

# The Wand of Sleep OR The Devil-Stick

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

## CHAPTER X.

Great was the dismay throughout the country side when it became known that Maurice Aymer had been murdered. There was hardly a person of consequence in the county who could not claim at least a bowing acquaintance with him. Moreover, Maurice was one of those men who are always popular, and much sympathy was manifested for his untimely death. Also the mysterious way in which he had come to his end, the absence of any known motive, and the knowledge that the deceased had no enemies—all these things combined to raise public curiosity to the highest pitch.

Crowds of people came from all parts of the country to view the scene of the crime, and, if possible, to gain a glimpse of Jen and David, who as relatives of the deceased were notorious for the time being; but thanks to the presence of the police and the vigilance of Jaggard, the morbid crowd of sightseers were unable to gratify their curiosity. The two men remained in seclusion, and saw no one save Dr. Etwald. A sympathetic message arrived from Mrs. Dallas, which, considering the way she had behaved towards Maurice, the Major regarded as a gratuitous insult.

"Can't she let the poor man rest in his grave?" said Jen, wrathfully. "It is all through her opposition to the match that this has come about!"

"Oh, you can't say that, Uncle Jen," remonstrated David.

"Yes, I can, sir. If Maurice had not been prevented from seeing Isabella, there would have been no necessity for him to call on Etwald; and if he had not done that, he would not have been on the high-road in the night to meet with his death. Mrs. Dallas and her infernal negroes are at the bottom of this whole accursed business."

Of course this was mere raving on the part of Jen, but the poor man was beside himself with grief at the loss of Maurice, and hardly knew what he was saying. Being in this frame of mind, he was by no means pleased when shortly after the delivery of Mrs. Dallas' message Dido made her appearance with a request for a personal interview.

"I shan't see that black witch," cried the poor Major. "David—Etwald, send her away."

"I wouldn't if I were you, Major!" said Etwald, judiciously; "she might be the bearer of valuable information, likely to lead to the detection of Aymer's assassin."

David left the room and remained absent for some time. On his return he stated that Dido had come with a message from Isabella, and that she refused to deliver it to anyone save the Major. Seeing that the negroess was thus insistent, and wondering what Miss Dallas might want with him at so painful a time, Jen yielded, and Dido was admitted into the library. She looked taller, more massive, and more sullen than ever, and though she trembled at the sight of Dr. Etwald—who, by the way, kept his dark eyes studiously fixed on her—she was fairly composed when she addressed the Major.

"My lil missy want you, sar," said Dido, going straight to the point. "She weep! She ill! She make terrible bobbey, dat poo' girl. Massa come an' see my lil missy dis day!"

"I can't at present! The police are in the house; there is a lot to be attended to. Tell your mistress, Dido, that I'll see her to-morrow."

"She wants you to-day!" insisted Dido, obstinately.

"I have given you the message," said Jen, sharply. "Tell her I'll see her to-morrow. And now, Dido, I want to know what you have to do with this crime?"

"I, massa! Ole Dido she do nuffin. Massa Maurice he die Voodoo! Oh, yes!"

"By that devil-stick poison?"

"Me don't know what debble-stick is! I no touch him!"

It was clearly impossible to learn anything from so obstinate a creature, so Jen repeated that he would call upon Isabella on the morrow, and dismissed the negroess. As she left the room Dr. Etwald followed her, and on his return mentioned casually that he had been giving Dido some instructions as to what was to be done with Isabella.

"The girl is nervously excited," he explained; "and now that she has sustained this shock of Mr. Aymer's death there is no knowing what complications may ensue."

"You are a prophet of evil, Etwald! First, my poor Maurice, now Miss Dallas!"

"As to that," replied Etwald, with deliberation, "I foretold that Miss Dallas may get ill from perfectly natural signs. She was in love with Aymer; she is of a highly excitable and nervous character, so it is easy to know that unless great care is exercised, her brain may be affected."

"But with regard to Maurice?"

