

The Wand of Sleep OR The Devil-Stick

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

CHAPTER XIV.

"One moment!" said Jen, as they approached the veranda, whereon Dido was waiting them. "How do you know that Etwald picked up the handkerchief in the room?"

"Because I overheard his apology to my mother for having put her handkerchief to such use," replied Isabella, with suspicious promptitude.

"Humph! Didn't the doctor think it strange that he should find it there? Rather peculiar, don't you think, seeing that he must necessarily have been ignorant of your visit on that night?"

"He was not ignorant of that! To account for the fever which seized me, my mother explained all that took place to Dr. Etwald. He quite understood that I had dropped the handkerchief."

"Did he apologize for his use of it—before or after the explanation?" was Jen's final question.

"After!" replied Isabella, with some hesitation; then abruptly left the Major's side to exchange a few words with Dido. Jen looked after her with a glance full of doubt and suspicion. Notwithstanding her love for Maurice, and her expressed desire to avenge his death by hunting down the assassin, she appeared to be anything but frank in the matter. In plain words, her conduct suggested to Jen's mind an idea that she knew more than she cared to talk about; and that such half-hinted knowledge implicated her mother. In which case—but here Dido interrupted Jen's meditations.

"My missy tell me you wish to hear my Obl," she said, abruptly fixing her eyes on the face of the visitor. "Why you wish? You laugh at Obl?"

"I don't particularly wish to learn your Voodoo secrets," answered Jen, carelessly. "All I desire to know is why you manufactured that scent with which you saturated a certain handkerchief of your mistress?"

"Mother's handkerchief, Dido," explained Isabella, interrupting. "The one you bound round my head."

"Oh, dat a Voodoo smell to drib away de evil spirit," said Dido, solemnly addressing herself more particularly to the Major. "My witch-mudder, she learn to make dat in her own land. Too much of it kill—kill—kill!"

"By means of its odor?"

"No, dat only drib away bad debbls. But you scratch de skin wid one leetle bit of it, and you die, die, die!"

"And the scratch is made by means of the wand of sleep?"

"Ets. Dat so," said Dido, with pretended surprise, turning on him sharply. "But you no b'lieve in Obl, massa. What you know of de wand of sleep—de debble-stick?"

"Because I had one, Dido."

"The negress laughed with scornful doubt.

"Ho, dat one big lie. Der ain't no debble-stick, but in the king's palace at Kumassi."

"You are wrong. I had one, and it was stolen by—"

"Who, of course," interrupted Isabella, again. "Don't you remember, Dido, you were asked if you had taken it?"

"Ho, yes. Now I do tink," said Dido. "Ah, massa, you say I took de debble-stick and made de new smell to fill him. Den dat I kill wid him massa, who lubbed his missy, and dat I made spells in your house to steal de body. Hey, dat no so?"

"It certainly is so," assented Jen, astonished to hear her put his suspicions into such plain words. "Mr. Aylmer was killed by means of this poison. It was used again to render my servant insensible while the body was stolen. So I thought—"

"I know, I know!" broke in Dido, impatiently. "But dat not to do with me. De poison in your debble-stick."

"There was; but it was all dried up."

"Not dat nassin. If you pour water in dat stick de poison come alive. Well, dat stick taken, but I no take it. Dat po' young massa killed wid it—I no kill him. But de odder ting, sah. Dat smell! I mek it for missy, dat all! And having made this explanation, Dido folded her arms, and waited in scornful silence to hear what her accuser had to say. He considered the absolute absurdity of her story, which—on the face of it—was a manifest invention, and one which it would seem, was supported by the testimony of Isabella.

"You are satisfied now, I think," said this latter, seeing that the Major did not speak.

"Well, yes, Miss Dallas," returned he, with much deliberation. "I am satisfied—for the time being."

"Does Dido's explanation give you any clue?"

"It gives me a clue in a direction for which I should not have looked for it. Thank you, Miss Dallas—and you, Dido. I shall now say good-day."

"When will you return?"

"When I have followed to its end the clue of which we have been speaking," replied Jen, and taking off his hat, he walked swiftly away from the house.

When he vanished round the curve of the drive, Isabella, with a very pale face, turned towards Dido.

"I have told all the lies you wished me to tell," she said, hurriedly. "I have hidden from the sharp eyes of Major Jen those things which you wished hidden, and all at the cost of my honor and honesty."

