

The Trail of the Dead:

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE
OF DR. ROBERT HARLAND

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CHAPTER X.

Graden's chair toppled to the ground as he rose. In three strides he was out of the door. I turned to Mossel with a demand for an explanation.

"Wait till Herr Graden returns," he grunted sulkily.

I have the strongest objection to those silly tricks of secrecy with which the professional police endeavor to magnify their most simple discoveries. I was speaking my mind strongly on the subject when my cousin reappeared.

"Hallo! what's the matter?" he asked. I explained the position, while the fat German chuckled in an oily, irritating manner.

"Is not the official always the same?" said Graden, with a grim smile. "Come to the light, Robert, and I'll explain."

It was certainly an ingenious discovery they had made. Upon the page upon which the map should have rested were several slight indentations, evidently the result of marks made upon the lost paper by a pencil with a fine point. With great care my cousin tore out the corresponding map from his guide book and fitted it into the vacant place. Then, turning it slowly back, he drove a pin through the thin paper at the spots immediately above the indentations on the page below.

"The devil take him!" he cried. "Look, Mossel. This doesn't help us, after all."

It was true enough. The pin-pricks showed, first, Lemsdorf; then a cross-road some ten miles to the east; and then Bromberg, to the north, on the Berlin-Thorn, and Gnesen, to the south, on the Posen-Frankfurt railways. He had evidently been measuring and calculating indecisively.

"Do not trouble yourself, Herr Graden," said Mossel, with a wave of the hand that had more than a suggestion of patronage. "There are still telegraphs. I will have him detained at whichever place he reaches. I shall return in half an hour—to a good supper, I trust, Mr. Landlord."

We followed him to the outer door, which opened to a writhing wilderness of snowflakes, for the fall had recommenced. The policeman turned up his collar with a grunt of disgust and melted into the darkness. We turned to meet the face of the landlord, white and drawn with a terrible anxiety.

"My son!" he gasped. "What of my son?"

"Heaven pardon me!" cried Graden. "I had forgotten him!"

"This man he drove, that is about to be arrested—is he a criminal? Do not spare me, mein Herr."

"Your servant—our driver to-day—will be telling the tale in your kitchen, of the death of the Prof. Mechersky, of Castle Oster. This man, whose name is Marnac, killed him. That is why we pursue. Yet, my friend, I see no danger for your son, unless—"

"Unless what, mein Herr?"

"Unless he refused to assist in the escape of a murderer."

"He is an honest boy, a good boy, but very stubborn. His horses were borrowed; he had promised to return them to-night. He would never consent to drive this man to Bromberg or Gnesen, which is at least an eighteen hours' journey. Oh, mein Herr, mein Herr! what is happening—out there in the snow?"

"We are in the hands of Providence, my friend," said my cousin gravely, laying his hand on the landlord's arm. "You can do nothing but pray that it may be well with the boy."

I was very sorry for Reski. As I made my toilet in my room upstairs, the danger of his son grew upon me. Fate, accident, Providence—whatever you choose to call it—is a strange thing, for indeed it chooses its victim with a fine impartiality. When I entered our supper room, I found my cousin equally disturbed.

"This is a bad business about the landlord's son," he said. "I've a good mind to follow the sleigh, though it's little good that would do."

"It's an awful night," I grumbled, for indeed the wind was shrieking in the roof like a lost soul.

"You're a queer chap, Robert, with your confounded mannerisms," he said. "Yet I'll wager you'd be the first to be off into the storm in a matter of life and death."

It was not exactly complimentary, but I let it pass.

Mossel was delayed. It was close upon twenty minutes more before he arrived, a snow-swathed, stamping bear of a man, whose curses preceded him as he rolled down the passage to our room.

"What's up, Mossel?" Graden demanded sharply.

"The wires, mein Herr Graden, the wires! Potztausend! but this storm has brought them down like clothes lines."

"A special train, then."

"They have not an engine in the shed. I have been to see; it was that which delayed me."

Graden drew a sheet of paper from his pocket and glanced at it swiftly.

"There is not a train till ten in the morning," he said. "He will be at Bromberg, which is the nearer town; by eleven at latest. This is a branch line, and we could not get there under three hours."

It is now seven. An old man as he is could hardly travel through such a night without stops for food. Again, this lad who drove him may have refused to proceed. We must chance it, my friends, and follow."

