

The Trail of the Dead:

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE
OF DR. ROBERT HARLAND

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CHAPTER III.

In two strides my cousin was on the steep and narrow stairs. For a man of his age and size he mounted them with a surprising activity. Indeed, when I gained the landing he was already standing at the door of the room. He held up his hand with a warning gesture. I stepped up to him softly and peeped over his shoulder.

By the side of an old sofa placed against the wall of a room, half bed-chamber, half study, Professor Marnac crouched on his hands and knees. A lamp stood on the floor at his elbow. He was working with feverish haste, yet with a certain method, moving the lamp onward as his examination of the section lit by its immediate rays was completed. It was an odd sight, this silver-haired figure that crept about, peeping and peering, like some species of elderly ape. So absorbed was he that it was nigh on a minute before, with a swift sideways turn of the head, he caught sight of our faces in the doorway and rose to his feet.

"I can find no trace of it," said he, smoothing back his hair with a sigh. "It is excessively annoying."

"Of what, may I ask, sir?" I queried. "Of my signet ring, Mr. Harland. A valued possession which I would not lose for fifty pounds."

"Pray let me assist you," said I, stepping forward and raising the lamp, which the professor had replaced on the table.

"No, no, Mr. Harland. Enough has been done; in the presence of death we must forget such trivialities. Besides, although it was on my finger when I entered the house, it may have been dropped in the hall or on the stairs. I do not doubt that Hans will find it."

The professor spoke in so resolute a fashion that politeness did not demand that I should press the matter. My cousin had already passed behind a great screen of stamped leather that cut off the bed from the rest of the apartment. Marnac had stepped after him, and I, though at a slower pace, followed them. To be honest, the events of the evening had disturbed me not a little. I had grown suspicious, uneasy; and this annoyed me in that I was without reasonable cause for such a frame of mind. Granted that the professor had displayed oddities of demeanor, yet he was notoriously an eccentric. And if my cousin had become taciturn, if his politeness rang insincerely, the death of his old friend—

"Stand back, Herr professor! stand back, I say!"

It was Graden's voice, stern and decisive. I sprang to the corner of the screen and peered into the darkened alcove beyond.

Upon his death-bed pillows the calm and simple face of poor Von Stockmar gleamed like a mask carved in white marble. But neither of the two men who confronted each other across the body looked upon it. Graden, a grim and resolute figure, stood holding a common wooden match-box in his huge hands. He had opened it carelessly, for cheap sulphur matches were scattered on the sheet before him. Marnac's face I could not see, but in the pose of his back and shoulders there was something feline—something suggestive of an animal about to spring.

For a second or two the three of us stood in silence. My cousin was the first to break it.

"Pray do not let us detain you, Professor Marnac," said he. "Should we chance upon your ring, believe me, it will be safe."

The professor straightened himself with a little gesture of submission and stepped back into the lamplight. His hand was on the latch, when he turned upon us—for we had followed him—with a face deformed with the most malignant fury.

"Au revoir, my friends," he cried. "I wish you a pleasant evening."

And then a fit of laughter took him—smothered, diabolical merriment that broke out in oily chuckles like water gurgling from a bottle. The door closed upon it. We stood listening as it grew fainter, fainter, until it died away in silence on the lower stairs.

"Turn the key, Cousin Robert. But no; after him, lad, and bolt him out of the house. He'll be burning it down, else."

Graden was inexplicable; but I ran to obey. As I reached the hall, I heard the clang of the street door and the squeaking of the bolts as Hans shot them behind the departing visitor.

When I re-entered the room I found the screen pushed back against the wall, and my cousin, in his shirt-sleeves, leaning over the bed. He barked at me over his shoulder to sit down and keep quiet, and I humbly obeyed him. Once or twice he turned to the lamp which he had at his elbow, and I caught a glimpse of a magnifying glass. Presently he rose, and, carrying the lamp in his hand, commenced a circuit of the room, lingering now and again to examine some object. At the dressing-table he paused for several minutes, using the magnifying glass repeatedly. But shortly afterwards he threw himself into a chair beside me with the air of a man whose work is done.

