

The Wand of Sleep

OR

The Devil-Stick

By the Author of
"The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," Etc.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"Come, come, boys!" said Jen, annoyed at this scene between two hot-headed young men, who were not yet gifted with the self-restraint of experience. "Don't talk like this. You are at my table. There is a stranger, or shall I say a friend, present!"

"Say a friend," observed Etwald, calmly, "although I am about to say that which may cause these two young gentlemen to look upon me as an enemy."

"What do you mean?" asked Maurice, turning his still frowning face towards this strange and enigmatic man.

"What I say, Mr. Aylmer! You—admire Miss Dallas?"

"Why bring her name into the question? Yes, I admire Miss Dallas."

"And you, Mr. Sarby, I can tell from your attitude, from your look, you love Miss Dallas."

David was taken back by this strange speaking.

"Yes, I—I do love Miss Dallas," I guessed as much," resumed Etwald, with a cold smile. "Now it is strange—"

"It is strange that a lady's name should be thus introduced," said Jen, annoyed at the tone of the conversation. "Let us drop the subject."

"One moment, Major. I wish us three to understand one another—here the doctor hesitated, then went on in an impassive voice—"about Miss Dallas!"

"Why do you speak of her?" asked Maurice, fiercely, while David looked loweringly at Etwald.

"Because I love her!"

"You love her!"

The two young men burst out simultaneously with the speech in tones of sheer astonishment, and stared at Etwald as at some strange animal. That this elderly man—Etwald was midway between thirty and forty, but that looked elderly to these boys of twenty-five—should dare to love Isabella Dallas was a thing unheard of. She so young, so beautiful; he so somber, pale, and worn with intellectual vigils; with a mysterious past, a doubtful present, and a problematic future.

Maurice and David, divided the one against the other by their passion for the same woman, united in a feeling of rage and contempt against this interloper, who dared to make a third in their worship of Isabella. They looked at Etwald, they looked at one another, and finally both began to laugh. Jen frowned at the sound of their mirth, but Etwald, in nowise discomposed, sat unsmilingly in his seat waiting for further developments.

"Oh, it is too absurd!" said Maurice, resuming his seat.

"Why?"

Etwald put the question with the greatest calmness, stared steadily at the young man, and waited for the reply, which he knew would be difficult to make.

"Oh, because—because—"

"Never mind explaining, Mr. Aylmer. I can guess your objection. I am too old—too plain—too poor for this charming young lady. You, on the contrary, are young, passing well off, and handsome; all the gifts of fortune are on your side. Decidedly," added the doctor, "you hold the best hand. Well, we shall see who will win this game—as we may call it?"

"And what about me?" said David.

"You forget that I am a third player. Come, Etwald, you have prophesied about Maurice; now read my fate."

"No," said Etwald, rising. "We have talked long enough on this subject. It is plain that we three men are in love with the same woman. You can't blame me, nor I you. Miss Dallas is a sufficiently beautiful excuse for our madness. I spoke out, simply because I want you both to understand the position. You are warned, and we can now do battle for the smiles of this charming lady. Let the best man win!"

"Nothing could be fairer than that," said Jen, quickly; "but I agree with you, doctor, that the subject has been sufficiently discussed; but, indeed, it should never have been begun. Let us go to the smoking room."

Thither the three young men went in the wake of the Major. It was a comfortable room, with one wide window, which at the present moment was open. Outside the light of the newly-risen moon bathed lawn and trees and flowers in a flood of cold silver; and the warm radiance of the lamp poured out rays of gold into the wonderful white world without. The three men sat down in comfortable chairs.

Self-contained as ever, Etwald looked up at the wall near him, and seemed to be considering a decoration of savage arms, which looked barbaric and wild, between two oil paintings. When Jen came back with the cigars, his gaze followed that of his guest, and he made a remark about the weapons.