"I thought you had already so decided when I saw the sleighs at the door," said Mossel.

"Sleighs, Mossel? I ordered no sleighs!"

"Well, they're there. Two troikas with three good horses apiece. Come and see for yourself."

The policeman had spoken the truth. On the leeward side of the porch two sleighs were waiting. The light from the open door behind us shimmered on the drifting snow and flashed on the bells about the horses' necks. It was bitterly cold, and I was turning to retreat into the hall when a man wrapped in furs moved out of the darkness. It was the keeper of the inn, his face grey-white, like the underside of a sole.

"Whose sleighs are these?" asked Graden sharply.

"Mine, Mr. Englishman, mine. I follow to save my boy."

"And the horses?"

"The best in Lemsdorf. They are private teams, lent by those who had pity upon my sorrow."

"May we come with you?"

"I would ask for nothing better, mein Herr."

Inside of ten minutes I was ready to start, with a borrowed cloak flung over my thickest clothes, and a huge hunch of bread-and-meat in my hand. Quick as I had been, Mossel and my cousin were already dressed and in consultation. We were to drive to the cross-roads, they told me, and then separate, the one sleigh, with Graden, Mossel and an experienced driver, taking the road to Bromberg, which, being the shorter, was more likely to be the one Marnac had chosen; the other, containing the innkeeper and myself, was to follow the Gnesen road. I was not particularly pleased at the prospect of parting with my friends, but I made no objection to this plan. We entered our sleighs, rolling ourselves in the rugs.

"Are you armed?" Graden called across to the innkeeper in his little seat before me.

"Yes, mein Herr. Do you go first, for you have the better team."

The chase was up indeed!

As we passed on to the plain outside the town, the gale that came charging out of frozen Russia leapt upon us with a howl of furious joy. The flakes that rose from beneath the curved runners and the beating hoofs fled spinning into the night. The sky hung low and black and starless above the white sheet of rolling snow. The little sleigh bells grew silent in the heavier drifts, breaking out again where the track was harder. A hundred yards ahead the sparks of Graden's pipe flashed as they kindled in the wind. The fall had almost ceased.

My driver sat squarely before me, with a rein in each of his fur-gloved hands. I could not see his face, but from his projecting head and hunched shoulders I could imagine how he looked, peering over his horses into the night, with fear gripping at his soul.

I must admit that for myself I was in a condition of petulant discomfort. The slightest movement seemed to give entrance to some new draught that chilled my arm or ran trickling down my spine. Now, and again a flake of snow lodged in my neck or ear and melted icily. Tired, cold and hungry, I lay amid my rugs, cursing the folly that had led me to take a hand in a business that should have been left to the police. I had the keenest desire for a quarrel, but being to all conversational purposes alone, that relief was impossible.

CHAPTER XI.

Within two miles of Lemsdorf we had left the plain for the forest. The moon was obscured, yet a faint light filtered down from above, finding a reflection in the snow, and emphasizing the black pillars of the pines that went sliding by. There was now no trace of our companions save the marks of their runners on the track; over the woods brooded an utter silence, broken only by the swish of our sleigh and the murmur of the bells rising and falling in a low, monotonous melody. It was as if we were passing through the waste places of a dying world. One of my feet began to grow numb, and when I turned about that I might shelter it, the snow that had gathered on my collar plunged down my neck, so that I shivered with cold. But on the whole I was reasonably warm amongst my wraps, and a feeling of drowsiness grew upon me.

It was Reski's voice that woke me. We had halted in a dim clearing in the woods. A score of yards away the second sleigh was waiting. Evidently we had reached the cross-roads, where we were to part.

"Any tracks?" shouted my driver.

"No," came Graden's answer. "The wind and the fresh fall have cleared them away. Are you all right, Robert?"

"I am exceedingly uncomfortable, if that is what you want to know," I shouted back. Indeed, it was a silly question to ask me. My temper was not improved by a distant chuckle which I attributed to Mossel.

"Cheer up, Robert!" continued my cousin. "If you run across him, you must do your best. Reski will see you through, never fear; but I don't think there is much chance of your coming up with him, for he will have taken the shorter route which we follow. Anyhow, remember that the rendezvous is at the 'Drei Kronen,' at Thorn. If you catch

him, telegraph there; if the wires are down, send a messenger. Do you understand?"

"You are perfectly lucid."

"Well, good-by."

