared beyond it. Later I heard the crashing of branches as if the horses were being led off through the woods back of the hut, and now that I think of it, it must have been in the direction of this hotel."

Benton frowned as he opened the stove door and tossed in the end of his cigar. "I've often felt that I'd like to investigate the matter. You see, I had to leave early the next morning, and this is the first time I've struck this town since then, but my first question when I met a man I knew was, 'Is your witch still here?' And he said she was. There's a mystery in the matter, because"—Benton paused and stared thoughtfully at the toe of his polished boot.

"Because"—suggested Cooper impatiently.

"Because the voice of the black rider that night sounded mighty like the voice of mine host here, Bill Linden," returned Benton in a low tone.

Joel Gifford aroused himself from the half lounging position he had assumed when Benton began his narrative, and, although he had been a close listener to the story, his own thoughts must have made a sad rumbling accompaniment to the tale, for his eyes were full of troubled reminiscence.

He lifted his eyes to the mantel-piece, where an old fashioned mirror hung in such a position that it reflected the door into the hall. Joel Gifford saw a picture framed in that doorway, and he half rose from his chair and pointed with a shaking finger at the face he saw in the glass.

It was the face of a tall, black bearded man, with a narrow head and little black eyes gleaming wickedly beneath bushy brows. He was staring at Joel Gifford as if fascinated by the younger man's face. There was ferocity in his gaze, as well as surprise and fear.

"Who is that man?" cried Joel Gifford excitedly as he whirled around toward the doorway.

"It's Bill Linden, our landlord," cried Benton. And then he pulled Gifford violently aside, for there was the deafening report of a pistol, and the bullet that had been intended for Gifford found another mark and shattered the mirror. There was another report, and the landlord of the Dahlgren hotel dropped dead upon the floor, killed by his own wicked hand.

Gifford reached him first and turned him over and looked closely at the dead man's face. "He is dead," he said briefly, and then, rising, he continued to the little crowd of people that had gathered at the sound of the pistol shots: "Gentlemen, this man is not Bill Linden. That must be an assumed name, for he has been well known to the world as Chafield Chapman, a well known banker who disappeared five years ago and who was supposed to be dead. At the same time he disappeared my young wife, who was his only daughter, also disappeared from my house, and from a note that reached me a few days later I could only judge that both of them were dead. The note was signed by my father-in-law, and he said that as he had failed in business he would end all and that he would take Gertrude with him. My search for them both has covered five years, and it must end tonight, for I believe I have found the solution to the mystery."

"Chafield Chapman was passionately fond of his only child and always hated me because I loved and married her. It is my belief that he lured her away and has kept her prisoner in this hut in the woods back here, allowing her to ride forth only at night for air and exercise. Gentlemen, the witch of Dahlgren is my wife!"

Accompanied by a crowd of interested villagers, the three traveling men hastened to the house in the woods and broke open its barred door. There, facing them with beautiful white face frozen into fear and her grief whitened locks hanging in heavy braids over her shoulders, was Gertrude Gifford, Joel's lost bride.

At her scream of joyful recognition as her husband took her in his arms once more the people backed out of the house and left the reunited couple alone with their happiness.

Thus passed the witch of Dahlgren.

RIVERS IN THE AIR

Curious Play of the Winds in the Yosemite Valley.

EBB AND FLOW WITH THE SUN

These Air Currents or Air Falls Are So Regular That They May Almost Be Timed—Mirror Lake and the Spray Combs at Bridal Veil Falls.

Did you know there are air falls in the atmosphere just as real and apparent as are the waterfalls you have so often viewed with admiration and delight because of their natural beauty? In the famed Yosemite valley the most interesting feature is, to the scientist perhaps, its winds.

The winds there are seldom more than light zephyrs, moody and capricious to the ordinary tourist, but when rightly understood one of the wonders of the valley. These interesting facts are told by Professor F. E. Matthes of the United States geological survey in the Sierra Club Bulletin.

In no other place in the entire world perhaps are the air currents more systematic and regular than in the Yosemite valley, he says. In the first place, the sun naturally heats the ground more rapidly than it does the air. Thus every hillside basking in the sun becomes a heat radiator and gradually warms the air above it, so that the air, becoming lighter, begins to rise.

But under these conditions the air does not rise vertically because the air directly over it is still cool and is pressing downward. Therefore up the sides of the warm slope the heated air makes its way. That is why the tourist making his way up the mountain slope with the sun on his back finds his own dust traveling upward with him in a choking cloud.