"All those came from Ashantee and the West Coast of Africa," said he, touching a vicious-looking axe. "This is a sacrificial axe; this murderous-looking blade is the sword of the executioner of King Koffee; and this," here he laid his finger lightly upon a slender stick of green wood, with a golden top set roughly with large turquoise stones, "is a poison wand!"

"A poison wand!" echoed Etwald, a sudden light showing in his cold eyes. "I never heard of such a thing."

David, who was watching him, had an instinctive feeling that Etwald was telling a lie. He saw that the man could hardly keep his seat for his eagerness to examine and handle the

strange weapon. However, he said nothing, but watched and watched, when Maurice made a remark about the stick.

"Oh, that is Uncle Jen's greatest treasure," he said, smiling. "He can tell twenty stories about that innocent-looking cane!"

"Innocent-looking!" echoed Jen, taking down the green wand. "How can you say such a thing? Look here, Etwald," and he laid the stick on the table. "No, don't touch it, man," he added, hastily, "there is plenty of venom in it yet. 'Tis as dangerous as a snake bite. If you touch this slender iron spike projecting from the end, you die!"

Again David noted that the tigerish light leaped up in the eyes of Etwald, but he had sufficient control of his features to preserve a look of courteous curiosity. He carefully handled and examined the instrument of death.

It was a little over a foot long, of a hard-looking green wood; the handle of gold was coarsely moulded in a barbaric fashion round the turquoise stones, and these, of all hues from green to the palest of blues, were embedded like lumps of quartz in the rough gold. Round this strange implement there lingered a rich and heavy perfume, sickly and sensuous.

"See here!" said Jen, pressing, or rather squeezing, the handle. "I tighten my grip upon this, and the sting of the serpent shows itself!" Whereupon Etwald glanced at the end of the wood and saw a tiny needle of iron push itself out. When Jen relaxed his pressure on the gold handle, this iron tongue slipped back and disappeared entirely.

"I got this at Kumassie," explained Jen, when he had fully exhibited the gruesome mechanism of the stick. "It belonged to the high priest. Whenever he or the king disliked any man, who was too powerful to be openly slain, they used this wand. What excuse they made I don't know, but I suppose it had something to do with fetish-worship. However, the slightest touch of this needle produces death!"

"It is poisoned at the tip?"

"Not exactly. The needle within is hollow, and a store of poison is contained in the handle up here. When squeezed these turquoise stones press a gold within, and the poison runs down to the point of the needle. In fact, the whole infernal contrivance is modeled upon a serpent's fang."

"But it is quite harmless now," said David, as Jen replaced the wand in its gold sheath on the wall, "else you wouldn't have it there."

"Well, no doubt the poison has dried up," said Jen, with a nod. "All the same I shouldn't like to prick myself with that needle. I might die," finished the Major, with the naive simplicity of a child.

Etwald said nothing. With his eyes fixed upon the devil-stick, he meditated deeply. The barrister, whose belief was that Etwald knew more about the wand than he chose to say, watched him closely. He noticed that the doctor eyed the stick, then, after a pause, let his gaze wander to the face of Maurice. Another pause, and he was looking at David, who received the fire of this strange man's eyes without blanching.

There was something so mesmeric in the gaze that David felt uncomfortable, and as though he were enveloped in an evil atmosphere. To his surprise, he found that his eyes also were attracted to the stick, and a longing to handle it began to possess him. Clearly Etwald was trying to hypnotize him for some evil purpose. By an effort of will David broke through these nightmare chains and rose to his feet. The next moment he was in the open air, in the cold moonlight, breathing hard and fast.

Within, Maurice and the Major were talking gaily, and the sound of their voices and laughter came clearly to the ears of David. But silent in his deep chair sat Etwald, and the burning glance of his eyes seemed to beam menacingly through the air, and compel the young man to evil thoughts. David looked at Etwald dark and voiceless; and over his head, in the yellow lamplight, he saw the glittering golden handle of the devil-stick.

CHAPTER III.