"Quite a different thing. I read in his hand that he would be subject to a state of Life in Death."

"Which, as we guessed, meant paralysis or catalepsy," said David. "But, as you see, poor Maurice is dead. Your prophecy was false."

"It would seem so. Mr. Aymer is dead, as you say; so the term Life in Death cannot be applied to his present state of non-existence. But you will admit that I foretold that evil would happen to him if he decided to marry Miss Dallas. It has turned out as I thought."

"True, doctor," remarked Jen, keeping his eyes fixed upon the swart face of the other. "And is that all you have to say?"

"All? What else do you expect me to say?" demanded Etwald, coldly.

"Say who you think killed Maurice? Who stole the devil-stick?"

"I can't answer," said the doctor, taking up his hat. "A detective may be able to assist you on these points. Engage one!"

"No," said Jen, taking David by the arm. "We don't need aid from the law to learn who killed Maurice, and avenge his death. David and myself will find the guilty person."

"Really. I hope you will succeed. But a case like this requires a trained intelligence such as you may find in a detective. Of course, you may command my services, Major, but I'm afraid you will not succeed."

When the doctor had taken himself off, and was walking past the library windows towards the curve of the avenue where it ran into the woods, Jen looked after him with a lowering face, and laid an inquiring finger on David's arm.

"Do you trust that man, my boy?" he asked, gravely.

"No," returned Sarby, after a pause. "I think he is a bad lot."

"I am sure of it; and what's more," added Jen, nodding, "it is my opinion that he knows who killed Maurice, if indeed he did not do it himself."

The hours dragged heavily along in that house of mourning. The body of the dead man lay in the little chamber which looked out upon the laurel-encircled lawn. It was covered with a white sheet, the hands were folded upon the breast, and flowers had been laid thereon by the Major. Over the face a handkerchief had been thrown, as the once handsome features were so discolored as to be absolutely repulsive to the sight. There was something terrible in the rigidity of the long form, stretched out so stiffly under the sheet. In the chamber, candles were burning, and Jaggard was watching near the corpse. He was to watch throughout the night.

David retired early to bed, as he was quite worn out with the anxieties of the day; but Jen was too grieved to sleep. He remained in the library, thinking over his great loss, and wondering what wretch could have taken that young life. Towards 12 o'clock he went to the kitchen, and had a short conversation with the policeman, who was a stupid buccolic youth with no more brains than a pumpkin. Afterwards he sought the chamber of death, to see that Jaggard was not sleeping at his post. Finally, like the old soldier he was, Jen went round the house, to satisfy himself that the windows and doors were bolted and barred. All these things done, he returned to the library.

At first he read and then paced up and down, thinking of his dead lad, and finally as the hands of the clock drew to midnight, he threw himself into a chair, and worn out in body and in mind, the old man slept profoundly. Hour after hour passed in silence; the moon set, and the night grew darker, as the mind rose and moaned through the woods round the house. Save the muttering of the breeze and the ticking of the clock, not a sound was to be heard in that silent room wherein Jen slept heavily.

Suddenly he woke with a start. Someone was rapping gently on the shutters of the middle window. Glancing at the clock, Jen saw that it was 3 in the morning, and wondering who could be outside at so untimely an hour, he rose to open the window.

With care, begotten of old experience, he picked up his revolver, and held it ready while unbolting the window shutters. When they were thrown open, he saw a white figure with outstretched hands standing before the window.

"Miss Dallas! You here? At this hour?"

"Yes, yes," whispered the girl, stepping into the room. "I got out of my bedroom window and escaped from my mother and Dido. I want to see Maurice. Take me to the death-chamber."

Seeing from her looks that she was too distraught to be argued with, Jen led her out of the library and into the dead man's room. Then he uttered a cry, which was echoed by a wild shriek from the girl!

The bed was empty—the corpse was gone.

