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BY GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON  
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It was not until they had explored  
the basement and found it utterly  
without signs of human occupancy  
that the truth of the situation began  
to dawn upon them. Barminster's  
face was white, and his voice shook as  
he ventured the horrid speculation:  
"The good Lord save us—it's that  
damned haunted house Pen was talk-  
ing about!"

"But ze lights?" queried the count.  
"Ghosts?"

"Let's get out of this place," said  
Lord Bazelhurst, moving toward the  
door. "It's that beastly Renwood  
house. They say he comes back and  
murders her every night or so."

"Mon Dieu!"

"Penelope isn't here. Let's move on,"  
agreed the duke readily. But even  
fear of the supernatural was not  
strong enough to drive them out into  
the blinding storm. "I say, look ahead,  
there's Shaw's place!"

Peering through the door they saw  
for the first time the many lights in  
Shaw's windows, scarce a quarter of  
a mile away. For a long time they  
stood and gazed at the distant win-  
dows. Dejectedly they sat down, backs  
to the wall and waited for the storm  
to spend its fury. Wet, cold and tired,  
they finally dozed. It was Lord Cecil  
who first saw the signs of dawn. The  
rain storm had come to a mysterious  
end, but a heavy fog in its stead loom-  
ed up. He aroused his companions  
and with many groans of anguish they  
prepared to venture forth into the  
white wall beyond.

Just as they were taking a last look  
about the wretched cellar something  
happened that would have brought ter-  
ror to the stoutest heart. A wild, ap-  
palling shriek came from somewhere  
above, the cry of a mortal soul in  
agony.

The next instant three human forms  
shot through the narrow door and out  
into the fog, hair on end, eyes bulging,  
but sightless; legs traveling like the  
wind and as purposeless. It mattered  
not that the way was hidden; it mat-  
tered less that weeds, brush and  
stumps lurked in ambush for unwary  
feet. They fled into the foggy dan-  
gers without a thought of what lay  
before them, only of what stalked be-  
hind them.

Upstairs Randolph Shaw lay back  
against the wall and shook with laugh-  
ter. Penelope's convulsed face was  
glued to the kitchen window, her eyes  
peering into the fog beyond. Shadowy  
figures leaped into the white mantle;  
the crash of brush came back to her  
ears, and then, like the barking of a  
dog, there arose from the mystic gray  
the fast diminishing cry:

"Help! Help! Help!" Growing  
fainter and sharper, the cry at last  
was lost in the phantom desert.

They stood at the window and  
watched the fog lift, gray and forbid-  
ding, until the trees and road were  
discernible. Then arm in arm they  
set forth across the wet way toward  
Shaw's cottage.

"Poor Cecil!" she sighed. "It was  
cruel of you." In the roadway they  
found a hat which she at once identi-  
fied as the count's. Farther on there  
was a carriage lamp and later a mack-  
intosh, which had been cast aside as  
an impediment. "Oh, it was cruel!"  
She smiled, however, in retrospect.

"If I were only sure that nothing  
serious had happened to Cecil," she  
murmured anxiously.

"I'm sorry, dear, for that screech of  
mine," he apologized.

Suddenly he started and gazed in-  
tently in the direction of the haunted  
house. A man—a sorry figure—was  
slowly, painfully approaching from the  
edge of the wood scarce a hundred  
yards away. In his hand he carried a  
stick to which was attached a white  
cloth—doubtless a handkerchief. He  
was hatless and limped perceptibly.

"It's Cecil!" whispered Penelope in  
horror struck tones. "Good heaven,  
Randolph, go to him! He is hurt!"

It was Lord Bazelhurst. As Shaw  
hurried down the drive to meet him, so  
thought of the feud in mind, two be-  
ings even more hopelessly dilapidated  
ventured from the wood and bobbled  
up behind the truce bearer, who had  
now paused to lift his shoulders into a  
position of dignity and defiance.  
Shaw's heart was touched. The spec-  
tacle was enough to melt the prejudice  
of any adversary. Lord Cecil's knees  
trembled. His hand shook as if in a  
chill. Mud covered, water soaked and  
bruised, their clothes rent in many  
places, their hats gone and their hair  
matted, their legs wabbling, the trio  
certainly inspired pity, not mirth nor  
scorn.