She ran hastily into the house, as though to escape further conversation on a distasteful subject, while Dido, with her eyes on the ground, remained in deep thought. The old negress knew that she was placed in a perilous position, which might be rendered even more so, should Isabella speak freely. But of this she had little fear, as by her conversation with Major Jen the girl had gone forward upon a path of concealment whence there was now no retreat. Yet Dido was not satisfied. She did not trust those around her, and she was uneasy as to what might be the result of Jen's pertinacity in investigating both the death of Maurice and the disappearance of the body. Thus perplexed, it occurred to her to seek out and consult with Dr. Etwald.

"I shall tell the master all," she muttered, in her own barbaric dialect, "and he will tell me what to do. The spirit in the Voodoo stone will tell him."

Having come to this resolution, she went into the house to ask, or rather to demand, permission to visit Deaminster. That she was about to call upon Etwald, the negress did not think it necessary to tell Mrs. Dallas. There were matters between her and the doctor of which Mrs. Dallas knew nothing, which she would not have understood if she had known. When she inquired, Dido merely hinted that such secrets had to do with Obl, when the superstitious nature of Mrs. Dallas immediately shrank from pursuing an inquiry into what were—even to this civilized so-called Christian woman—sacred mysteries.

But while Dido goes on her dark path and takes her way towards Etwald in his gloomy house at Deaminster, it is necessary to return to the doings of Major Jen. On leaving "The Wigwam" he returned forthwith to his own house with the intention of repeating to David the conversation which had taken place between himself, Dido, and Isabella. On his arrival, however, he learned that David had gone out for a walk, and that Meg Brance was waiting for him in the library. At once the ever-courteous Major hastened to apologize to his visitor.

"My dear Meg, I am so sorry to have been absent when you called. I hope you have not been waiting long!"

"Only half an hour!" replied Meg, in a low, grave voice. "I should have waited in any case until your return, as I have something important to say to you."

The Major looked inquiringly at his visitor. She was a tall and stately woman, with a fair complexion, steady blue eyes, and hair of a deep red shade. Although close on 25 years of age, she was still a spinster, as much to the annoyance of her mother—a match-making matron—she had hitherto declined the most eligible offers for her hand. Her reasons for such refusals she would not state, but Jen—from certain observations—had long since guessed the truth. Meg was deeply in love with Maurice Aylmer, and it was for his sake that she remained single. Whether she knew that the young man loved Isabella Dallas it is impossible to say; but at all events she showed him very plainly the drift of her desires. The very indifference of Aylmer had rendered her love more violent and persistent. What would have been the conclusion of this one-sided love it is difficult to conjecture; but the death of Maurice had brought this and all other things to an abrupt conclusion.

Meg was dressed in black out of regard for the dead man, and she looked worn, red-eyed, and very dejected. But in coming forward to greet the Major, her fine blue eyes lighted up with the fire of hope, and it was with something of her old impetuosity—quenched since the death of Maurice—that she gave him her hand and repeated her last remark.

"I have something to say to you," she said, quickly. "Something likely to help you in your investigation."

"Concerning the theft of the body?" asked Jen, eagerly.

"No, with regard to the murder."

"What is it?"

"I will inform you in a few minutes," replied Meg. "But first tell me if you have found out anything likely to reveal the truth."

"No," Jen shook his head mournfully. "I am completely in the dark, and so is Inspector Arkel. The whole case is a profound mystery."

"Well, mysteries, even the most profound, have been cleared up before now, Major. Come, tell me precisely how the matter stands, and I may be able to help you."

"You know something?"

"Yes, I do; and it is to tell that something that I have driven over today. Well, now, Major, let me know all about the matter from the beginning. I have heard nothing but the most garbled accounts, and it is necessary that I should know the exact truth."

"I shall tell it to you," replied Jen, with some hesitation; "but I am afraid I shall give you pain."

"I guess what you mean—Miss Dallas."

"Maurice wanted to marry her."

"I know, I know," replied Meg, while a wave of color passed over her fair face.

"You do!" cried Jen, in surprise.

"And who told you?"

"Mr. Sarby."

"Oh!" The Major considered a moment, and his thoughts were anything but benevolent towards David. "I can guess why he told you. In the meantime, let me state the case. Maurice was killed on the high-road by means, as I verily believe, of the devil-stick. You know about that, of course?"

"Yes; I read the report of the inquest, and I have heard rumors. I agree with you, Major, that Mr. Aylmer was killed by the poison of the devil-stick. Go on."

"On the night that the body was stolen," continued Jen, deliberately, "Jaggard was drugged by means of a perfume which is the same that impregnating the devil-stick."

"Well," said Meg, "it would seem that the devil-stick is the center of this mystery. If you found the devil-stick you would know the truth."

