

The Wand of Sleep OR The Devil-Stick

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

CHAPTER VI.

Maurice returned home after a somewhat stormy interview with Mrs. Dallas. For once the mother of Isabella was roused out of her habitual indifference, and she refused absolutely to accept Aylmer as her son-in-law.

"It is because that black woman distrusts me that you object," he said. "I wonder that an educated person should be dominated by that uncivilized creature."

"Dido has nothing to do with my refusal!" said the widow, coldly; "and although I take her advice in some things, I do not in this. I don't wish Isabella to marry you, and I request you to leave my house."

"As a gentleman I must accept your dismissal, but I decline to give up Isabella."

"And I," cried the girl, "swear to remain true to Maurice!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said her mother, violently. "I forbid you even to think of that young man. You shall marry whom I choose!"

"Dr. Etwald, I suppose?"

"No! Mr. Barby."

"David!" ejaculated Maurice, in an astonished tone. "You wish Isabella to marry him?"

"Yes! He loves Isabella much more than you do, and he asked permission—which you didn't—to pay his addresses to her. I consented, and so," Mrs. Dallas raised her voice, "he shall marry her."

"I refuse to marry Mr. Barby," said Isabella, vehemently. "I hate him!"

"That is no matter!" replied her mother, coldly. "You must marry him!"

"Must!" repeated Maurice, with great indignation.

"Yes, Mr. Aylmer! Must! Must! Must! If you want an explanation of that you can ask Major Jen!"

"The Major! My guardian!" cried Aylmer, quite thunderstruck. "Is he against me?"

"Ask him! I want no further speeches from you. Go to your room, Isabella."

Resigning himself to the inevitable, Maurice gave one glance at Isabella, and went outside with a heavy heart. Dido was standing upon the veranda, with her eyes glowing like two coals. Yet there was an ill-concealed expression of triumph in her gaze which Maurice, in his then disturbed and angered state of mind, could ill brook. He paused abruptly as he passed by her, and asked a direct question:

"Why do you hate me, Dido?"

"Voodoo!" said she in a harsh voice.

"Bah! you black parrot!" muttered Maurice, scornfully, and turned upon his heel. As he vanished down the walk Dido clapped her hands together with great satisfaction, and began to sing in low tones. Her song was barbaric in words, and strange beyond all telling in the music. It rose and fell, and moaned and drawled in a curiously painful manner. In the drawing-room Mrs. Dallas had risen to her feet at the first deep contralto note, and now stood rocking herself to and fro with an expression of alarm on her face. Isabella was terrified in her turn. She shrieked and ran out of the room. Then Dido, still singing, appeared at the window, and looked at Mrs. Dallas with an expression of triumph.

"Why do you sing the death song?" asked Mrs. Dallas, opening her eyes.

"Because de master hab doomed dat yaller-hair!" said Dido, and continued her song.

In the meantime, Maurice walked slowly homeward, puzzling out his own mind, as to what could be the meaning of these strange things. He could not understand why Mrs. Dallas objected to him as a son-in-law; nor could he surmise the meaning of the mysterious word "Voodoo," pronounced so significantly by Dido. However, he saw plainly that the negroess was the disturbing element in the Dallas household, and by a half-hypnotic control over the weak will of her mistress, she could act as she pleased.

Maurice, simple and upright in conduct and character, was no match for the unscrupulous machinations of Dido. She hated the young man, and was determined that he should not marry her nursing. But whether she had, like Mrs. Dallas, a preference for David over Dr. Etwald, Maurice could not determine. The more he thought over affairs, the more incoherent and complicated did they become; so Aylmer gave up the task in despair. Then it occurred to him that Mrs. Dallas had referred him to Major Jen; so to his guardian Maurice went the moment he arrived at the big house.

"Major gone out, sir," explained Jaggard, to whom Maurice applied for information. He got a message from Dr. Etwald, and went to see him. Be back to dinner, sir, I believe."

"Where is Mr. Barby?"

"Gone over to Branch Hall, sir."

"Ho, ho!" thought Maurice, as he turned away. "So David had gone to

see Meg. Now if he is in love with Isabella, and Mrs. Dallas favors his suit, I wonder why he acts in that way."

The question he could not answer, so dismissing it from his memory, he retired to the smoking-room with a novel. When Jen and David returned he intended to question both, and, is possible, get to the bottom of these sickening mysteries.

"Hang it!" soliloquized Maurice over his book; "since yesterday everything seems to have gone wrong. That negroess and Dr. Etwald are at the bottom of affairs. But I can't see their reasons for mixing up things so."