Some little distance from the Major's abode stood a long, low rambling house on a slight rise. Surrounded by deep verandahs, it was placed in the middle of emerald green lawns, smoothly clipped; and these, lower down, were gridded by a belt of ash, and sycamores, and poplars, which shut out the house from the high road. The mansion, with its flat roof and wide verandahs had a tropical look, and indeed it had been built by a retired Indian nabob, at the beginning of this century. When he died the house had been sold, and now it was occupied by Mrs. Dallas, who leased it because of its suggestion of tropical habitation. She came from the West Indies, and had lived in "The Wigwam," as the house was called, for over ten years.

Mrs. Dallas was a large, fat, and eminently lazy woman, who passed most of her time in knitting, or sleeping, or eating. Her husband had died before she had come to this country, and it was the desire to preserve her daughter's health which had brought her so far from the sun-baked islands which her soul loved.

Her languid Creole nature and lethargic habits were unsuited to break, practical gray skies, the frequent absence of sunlight, and the lack of rich and sensuous coloring. Often she

threatened to return to Barbadoes, but she was too lazy to make the effort of again settling herself in life. With all her longings for the fairy islands of the West, she was out of place in this northern land, and so was Dido.

This latter was a tall and massively framed negro woman, with very little of the black about her. She looked rather like a priestess, with her stern face and stately mien; and, indeed, in the West Indies, it was known among the negroes that Dido was high in power among the votaries of Obi. She could charm, she could slay by means of vegetable poisons, and she could—as the negroes firmly believed—cause a human being to dwindle, peak, and pine, by means of incantations.

This black Canidia had left a terrible reputation behind her in Barbadoes. Dido was not a favorite in the servants' part of "The Wigwam," but for this unpopularity she cared little, being devoted to Isabella Dallas. She adored her nursing. The girl was about twenty years of age, tall and straight, with dark hair and darker eyes, with a mouth veritably like Cupid's bow, and a figure matchless in contour. With her rich southern coloring and passionate temperament—she was of Irish blood on the paternal side—Miss Dallas looked more an Andalusian lady. She had all the loveliness of a Creole woman, and bloomed like a rich tropical flower with poison in its perfume, amid the roses.

If Mrs. Dallas was a bore—and her friends said she was—the daughter was divine, and many young men came to "The Wigwam" to be spellbound by her beauty. More than the three who had dined at "Ashantee" were in love with Isabella.

Upon her Dido exercised a powerful and it must be confessed, a malignant influence. She had fed the quick brain of the girl with weird tales of African witchcraft and fanciful notions of terrestrial and sidereal influences. Isabella's nature was warped by this domestic necromancy, and had she continued to dwell in the West Indies, she might almost have become a witch herself. Certainly Dido did her best to make her one, and taught her nursing spells and incantations, to which the girl would listen fearfully, half-believing, half-doubting. But her contact with the sunny side of life saved her from falling into the terribly abyss of African superstition; and how terrible it is only needed that she should be removed from the bad influence of the barbaric Sybil to render her nature healthy and all her life with pleasure.

But Dido was like a upas tree, and the moral atmosphere with which she surrounded Isabella was slowly but surely making the girl morbid and unnatural. Mrs. Dallas—versed in the negro character—half-guessed this, but she was too indolent to have Dido removed. Moreover, strange as it may appear, she was more than a trifle afraid of the negroes and her unholy arts.

Maurice had met with, and had fallen in love with, Isabella, and she returned his affection with all the ardor of her passionate nature. His handsome and frank face, his sunny nature and optimistic ideas appealed strongly to the girl who had been environed from her earliest infancy by the pessimism of Dido.

Maurice saw well how Isabella had deteriorated under the bad influence of the negroes, and he did his best to counteract her insidious morality and morbid teaching. He laughed at Isabella's stories and superstitions, and succeeded in making her ashamed of her weakness in placing faith in such degraded rubbish. While with him Isabella was a bright and laughing girl; quite another sort of being to the grave and nervous creature she was while in the presence of Dido. She felt that if she married Maurice she would be a laughing stock to her friends, and as all her affections and instincts inclined to the young man she hoped to become his wife.