"It's no disrespect to our little Hermann that I mean," said he, pulling out a big briar, "but smoke I must." He sat there puffing for a minute or

two, his head sunk forward, his eyes on the floor. I watched him expectantly.

"It's a great gift, is observation," he began. "It makes just the difference between mediocrity and success in game-hunters and novel-writers, in painters of pictures and explorers of the unknown lands, where a man has never a map to help him. And this same trick of observation has given me some very remarkable results this evening; and how remarkable you will realize when I set them out in proper order. You've a logical head, Cousin Robert, and I want you to give me your fullest attention. Contradict me if I overstate the case."

"Fact the first: That a certain celebrated scientist, Rudolf Marnac, had an ill feeling—a very ill and evil feeling—towards a certain brother-professor, one Hermann Von Stockmar. Fact the second: That Von Stockmar died suddenly."

"Of a natural cause, as certified by a competent physician," I added quickly. "Exactly. Fact the third: Marnac, who considers you a deserter to the Stockmar camp—as, indeed, I gather from your own story—appears in your rooms to inform you of the sudden death of his enemy. Now, why should he do that?"

"He is an eccentric. A sudden whim, perhaps. We were very intimate once, you must remember."

"Though hardly so now, from his manner of regarding you when he first announced himself this evening."

"He might have caught what we were saying. Listeners hear no good of themselves, but that does not tend to improve their tempers."

"Well, let that pass. It brings us to fact number four: He tells a deliberate lie."

"A lie! But when?"

"The man was worth studying. When I first saw him this evening, I ran my eye over him. I especially noticed his hands—their suppleness, their delicate color, their long prehensile fingers. I do not doubt that he is very proud of them. He wore no ring—it is not the custom of those who deal with germs to so adorn themselves. What was he looking for so anxiously in this room, if it were not a ring? Why did he leave us in the hall that he might conduct this search before our presence disturbed him?"

"I cannot suggest an explanation; but really, Cousin Graden, you seem to be weaving a most unnecessary tangle. I cannot imagine what result you expect to obtain."

"A conviction for murder."

CHAPTER IV.

I stared at him in the most profound amazement.

"Yes, murder, Cousin Robert; as deliberate and cold-blooded a doing to death of an innocent man as has ever befouled a corner of God's fair world."

He rose from a chair and plowed heavily up and down the room. The veins started in his forehead; his huge hands knotted themselves tensely.

"Listen. This afternoon a man lay asleep on that couch in the corner. We know the manner of man—a keen investigator, an indefatigable worker, an honest fighter; but one who had never done in all his life a mean or ignominious action. There comes a creak upon the stairs, the door is opened softly, a head peers in. He—the murderer—enters the room. He knew the custom of the house in this warm September weather: the doors open, the old servant asleep, the master taking his regular siesta. How far is he a criminal, how far a lunatic? Is this act premeditated, or the sudden tempting of opportunity? Who can say? It is enough that in his diseased imagination he has come to regard the sleeper as an enemy who maliciously set himself to destroy his theories and to bring ridicule on the laborious work of years. His desire for revenge is concentrated on the man before him."

"How the 'thing' came into his possession I cannot guess, though that should be a point easily discovered. He himself may have obtained it from Africa, or it may have come into his hands by chance, as the chief of the Entomological Museum. But he has it safe enough shut up in the tin box which fell from his pocket in your rooms. The spring of the lid was defective, you may remember; it is that same defective spring that will hang him."

