

W. H. Ziff Co., 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago,
Foreign Advertising Representatives

ILLUSTRATED FEATURE SECTION—December 14, 1929

Pictures in the Illustrated Feature Section were posed,
and do not depict principals unless so captioned. BEN DAVIS, Jr.,
Feature Editor

The MYSTERY OF THE VERMILION RAY Still Unsolved!

After a gruesome tragedy the
Haunted Rock sheds a blinding light
which science has not explained.

By DORAN JOHNSON

THIRTY years ago a Negro preacher was riding a mule along the Whitewater road. It was a dark, somber day, and a flying mist filled the air. There was a hint of a heavy rain, and the preacher, Moss Anderson, was in a hurry to reach shelter. It had been misting rain since early morning, and the increasing dampness was against the comfortable travel of the wayfarer. Moss was humming a little song as his mule slowly picked his way over the uncertain road.

When he came to the place where the bluff ran straight up in the air to a dizzy height, Moss suddenly heard a deep rumbling sound, so he quickly brought his mule to a stop. The mule braced his front feet, the instinct of the animal showing in this sudden movement. This, of course, told Moss that something extraordinary was about to take place.

And as the mule stopped, there came, almost before the rider had time to realize it, a deafening crash. But before the enormous rock above had let go of the side of the bluff and cascaded to the earth, Moss Anderson had seen something that stilled his heart. Directly beneath the falling rock stood a Negro woman who clutched the hand of a small child in each of her own.

Moss needed no second flash of thought to assure him that the woman and the two little children had been buried beneath the gigantic rock, and without waiting to investigate, he leaped from the mule, left him standing there in the wagon road that wound around the side of the precipitous bluff, and rushed headlong in the direction of a large white house that stood not more than three hundred yards away.

That was the beginning of the trouble at that particular spot a mile out of Dutchtown, Missouri, and that was when the big rock got its present name: "The Rock of the Haunting Woman." For, as a matter of fact, the remains of the woman and the two little children were never recovered. The rock weighed approximately sixty tons, and there was no way of blasting it, without completely destroying all trace of the human bodies that lay mangled beneath it. Men gathered, women came there and fainted at the horrible tragedy. Men tried to agree upon some sensible course of action to follow, but there was obviously no reasonable tactics to be adopted. The remains of the victims of the enormous rock would have to stay where they were. Come what may, they could not be removed.

Moss Anderson preached a sermon about it the following Sunday



Billie Bailey, who because of his acquaintance with the hills, acted as a guide for the author and a number of investigators. He led the author to a vantage point where the red ray could be seen with remarkable clearness.



The Haunted Rock—the source of the Vermilion Ray. This rock crushed the woman and children.

morning at his miniature church in Piper's Glen, and he told his congregation that he had witnessed a sight that he would never forget as long as he lived; and the old settlers around Dutchtown remember how Moss was a nervous wreck for the balance of his life. It must have been terrible when Moss looked up to see the woman helpless there in the path of the rock and her two small girls holding to her hands for protection. Such a thing as that, once seen, is never easy to erase from the human mind.

Since this tragedy, on each Friday night of every week, for the past twenty-five years, the ghost light of the Rock of the Haunting Woman has never ceased to put in its appearance, regardless of weather conditions, regardless of everything. The light seems to be upon the rock, in the center of it, and the light resembles in some measure a lantern with a red globe such as is used to warn the careless motorist of an excavation on the highway.

Many attempts have been made to solve the mystery of the light, but all these efforts have resulted in failure on the part of the many investigators. There seems to be positively no explanation for the existence of the light with the vermilion ray.

Sometimes the ray can be seen for as far as three hundred yards, while at a distance of a hundred yards the ray is almost blinding. Mrs. Roy Cain, wife of a prominent white hunter and sportsman, almost ran her car to its utter destruction one night when she was on her way to visit her parents.

In fact, it is said that Mrs. Cain actually did run her coupe over the edge of a steep embankment, and succeeded in stopping it only when the front wheels hung over the side. It was a close call, in-

deed. And then, there is the investigation of her husband carried on to prove that there was positively nothing supernatural in the existence of the ghost light.

Cain did not believe in ghosts, so he set out to bring home a solution to the mystery of the vermilion ray. He couldn't tolerate the stories that had been kept alive by the ancient residents of the village of Dutchtown for twenty years. He thought that somebody was having a barrel of fun by perpetrating a practical joke. He was sure some grim joker had started the light business twenty years before, and kept it up.

There would be, when he had completed his minute investigation, nothing left to point to the theory of the ghost light, and then he would make all the fanciful stories that had been believed, seem as fabrications of an over imaginative brain. Consequently, when he launched his attack against the ghost light, he did it with steady and persistent determination.

He approached the rock at nine o'clock on a clear Friday evening. It was in the summer time, and there was a full moon. The air was still. And the creatures of the wild places evidently had hidden away at the first sign of his coming. He parked his car at the bend in the road where his wife had almost gone to her death, took his two bird dogs, his rifle and a belt of cartridges and began slowly and cautiously to move in direction of the rock.

When he had rounded the bend, the vermilion ray which looked as if it had been dipped in human blood, struck him squarely in the eyes. But he did not let this stop him. He moved to a position close enough to get a good shot, lifted his rifle and fired point-blank at the light. The bullet went whang- strange inasmuch as he is an ex-

ing through the night, but when the smoke cleared away, the light was still there.

Now Cain thought this pert rifle shot. To tell the truth he thought it so strange that when he lifted the rifle a second time, to get another shot at the light, he felt his hands tremble slightly. Nervousness! For the first time in his life he felt nervous when about to fire a gun.

He hesitated, called his two dogs, and made them crouch down at his feet. There was something comforting in their presence. He wasn't afraid, and he would not have been nervous had he been dealing with something more natural. Men or animals would not have troubled him the way the mysterious light bothered him; and he felt increasingly queer with that vermilion ray beating against his face.

It had a somewhat warm glow. He knew that if he had been asked to describe how the ray felt against his flesh, he would have failed miserably. Then, from that moment on, he had the certainty that he was dealing with something supernatural.

He lifted the rifle and fired again. This was followed by a third and a fourth shot; but the light did not vanish. He kept on shooting, and all the time he was getting more nervous. Ultimately, however, he ceased to fire, straightened himself up to his full height, and went striding toward the rock. There he climbed up on the top of it, and made an examination of its surface, rubbing his hands over it; but without result. He imagined the rock felt warm there on top yet there was no evidence of there having ever been a light of any sort there.



He approached the rock at nine o'clock on a clear Friday evening. . . . The air was still . . . He . . . began slowly and cautiously to move in the direction of the rock. When he had rounded the bend, the vermilion ray which looked as though it had been dipped in human blood, struck him squarely in the eyes. But he did not let this stop him.



The house near the Haunted Rock, a historical landmark.



"Koko," this young colored fellow, a well-known figure about town, had his eyes severely burned by the mysterious ray.

Chagrined, he climbed down off the rock and walked completely around it. Still, there was no evidence of there being anything out of the way. So he retreated to his former position, and whirling round, with the two dogs at his heels, he shot an inquiring glance at the rock. The light was there and the warm vermilion ray was

(Continued on page 7)