

ry." And in order to encourage and help him I began to try as well."

"What!" said Sanderson, "the passes?"

"Yes, the passes."

"But—," I said, moved by an idea that eluded me for a space.

"This is interesting," said Sanderson, with his finger in his pipe bowl. You mean to say this ghost of yours gave away—"

"Did his best to give away the whole confounded barrier? Yes."

"He didn't," said Wish; "he couldn't. Or you'd have gone there, too."

"That's precisely it," I said, finding my elusive idea put into words for me.

"That is precisely it," said Clayton, with thoughtful eyes upon the fire.

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For just a little while there was silence.

"And at last he did it?" said Sanderson.

"At last he did it. I had to keep it up to him hard, but he did it at last—rather suddenly. He despaired, we had a scene, and then he got up abruptly and asked me to go through the whole performance slowly, so that he might see. 'I believe,' he said, 'if I could see I should spot what was wrong at once.' And he did."

"I know," he said.

"What do you know?" said I.

"I know," he repeated. Then he said peevishly: 'I can't do it if you look at me—I really can't; it's been that, partly, all along. I'm such a nervous fellow that you put me out.'

"Well, he had a bit of an argument. Naturally, I wanted to see; but he was as obstinate as a mule, and suddenly I had come over as tired as a dog—he tired me out."

"All right," I said, 'I won't look at you, and turned toward the mirror, on the wardrobe by the bed.'

"He started off very fast. I tried to follow him by looking in the looking-glass, to see just what it was that had hung. Round went his arms and his hands, so, and so, and so, and then with

a rush came to the last gesture of all—you stand erect and open out your arms—and so, don't you know, he stood. And then he didn't! He didn't! He wasn't! I wheeled round from the looking-glass to him. There was nothing! I was alone, with the flaring candles and a staggering mind. What had happened? Had I been dreaming? And then, with an absurd note of finality about it, the clock upon the landing discovered the moment was ripe for striking one. So!—Ping! And I was as grave and as sober as a judge, with all my champagne and whisky gone into the vast serene. Feeling queer, you know—confoundedly queer! Queer! Good Lord!"

He regarded his cigar ash for a moment. "That's all that happened," he said.

"And then you went to bed?" asked Evans.

"What else was there to do?"

I looked Wish in the eye. We wanted to scoff, and there was something, something perhaps, in Clayton's voice and manner that hampered our desire.

"And about these passes?" said Sanderson.

"I believe I could do them now."

"Oh!" said Sanderson, and produced a penknife and set himself to grub the dottle out of the bowl of his clay.

"Why don't you do them now?" said Sanderson, shutting his penknife with a click.

"That's what I'm going to do," said Clayton.

"They won't work," said Evans.

"If they do—" I suggested.

"You know, I'd rather you didn't," said Wish, stretching out his legs.

"Why?" asked Evans.

"I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

♦ ♦ ♦

"But he hasn't got 'em right," said Sanderson, plugging too much tobacco in his pipe.

"All the same, I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

We argued with Wish. He said that for Clayton to go round with those gestures was like mocking a serious matter.

"But you don't believe—" I said.

Wish looked at Clayton, who was staring into the fire, weighing something in his mind. "I do—more than half, anyhow, I do," said Wish.

"Clayton," said I, "you're too good a liar for us. Most of it was all right. But that disappearance happened to be convincing. Tell us, it's a tale of cock and bull."

He stood up, without heeding me, took the middle of the hearth rug, and faced me. For a moment he regarded his feet thoughtfully, and then for all the rest of the time his eyes were on the opposite wall, with an intent expression. He raised his two hands slowly to the level of his eyes and so began.

Now Sanderson is a Freemason, a member of the lodge of the Four Kings, which devotes itself so ably to the study and elucidation of all the mysteries of Masonry past and present, and among the students of this lodge Sanderson is by no means the least. He followed Clayton's motions with a singular interest in his red-dish eye.

"That's not bad," he said when it was done. "You really do, you know, put things together, Clayton, in a most amazing fashion. But there's one little detail

"I know," said Clayton. "I believe I could tell you which."

"Well?"

"This," said Clayton, and did a queer little twist and writhing and thrust of the hands.

"Yes."

"That, you know, was what he couldn't get right," said Clayton. "But how do you—?"

"Most of this business, and particularly how you invented it, I don't understand at all," said Sanderson, "but just that phase—I do." He reflected. "These happen to be a series of gestures connected with a certain branch of esoteric Masonry. Probably you know. Or else—how?" He reflected still further. "I do not see I can do any harm in telling you just the proper twist. After all, if you know, you know; if you don't, you don't."

"I know nothing," said Clayton, "except what the poor devil let out last night."

"Well, anyhow," said Sanderson, and placed his churchwardse very carefully upon the shelf over the fireplace. Then very rapidly he gesticulated with his hands.

"So?" said Clayton, repeating.

"So," said Sanderson, and took his pipe in hand again.

"Ah, now," said Clayton, "I can do the whole thing—right."

He stood up before the waning fire and smiled at us all. But I think there was just a little hesitation in his smile.