Then he laid aside his book to think, and stared idly at the opposite wall. It chanced to be that upon which the barbaric weapons before alluded to were arranged, and conspicuous among them the golden handle of the devil-stick. Recalling the mention of Voodoo, and Etwald's reference to African witchcraft, Maurice connected in his own mind the devil-stick with those barbarisms, and on the impulse of the moment he rose to examine the magic wand. Handling it carefully—for he dreaded the poison, although it was said to be dried up—he wondered if Dido could make use of it were it in his possession.

"I heard Mrs. Dallas say that Dido's people came from Ashantee," soliloquized Maurice, "so I have no doubt she can work the infernal thing. Perhaps she knows enough to fill the bag with fresh poison. If she did so, I wouldn't trust myself near her. She would be sure to experiment on me."

At this moment Major Jen, looking slightly worried, entered the room, and seeing the devil-stick in the hand of Maurice, he stopped short with an ejaculation of surprise.

"You are looking at that thing, Maurice?" said he, wonderingly. "Now that is strange. I have just been talking about it with Dr. Etwald."

"Oh!" said Maurice, his thoughts flying back to the mysterious influence which he had seen Etwald exercise over Dido. "And what was the doctor saying?"

"A great deal. He saw the devil-stick the other night, and to-day he sent a note, asking if I would ride over and see him this afternoon. I did so, then he explained that he wished to buy that thing!"

"The devil-stick? Why?"

"I can't say. He explained that he had been in the Barbadoes; and that he took a great interest in the subject of African fetish-worship. He had heard of these 'wands of sleep,' as they are called, and greatly wished to obtain one, but he was unable to do so. Since seeing mine he has been seized with a desire to possess it."

"Why?" said Maurice, again.

"As a curiosity, I suppose. I've told you all he told me. But I refused to sell it to him, and he seemed greatly vexed, a display of irritation which in its turn vexed me. I was quite annoyed when I left him."

"Why don't you wish to sell it, Uncle Jen?"

"Because it is a dangerous thing to handle. Although the poison is dried up, yet there may be enough in it to kill a man. If I parted with it and anyone was injured by it, I should never forgive myself. Pray put it up, Maurice; I dislike to see you touch it. To-night, after dinner, I shall look it up in a safe place. David is right; it should not be on the wall there."

"David has gone over to see Meg."

"Yes. I don't think he will be back until after dinner," said Jen, rising. "So you and I had better sit down as soon as we are dressed. I am very hungry."

"Uncle Jen, I want to ask you something. Do you wish David to marry Isabella Dallas?"

"I really can't say. That is a matter which lies in the hands of the girl herself. If she likes you better than David—"

"She does?"

"What! Have you spoken to her?"

"I have, and to Mrs. Dallas, who declines to sanction our engagement. She wants Isabella to marry David, and said—"

"I can guess what she said," interrupted Jen, hastily. "No more of this till after dinner, my dear lad. Then I'll explain all!"

"Explain what?"

"Why Mrs. Dallas wants Isabella to marry David." Not another word would the Major say on the subject at that moment, so Maurice was forced to seek his room in a very unsatisfied frame of mind. However, as he thought, here was one mystery about to be explained, and that was a comfort. As Jen prophesied, David did not return to dinner, and Maurice had a tete-a-tete with his guardian. But they talked of indifferent things, and it was not until they were once more in the smoking-room that the Major consented to speak on the subject of Mrs. Dallas' strange conduct.

"Now, my boy, I'm ready to tell

—Here Jen stopped and looked blankly at the wall. "The stick!" gasped Jen, pointing a shaking hand at the wall. "The devil-stick!"

Maurice looked—the devil-stick was gone!

CHAPTER VII.

For some moments the two men looked at one another; and then Major Jen, seeing the necessity for prompt action, rang the bell. Jaggard entered with military swiftness, and stared blankly at his master, who was pointing at the wall.

"Where is the devil-stick?" demanded Jen, wrathfully.

Jaggard advanced to the trophy of weapons, and examined them with some deliberation, after which he turned to face the irate Major.

"It's gone, sure enough, sir, but I don't know where."

"Find out if any of the servants have taken it."

Jaggard saluted and vanished, while his master walked up and down the room, fuming at the loss of the curiosity. In a few minutes Jaggard returned with the news that none of the servants had been in the smoking-room that evening.

"Who lighted the lamp?" demanded Jen, sharply.

"We found the window open when we came in," said Maurice. "Did you open it?"

"Yes, sir. The Major told me to always air the room during dinner."

"Do you think that someone has stolen the stick, Maurice?" said the Major. "Someone from outside, I mean."

"I am sure of it," replied Aylmer, with decision. "Jaggard, did you notice that negroess of Mrs. Dallas' about the grounds, since 5 o'clock?"

"Why, no, Mr. Maurice; I can't say as I did."

"The tramp, then; Battersea!"

"No, sir. Haven't set eyes on him for a week."

