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The House of the Hidden Gold

WHEN his sons killed him, Doctor Perry M. Talbott, rugged old Missourian, left his money hidden so well, that it took many years to find even a trace of its whereabouts. Only recently has the mystery of the hidden gold been partly solved. The remarkable deductions of Mr. Charles Martin, a self-educated historian, have been largely responsible for the partial solution.

A shotgun exploded in the window of the Talbott farmhouse. With a low moan and clutching spasmodically at his breast, Doctor Perry M. Talbott pitched headlong to the floor, dead.

Mrs. Talbott was with her husband at the time and although completely unnerved, she managed to call a doctor. Afterwards, she gave a detailed account of the happening, which, although vague, furnished the authorities a clue. The sheriff immediately went to work.

This took place in the late '80's, created a state wide sensation and intrigued the interest of the public. Doctor Talbott's two sons,

The House of the Hidden Gold, at the little Missouri town of Arkoe, where the mysterious Talbott murder occurred.



emphatically had not. Moreover, they didn't ever intend to tell it; and furthermore, they wanted the detective to understand that if he gave them away he'd never live to tell a second version of the story. Besides, they had it on him. He had willingly, of his own accord, confessed to having killed a man, and they thought they could send him to the chair if he tried to send them to the gallows.

That was that. But the detective was not satisfied and tried to get more information. Did they know what had become of their father's enormous wealth, or did they know the total wealth?

They said they didn't know a thing about the money, but wished they did. They'd take it and get out of the country. However, the gold had been carefully hidden and dead men did not tell tales. They stated further that the old gentleman's wealth had amounted to more than fifty thousand dollars at the time of his demise. This, it was believed, was primarily in gold.

After this, the detective was unable to obtain any more information of a worth while nature. The next morning he saddled his horse and rode to town. The next time the Talbott boys saw him he appeared at the house with the sheriff and had undergone a remarkable transformation in appearance, being neatly and expensively attired in gray tweed, with gold rimmed spectacles. The mo-

had destroyed the life of their father because of his extreme cruelty to their mother.

The authorities sought to drag the truth from the set lips of the brothers and failed, only because the boys, realizing that they had talked too freely to the detective, were determined to talk no more.

During the trial, the following bits of evidence were forced from the defendants: They did not know what Doctor Talbott had done with his money. Yes, they knew he had left considerable money somewhere, possibly in some hidden place which would be difficult to find. They thought there was at least fifty thousand dollars, though they were not sure. Their father had been exceptionally partial to gold.

They had seen many different kinds of gold coins in his possession. He never kept any greenbacks about him, and thought they were a nuisance.

They refused to disclose to the detective. Hence,

the latter had to make full revelation.

He had led the boys into talking about their father one evening after becoming well acquainted with them. The conversation then was as follows:

"We've got something to be careful about," one of the brothers had said. This when the detective pretended to be a fugitive from justice, himself. "We're like you, in the same boat. What did you do back in New York that made you come here and hide?"

The detective told them that he had killed a man.

"Was it as bad as that?" one of the brothers interrogated.

"Every bit as bad," confessed the investigator somberly. "In fact, if I were to go back to that state they would send me to the electric chair."

"What would you say if we were to tell you that we, too, had committed a murder?" asked the oldest brother.

"I'd sympathize with you," the detective proclaimed. "I know what it means."

"Well," said the oldest of the Talbott brothers, "we did. We killed our father. Shot him through the window with a sawed-off shotgun; and the sheriff has been out here several times looking around and acting like he suspected something. But he ain't got a thing on us. There's nothing he can do without evidence."

"Did you ever tell this to anyone else?" the investigator inquired.

They shook their heads simultaneously. They most

Charles Martin, whose account of the Talbott murder case was the most interesting and accurate of the entire investigation.



good-looking, neat appearing young men, kept up their father's work, getting out the farm crop and doing what they knew their father would have wished.

Doctor Talbott was the community's favorite physician, and was known to be worth considerable money. However, when the time came for a settlement of his debts, the family encountered no little difficulty in raising the required amount of money, making it known at the moment that they knew positively nothing about what had become of Doctor Talbott's wealth. They were barely able to meet the expenses of the funeral after squaring Doctor Talbott's out-standing debts.

Of course the public was mystified. And to aggravate the matter, there had been no arrests made. This provoked the community more than the disappearance of Talbott's wealth. The people residing in the town of Arkoe, Missouri, where the crime took place, insisted upon the authorities making a more strenuous effort to apprehend the murderer.

