

The Trail of the Dead:

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE
OF DR. ROBERT HARLAND

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CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

It snowed that night, and to some effect, as the morning light showed me. The broad, slovenly street beneath my windows was thickly coated; and though the fall had ceased, a dull sky, streaked as with muddy whitewash, threatened a further downfall. It was bitterly cold and I hung on my clothes in a vile temper.

Graden was meditating before the stove when I entered our breakfast-room, with the strange book he had shown me during the journey in his hands.

"You look pale as a ghost. Are you quite fit?" he asked kindly.

"Oh, yes; though my night was not particularly peaceful."

"What do you mean?"

I told him briefly of my unknown visitor. He seemed greatly interested, questioning me minutely on various points.

"Your theory may be correct," he concluded. "Some guest may have mistaken his chamber, and hurried off on discovering his mistake. Yet, if he had a light with him, how came he to make such an obvious error; whereas, if it was the striking of a match that roused you, what was the man doing wandering in the dark?"

"To tell the truth, when I first woke, I imagined it was Marnac himself."

"I have considered that point. I do not think it could have been he."

"And why?"

"Before you were down this morning I had a talk with our landlord. The guests at his house are of two classes—commercial travelers and those having business at the dye-works. They do not stay long—usually a week at most. Of the nine which he now has, none has exceeded that limit. He knows them all personally—six commercials, two dye-works men, and a rich Englishman, one George Wakefield, who has been staying with some magnate in the neighborhood. But here is Herr Reski himself."

"Gentlemen," said the landlord, bowing low, "your sleigh is at the door."

"How far is it, then, to Castle Oster?" I asked him.

"Close on twenty miles; and with this fresh snow it will be heavy going."

Ten minutes later we slid on our silent runners, to the tinkle of the bells, out through the squalid, sprawling town, out through the wooden hovels of the suburbs, out past the dye-works, with their tall, melancholy chimneys, out into the snow-clad levels beyond, and there from out of the east there sprang upon us a great and bitter wind, chilled by its long journey over the boundless steppes of frozen Russia. Here and there, across the plains, a whiff of powdery snow, like the smoke of heavy guns, would leap up before the fiercer blasts, only to burst and fall as they lulled once more. To the south and east the pine woods ranged their formal ranks, black against the dazzling carpet at their feet. It was a scene of utter desolation.

We drove in silence. Graden sat in a huddled mass, his chin buried in the great woollen comforter he wore; staring out over the plain with fixed, introspective eyes. For myself, I sat amongst the rugs beside him in vague speculation. What could be this danger that threatened the scientist from St. Petersburg in his home at Castle Oster? After all, might not our whole journey be a folly born of Graden's imaginings, a blind guess that had dragged us half across Europe? I shivered, and shivering, muttered anathemas on the climate.

CHAPTER VII.

We entered the forest. On every hand stood the pines, stretching away in long, melancholy avenues floored with drifted snow. The laden branches bowed before us, now and again, at the whirl of a passing gust, flinging their burdens from them. Once a willow grouse, white as the snow beneath it, swept on steady wing through the trees. Once from the far, far distance, borne upon the eastern breeze, there came a cry, a weird, hopeless echo in the air, that set the horses snorting. I knew what it must be—a wolf who felt the first pangs of the winter's hunger gathering round him. But there was no sign of man nor marks of sleigh tracks on the newly fallen snow.

We did not travel fast, though our driver did his best. The snow had not hardened and settled into that enchanting surface on which the runners speed so swiftly. Midday was past before we saw, through a sudden gap in the forest, a rising mound crowned with a low, grey building. "Castle Oster!" cried our driver, turning in his seat to claim our attention. In ten minutes more we had halted at a gate set in a high stone wall.

Before we were clear of the rugs the driver had slipped from his perch and tugged at a rusty iron bell-pull. We waited without an answer. Again he rang; but Graden did not wait the result. The door was not bolted; it opened to his vigorous arm, and we followed him into the broad courtyard of the castle.

trailed long pendants of ice. Against the old doors the snow had piled itself in heavy drifts. No sound broke the brooding stillness. It was a picture distressingly forlorn.

"Has Professor Mechersky, then, no servants?" asked Graden of our driver. I noticed that he hushed his voice in speaking; he, too, felt the uncanny influence of the place.

"Two, mein Herr—a man and a woman. I cannot think where they can be."

"I had understood he was a man of means. Why does he allow this disrepair?"

"I do not think the professor cares. He shuts himself up with his experiments when he is here—which is not often now. His rooms look to the south on the other side. For the rest, the house is not furnished."

"Well, I suppose there is a servant who will—Heavens! what is that?"