The snow spurted from under their horse's hoofs as they swung on to the north road. Then my driver shouted to his team, and we, too, rushed forward, but on the other track curving south and east. For a minute I could hear their bells tinkling an echo in the distance. Then they died away into silence.

My interest in the chase suddenly expanded. Now that my cousin had deserted me, it seemed an ugly, dangerous business. Marnac would stop at nothing, that was certain. Supposing we should chance upon this desperate maniac, what then? My driver was armed, and had the appearance of a bold, courageous man. Was he so in reality? I stared up at his back and wondered.

We had traveled the half of a mile, when from the black of the forest before us rose a cry, a fierce, chuckling bay that sent the horses plunging across the road. In the solitude of those ice-bound woods it sounded the more threatening, the more utterly malignant. I sprang to my feet, gripping Reski by the shoulder.

"What is that?" I cried.

"Wolves, mein Herr."

"Will they attack us?"

"Calm yourself, mein Herr," he answered gruffly, his eyes still set on the track before him. "The winter is young, and their mouths are not empty."

The pace of the horses had dropped to a slow trot. They advanced stiffly, with staring eyes and ears pricked forward. I remained standing, peering across the driver's seat at the white track that ran dimly away between the banks of pines.

Suddenly from a snow-powdered thick-
et before us there burst a chorus of low snarls that grew into the short, angry barks of dogs disturbed. With a jerk the horses stopped, trembling and squeezing themselves together with the fear that was on them.

"They have something there," cried Reski, and there was a shudder in his voice. "Otherwise they would not be so bold. Take the reins, mein Herr."

He thrust them into my hands and jumped from the seat. His pistol flashed, and I caught a glimpse of forms scurrying over the snow. Then the darkness fell again like a veil.

"What have you found?" I shouted.

"Under the trees it is hard to see," came back his answer. "Perhaps—I was mistaken. But wait."

He struck a match, and his tall, thin figure sprang out in silhouette as he moved slowly forward, shielding the light with his hands.

"Here are the footprints of the wolves."

"It was here that they gathered. There is something by the tree."

It is not a log—ah, no! but it is not a log, though it lies so still. . . . I fear to approach—how I fear! Have mercy! It is a man! It is Ivan, my son!"

We were on Marnac's trail—the trail of the dead.

At last it was all over. Alone, for I dared not leave my hold upon the frightened horses, Reski carried his son to the sleigh and laid him there beside me, with a rug across the face. He had been killed from behind, poor lad, with a revolver shot in the back of his head. He had refused to proceed, and Marnac had not hesitated. That was plain enough. I thanked God that we had been in time—to save him from the wolves.

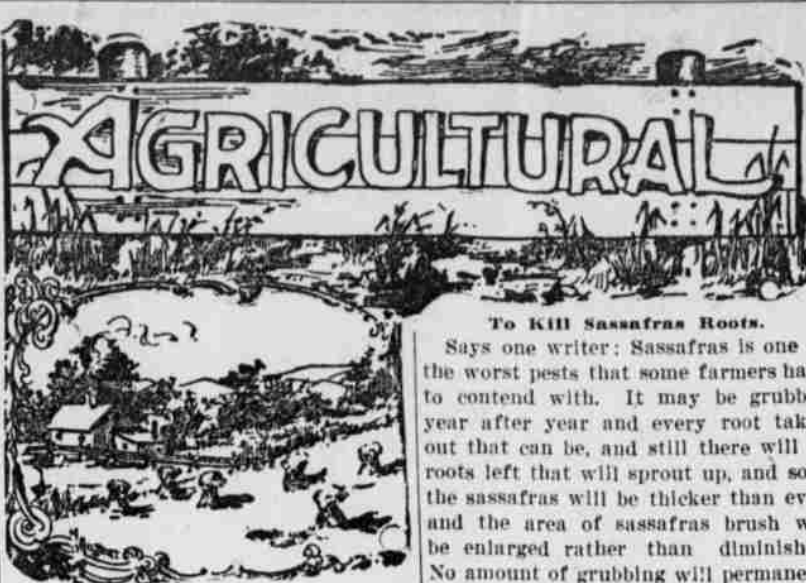
Yet there had been but a short delay. For when Reski had seen his dead bestowed upon the sleigh, he had taken the reins and sent his horses forward. He did not speak, nor did I offer him consolation. But as I watched him sitting above me, peering ahead like some old hawk figure on a vessel's bows, there was a grim intensity about the man, a fixed resolve that was strange to witness. So we fled through the night, down the interminable avenues of pines, bearing our dead with us.

