



"Elsie, you believe in ghosts."

her illegitimate child as a decoy for a house of ill repute.

What a deadly parallel the Clarion could make of these two Markham products if it only had the facts!

But as he well knew, Markham interests could not be jeopardized in the Clarion, whose readers were not stock-buyers, nor movers in the smart set and the opera crowd. The fact that several thousand wage-earners read the Clarion affected only the labor side of Markham interests. And the boss had been shrewd enough to spend money on labor athletics, had given thousands to the Labor Temple building fund, thousands more to the Y. M. C. A., to missions, and workingmen's homes. No matter which way the Clarion might turn outside the arc of Markham's huge inside interests, he was immune from attack. Markham subscribed liberally to campaign funds for either political party which he suspected of going to win, and was ranked as an independent. Boldly, secretly, openly, ceaselessly he was bolstering up his credit in the community and the country; and just as boldly hammering down opposition in his foundries, factories and machine shops. He had that amazing genius for organizing and capitalizing every available force in the community, always behind the tacit slogan, Nothing Succeeds Like Success.

All this Martin Hoag understood perfectly. Markham knew that he understood. Hence his desire either to convert Hoag into a loyalty factor in his interests, or to eliminate him. He preferred the former. Hoag eliminated might be a dangerous outside enemy.

A few minutes past three the day after his midnight adventures, Hoag noticed an unusual commotion in the secretary's office. She went into the big head office and closed the door. Through the crizzled glass partition he could see that she was busy at the telephone. He noticed that a lad had just fetched up the evening papers. Hoag slipped quietly out and got a copy of the Clarion. In his sentry-box he turned it over, and saw on the front page,

HAS MARKHAM FOUND A MINE?

The thing was pure conjecture, oddly near the truth. Hence the anxiety of Helen Munro to make sure that none of the morning papers scalped the item and that if possible the Clarion contradicted it next day.

After the girls had gone home she buzzed him in.

Hoag had never seen her act so much like the boss.

"You—saw that Mr. Hoag?" pointing to the mine item.

"I did, yes. Somebody's been guessing. I thought Mr. Markham was——"

She interrupted him.

"Now, Mr. Hoag, you may as well quit sparring. I know that you knew he had gone north for business—and big business. I'm taking you into my confidence because you make me. I can't

talk to the general manager of the factories or any of his superintendents. They run their own show, especially when he's away. But I've got that killed for all the other papers, anyway. I can't help the Clarion. Nobody reads it but the labor crowd, anyway—do they?"

He leaned across her desk.

He saw that she was powerfully worked up. He pitied her, because she was in the grip of Markham; because she feared him; because she feared more than all his fear of the Clarion—and Henry Markham feared that rag, as he called it, to the point of hysterical hatred. It was his one bogey. She had tried again and again to argue him out of it.

"What is there to fear?" asked Hoag, quietly. She sat down facing him.

"Everything—or nothing," she replied.

He smiled. "I should say—comparatively nothing."

Silence for a moment. She went to get her wraps. Her shadow flickered enormously over the walls. Hoag watched it.

"Why—do you look so?" she asked.

"I was just thinking," he replied, evasively, "of how a certain full-page display ad, handsomely illustrated, might look—advertising Markham products. That was all."

XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS HOLIDAY

ELSIE CARNOVAN got a start next morning when she found herself finishing her ninth letter—and still no Mr. Hoag. She passed an inquiry along—was he ill, did anybody know? No one seemed to know. The machines clicked and clattered away as though he never had been missed.

Helen Munro had no knowledge of his whereabouts. Never in all the sixteen years of his Markhams experience had Hoag been absent from the office without notice.

During the forenoon many were the glances at the sentry-box. Elsie fumbled her work. Her head ached that day. There had been headaches that had vanished when Hoag came round. This one stayed and got worse. There had been idle surmises that Mr. Hoag was losing not only his grip of the office, but somewhat of his mind. Elsie could not think clearly about this. Compared to so many men she had met he was always out of his mind. She knew that of late he had become interested in the movies. And she wondered why. All the girls in the office were movieites. Elsie had been to a few shows herself, the queer little hysterical films that drifted out to the west end for the factory hands. The screen sometimes haunted her like a dream. While other girls chattered glibly about shows, she only recollected a shimmer of strange phantoms in a blur of high lights.

So, why had Mr. Hoag taken his sudden interest in the movies? She knew something of his interest in psychic phenomena, and had always fancied he should have been some sort of professor, with that quiet wizard's way.

But of course there was his office work; the boss away somewhere; the woman in the office; the marvelously growing system in the factories, foundries and machine-shops not far from Elsie's home. What would Mr. Hoag come to in all that? He was so vastly different from that tremendous person, Mr. Markham. Elsie found herself in many a day dream over those three; the strange bond between the two men through the young woman who had such a knack of understanding both business and men. The more Elsie thought about it the less she liked Miss Munro. She had no real ground for her dislike, except—well, except regarding Mr. Hoag. What was her real influence over him? How did he influence her?

Seldom had the two women exchanged even greetings. Miss Munro was not one for the likes of Elsie to aspire to.

But that afternoon, when Elsie's head throbbed and the letters on her machine went into a blur, and her fingers fumbled the keys into all sorts

of tangles with many and many a blunder to erase on a letter—she became suddenly conscious that Miss Munro was standing in front of her desk.

"Miss Carnovan, do you know any reason for Mr. Hoag's absence?"

"No, Miss Munro. Nothing."

"I have telephoned his house. His landlady knows nothing about him except that he left this morning as usual."

The two women exchanged glances.

Elsie rose.

"Please don't examine my work, Miss Munro. I'm not doing well to-day. I can't——"

Helen smiled.

"I understand—perhaps. But——"

A flash came to Elsie's face.

"You think I understand better? Maybe I do. Maybe I do. I believe that Mr. Hoag is to-day doing something he has never done before. I believe that he is here, when none of us can see him. He is here now. He is thinking about—some of us, somebody, not any of those who are doing best in the world, but about people who are in trouble, who don't succeed, who most always fail when left to themselves."

"Elsie, you are too religious. You believe in ghosts."

"I don't know that. But I believe that Mr. Hoag has the power to live outside of himself, as no man I ever knew had it. And maybe to-day he is doing a bigger work than ever he did, just because he is free, because there is nothing to stand between himself and his desire to do what he wants to do."

Helen Munro went back to her office.

She had reason long afterwards to remember Elsie's curious words.

XV.

AND ANOTHER MOVIE

HOAG celebrated his return to the office—some days later and a day or two before the return of the boss—by doing what he expected to be considered the most outlandish thing of his whole career. He went about like a superman that day. He knew that to-morrow and the next day and every day after the return of Markham he would gradually be fed back into the system. For days now he had been in a different world. What it was he told nobody and none of them guessed. He had such an over-the-hills look that to Elsie he seemed like some of those much exhilarated people told about in the Bible.

Helen Munro decided not to quiz Mr. Hoag as to his absence. Let him speak for himself. But all day he said nothing; greeted her in the usual way and in the afternoon sent her a brief note with a very astounding request:

"Dear Miss Munro:

"You are to consider this request unconventionally. I ask of you as a personal favor to me, (Continued on page 25.)"



"Why didn't you tell me—who it was?"