"I don't go as far as that," protested Jen. "If we found the person who stole the devil-stick from my smoking room, I might guess the truth."

"In that case, Major, look at this," said Meg, and she produced an article from her pocket; an article which she held up triumphantly before the astonished eyes of the old man.

"The devil-stick!" he cried. "By all that is wonderful, the devil-stick!"

"Yes, the devil-stick. I got it from the assassin of Mr. Aylmer!"

"The assassin—you know the assassin. Who is he—or she?"

"It is not a woman, but a man. Battersea!"

CHAPTER XV.

Major Jen sprang to his feet with a loud cry. The information that Battersea was the criminal took him so utterly by surprise that for the moment he was tongue-tied. Then, when he recalled the feeble and emaciated form of the old tramp, when he recollected his weak intelligence; he altogether declined to believe that such a creature could have conceived and executed a triple crime—the theft of the devil-stick—the murder of Maurice—the stealing of the body. Battersea had not sufficient craft or strength to do such things. With a shrug of his shoulders the Major resumed his seat.

"You must be mistaken, Meg," he said, in a quiet voice. "Whoever may be guilty, Battersea, for physical and mental reasons, must be innocent."

"That you must prove," replied Meg, dryly, "and in accusing Battersea I go only on your own premises. You said that the man who stole the devil-stick, who had it in his possession, must be the guilty person. You see the devil-stick there." She pointed to the table.

"Well, I obtained that from Battersea."

"How did you obtain it?"

"Knowing that I collected curiosities, he came to sell it to me."

"A proof of his innocence," cried Jen, promptly. "If the man had been guilty, he certainly would not offer the evidence of his guilt for sale. Where did he obtain this devil-stick?"

"Out of your smoking-room, I presume," said Meg. "But I have not questioned him, as I thought it best that you should examine him yourself."

"Certainly, when I can find him. Where is he now?"

"Round at your stables with my groom. I brought him over with me."

"Thank you, Meg," said Jen, cordially. "I congratulate you on your presence of mind, and on your courage."

"There is no necessity to congratulate me at all," replied the other, coloring. "I knew that it would not be wise to let him out of sight after I saw the devil-stick in his possession. And as to my courage," she added, carelessly, "the poor old creature is so feeble that even I—a woman—could overpower him. But ring the bell, Major, and have him in. I may be wrong. He may be innocent, but if you force him to confess how he obtained possession of the devil-stick, you may get at the truth—and perhaps at the name of the murderer."

"It won't be the name of Battersea," said Jen, touching the button of the bell. "He had no motive to steal my devil-stick, or to kill Maurice, nor could he have any reason to take possession of a dead body. Besides," added Jen, returning to his seat, "if this tramp were guilty, he would scarcely put his neck in danger by offering you the devil-stick for sale."

At this moment the footman appeared in answer to the bell, and in obedience to his master's peremptory order, left the room again for the purpose of bringing in old Battersea for examination. While waiting, neither Meg nor the Major spoke, as they both considered that nothing further could be said until the truth was forced from the tramp. Then the present aspect of the case might change, and an important step might be taken towards the solution of the mystery.

(To be continued.)

What I am and what I think are conveyed to you in spite of my efforts to hold it back.—Emerson.

FASHION HINTS



Navy blue marquisette trimmed in white foulard, thickly dotted with navy blue—it was a little dress that made one marvel at its simplicity and style. In one word it was "satisfying."

IN OLD VIRGINIA.

Blue Laws of Cavaliers Much More Strict Than Those of Puritans.

The blue laws of the Puritans weren't in it with the blue laws of old Virginia, though it has always been supposed that the cavaliers of the southland cared more for high living and frivolity than for good behavior and order. In 1662 the following laws were enacted in that State:

Every person who refuses to have his child baptized by a lawful minister (Church of England) shall be amerced 2,000 pounds of tobacco, half to the parish, half to the informer.

To steal or unlawfully kill any box that is not his own the offender shall pay to the owner 1,000 pounds of tobacco and as much to the informer, and in case of inability to pay shall serve as a slave two years, one to the owner, one to the informer.

No marriage shall be reputed valid in law but such as is made by a minister according to the laws of England. The minister who doth marry contrary to this act shall be fined 10,000 pounds of tobacco.

If a married woman shall slander a person the woman shall be punished by ducking, and if the damages be adjudged more than 500 pounds of tobacco her husband shall pay, or the woman receive a ducking for every 500 pounds so adjudged against her husband if he refuse to pay the tobacco.