"He stands over there, listening and watching. There is no sound; the sleeper will not wake. He opens the case upon the dressing-table and lifts the 'thing' with tweezers—for every hair of it has its poison. With scissors he cuts off some score of hairs, catching them in the crease of a folded sheet of newspaper. He replaces it in the case and closes the lid. Like an ugly shadow he fits across to the couch, kneels by its side, and one, two, three times blows the hairs from the creased paper across the intake of the sleeper's breath. He turns, snatches up the case from the table, and is gone. In five hours Professor Von Stockmar is dead of inflammation of the lungs. There is not a doctor in all Germany who would challenge that diagnosis. In nine hours Professor Rudolf Marnac is accused by me, Henry Graden, of murder."

"But this deadly 'thing'!" I cried, with a sinking horror at my heart. "This beast, reptile, insect—what is it? Where is it now?"

For answer he thrust his fingers into his pocket and drew out the same wooden match-box that I had seen him with by the bedside of the dead man. He slid it half open and tapped it sideways on the table under the lamp. A round, fluffy ball rolled out and lay motionless. Suddenly a little black head protruded, a score of tiny feet paddled into motion, and across the table there crept a hairy caterpillar—a loathsome, disreputable object, for across its back lay a ragged scar, where the hairs had been shorn away.

"Do you recognize the species?" In a faint-hearted way I leaned across to grasp it, but with a sudden motion he brushed my hand aside.

"I see you do not," said he grimly. "It is common enough in South Africa."

With the end of a match he carefully pushed the insect back into the box, and replaced it in his pocket.

"The luck was against Marnac," he continued. "Not for one moment do I suggest that otherwise I should have suspected the truth. To begin with, the defective spring of the case allowed the caterpillar to escape while he was bending over poor Hermann. After he had done his awful work he slipped it back hastily into his pocket. He never realized what had occurred until, upon accidentally pulling it out with his handkerchief in your lodgings, he found it empty. It was for that reason he searched so anxiously. What became of it did not matter so long as it was not found in this room; though, as a matter of fact, there was very small danger even then of it affording a clue."

"And now we come to a stroke of abominable luck, of which Marnac has every right to complain. I found the caterpillar on the sheet of the bed, where it had crawled in its wanderings. But that was not the worst of it, for I happened to be the one man in all Heidelberg who knew of its peculiar properties; who knew that its hairs are slightly poisonous, sufficient indeed to raise a nasty rash on the hand; who knew that the old-time Hottentots employed it for removing their enemies by blowing the hairs into their lungs. I took out a match-box, emptied it, and collected the caterpillar. I was closing the box when I looked up and saw Marnac watching me with a shocking expression, which could hardly have distorted the face of a perfectly sane man, however provoked. Nearly every murderer has a screw loose somewhere; but, in my opinion, Marnac is in an unusually bad way. It may turn out more of an asylum than a gallows business, after all."

"But the details of the scene you picture; how did you obtain them?"

"I am a quick thinker, and the events of the evening began to arrange themselves in a sort of sequence, crowned by the discovery of the caterpillar. The inference to be gathered from them was obvious. I examined the nostrils of the dead man, and found four of the caterpillar hairs caught therein. On the dressing-table lay an ordinary pair of nail scissors. Two hairs were jammed where the blades met. On the creased sheet of paper, which I found behind the couch, there was no sign; but the use to which it had been put was plain. From Hans I knew the custom of the house; the sleep after the midday meal, the open doors, the opportunity. Is the matter plain to you?"

"What are you going to do?" It was all that I could say.

"Nothing to-night. To appear at a German police-station at this hour with such an extraordinary story would be for two foreigners, at least—the height of absurdity. Besides, there is no hurry; Marnac won't budge. He'll sit it out, never fear."

One o'clock clanged out from the steeples as I bade good-night to Graden at the door of my lodgings. He had already secured a room in a neighboring hotel.

"Have you a lock on your bedroom door?" said he.

"I believe so."

"Well, use it to-night. We've an ugly customer to deal with; and the worst of it is that, unless I am much mistaken, he knows how much we know."