From somewhere within the house there came a shriek, a cry of supreme terror. Again and yet again it was repeated before it shrank away into silence. Graden ran across the court to the main door, and I was hard upon his heels. He pulled the bell and hammered fiercely upon the heavy oak panels; but no one answered.

"I don't believe the thing is bolted," said he. "Keep the handle turned, and let me try what I can do."

He stepped back a dozen paces, and then came running at the door like a bull. The giant caught it squarely with the point of his shoulder; there was a sharp crack; the next instant we were both sprawling on the floor within.

We found ourselves in a great and dusty hall, indifferently lighted. Against the wall on my right I could dimly discern the figure of a woman crouched on the floor, sobbing bitterly, her face buried in her hands. She did not move, despite our violent entrance. At the foot of the main staircase an old man was bending over something that lay motionless. He looked up at us with a white, pitiful face.

"He is dead—the master is dead!" he whimpered.

Graden strode up to him, and I followed at his heels.

Professor Peter Mechersky—for such I knew it must be—lay huddled under an old grey cloak that spread wing-wise from his neck, a blot upon the polished oak of the floor. From his face, thin though it was and wasted with disease, he must have been a middle-aged man who had preserved a singular beauty. He had died as a child might fall asleep. Yet the horror that he had escaped he had left to the living; for his attitude was abnormal, impossible, and ghastly to behold.

It was not right that a body should resemble an egg that is broken.

My cousin swept aside the cloak for a moment, and replaced it reverently, though with a hand that trembled.

"He has not a sound bone in his body," he muttered, and then, turning to the old servant, "How did this happen?" said he.

"He had been ill for some weeks, mein Herr, and we begged him not to leave his room. But to-day he declared himself better. He insisted that he should descend to the library. Half way down the stairs he tripped and fell. I ran to his side and found him, as you see him, crouched—like—like—"

"Like a toad?"

"Yes, mein Herr, like a toad."

The man broke into hysterical weeping.

"The Englishman, Herr Wakefield, was most anxious about my master's health," he stammered out. "The Herr professor became indisposed some ten days after his arrival; since then he has been most kind, most considerate, sitting by the master's bed for hours. He would allow no other doctor to visit the master. He is a kind, good man, this doctor, the Herr Wakefield."

"So I believe. How came he to know your master?"

"I am not sure; but I think he brought a letter of introduction from a Professor Marnac, of Heidelberg, a gentleman of whom my master disapproved, yet admired for his learning."

"And this Englishman, did he prescribe for your master?"

"Of course. They loved each other, and sat late into the night in their discussions. When my poor master was taken ill, Herr Wakefield took complete charge of him. Ah! if he did but know what had happened!"

"Then he is not here?"

"No; he drove to Lemsdorf yesterday afternoon. He had to return to his own country. Ah! if he did but know!"

It was plain enough—Marnac, the linguist, was Wakefield, the Englishman. It was he, new from this thing that he had done, who had come creeping to my room in the night, being suspicious of the strangers from the south. It was he that had brought about this mysterious horror. I turned from the poor monstrosity upon the floor and leaned, shuddering, against the wall. As I did so, Graden strode past me to the open door.

"Driver, can your horses take us back?" I heard him say.

"Not without rest and feed, mein Herr. The snow is very bad, and they are tired."

"Would a hundred marks to the driver assist them?"

"It is impossible. They could not reach half way. Wait, mein Herr, and it may be done."

My cousin came up to me and laid his great hand upon my shoulder.

"I'm afraid it's the truth," he said. And then turning to the dead man's servant, "Your master—had he horses?" he asked.

"Three, mein Herr, but they have not yet returned from Lemsdorf, where they went this morning with the big sleigh for provisions."

With a sharp order Graden sent our driver hurrying to the stables. Then, with his arm linked in mine, we followed the old servant into a low-roofed dining-hall. As I dropped upon an oak settle before the great china stove, he thrust his flask into my hands and, with a word of encouragement, slipped away. I knew that he was examining the body, but, doctor though I was, the spirit of investigation had gone out of me. I could no more have assisted him than a medical student can watch, unmoved, his first operation.

In about twenty minutes he returned, bearing a tray upon which was set bread and cheese, flanking a great ham. I turned from the food with disgust; but my cousin felt to diligently, complaining the while at my folly in not eating when I had the chance.

"You must pull yourself together," he protested, with his mouth full. "Try this ham now. It isn't half bad."

More to humor him than with any intention of following his advice, I drew my seat to the table.

"Come, now; that's better," he cried, carving away. "To tell the truth, I haven't the slightest idea what that villain Marnac has been up to. But what I do know is that we've got to catch him—dead or alive. Therefore I recommend you to stoke up your body with this excellent—hallo!"

"What's the matter now?" I asked irritably; for, indeed, his hearty appetite annoyed me.

For answer he rose and peeled the bell. The old manservant, with the brandy flushing his white cheeks, tottered into the room.