## CHAPTER XI.

Astounded and horrified, the Major, with Isabella Dallas clinging to his arm, stood staring at the empty bed. The candles were still burning, but Jaggard had fallen from his chair, and was lying, a huddled heap upon the floor. The one window of the room was wide open, and the wind was shaking a loose shutter to and fro. The shock of the discovery was so terrific that Jen, for once in his life, lost his presence of mind. He was recalled to his senses by the wild voice of Isabella.

"Maurice! Maurice! Where is he?" she cried, leaving the Major and rushing towards the empty bed. "You said he was here—my poor dead love; but I can't see him. Where is he? Where is he?"

Jen turned his horrified gaze on the poor girl. He did not know what to do. Isabella was in a dangerous state of hysteria. She had little on but a loose white dressing-gown, and her presence in the house at 3 o'clock in the morning was enough to overpower Jen's sense of the reasonable. Independent of the crowning horror of the missing corpse. At this juncture the much-needed aid came from without. David Sarby rushed into the room.

He was half-clothed, pale as the white dress of Isabella Dallas, and evidently, from the wild look in his eyes and quivering of his nether lip, badly scared. Stopping short a few paces from the door, he held up the lamp which he carried, to survey the astonishing scene before him. The sight of Jen tongue-tied and immovable, of Isabella weeping on her knees by the bedside, of the bed itself vacant of its dead occupant—all these things were calculated to shock even stronger nerves than those of David Sarby. Nevertheless, after a pause of sheer astonishment, he managed to stammer out a question.

"Did—did she cry out?" he asked, nodding towards the girl. "I heard a shriek."

His presence and question unlocked the Major's tongue.

"Yes," he replied, in a hesitating manner, as of one unused to speech. "She came to the library window ten minutes ago, having escaped from the custody of her mother and Dido. Quite hysterical, as you see, and bent upon seeing our poor dead lad. To pacify her I brought her here, but, as you see—"

"The body is gone!" cried David, hurrying towards the bed.

"Gone! gone!" moaned Isabella, rising. "Oh, my dear dead lover!"

"Jaggard!"

"There!" said Jen, pointing to the inanimate form of his old servant.

"We must alarm the house," cried Sarby, in a horrified tone, and thereupon walked swiftly towards the door. Before he could reach it the Major, having recovered his presence of mind, seized him by the arm.

"No, no!" said Jen, hastily. "Do not bring anyone here as yet. We must think of this poor girl, David. Take her home at once. When you are both out of the house I shall give the alarm. You understand; no one must know that Miss Dallas has been in my house at this hour."

"I quite agree with you," said David, simply; and turning to Isabella, he took her gently by the hand. "Come, Miss Dallas. This is no place for you."

"Maurice," muttered Isabella, looking piteously at him.

"Maurice is not here. Come, Miss Dallas; let me take you back to your mother."

"My mother is so cruel," said Isabella, in a low tone, "and I feel so ill," she continued, raising her hand to her loose hair. "Yes, yes; I must go home. But Maurice—my dear Maurice—"

"I shall tell you all about it to-morrow," answered Jen, soothingly, and led her out of the room. "At the present moment you must go home with Mr. Sarby. David, there is a loose cloak of mine in the hall. Wrap it round her and come in the library. It is best that she should leave in the way she came."

David did as he was told, and snatched up his old ulster after wrapping up Isabella. In the library they found the Major reopening the shutters of the window, which he had closed on the girl's entry. When he flung them wide, a gust of wind blew inward, sprinkling him with moisture.

"Rain," said Jen, drawing back. "All the better; there will be no spies about, and you can take Miss Dallas home without being observed."

Taking the girl by the hand, David led her towards the window. She was in a half-dazed condition, the result of the strong excitement which had impelled her to make this midnight visit, and her nerves being thus dulled, she surrendered herself passively to the guidance of David. Only at the window did she pause, and look steadfastly at the Major.

"You must find out what has become of my dear Maurice's body," she said, quietly.

"I promise you," replied Jen, with a look of stern determination in his face. (To be continued.)

## Demeanor Analyzed.

"Your chauffeur seems very respectful," said the guest.