I watched him as he rolled away, a gigantic figure in the moonlight, waving the thick stick he carried. Never had my stairs seemed so uncomfortably dark, never had they creaked behind me so mysteriously. It was with a sigh of relief that I gained my room and by a quick glance assured myself that I was alone.

It seemed that I had only just dropped off into dreamland—for, indeed, sleep had been hard to woo that night—when a knocking at my door brought me from my bed. I unlocked and opened it. Cousin Graden filled the foreground.

"I didn't think he'd throw up the sponge," said he. "But he has, none the less. Marnac has bolted!"

"And you?"

"I shall follow."

So commenced those strange wanderings which I shall entitle "The Trail of the Dead."

(To be continued.)

Narrow Escape.

"I can cure you, I believe," said the young doctor, "but you must drink no coffee."

"I never do drink coffee," interrupted the patient.

"E-r, don't interrupt me. As I was saying, you must drink no coffee but purest Mocha. You must drink a little of that every morning."—Philadelphia Press.

A Deep One.

"Senator Slye advise all young men to be honest."

"Well?"

"But he's an old grafter."

"Just so. And he wants to reduce competition in his line."—Philadelphia Bulletin.



Dangerous Corn Pest.

The cornstalk borer has infested various parts of the county for many years, but has not done great damage in most parts of the corn belt. It has begun to appear in Iowa and Kansas in the last two or three years.

It is a large, white, brown-spotted caterpillar which bores into a stalk of young corn. When fully grown it burrows down into the tap-root, and in the spring transforms to a pupa, from which the adult soon emerges and lays its eggs on the young corn near the axils.

The young larvae hatching from them bore into the stalk and upward through the pith. When fully grown they bore outwards to the surface, making a hole, from which the moth escapes and transforms to pupa in the burrow. This insect is two-brooded, the second brood feeding on the old stalks, generally between the second joint and the ground, and becoming full grown about harvest time, when they go into winter quarters.

When corn was seriously infested last year and the stalks left standing a second infestation may be expected this year unless the farmer has raked and burned, a method which we have always suggested when the cornstalks were known to harbor any kind of insect pests. Corn is too good to be without its full supply of enemies, which attack it from the very time it is planted in the ground until it is in the full ear.

Value of Dairy Products.

There were 12,147,304,550 pounds of milk and 588,186,471 pounds of cream used in 1904 in the manufacture of 551,278,141 pounds of butter, 313,685,290 pounds of cheese and 303,485,182 pounds of condensed milk. These figures are part of the census of manufactures for 1905. The total cost of the materials used in the industry was \$142,920,277, while the value of the products was \$168,182,789, an increase of the former of 31.3 per cent, and of the latter of 28.6 per cent. The number of establishments dropped from 9,242 to 8,926, while the capital increased 30 per cent to \$47,255,556. There were 3,507 salaried officials and clerks and 17,557 engaged in the manufacture of these articles. These received salaries and wages amounting to \$9,789,036.

Arranging Large Kettle.

This illustration gives a plan to set up a kettle in butchering time which is much better than the old way with posts and pole. Take one and one-half



HOW TO SET THE KETTLE.

inch old wagon tire to the blacksmith shop and get a ring made the size of your kettle, with three legs welded to it, and you can move your kettle any place where wanted, and nothing is in your way to go around it.

Tapeworm in Turkeys.

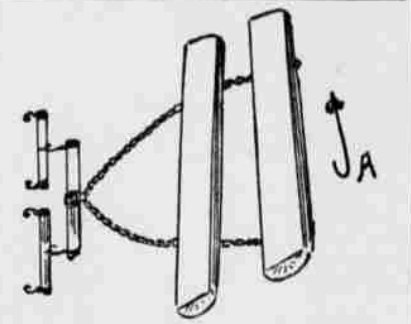
The presence of the tapeworm may be recognized through the indolent, drowsy spirits of turkeys infested by it; a careful examination of voidings will reveal its presence, as those infested will pass small portions of the worm. Powdered male fern is an effective remedy, and may be administered in doses of from thirty grains to one dram of the powder; or of the liquid extract, fifteen to thirty drops. This should be administered morning and evening before feeding; the minimum dose to the younger, increasing the dose as they grow older. Oil of turpentine is an excellent remedy against worms of all kinds which inhabit the digestive organs of poultry. A common remedy for the removal of worms from fowls is one drop of kerosene oil night and morning. This should not be administered to the very young, but may be used with impunity after they are a few weeks old.