"Very good, Jaggard," broke in the Major. "You can go, Maurice!" he turned to the young man when Jaggard had left the room, "what do you mean by all these questions and examinations? Do you suspect anyone?"

"Yes," replied Maurice, deliberately. "I suspect Dido, the negroess."

"Why?" asked Jen, with military brevity.

"It's a long story," returned Maurice. "Look here, Uncle Jen, I want to dress at half-past six; you did also. When we left the stick was in the room on the wall. Now we are here again at half-past eight; it is gone. In these two hours Dido has had time to cross the lawn yonder and steal it."

"But why do you suspect Dido? She was never in this room."

"No, but Dr. Etwald was."

"Dr. Etwald! Do you think he has anything to do with it?" queried Jen, perplexed, and a trifle startled.

"I am certain of it," replied Maurice. "He employed Dido to steal it from you, as you refused to sell it. Listen, uncle, and I'll give you my reasons for this belief." and then Maurice told succinctly all that had taken place at "The Wigwam" during the afternoon.

Major Jen listened quietly, and waited until Maurice ended his story before he spoke. The information about Mrs. Dallas and her reference to himself did not surprise him so much as Aylmer expected it would do. In fact, he only made one brief remark upon this point.

"I am sorry Mrs. Dallas said that," he remarked, when Maurice paused in his narrative.

"But what does she mean by it, Uncle Jen? Didn't you wish me to marry Isabella?"

"I am neither for nor against," replied Jen, enigmatically. "As I said before, let the girl marry whom she loves best."

"She loves me best!"

Major Jen wriggled uneasily in his seat. He disliked telling what appeared to him to be a silly story, but as such story bore strongly upon the present position of things, and as Maurice was impatiently waiting to be enlightened, Jen was forced to put his scruples on one side and speak out.

"If what I relate appears impossible, don't blame me," he said abruptly, "and I feel certain that you will laugh when I tell you about Voodoo!"

"That word again!" cried Maurice, in a puzzled voice. "Dido used it when we met Etwald; she repeated it to me before I left. Voodoo! Voodoo! What does it mean, Uncle Jen?"

"African witchcraft! Ob! Fetish-worship! The adoration of the bad spirit who catches mortals by the hair. Any one of these things explains the meaning of the term."

"H'm!" said Maurice. "It is a devil-worship pure and simple."

"Yes, and Mrs. Dallas knows more about it than is good for her. My boy," Jen laid his hand upon the arm of the young man, "when you reach my age you will find that there is no limit to the credulity and folly of human beings. When I was stationed in the Barbadoes many years ago I met Mrs. Dallas."

"Oh! so she is an old friend of yours?"

"Yes. I knew her in the West Indies shortly before Isabella was born. It was through knowing me," explained the Major, "that she came to this neighborhood and rented The Wigwam. You see, Maurice, I was one of the few people she knew here, and she remained near me for company's sake, and because she was afraid of herself."

"I don't quite understand."

(To be continued.)

American plows, threshers and reapers cover the fields of Argentina

URNS DOWN METHODISTS.

Roosevelt Deplores Tumult Caused by Vatican Incident.

Rome, April 6.—The chief material development in the Roosevelt-Vatican incident today was Mr. Roosevelt's repudiation of an attempt of the Methodist organization here to interpret his action as an endorsement of its work.

This repudiation took the form of calling off a reception to the members of the American colony, which was to have been held tomorrow night at the embassy, and it resulted directly from the issuance of a statement yesterday by Rev. B. M. Tipple, pastor of the American Methodist church, in which he severely arraigned the Roman Catholic church.

Mr. Roosevelt continues to deprecate in the most vigorous fashion, the fierce religious tumult caused by the incident, which he regards as personal to himself, and continues entirely confident that his countrymen, Catholic as well as Protestant, when the facts in the case are clearly and dispassionately examined, will sustain his position.

When the Vatican's statement, likening the situation to what might occur in Germany if he visited the Polish Separatists after seeing the emperor, was called to Mr. Roosevelt's attention, he said:

"If the German emperor would place as a condition to an audience that I should not see the Poles, I should make a similar reply. Upon that condition I shall be compelled to forego the pleasure of an audience."

A phase of the situation attracting more and more attention here is the open disapproval of the Vatican's action by numerous Catholics. This is not confined to laymen, but extends to the hierarchy and even to the sacred college itself. Some of the cardinals have privately expressed dissent from the action that places the church in a position in any way hostile to Mr. Roosevelt.

Catholics dwell on the many evidences of his friendship while he was the occupant of the White House and declare emphatically that the church is being placed in a false position toward the ex-president and toward America.

CARMEN'S STRIKE DIES.

Philadelphia Company Will Take Back Old Men When Needed.