(To be continued.)

The Island of Nickels and Dimes.

This past summer seven to eight million people made twenty million trips to Coney Island. They spent there forty-five million dollars, mostly in nickels and dimes, and the total sum was three times what the nation paid to Napoleon for Louisiana, or six times what we paid Russia for Alaska.

There are in Coney Island peanut stands, the size of a broad top desk, which rent for fifteen hundred dollars a season. The men who sell "frankfurters" pay enormous sums for the right to stand where they do, and get their money back in the nickels of the twenty millions.

On week-days the attendance is large, but on Sundays and holidays it rises to a point where each visitor has room only to be happy standing still. On the Fourth of July four hundred thousand people crowded into the little island, bathed, shot the chutes, were photographed and ate "red-hots." It was believed then that Coney would not hold a single additional visitor, but on August 15th a new hundred thousand came, making half a million in one day.

It is a wonderful business—this Coney Island—but a very risky one. The nine hundred million nickels depend upon the weather. When the mercury drops, profits fall to nothing. If a plague should break out and the island be quarantined, boats would stop running and the people would stay in their city homes. The Coney Island farmer must harvest his crop of nickels while the sun shines.—Success Magazine.

Between Friends.

Miss Homeleigh—Perhaps you won't believe it, but a strange man tried to kiss me once.

Miss Cutting—Really? Well, he'd have been a strange man if he'd tried to kiss you twice.—Illustrated Bits.

Nip and Tuck.

He—I wouldn't marry a girl who put on false hair.

She—And I wouldn't marry a man who put on a false front!—Boston Herald

DANGEROUS THINGS TO HANDLE.

Articles of Daily Use Which May Be a Peril to Human Life.

Thousands of people are handling certain articles daily without any idea of their dangerous nature.

The ordinary soda water siphon, for instance, is a bomb, and an exceedingly powerful one to boot, charged, as it frequently is, up to a pressure of between 130 and 160 pounds.

A child who dropped one of these dangerous contrivances in the street the other day was almost as shockingly mangled by the resultant explosion as was M. von Plehve, the assassinated Russian Minister of the Interior, by the dynamite bomb thrown by the Anarchist Porzonen.

The large celluloid combs, again, which ladies are so fond nowadays of wearing in their hair, will, if accidentally brought into contact with a naked light, burst into flame of explosive violence.

Nor is this to be greatly wondered at, seeing that one of the ingredients to celluloid is gun cotton, while another is camphor, than which is no more inflammable substance known to chemists.

Iodide of nitrogen, for instance, which is frequently prescribed in combination with other drugs, is a highly explosive chemical, and accidents have happened over and over again through its incautious handling by persons ignorant of its dangerous properties.

Picture of iron and diluted aqua regia, again, a mixture often prescribed as a tonic, gives off an explosive gas which has been known to shatter the strongest vessels.

Chloride of potash lozenges are highly dangerous if accidentally brought into contact with an unlighted phosphorus match. Chloral hydrate and sal volatile, the favorite nerve tonic, become, under certain conditions, as deadly as dynamite.

The spontaneous explosive combustion of a box of oxide of silver pills has ere now caused fatal injury to their unfortunate possessor. Bicarbonate of potash, a common remedy for flatulence, will cause a dangerous explosion if accidentally mixed with sublimate of bismuth.

Ordinary spirits of wine is a substance possessing tremendous perils. A pint of it if suddenly ignited will produce the very same destructive effects as three or four pounds' weight of gunpowder. This has been proved on many different occasions.

Once at the Royal Surrey County Hospital a clergyman rashly threw a small quantity on to a "snapdragon" dish, around which a number of choir boys were gathered. The resultant explosion killed one unfortunate lad and severely injured several others.—Pearson's Weekly.

The Story of a Turtle's Meal.