"I am sorry to trouble you," said Graden courteously, "but we both set such store by your hams that we wish to know where they can be obtained. Do you cure them yourself?"

"No, mein Herr, but it is done near by," answered the man, with a look of blank surprise.

"Indeed, the Lemsdorf ham is a discovery; it should make a stir. I wonder I had not heard of its merits before."

"You see, mein Herr, the best curing station has not long been established."

"A new enterprise?"

"Yes, mein Herr. It belongs to Herr Drobin, a South German. Two years ago he took the big farm at Gran, which you passed on your way here. It is this side of the dye-works. He has many pigs in the forest. His hams are becoming famous from Warsaw to Königsberg. It is said he has some secret in the feeding or curing—no one knows which."

"Thank you—that is all."

The door was scarcely shut when I turned hotly upon Graden. "How dare you sit here in this house of murder and talk of the excellence of the food?" I cried furiously. "It is shameful, indecent!"

"Yet we will visit the farm of Gran on our way back. I have some little inquiries to make."

"We shall do nothing of the sort," I snarled.

"If you were a soldier or an explorer, Cousin Robert," he said, leaning across and tapping me kindly on the arm, "you would know that in any expedition one alone can be responsible. The rest obey, whether they be few or many. As it is, I beg you to recognize that fact and to obey."

He was right, and I knew it. But to save appearances I walked to the window and stood drumming upon it with my fingers for a while before I answered him.

"Well, do as you please," I said at length.

"I think the sleigh may be ready by now," he said. "Come, let us go out and inquire."

There is no need to dwell on this miserable drive. The tired horses dragged slowly forward, the driver, sullen and frightened, urging them on with blows and curses. Mile after mile of pine woods marched past us, but we did not speak, crouching in the furs. At last, as night was falling, we reached the edge of the forest and swung aside from the main road into a track that skirted the edge of the pines. The ground sank away into a hollow like the palm of the hand. At the lowest point I could see a square, wooden building flanked by rows of outbuildings. It was, as I imagined, the farm of Gran. But before we reached it, our driver suddenly drew up his horses. A man was advancing toward us through the trees. Our driver turned, and with a wave of the whip explained the situation.

"It is Herr Drobin," said he. (To be continued.)

State at That.

"It is very seldom that they serve actors with five different kinds of vegetables," whispered the short comedian in the quick-lunch room.

"Oh, I don't know," sighed the lanky tragedian. "One time I was served with twenty-five different kinds of vegetables."

"You don't say? In what hotel?"

"No hotel. The audience supplied them."

Their Great Scheme.

"Have you and your wife quarreled?"

"No; why?"

"I notice that when you take a trip you always go on different trains."

"That's for the children's sake. If either one of the trains should be wrecked, the kids would have at least one parent left."—Cleveland Leader.



The Moth Pest.

Westward the gypsy moth takes its way. It has caused millions of dollars' worth of damage in Massachusetts, has escaped to New Hampshire and Connecticut, and now the invasion is turning toward New York State. This interesting information is conveyed in a letter of warning just issued by E. P. Felt, State Entomologist.

The brown tail moth is a more recent introduction, and, unlike the gypsy moth, flies readily. It is not only a very destructive leaf feeder, but the barbed hairs of the caterpillars cause a very severe irritation upon the unprotected skin.

Two rows of warts down the back of the gypsy moth caterpillar make it easily distinguishable. It is about two inches long and the ten anterior warts are blue, the twelve posterior red. The gypsy moth will eat anything in the tree or shrub line, and on the slightest disturbance leap on passersby and cling to clothing.

Brown tail moths have white spots on each side and a single pair of red spots near the tail. They prefer wild cherry, pear, apple, maple, elm and white oak leaves, and have barbed horns, which, breaking off or blowing from the cocoon, produce an intolerable irritation, the "brown tail itch."

Caterpillars of both species, says Mr. Felt, may be destroyed by spraying with an arsenical poisoning, preferably five pounds of arsenate of lead to fifty gallons of water, though the gypsy moth caterpillars, especially when nearly full grown, are quite resistant to poison. Eggs of the gypsy moth may be destroyed by treating the egg masses with



NESTS OF THE MOTHS.

a preparation composed of 50 per cent creosote oil, 20 per cent carbolic acid, 20 per cent spirits of turpentine and 10 per cent of coal tar.

To Make Good Corn Drag.

Any farmer handy with the ordinary tools on a farm can make a corn drag attachment for his cultivator that will pay for itself many times in one season. If properly used, says an experienced agriculturist. The common farm harrow is too heavy and unwieldy for harrowing corn after it is up, except under the most favorable conditions of soil and weather. To make, get oak one and one-half inches by three. Make in two sections of three bars each. Let each section be long enough to cover all of space between two rows. Brace same as other harrows. No. 60 wire spikes make very good teeth. Set teeth a little slanting and as close as will work in your soil without clogging. Attach to beams of corn plow. Arrange so that the drag will cover all the ground when you wish by connecting the two parts. You can, with this arrangement, adjust the drag to suit.