"If I begin—" he said.

"I wouldn't begin," said Wish.

"It's all right," said Evans. "Matter is indestructible. You don't think any jiggery-pokery of this sort is going to snatch Clayton into the world of shades. Not it! You may try, Clayton, so far as I'm concerned, until your arms drop off at the wrists."

"I don't believe that," said Wish, and stood up and put his arm on Clayton's shoulder. "You've made me half believe in that story, somehow, and I don't want to see the thing done."

"Goodness!" said I, "here's Wish frightened."

"I am," said Wish, with real or admirably feigned intensity. "I believe that if he goes through these motions right, he'll go!"

"He'll not do anything of the sort," I cried. "There's only one way out of this world for men, and Clayton's thirty years from that. Besides— And such a ghost! Do you think—?"

Wish interrupted me by moving. He walked out from among our chairs and stepped beside the table and stood there.

"Clayton," he said, "you're a fool."

Clayton, with a humorous light in his eyes, smiled back at him. "Wish," he said, "is right, and all you others are wrong. I shall go. I shall get to the end of these passes, and as the last swish whistles through the air, presto!—this hearth rug will be vacant, the room will be blank amazement, and a respectably dressed gentleman of fifteen stone will plump into the world of shades. I'm certain. So will you be. I decline to argue further. Let the thing be tried."

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"No," said Wish, and made a step and ceased, and Clayton raised his hands once more to repeat the spirit's passing.

By that time, you know, we were all in a state of tension—largely because of the behavior of Wish. We sat all of us with our eyes on Clayton—I, at least, with a sort of tight, stiff feeling about me, as though from the back of my skull to the middle of my thighs my body had been changed to steel. And there, with a gravity that was imperturbably serene, Clayton bowed and swayed and waved his hands and arms before us. As he drew toward the end one piled up, one tingled in one's teeth. The last gesture, I have said, was to swing the arms out wide open, with the face held up. And when he at last swung out to this closing gesture I ceased even to breathe. It was ridiculous, of course, but you know that ghost-story feeling. It was after

dinner, in a queer old shadowy house. Would he, after all—?

There he stood for one stupendous moment, with his arms open and his up-turned face, assured and bright, in the glare of the hanging lamp. We hung through that moment as if it were an age, and then came from all of us something that was half a sigh of infinite relief and half a reassuring "No!" For visible—he wasn't going. It was all nonsense. He had told an idle story, and carried it almost to conviction, that was all! And then in that moment the face of Clayton changed.

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It changed. It changed as a lit house changes when its lights are suddenly extinguished. His eyes were suddenly eyes that were fixed, his smile was frozen on his lips, and he stood there still. He stood there, very gently swaying.

That moment, too, was an age. And then, you know, chairs were scraping, things were falling, and we were all moving. His knees seemed to give, and he fell forward, and Evans rose and caught him in his arms.

It stunned us all. For a minute I suppose no one said a coherent thing. We believed it, yet could not believe it. I came out of a muddled stupefaction to find myself kneeling beside him, and his vest and shirt were torn open, and Sanderson's hand lay on his heart.

Well—the simple fact before us could very well wait our convenience; there was no hurry for us to comprehend. It lay there for an hour; it lies athwart my memory, black and amazing, to this day. Clayton had, indeed, passed into the world that lies so near to and so far from our own, and he had gone thither by the only road that mortal man may take. But whether he did indeed pass there by that poor ghost's incantation, or whether he was stricken suddenly by apoplexy in the midst of an idle tale—as the coroner's jury would have us believe—is no matter for my judging; it is just one of those inexplicable riddles that must remain unsolved until the final solution of all things come. All I certainly know is that in the very moment, in the very instant, of concluding those passes he changed and staggered and fell down before us—dead!

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Walking Clocks

MOST of the ancient Spanish customs have long since died out, but one is still maintained in the village of Los Arenas, near Bilbao. The custom consists of the serenoes (night policemen) calling out the hours and state of the weather every night, commencing at midnight and finishing at 5 o'clock a. m. One is roused by one of these loud-voiced policemen singing out beneath the bedroom window, "Las doce, sereno!" ("Twelve o'clock, fine weather.") By 4 o'clock the weather has probably changed, and it may be raining and blowing a regular hurricane, a state of things in itself enough to awaken any man. Yet you are cheerfully informed of the fact by the policeman shouting, "Las cuatro, lloviendo!" ("Four o'clock, raining.") Many inhabitants have tried in vain to get this stopped, for no useful purpose whatever is served by the custom.

Both Cheating

A MATRON was confiding her domestic troubles to a friend.

"I find," said she, "that my husband has charged some one in his office with the duty of calling me up every afternoon to mumble terms of endearment. That's a pretty way to treat one's wife, isn't it? He's been spending his afternoons at the club."

"How was it," asked the friend, "that you didn't at once notice that it wasn't his voice that called?"

"Well," explained the aggrieved wife, "I've been pretty busy with bridge every day, and I've been having the maid answer the phone."

His eyes were suddenly eyes that were fixed, his smile was frozen on his lips—and he stood there, very gently swaying.