"That air of deferential solicitude," replied Mr. Chuggins, "is not respect. It is sympathy."—Washington Star.

## Naturally.

Medical Professor—What is the result, young gentlemen, when a patient's temperature goes down as far as it can? Student—Why—er—he gets cold feet.—Cleveland Leader

## FASHION HINTS



This outing suit of rose colored linen has small tucks paneled in the sides of the blouse and skirt. Black linen is used for the belt, collar and deep cuffs.

A jaunty tie is drawn through the slash in the blouse front, giving just the required dash to the whole.

## CLAIMS A LAKH.

Preparatory to a Big Oil Venture Through Boring in Its Bed.

A fight for title to 4,400 acres of Ferry Lake in Caddo parish, southwest Louisiana, and said to be an oil field valued at approximately \$5,000,000, has been begun before Commissioner Dennett of the general land office.

The claimant is John H. King of Texarkana, Texas, who made entry over one year ago under the placer mining act. He claims that the area of the lake was never turned over by the government to the State of Louisiana, and as the attorney general of that State did not put in an appearance yesterday it is believed that the State is content to let the general government deal with the proposition before it in any manner it may deem advisable.

Former Representative John J. Lents of Columbus, Ohio; J. A. Teller of Little Rock, Ark., and J. D. Korner, also of the capital of Ohio, made up the legal array which presented Mr. King's side of the case. At the close of the argument Commissioner Dennett took the matter under advisement. He did not announce when a decision will be rendered in the matter.

For several months past it has been believed that the State officials of Louisiana were going to put up a vigorous fight for the lake, which also has a considerable area in the State of Texas. Several years ago, while prospecting over the general oil field in the section where the lake is located, Mr. King discovered that while the Standard Oil Company had located its wells on all sides of the property, no attempt had been made to locate on the lake.

He then went to work, and made a close examination of the records bearing on the question of title to the land on which the lake lies. This was formerly government land before the back water from the Red River overflowed the section and left the lake. He ascertained, so it was pointed out in the argument of the attorneys before Commissioner Dennett yesterday that the lake was never turned over by the general government to the State of Louisiana, and he lost no time in making an entry on the 4,400 acres in question, which is believed to be the richest in the section in point of possible oil fields.

With his entry he then made his plans to bring the matter to the attention of the commissioner of the general land office, so as to perfect the title before he begins operations for locating oil wells. He talked at length yesterday of the question and pointed out that as the lake is only about two or three feet deep it will be a comparatively easy matter to locate oil wells in all parts of the area covered by the 4,400 acres in question. Mr. King is positive from the investigations he has made that the area is of immense value and hopes as soon as he gets title to begin operations.

The section in which the lake is located in both Texas and Louisiana is looked upon by oil experts everywhere as a particularly rich oil country, and this fact has been singularly brought out, it is declared, by reason of the fact that the Standard Oil Company has come into the section and bought up all the land bordering on the lake.—Washington Star.

## A Wedding Merchant.

The jeweler had left his new boy in charge of the store while he went home to his dinner, but not until he cautioned the youth that all the goods were marked and that he must not let anyone take goods with him unless they were paid for.

"Well, Sam," he asked upon his return, "did you have any customers?"

"You bet!" said Sam, gleefully. "And I got his money, too! I sold one man all those brass rings you had that were marked 18c on the inside, and here's the money—a dollar and ninety-eight cents!"—Judge.



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The women of Allington, Conn., have organized for the protection of their village from fire. They are to hold a country fair, the proceeds of which will be used to buy apparatus. They will also form a woman's brigade of the fire department.

Mother's will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the teething period.

John D. He accumulated many rocks. And this is his explanation: "I need them all—in spite of your knocks—To make a secure Foundation."—Chicago Tribune.

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Reason for the Name. First Milliner—You have designed the north pole hat? Second Milliner—Yes; it will be a matter of dispute between the purchaser and her husband.—New York Sun.

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