Agricultural Atom.

Try feeding the work horses light at noon and heavier at night.

It is most exasperating to attempt to fix a pump when the stock is standing around waiting and making things unpleasant.

An early piece of ground sown to barley makes the pigs smile.

The brood sow cannot successfully suckle her litter on a corn ration.

One farmer with a small bunch of sheep reports that from nineteen sheep last year he realized \$129.30 in lambs and wool—\$6.84 a head—which is a good record.

The cut worm, like the "x" of algebra, is always the unknown quantity, and it is as hard to find him sometimes as it is to find what "x" in algebra equals. Let the scientists tell us how to get rid of this pest.

The man who breeds a breed of hogs because he likes them is sure to succeed. More depends on the man than on the breed.

All fence rows should be set to grass so as to keep down a dense growth of weeds. If weeds are allowed to grow it means that they will have to be mowed.

If your family has not had all the strawberries and garden truck their hides will hold, what has been the reason? These things are so easily obtained that one ought to be ashamed if they are not supplied.

One of the best Scotch shepherds says that when a sheep reached the age of six years, it is well to get her off one's hands. Then she begins to go down, and a sheep on the shady side of life is poor property.

Mules in Strong Demand.

As indicating the steady growth in public favor which the mule is enjoying, we are glad to note that the proprietor of a Missouri jack farm has just sold some fine animals at high prices—\$3,000, \$2,000, \$1,500, \$1,250, five for \$1,000 each, \$900, \$800, \$700, three jacks and one Jennet, \$3,000. A letter from Austin, Tex., says there is a great shortage of mules in that State. They are in strong demand by farmers and ranchers, and the supply is inadequate. As a result, the prices of good mules have gone up to the highest figures ever known in the State. It will be but a few years until this mule shortage, which is said to exist throughout the country, will be relieved, as much attention is now being given to breeding the animals.—Country Gentleman.



WELL-BRED JACK

Spraying to Destroy Bugs.

The recognized formula for bordeaux mixture for use on potatoes is six pounds of copper sulphate, blue vitriol, four pounds unslacked quicklime and fifty gallons of water. The copper sulphate is dissolved in one barrel and the lime in another. Add to each twenty-five gallons of water and then mix thoroughly. When to be used strain through a wire strainer, preferably one of brass.

Spraying should be started when the potato plants are six inches high and be repeated every ten days or two weeks, according to the weather, throughout the growing season. If bugs are to be destroyed, add one pound of paris green to each fifty gallons of bordeaux mixture, but the bordeaux mixture should be used alone until the bugs are noticed.

When it is figured that the cost of spraying does not exceed \$7 an acre, and it is often less, while experiments have proved that the value of the crop was increased three or four times the cost for spraying, it certainly pays and pays well.

Flies and the Milk Yield.

The effect on milk production by the use of fly repellants has been tested at the Missouri Station. Various mixtures were found which would keep off the flies all day if put on in the morning; but a measurement of the milk and test of the butter fat for a period of two weeks indicated that keeping off the flies did not affect the milk yield. As somewhat similar results were obtained by experiments at the Connecticut Station, it seems fair to concede that the injurious effects of the fly pest have been exaggerated. During the fly time the feed in most pastures is growing poorer every day and the cows naturally shrink then, but it is probably a mistake to blame the flies for much of the shrinkage. For all that, it is worth while to use the mixtures to keep off the flies for the peace and quiet obtained in the stable for both the cows and for the milkmen.

Good Crops for Old Grass Land.

The question of what to do with grass land after haying, where the land is run out and poor, is a rather puzzling one, but if we should get rain enough to soften the surface and permit easy plowing, it may be broken up, enriched with manure or fertilizer and immediately seeded with Hungarian. In case the weather should prove too dry for this, barley may be sown either alone or with rye in August for fall feeding. Off good, strong land, well enriched, a crop of late cabbage plants may be set as late as July 15; the turnip seed may be sown even as late as Aug. 1, though July 20 is a better time.

Guinea Fowls Keep Away Hawks.

A Massachusetts poultryman declares that he has lost no chicks by hawks and crows since he kept a small flock of guineas, though losing many before. Their strident voices seem to disconcert the feathered marauders. The guineas are also good watchdogs, and no prying thief or sneaking "varmint" can escape their nocturnal vigilance and shrill alarm. The young make fine eating, too, and there is a growing demand for them in the markets. It would pay on many a farm to add a few guineas to the feathered stock.