It was one o'clock when we lit upon a wayside inn. Our clamor aroused the landlord, who directed us to where a kettle simmering on the stove gave a warm mash for the horses and hot coffee for ourselves. He was sleepily inquisitive, nor did he inquire what was the thing beneath the rug which we carried with us. But he gave us news. Marnac had left there less than two hours before. He had been greatly delayed by a collision with a tree, and some rough repairs had been necessary. One of his horses, too, had been slightly lamed. Yet Reski showed no unusual interest in the tale we heard. He spent his time with his horses, grooming and soothing them. It was not till they had rested three-quarters of an hour that he called me out from my seat by the stove, and again we swept away upon the chase.

It was at dawn that we sighted him. He was climbing a long slope, a black speck in the white riband of a road. Above him, long flakes of orange cloud were slowly brightening and deepening in color. As he topped the hill, the sun came peering up over a moorland heaped with tumbled drifts. The sky flushed and faded to a deep cobalt blue. So day came.

It almost seemed as if our horses understood. They increased their pace without a touch of the whip, tugging at the frozen, twisted reins. As they, too, rose the hill, Reski shouted to them, and they stepped briskly forward. The fresh snow had frozen, and we traveled well, the surface crackling as we crushed over it. We were less than a quarter of a mile from him when he turned and noticed us. We saw him spring to his feet and lash his team, but the off-side horse was running stiffly and his pace scarcely increased. He leaned down, fumbling and searching at his feet, while he held the reins in one hand. After that he did not hurry, but drove steadily forward, glancing at us now and again over his shoulder.

(To be continued.)



To Kill Sassafras Roots.

Says one writer: Sassafras is one of the worst pests that some farmers have to contend with. It may be grubbed year after year and every root taken out that can be, and still there will be roots left that will sprout up, and soon the sassafras will be thicker than ever, and the area of sassafras brush will be enlarged rather than diminished. No amount of grubbing will permanently rid a field of sassafras. The most successful method of fighting sassafras I have ever tried is to cut off the sprout at the top of the ground and to pasture with cattle and sheep until the roots die, or if the trees are large, peel them two or three feet above the ground and pasture until the roots die. If the land is plowed and the roots broken, they will sprout, but if pastured close the roots die in a few years.

Locust Destroyers.

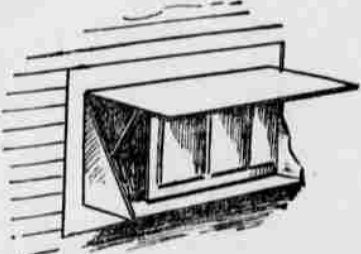
In Argentina, as in Africa and Asia, the locust is a name of dread, though not to anything like the same extent, and in South America there has arisen a hope of combatting the destroyer which may prove of enormous value in regions more liable to devastation. Large numbers of locusts were found dead and microscopic examination showed that they had been destroyed by a natural enemy—a species of fly which ate into the body of the locust, and there deposited its larvae which developed into a life prodigiously multiplied. Experiments are now being made to test whether this fly can thrive in regions which are recognized as the incubating places of the locust. The Argentine agricultural department is breeding the flies for this purpose, though under effective control.

Potato Spraying Saved \$22 per Acre.

In the efforts to make potato spraying popular among the farmers of the State, the New York experiment station at Geneva has been carrying on co-operative tests with farmers in all parts of the State. As a result of the spraying carried on by forty-one farmers on a total of 363 acres, the average gain due to spraying was fifty-eight bushels per acre, at a cost of about \$5 per acre, giving a net profit of about \$22 per acre, after paying the expense of spraying. As a result of this good work it is asserted that the practice of spraying is on the increase in New York.

Shutter for Barn Window.

Sliding windows in a barn, such as are frequently used for throwing manure through, are hardly ever quite tight, and much cold air is often allowed to rush in upon the animals inside. The American Agriculturist suggests the use of this shutter, which is made of matched boards and hinged



BARN WINDOW SHUTTER.

at the top so that it can be let down at night to keep out cold air. The shutter is set at an angle so that its own weight will keep it closely shut; or it may be shut flat against the casing and be tightly closed by a hook.