Philadelphia, April 6.—Declaring that it had in its employ more than 5,000 of the 7,000 men needed for the operation of its cars, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit company announced today that so far as it was concerned the strike of its former employees was at an end. The company added that for the vacancies still existing in the operating forces the strikers if they applied for work, would be given preference over other applicants.

The leaders of the strike, on the other hand, maintain the strike has settled into a struggle of endurance and the company in the end will be forced to grant concessions and take back all the strikers.

The company today posted rules governing the employment of its men. The rules are practically the same as contained in the proposition made to the strikers through Mayor Reyburn two weeks ago, except no mention is made of several concessions the company had been willing to grant the strikers.

All employees are free to join any labor organization. The workday shall be not less than nine nor more than ten hours in any one day, the full day's work to be completed within 12 hours as nearly as possible.

In an altercation between Harold Lafne, a striking conductor, and Hod Alexander, a division superintendent of the Rapid Transit company, today, Alexander was shot in the head. Lafne was arrested and Alexander was removed to a hospital. His condition is critical.

Capacity Reception Planned.

New York, April 6.—To determine just what is the limit of Theodore Roosevelt's strenuousness in the way of a welcome home is the question occupying the committee named by Mayor Gaynor to arrange the reception in honor of the ex-president. The plan is to give him just as big a reception as he can stand. Most of the members believe he can stand a great deal, and the program will be arranged with this idea in view. More than 200 members of the committee met this afternoon.

Freight Rates to Be Increased.

Minneapolis, April 6.—"The railroad must and will increase their freight rates," say the railroad men of this city. "On one side the states and Federal government are dictating to us and on the other side are the unions, practically dictating their wages. The only recourse the railroads have is an increase in rates. The more outgo the more the income must be."

Bank Raided; Two Slain.

Pittsburg, April 6.—Samuel Friedman, general manager of the Victor Banking company at McKees Rocks, was killed by bank robbers tonight. Friedman's assistant, Isaac Schwartz, was wounded by the robbers and died in a hospital later. Robert King, a bystander, was dangerously wounded.

Does Radium Exist?

This rather surprising question is raised by Dr. Gustav Le Bon, a well known scientist, who calls upon the friends of science to contribute \$10,000, the sum which he estimates as probably necessary to cover the cost of experiments to prove whether radium really exists. His own idea is that there is no such metal, and that the phenomena from which its existence has been inferred are due to unknown combinations analogous to those which impart the property of phosphorescence to certain sulphides. He calls attention to the fact that what we usually call radium is simply the chloride or bromide of an unknown substance. A pure chloride, he says, is never phosphorescent, but becomes so when mixed with traces of certain other substances. He predicts that the result of the research that he proposes would be to derive from the so-called chloride of radium nothing more than the well known metal barium, and holds that the observed radio-activity results simply from certain now unknown chemical combinations.

Equal to the Emergency.

"No, Gerald," she said, shaking her lovely head; "I positively will not marry you before next June."

"But your father and mother both," urged the young man, "think—"

"Don't quote papa and mamma; they are thinking only of their plans for the summer. If you change my determination, Gerald, you will have to bring more pressure to bear than that."

Gerald, being a resourceful young man, promptly brought the pressure to bear.—Chicago Tribune.

Strict Women Who Love.

The strictest women are at times the most loving. When this happens their attachment is as strong as death, their fidelity as resisting as the diamond. They are hungry for devotion and athirst for sacrifice. Their love is a plety, their tenderness a religion, and they triple the energy of love by enshrining it as a duty.—Henri Frederic Amiel.

By Comparison.

"I notice some of the old newspaper jokes have got on the stage."

"So?"

"Yes; and they really seem quite fresh in musical comedy."—Louisville Courier-Journal.



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MUCH IN LITTLE

Longevity is most frequent in countries of low birth rate.

Penny postage is proposed between Great Britain and Turkey.

A bushel of grain will make four and one-half gallons of spirits or twenty-seven gallons of beer.

The world's estimated steam power in use to-day is 12,000,000 horse power.

The German iron and steel industry is apparently as busy and prosperous as the Americans.

The City Council of Chicago has killed the proposed ordinance prohibiting peddlers and newsboys from crying their wares.

American capitalists are trying to form a merger of every acre of timber-producing land in Nova Scotia, investing \$5,500,000.

A tack hammer, the head of which folds into a recess in the stick, for convenience in carrying, has been patented by a Pennsylvanian.

Spyro Matsouka of Athens, Greece, poet and lecturer, who has been touring America for six months, is seriously ill at the Presbyterian Hospital, in New York.

Now None of Usation.

"I don't speak to the woman across the street any more."

"What's the matter now?"

"She's for Peary."—Birmingham Age-Herald.