But on coming down the same trail, when the face of the slope is in the shadow, the dust ever descends with the traveler in the same irritating cloud. When the face of the mountain is in the shade the air is cooling from the face of the slope and is pressing its way down into the valley.

Just as soon as the sun leaves the slope of the mountain the earth begins to lose its heat by radiation and in a very short time is really cooler than the air. The layer of air next the face of the hillside chills by contact with the earth and, becoming heavier as it condenses, begins to press down along the slope. Thus there are normally the warm up draft on the sunny slope and the cold down draft on the side in the shadow. In a windless region like the Yosemite this rule may be depended upon at almost any time.

But in the Yosemite, with its bold cliff topography, these upward and downward air currents are somewhat interrupted. On every sunny slope bold cliffs create shadows, and consequently there are downward air currents or local breezes daily at regular hours as the shadows come and go.

Glacier Point is one place in particular in which Professor Matthes says this shadow effect on the air currents may readily be tested by casting small bits of paper into the air. As the afternoon wears on and the shadows in the valley gather the cold draft in the hills pours downward, forming the valley like a great river and flowing on to the plains below. Every side canyon and valley sends its re-enforcements, like the tributaries of a great river, to this general air current flowing onward to the plain.

With the return of the morning sun the earth at the tops of the hills is warmed and the downward current in the air is suspended. The up draft soon begins as the sun shines into the valleys. The air currents are so regular that they may almost be timed.

Few realize, says the author of the paper, that it is on these reversing air currents that one of the chief attractions of the Yosemite depends. Mirror lake, to be viewed at its best, must be seen in the early dawn, when the reflections are most perfect.

The lake is stillest and its surface most mirror-like when the cold night currents have ceased and the uprising day currents of air have not yet begun. Yet unless one is punctual he will miss the chief beauty of the place, for this perfect stillness is as brief as the turn of the tide.

In the evening and during the night, when the down draft of air from the mountain sides is strong, the stream of cool air pressing down the slope plunges over cliffs, just as water is seen to fall from similar heights. On either the Yosemite falls or the Nevada falls trails this air fall eerily is readily encountered in the evening.

During the daytime, on the other hand, the air rises vertically along the cliffs and up into the hanging valleys, taking part of the spray from the falls along with it. A pretty example of the air carrying the spray from the fall upward may be seen at Bridal Veil falls, where two little combs of spray, one on each side of the stream, steadily curve upward over the brink.

As soon as the sun is off the cliff these spray combs cease to exist.

An Attraction.

"I hear your new minister is very efficient."

"Oh, yes."

"How about his wife? Is she doing anything to bring people to church?"

"Indeed she is! Wears a different gown every Sunday."—Washington Herald.

Gossip is a beast of prey that does not wait for the death of the creature it devours.—George Meredith.

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SUMMONS.

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon, For Multnomah County.—The Foot-Titus Machinery House, a Corporation, plaintiff, vs. A. K. Carlson, defendant.

To A. K. Carlson, the above-named defendant:

In the name of the State of Oregon: You are hereby summoned and required to appear and answer the complaint filed against you in the above entitled action, on or before the expiration of six weeks from the date of the first publication of this summons, to-wit: on or before February 10th, A. D. 1912, and, if you fail to so appear and answer, for want thereof the plaintiff will take judgment against you for the sum of Eleven Hundred and Forty-Six and 22/100 Dollars and for the further sum of One Hundred and Fifty Dollars attorney's fee, and for the plaintiff's costs and disbursements herein; and also for the sale of certain attached property belonging to you, to-wit: 34 shares of the capital stock of the Foot-Titus Machinery House, an Oregon Corporation, which property has been duly attached in this action.

This summons is published pursuant to an order of the Hon. W. N. Gatens, Judge of the above entitled court, which order is dated December 27th, A. D. 1911. The date of the first publication hereof is December 30th, A. D. 1911, and the date of the last publication hereof is February 10th, A. D. 1912.

J. M. HADDOCK, Attorney for Plaintiff.

Date of first publication, December 30th, A. D. 1911.
Date of last publication, February 10th, A. D. 1912.

Ed Lewis, who rejoices under the misnomer of "orator" for the I. W. W., with a voice like a foghorn, stood on the streets the other night and spewed forth anathemas against Portland clergymen, not one of whom has ever harmed, or attempted to. He heaped ridicule upon the Christian religion. He even spoke of Christ as "the first

Baltimore's police chief would punish pickpockets by amputating their fingers, one at a time for each offense. Such a plan will never become popular with the light-fingered gentry, anyway.

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