At this particular stage of the game, several rumors were afloat. One of these had to do with the evidence recently unearthed, that the Talbott boys were acting "queer." The meaning of "queer" was not obvious. Next, a stranger had appeared at the farm, and was working as a hand. This individual was unknown. Mrs. Talbott simply said he had appeared at the back door of the house one morning and asked for employment; and because her boys were befuddled with their work, she had hired him on the spot. This merely caused further uncertainty.

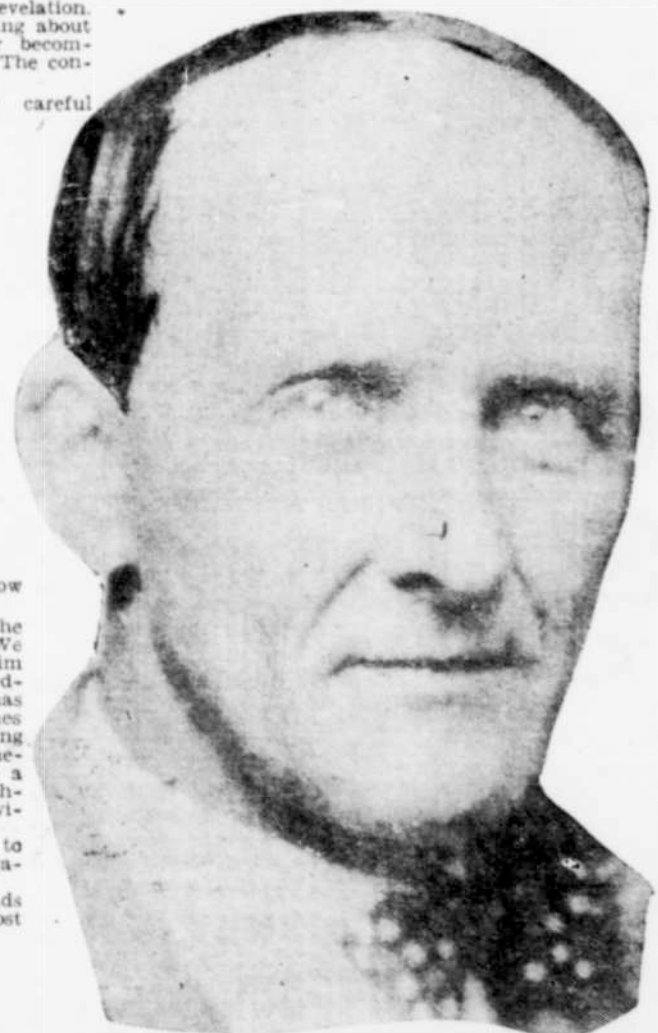
The authorities made no effort to thoroughly investigate the situation. They seemed content to sit back and wait. Eventually interest in the matter considerably diminished. The killer had planned his crime well, and the authorities were completely baffled.

This was one side of the question. On the other side several people were working frantically and religiously, to bring the matter to a head. They had certain suspicions and were doing their best to confirm them. They had even employed a private detective, a man with a splendid reputation for detecting crime and unearthing obstinate clues.

What surprised the community was the fact that Talbott's hand and the private detective were one and the same. Of course this was not revealed until the detective came forward with the evidence which caused the sheriff to make a special trip to the Talbott farm, and to place the two brothers under arrest for the murder of their father. The private investigator disclosed the startling fact that the Talbott boys



Nanna, made famous by her Dance of the Clinking Chains inspired by the treasure story.



Harlin Talbott, playwright and producer, who is writing a play around the "House of the Hidden Gold."

ment the brothers caught a sight of him they knew they had been trapped. They gave up without a struggle.

The Talbott boys were convicted and sentenced to be hanged. They met their fate on the same gallows, when a double trap was sprung. It was the first double hanging in the state and it took place in an open pasture, where hundreds of people could see the gruesome spectacle. The boys met their death unflinchingly. The people of the community claim today, that the Talbott brothers were innocent and died to protect the real killer.

The farmer sacked it up and carried it away. And it was not a dream; for the Talbott gold was there. He had paid one hundred dollars even for the house.

Strangely enough, no one had ever examined the walls of the House of Hidden Gold.

Mr. Charles Martin, influential colored citizen of the county seat, also connected with the Farmer's Trust Company Bank, became an authority on the case. Although he was only a small boy at the time What had become of the hidden gold? That was the question, and no one knew the answer to it. The old Talbott place was called the House of Hidden Gold; while searches and excavations were made there without result.

Recently a poor farmer, while moving the house, heard something rattle to the floor and roll away, dropping from a hole in the unplastered wall. When he looked, he caught his breath. A pile of gold coin burned his eyes.

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