Enacted that the Lord's Day be kept holy and no journeys or work done thereon, and all persons inhabiting in this country shall resort every Sunday to church and abide there quietly and orderly during the common prayers and preaching, upon the penalty of being fined 50 pounds of tobacco.

Any person inhabiting this country and entertaining a Quaker in or near his house shall, for every time of such entertainment, be fined 5,000 pounds of tobacco, half to the county, half to the informer.

Every master of a vessel that shall bring any Quakers to reside here after July 1 of this year shall be fined 5,000 pounds of tobacco, to be levied by distress and sale of his goods, and he then shall be made to carry him, her or them out of the country again.

The court in every county shall set up near the Court House, in a public and convenient place, a pillory, a pair of stocks, a whipping post and a ducking stool. Otherwise the court shall be fined 5,000 pounds of tobacco.

Fact Versus Theory.

"The teacher of one of the rooms in a school in the suburbs of Cleveland had been training her pupils in anticipation of a visit from the school commissioner," said George S. Wells of Pittsburg at the Shoreham. "At last he came and the classes were called out to show their attainments.

"The arithmetic class was the first called, and in order to make a good impression the teacher put the first question to Johnny Smith, the star pupil.

"Johnny, if coal is selling at \$6 a ton and you pay the coal dealer \$24, how many tons of coal will he bring you?"

"Three," was the prompt reply from Johnny.

"The teacher, much embarrassed, said, 'Why, Johnny, that isn't right.'

"'Oh, I know it ain't, but they do it anyhow.'"

Household Remedy

Taken in the Spring for Years.

Ralph Rust, Willis, Mich., writes: "Hood's Sarsaparilla has been a household remedy in our home as long as I can remember. I have taken it in the spring for several years. It has no equal for cleansing the blood and expelling the humors that accumulate during the winter. Being a farmer and exposed to bad weather, my system is often affected, and I often take Hood's Sarsaparilla with good results. Hood's Sarsaparilla is Peculiar to Itself. There is no 'just as good.' Get it today in usual liquid form or tablets called Sarsatabs.

Its Good Work.

The director of a prison received an order after many years' service. He had all the prisoners called together and made the following speech to them:

"As you see, I have been decorated, by royal grace, with an order. But I willingly acknowledge that this has been attained not alone by my own merits, but by the co-operation of all of us. I can also declare, with pleasure, that since I have occupied this office the number of prisoners has increased from 400 to 700—a fact of which both you and I may be justly proud."—London Tit-Bits.

How He Remembered.

"No, Dickey; I can't let you go fishing to-day. You want to go entirely too often."

"Maw, the last time I went fishin' was three weeks ago yesterday."

"Surely that wasn't the last time, Dickey."

"Yes, it was, maw. I remember it 'cause that was the day you held me in 'the bathtub an' made me take a bath."

Record Sale of Paintings.

The public auction of the Yerkes collection of paintings at New York has broken all American records for high prices, the Turner "Rockets and Blue Lights" bringing \$122,000 and the Frans Hals "Portrait of a Lady" going for \$137,000. In two days the sale totaled over a million and a half.

Arranging It.

"I have been on an exploring trip through my husband's summer clothes."

"And these poker chips and these racing form sheets?"

"Constitute the data for my lecture."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

No Need of Haste.

Truth, crushed to earth, was rising, but with exceeding slowness.

"Why should I hurry, anyhow?" said Truth. "The poet says the 'eternal years' are mine."

With which lame excuse she also justified herself for never quite catching up with a fugitive lie.

Italy levies a graduated income tax as well as a direct tax on land and houses. Smaller incomes are exempt from taxation. The minister of finance estimates that the income tax for this year will amount to about \$48,600,000, while the land tax will bring in \$36,400,000.

Reflected from Cricket.

"Do you think baseball will ever get a foothold in England?"

"They play it some."

"As strenuously as we do?"

"Well, no. They serve tea between the innings. I understand."—Pittsburg Post.

Voices from Beyond.

"But where," inquired the new arrival, "do you keep the lost souls who suffer from the gnawings of conscience?"

"My dear sir," answered Pluto, in a fine strain of irony, "do you think anybody with a conscience ever comes here?"

Bad Breath

"For months I had great trouble with my stomach and used all kinds of medicines. My tongue has been actually as green as grass, my breath having a bad odor. Two weeks ago a friend recommended Cascarta and after using them I can willingly and cheerfully say that they have entirely cured me. I therefore let you know that I shall recommend them to any one suffering from such troubles."—Chas. H. Halpern, 114 E. 7th St., New York, N. Y.

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