Silage for Beef Animal.

The Virginia Experiment Station has just issued a bulletin on feeding silage to beef animals. It concludes that silage after all will enable the feeders to maintain their animals at a lower cost and to secure greater gains than they have heretofore obtained; that animals to be fed for immediate slaughter can safely receive silage as the sole roughness. Animals so fed will kill out a high per cent of dressed meat, will help ship well, and will show a superior finish to animals fed on dry, coarse roughness.

Clod Masher, Leveler and Drag.

This clod masher, leveler and drag can also be used for mashing down cornstalks and weeds. Cut off a log about twelve inches in diameter that will split straight through the middle nicely, take off the bark from both pieces, that will leave one flat side and one rounding side to each piece; get some old half-inch rod irons, six pieces about fifteen inches long, have taps on one end and hook about two inches long, bent on the other end; bore two auger holes in each piece a foot from each end; put the hooks with taps through holes. Get two pieces of old log chains, with three links each, which will fasten the two pieces of timber together. Bore two more holes in one of the pieces about two feet from each end, and take one long trace chain and fasten to doubletree. Letter A shows shape of the rods. If you want to



GOOD FIELD CONTRIVANCE.

make it heavier, drop a pole on the chains between the logs. This will make as fine a drag, clod crusher, land leveler, stalk and weed knocker as you would wish to use.

Cheap Fuel Alcohol.

Denaturalized alcohol will probably become another great product of the southern states. It is claimed that cottonseed oil machinery is perfectly adapted to making industrial alcohol from the potato. If this is successfully proven, the many cottonseed oil mills of the south, which are idle each summer season for lack of material, will be able to operate all the time and keep their employes together. Furthermore, being already equipped with the machinery, they will, no doubt, be able to manufacture the alcohol very cheaply. Farmers would also be benefited by the immense demand for potatoes that would result. In Cuba alcohol is produced and sold from twelve to fifteen cents a gallon, and it is said to make an excellent fuel for running engines. It produces no soot or disagreeable odors. When the law recently passed by congress to denaturalize alcohol in the United States becomes operative it is expected greatly to increase the use of the article both for fuel and other purposes.

The Way to Make Hens Moul.

One of the achievements of modern poultry keeping is that of forcing a hen to doff her old coat, and grow a new one before the time when she would do so naturally. Many hens shed their feathers so late in the season, naturally, that cold weather overtakes them before they get new suits, consequently they seldom begin laying before spring. If the moult can be hastened so that a new coat of feathers is grown and the laying can be started before cold weather, the prospect is good for a supply of eggs during fall and winter.

The result is usually accomplished by cutting off all meat and mash foods, putting the hens on short rations of grain for a week or so to stop the laying, then allow more liberty and feed a full ration high in protein. This loosens the old feathers, which drop off quickly and starts a rapid growth of the new. A liberal allowance of beef scrap is essential, and linseed meal is an advantage. Sunflower seeds are also good during the moult.

Dodder Alfalfa's Enemy.

The worst enemy to alfalfa is dodder, a yellow twining parasite that lives on alfalfa and clover and rapidly destroys them. The seeds are small and yellow and most of the alfalfa seeds from the West are infested with dodder. The New York station says that the dodder seeds can be removed by sifting the seed through a sieve having twenty meshes to the inch. Careful seedsmen will sift the seeds, but farmers should be on their guard against common seeds that may be on the market.