Pumpkins for Lambs.

Pumpkins are good feed for lambs in the fall, especially when they are troubled with paper skin, caused by worms in the intestines. They will eat them if they are sliced or cut and sprinkled with salt, but it is better to provide flat-bottomed troughs with compartments, each being large enough to receive the half of a pumpkin cut in such fashion as to have the pieces lie flat with the inside uppermost.

Water for Work Horses.

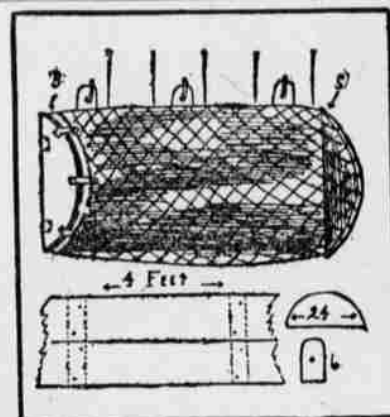
Give work horses a pail of water in the middle of the morning and the afternoon. They will be better for it. Help them along and you will have better satisfaction. Flies and hot weather make them cranky and poor. Give them a few carrots and a little grass now and then.

Chickens on Range.

The sooner you get the early hatch of chickens on open range the better it will be for them. It is pretty hard to teach brooder chickens not to go back to their original home after you want to take them away from the brooder and put them in the colony house. Either take the brooder out of sight, or move your chicks to another lot where they can't see it. Do not take them from the brooder until they have learned to get on without artificial heat, or they will huddle in the corners and do themselves an injury.

Economizing Green Food.

When green food is scarce or difficult to obtain it pays to plan some way so it will not be wasted. The following description is of a feeding box that works well. Cut two pieces for the ends, each twenty-four inches long, getting proper curve by using a compass. Make the back of the holder of thin boards four feet long and twenty-four inches wide and nail one end (figure 5) in place, hinging the other end, using small straps of leather to hold it shut. Cover the holder with coarse mesh wire netting and hang it in a convenient place high enough so the fowls cannot roost on it, yet so they can feed from it readily. Use hangers of wood, tin or leather as indicated in the cut at figure 6. This little feeding



ECONOMICAL FEEDING BOX.

box will enable the fowls to pick at the green stuff, whether it is clover, grass or chopped cabbage, without any danger of soiling or wasting it. Such conveniences are inexpensive, but save an immense amount of time, as well as food, so poultry keepers should use them whenever possible.—Indianapolis News.

Hens Don't Like New Home.

Fowls are very fond of their homes and dislike being moved to new locations. If eggs are the object it is most important that birds should not be moved from pen to pen, as it will delay egg production and also diminish the supply. Pullets for early laying should, if possible, be brought up within sight of their future laying run or pen. On the contrary, if it is wished to delay the laying of a pullet, and to encourage growth for prize purposes, her home must be changed often. A sitting or broody hen may be interfered with by removing her to a new scene and fresh companions—a more reasonable and humane way of checking her maternal instincts than that of half-drowning her, shutting her up in darkness or resorting to other cruel methods.

Points on Raising Geese.

Have one gander to four geese, no more. Give them a good run. Do not try to change their nests, but let them set where they lay. Take first eggs and set under hens, as a goose will sometimes lay thirty to forty eggs in the season. Goslings should not be allowed to run in water or tall, wet grass, but should have a good grass run, grass that is short and green. Feed dried bread moistened with milk, cooked dry potatoes or cooked cornmeal. Do not feed them too much at first, and mix some grit and sand with their feeds.

Roup Remedy.

The fowls should be placed in a dry, warm and well ventilated house, and have plenty of fresh water and scalded bran or other light food. Take of finely pulverized, fresh-burnt charcoal and of new yeast each three parts, of pulverized two parts, of flour one and one-half as much pulverized cayenne as flour. Water enough to mix well, and roll into balls or pills the size of a hazelnut, give one three times a day.

Canadian Wheat Crops.

The official Canadian spring wheat crop report forwarded by Consul J. H. Worman of Three Rivers shows the wheat acreage increased by 500,000 over last year's record. This raises Manitoba over the 3,000,000 mark for that cereal alone. The land sown to oats is 1,155,961 acres, an increase of 124,722, while the barley acreage has nearly reached 500,000, being, in fact, 474,242. The total increase in the grain acreage over last year is 615,836. The other crops also show an increased acreage.