"One moment, sir," called his lord-  
ship, with a feeble attempt at severity.  
His voice was hoarse and shaky. "We  
do not come as friends, dem you. Is  
my sister here?"

"She is, Lord Bazelhurst. We'll talk  
this over later on," said Shaw in his  
friendliest way. "You are worn out  
and done up, I'm sure—you and your  
friends. Come; I'm not as bad as you  
think. I've changed my mind since I  
saw you last. Let's see if we can't  
come to an amicable understanding.  
Miss Drake is waiting up there. Break-  
fast soon will be ready—hot coffee and  
all that. Permit me, gentlemen, to in-  
vite you to partake of what we have.

What say you?"

"Confound you, sir! I—I"— But his  
brave effort failed him. He staggered  
and would have fallen had not the  
duke caught him from behind.

"Thanks, old chap," said Barminster  
to Shaw. "We will come in for a mo-  
ment. I say, perhaps you could give  
us a dry dud or two. Bazelhurst is in  
a bad way, and so is the count. It was  
a devil of a storm."

Penelope came down from the porch  
to meet them. Without a word she  
took her brother's arm. He stared at  
her with growing resentment.

"Dem it all, Pen," he chattered.  
"You're not at all wet, are you? Look  
at me! All on your account too."

"Dear old Cecil! All on Evelyn's ac-  
count, you mean," she said softly, wist-  
fully.

"I shall have an understanding with  
her when we get home," he said ear-  
nestly. "She shan't treat my sister  
like this again."

"No," said Shaw from the other side;  
"she shan't."

"By Jove, Shaw, are you with me?"  
demanded his lordship in surprise.

"Depends on whether you are with  
me," said the other. Penelope flushed.

Hot coffee, chops, griddle cakes and  
maple sirup soon put the contending  
forces at their ease. Bazelhurst so far  
forgot himself as to laugh amiably at  
his host's jokes. The count responded  
in his most piquant dialect, and the  
duke swore by an ever useful Lord  
Harry that he had never tasted such  
a breakfast.

"By Jove, Pen," exclaimed her broth-  
er in rare good humor, "it's almost a  
sin to take you away from such good  
cooking as this."

"You're not going to take her away,  
however," said Shaw. "She has come  
to stay."

"What—what the devil do you mean,  
sir?" demanded Lord Cecil, his coffee  
cup shaking so violently that the con-  
tents overflowed.

"She's going over to Plattsburg with  
me today, and when she comes back



"When she comes back she will be Mrs.  
Randolph Shaw."

she will be Mrs. Randolph Shaw.  
That's what I mean, your lordship."

Three of his listeners choked with  
amazement and then coughed painfull-  
ly. Feebly they set their cups down  
and gulped as if they had something  
to swallow. The duke was the first to  
find his tongue, and he was quite at a  
loss for words.

"B—by Jove," he said blankly, "that's  
damned hot coffee!"

"Is this true, Penelope?" gasped his  
lordship.

"Yes, Cecil. I've promised to marry  
him."

"It isn't because you feel that you  
have no home with me?"

"I love him. It's a much older story  
than you think," she said simply.

"I say, that hits me hard," said the  
duke with a wry face. "Still, I join in  
saying, God bless you."

"We're trying to end the feud, you  
see," said Penelope.

Tears came into his lordship's pale  
eyes. He looked first at one and then  
at the other and then silently extend-  
ed his hand to Randolph Shaw. He  
wrung it vigorously for a long time  
before speaking. Then, as if throw-  
ing a weight off his mind, he remarked:

"I say, Shaw, I'm sorry about that  
dog. I've got an English bull terrier  
down there that's taken a ribbon or  
so. If you don't mind, I'll send him  
up to you. He—he knows Penelope."

THE END.

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