

The Wand of Sleep OR The Devil-Stick

By the Author of
"The Mystery of a Mansion," 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. Alymer! 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 aback 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 you 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 no wise 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. Alymer. 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, if you will pardon me saying so, 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, sticky 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 bag 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 old place 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 girdled 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 brisk, practical grey 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 verily 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 men 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 the initiated can declare. It only needed that she should be removed from the bad influence of the barbaric Sybil to render her nature healthy and fill 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 teachings. 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 rill; 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 his bright, strong nature would save her from a lamentable and melancholy existence; and as all her affections and instincts inclined to the young man, she hoped to become his wife.

(To be continued.)

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.

COUNCILMEN AT \$50 EACH.

Regular Price for Pittsburg Grafters in Small Deals.

Pittsburg, March 23.—Nine more former members of the councils, before the district attorney today, confessed their guilt in accepting money for their votes while members of the municipal bodies and before Judge R. S. Fraser received the immunity bath of a suspended sentence.

When the grand jury adjourned for the day just before 5 o'clock, it had returned no indictments, although it had listened for hours to developments in the bribery scandal even more sensational than those brought out yesterday. Men admitted selling their honor for from \$50 up.

John F. Klein was before the grand jury the greater part of the day and continued his narrative of councilmanic graft. Klein recounted some of his experiences in handing out the money to the councilmen.

"There was one fellow," he said, "who was a daisy—a regular Shylock for the dough. In the South Seventh street business I handed him \$81. He looked at me for a full minute and then yelled like a stuck pig for the extra 10 cents. You know \$81.10 was the standard price in that deal. Well, he got the 10 cents all right."

WITH BEEF PROBE, MEAT PRICE RISES.

Chicago, March 23.—Simultaneously with the grand jury's indictment against the so-called beef trust, cattle on the hoof at the stockyards advanced 15 cents per hundred pounds and some of the dressed meats have given a surprising exhibition of high jumping.

The sharpest advance was for mutton cuts, to the price of which was added 1 to 3 cents a pound. This increase brings mutton racks to 18½ cents a pound, legs and joints to 16 cents and cuts for stewing to 10½ cents.

The wholesale prices of beef, mutton and pork have increased 20 per cent within the last two weeks and the advance is to travel on to retail prices in the near future.

An average of 2 cents a pound more will be paid by patrons of the butcher shop on all meats and in at least one instance, sliced ham, the advance will be 5 cents. Mutton is now higher than for the last 20 years, selling at 30 cents for chops.

TAFT POINTS WAY TO PEACE.

Questions of National Honor Should Be Arbitrated, He Says.

New York, March 23.—The president of the United States spoke in the cause of world peace tonight before such a brilliant assemblage at the Hotel Astor that he described it as "superlative." He was the honor guest at a banquet of the Peace and Arbitration league and the principal speaker.

In the main, international peace was the keynote of every address, but no speaker advocated the immediate disarmament of nations. It was agreed armies and navies were necessary until a more Utopian universe shall have come about. On this point President Taft said:

"Because we are in favor of universal peace, and in favor of arbitration to secure it, we are not in favor of one country giving up that which we now use for the purpose of securing peace, or the withdrawal of our armament, our army or our navy."

Tremendous applause greeted his declaration, and he continued:

"I don't want to seem inconsistent in speaking so emphatically here in favor of peace by arbitration and in using every effort I can bring to bear on congress to have two more battleships this year. I am hopeful that we may continue with that policy until the Panama canal is constructed, so that then our naval force shall be doubled by the connection between the two coasts. Then we can stop and think whether we wish to go further."

"Perhaps by that time there will be adopted a means of reducing the armament, and when it comes I am sure we will not be the power to interfere with the general movement."

Pins are Weapons at Capital.

Washington, March 23.—Washington women can jab holdups and mashers with long hatpins all they want, according to Major Sylvester, superintendent of police. "We have in Washington 16,000 more women than men," said Major Sylvester in discussing the agitation against long hatpins. "Such a predominance of the gentler sex can have but one result. Numbers of women are obliged to go about the streets at night without escorts and women, assailed by marauders, have used hatpins with telling effect."

Death List Reaches 47.

Marshalltown, Iowa, March 23.—The list of the dead in the wreck of the Rock Island "Twin City Express" has grown to 47, several passengers having died as the result of injuries. Those who died during the night were J. S. Goodenough, engineer of the second engine, and Mrs. Lizzie Anderson, of Cedar Rapids.

TRIALS of the NEEDLEMS



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In the Days of the Gold Fever.

Overcrowding is no modern innovation, says a writer in the San Francisco Call, and he illustrates the point with a story. A man was complaining to an old pilot about the fact that there had been four in one stateroom on a steamboat. "Four in a room!" replied the other. "That's nothing. You should have traveled in the days of the gold rush to California."

"I remember one trip out of New York we carried more than one thousand passengers, and if you put fifty on that ship to-day there'd be a protest that would reach Washington, and make trouble for somebody. To show you how crowded it was and what 'crowded' really means, three days out from New York a chap walked up to the old man, and said:

"Captain, you really must find me a place to sleep."

"Where have you been sleeping until now?" asked the old man.

"Well," says the fellow, "you see, it's this way. I've been sleeping on a sick man; but he's getting better now, and won't stand for it much longer."

"Raising the Hand."

The raising of the hand which replaces the kissing of the Book in the oath which witnesses in England will henceforth take was in origin a pointing toward heaven. The oath taker extended his hand toward the Being whom he invoked—a pagan, for instance, touching the foot or knee of his god's statue. "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord," says Abraham. Our Germanic ancestors raised their spears toward high heaven. A quaint case is that of the Shrewsbury parliament of 1388, when the lords took a solemn oath by the cross of Canterbury, while the commons—no doubt to mark the distinction between the two orders—swore simply by lifting their hands.—London Chronicle.

A Deeply Felt Want.

Steward (the first day out)—Did you ring, sir?

Traveler—Yes, steward. I—I rang.

Steward—Anything I can bring you, sir?

Traveler—Yes, steward. B-ring me a continent, if you have one, or an island—anything, steward, so I'll long as it's solid. If you can't, suspend the ship.

Uncle Allen.

"A preacher who draws a big salary," said Uncle Allen Sparks, "sometimes gets a tempting offer to go somewhere and give a lecture, and he asks a college young man who is studying for the ministry to fill his pulpit for one Sunday. The college young man does it, and all he gets is thanks. Such things happen sometimes, and I suppose it's all right. I'm not blaming the preacher, understand. I'm only kicking because the young chap lets that sort of game be played on him, by jinks!"

Tarring and Feathering.

The first recorded instance of tarring and feathering a human being was in 1189, during the time of the crusades. In that year, the first of the reign of Richard I., a law was passed that "any robber voyaging with the crusaders shall be first shaved, then hot pitch shall be poured upon him and a cushion of feathers shook over him." After this the criminal was to be put ashore at the first landing place the ship reached.

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