A butterfly hunter tells the following story of swamp life:

"In the water right between my feet was a spotted turtle that had just captured an appetizing but by no means dainty morsel. This was a terrapin-like bug that was more than a mouthful. His body was already out of sight, but clawlike legs protruded from both sides of that isosceles triangle which a turtle's mouth makes when it is closed and waved a frantic farewell to the passing underwater world. The turtle was a long time in masticating his terrapin, but it was a happy time. His whole body blinked contentedly, and he waved his fore legs with a caressing outpush, a motion exactly like that of a child at the breast. Then he wagged his head solemnly from side to side, as a wise turtle might who feels that such good lunches are put up by fate only for the knowing ones of this watery world, and pushed himself halfway under the roots of a tussock for a nap."

Little Willie Knew.

Little Willie, the son of a German town woman, was playing one day with the girl next door when the latter exclaimed:

"Don't you hear your mother calling you? That's three times she's done so. Aren't you going in?"

"Not yet," responded Willie imperterbably.

"Won't she whip you?" demanded the little girl, awed.

"Naw!" exclaimed Willie in disgust. "She ain't goin' to whip nobody! She's got company. So, when I go in, she'll just say, 'The poor little man has been so deaf since he's had the measles!'" —Lippincott's.

No Words Wasted.

Nora was a treasure of a servant, whose habit of speech was often indirect, but was frequently picturesque and unexpectedly expressive. One evening "the master" was sitting in the library when the doorbell rang. Nora answered it, and on her return through the hall "the master" inquired who it was.

"It was a young man, sor," replied Nora.

"Well, what did he want?" was the question.

"Oh, he was just lookin' for the wrong number, sor." —Lippincott's Magazine.

Not Too Blind.

Angelina—Oh, dear! The diamond in my engagement ring has got a flaw in it.

Edwin—Take no notice, darling. Love should be blind, you know.

Angelina—Yes, but it hasn't got to be stone blind.

Effects of Lightning.

Lightning kills one-half of those it strikes, while a few of the survivors are rendered blind, deaf, dumb or partially paralyzed.



FARM NOTES

Farmers and High Prices.

The farmer is not guilty. He is a very small factor in the high prices now being paid for products. A study of prices paid in Chicago for hives, sheep and hogs and for produce will show that the farmer is not getting more than his share. Recently the writer purchased a hind quarter of beef, dressed and delivered on his farm, for 9 cents a pound. This same piece of meat would retail in Chicago for twice that amount. Any one can buy dressed meat from the farmers for that price—7 cents a pound for fore quarter and 9 cents for hind quarter.

Our hogs sell for nearly 8 cents a pound on the hoof and can be purchased from farmers, killed and dressed, at 12 cents. There is no waste in either dressed pork or beef purchased from farmers—the same kind as that you get from your local butcher. The farmer is paying high prices for everything he uses and his land must earn an income on an investment of from \$100 to \$200 an acre. His farm machinery and horses have doubled in price.

Don't blame the farmer; he is working hard for very ordinary wages. I am farming 160 acres. I will be highly pleased if I get \$20 an acre for my crop, or \$3,200 for the year. The landlord gets one-half the crop for rent, leaving me \$1,600 for a year's work for myself, wife and son, and \$2,500 worth of horses and machinery. To earn this \$1,600 we work from 4 a. m. until 8 p. m., eight months of the year, and during the other four months put in more than eight hours a day at hard manual labor. It is not all milk and honey on the farm, and the writer believes that the farmer, as a consumer as well as a producer, is buying too many automobiles for middlemen, paying dividends on too much watered stock and being the "fall guy" as well as the cliff dwellers of the city.

—A Farmer.

Brace for Fence Post.

In about four cases out of every ten sagging of wire fences is due to poor, improper bracing. It is not enough to staple the separate strands secured to each post—that is splendid as far as it goes. To have a well-stretched fence and keep it taut, it is absolutely necessary that a good brace or anchor post be used and that the fence be stretched from these anchors. A good brace is illustrated. The construction is very simple and the cost is as moderate as any.

The end post should be of good size and perfectly sound. The brace post need not be large, but must be in good condition if it is to wear. Other posts may be easily reset without interfering greatly with the fence, but this is not the case with either of the braces. The 4x4 running from the top of one post to the base of the other should be well selected, as considerable stress is placed upon it. It is best to mortise the ends of the cross bar or brace into the posts, as blocks nailed on give way in time. A fairly



SIEVE TO CLEAN THE WELL.

and clean the farm well, writes J. L. Risley. Any floating matter may be removed by using an ordinary hand sieve. After marking off the rim into three parts attach a wire to any of these parts or points, and for a handle use an attached rope. Fasten the end of the rope to the third point in the rim and a weight to the sieve, so it will sink after lowering. In using sink the sieve edgewise in the water, pull the rope with a single attachment, lifting out of well all the floating sticks and other debris from the surface of the water.

Keeping Accounts.

It has only been in recent years that farmers have been awakening to the fact that by taking an inventory once a year and by keeping an accurate book account that many valuable lessons could be learned and that by so doing they could place their farms on a more profitable basis. With business men, competition is so keen and profits necessarily so small that without keeping an accurate book account they would soon be forced out of business, but with farmers more slack methods do not necessarily result in bankruptcy, due, no doubt, to the fact that the farmer gets most of his living from the farm without any cash outlay, whereas the merchant must pay cash for everything he eats and wears. Notwithstanding this fact, however, the farmer who keeps a book account will find it just as profitable, if not more so, as the merchant.

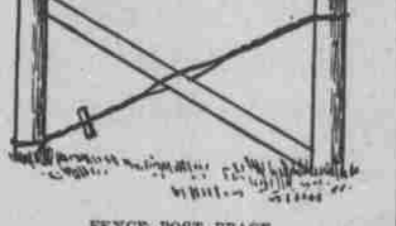
Fattening Poultry.

A fowl should always be fattened quickly as possible. Ten days is long enough, but it should be confined either in a coop or a number in a small yard. They must have a continual supply of fresh water, and should be fed four times a day, the first meal being given early and the last one late. A recommended mixture is three parts corn meal, one part ground oats, one part bran, one part crude tallow, the entire lot scalded and fed for the first three meals, with all the corn and wheat that can be eaten up clean at night. Weigh the articles given.

Milk Production.

Where help can be obtained to operate the dairy, milk production is one of the best paying branches of animal husbandry. The farmers operating their holdings with milk cows are enabled to market all the roughage and grain produced on the farm in milk, butter, cream or cheese. The dairy industry is especially adapted to build up and increase the fertility of the farm. It is popular among farmers because the farmer realizes a monthly income on his investments. As a rule, dairymen are thrifty and prosperous agriculturists.—Drovers' Journal

Fence Post Brace.



soft wire is better for the binding strand than one more liable to break with winding.

Tungsten Lamps for Farms.

The introduction of tungsten lamps is doing much to advance the use of electricity on farms. It is possible for the farmer with a small plant driven either by a gasoline engine or by damming a small stream, to obtain sufficient current to light his house and barn with this economical type of incandescent lamp. The use of electricity on the farm, by the way, is growing, and, as pointed out by the Electrical World, farmers will in time come to consider electricity a necessity. Then it will be found profitable to establish central generating stations for farming districts to take the place of the small individual plants now being installed.

Live Stock Builds Up Land.

It is very well known that in the old agricultural districts of Europe where land has been under cultivation for 2,000 years there is an increasing tendency to expand live stock industry. It is now recognized that animal husbandry is a wonderful help in not only maintaining the fertility of the soil, but also live stock industry builds up the land. Germany now has 10,967,000 milk cows, an increase of 500,000 in the past seven years. The total number of cattle in the empire aggregates 29,631,000, a gain of nearly 5,000,000 since 1883. Pigs total 22,147,000, as against 9,206,000 in 1883. The only class of live stock which shows a decrease is sheep, which declined 2,000,000 in the past seven years.