

THE SMALL HAUNTED COTTAGE

By D. W. Higgins, Author of "The Mystic Spring," "The Passing of a Race," etc.

"She knows her man and while you rant and swear,
Can draw you to her by a hair."



THE story I am about to tell is true in all essential details and the facts were known to and discussed by men and women who resided in Victoria forty and odd years ago. The details are sensational and tinged with a hue which proves the chief actors to have been unprincipled and ready to stop at nothing to accomplish their unhallowed ends.

Near the corner of Kane and Douglas streets stands a small one-story cottage, surrounded by fruit and shade trees. Its little courtyard is fairly well kept and the external aspect of the house is what you would expect from a well-to-do family who had selected it as a place of repose which the possession of some means and contented minds is supposed to confer. It is reported that the interior of the cottage does not comport with its respectable outer appearance; but as the conditions under which it is now occupied have naught to do with this tale, it will not be necessary to refer, even casually, to its present inmates.

The cottage, in 1839, was built by a French merchant, named Aimé Lassal. He was a handsome young fellow of somewhat swift habits, and had for a wife a very attractive Parisian lady, Mme. Lassal was indeed a beautiful woman, and she was conscious of it. Her figure was tall and graceful. Her eyes—the windows of her soul—black as jet and deep as wells. Her hair so dark that its color could almost be described as blue-black. In demeanor she was a perfect lady and her conversation, which was carried on in English with a slight French accent, was delightful, for she was witty and piquant and had a way which made visitors think she sympathized with them in their sorrows and joys. Her manner was so winsome that soon Mme. Lassal came to the front socially and her opinion was asked by the society leaders on nearly every subject before a decision was reached. In this capacity she became the repository of many family secrets which the possessors should have kept safely locked in the recesses of their own hearts. But human beings, especially women, are so confiding that when a person has once gained their confidence there is scarcely any limit to the secrets they will disclose. It often seems as though their hearts are bursting to tell all that they know, and often more than they know, to some one whom they think they can trust. When the spool has once begun to turn it scarcely ever ceases to revolve until the thread has all run out and both ends are in another's possession.

One afternoon M. Lassal came home from his office, which was on Wharf street, in a frame building where Todd & Sons' establishment is now, and complained of feeling very ill. He went to bed and a physician was called in, who prescribed for an attack of pneumonia. He grew rapidly worse and the next day was reported to have died. The announcement of his death was a severe shock to the little community, which then numbered only some 2,000 souls, and the funeral was largely attended. The coffin was interred in the Quadra street cemetery in accordance with the ritual of a secret society. The widow said the burial was temporary, as she intended to take the body to France for interment in the mausoleum of her husband's distinguished ancestors.

At that time there was no registration of deaths required, as is now the case. A patient might die of almost any complaint and be buried without a doctor's certificate, which was not often furnished, and as to the cause of death, it was seldom asked except in cases where death was the result of violence, and even then the inquest was hurriedly made and loosely conducted.

The widow's grief was unconsolable. Bowed with woe and with streaming eyes she gazed at the coffin (which had not been opened at the house to the mourners) as it was lowered into the grave and the service was read over the remains. On her return to the cottage she was waited upon by several ladies who took turns in watching over her for several days and nights lest in one of her paroxysms she should make away with herself.

Mme. Lassal had in her possession a daguerreotype of her late husband. Of this she had S. A. Spencer, the pioneer daguerreotypist, make several copies and posted them to friends in California and France, as the last picture of le pauvre Aimé. In the course of a few weeks Mrs. Lassal held a sale of the household furniture and disposed of the cottage and the lot on which it stood for a very small figure. She then departed on the mail steamer for San Francisco, leaving behind her many friends who were sincerely sorry to part with the accomplished and captivating lady who had won their hearts and who had been so cruelly bereaved.

The cottage became the property of a Mr. George Goodwin, who, with his wife and one child, went to reside there. The house was comfortably fitted up and well furnished and was the favorite resort of the young ladies and gentlemen of that day, who were always made welcome. Games at cards were indulged in, never for money and as there was a good piano in the house, and many of the visitors could play and sing fairly well, an occasional evening was devoted to music and dancing. At the Goodwin house were arranged the pre-

parations for picnics and parties that took place in or about the town. One of these picnics was held at Elk Lake. Boats were sent out on trucks and launched on that pretty sheet of water. The girls and boys were rowed about and duck shooting was indulged in. On shore a few grouse were gathered in and when fires had been built the campers were opened and the lunch and drinkables were spread upon table cloths and there was a feast of good things for the happy young people which they enjoyed most heartily. In the cool of the afternoon there was dancing on a level sward that had been cleared of undergrowth. It was late in the evening when the party got home, tired, but happy.

There were several married chaperones in the party, among whom were the Goodwins, who reached their cottage about ten o'clock. Upon opening the door their surprise was great when in the disturbed state of the interior they saw evidence that the place had been entered during their temporary absence. Nearly every movable article had been disturbed. Drawers had been opened and the contents thrown on the floor. Closet doors had been prised and the garments removed from the hooks. The covering of a settee which Mr. Goodwin had bought from the Lassal collection was ripped open, and the hair filling drawn out. Beds which had been carefully made in the morning had been unmade during the family's absence and the blankets and coverlets were tossed about. In one of the rooms the carpet had been raised and a plank torn up.

The disordered state of the rooms so excited Mrs. Goodwin that she broke down and cried at the spectacle of her most cherished household effects lying thrown about in this mysterious and disorderly manner. A closer examination showed that while nearly everything had been moved from its proper place nothing was missing. Not an article had been stolen. Her old-fashioned gold watch on the mantelpiece had not been touched. A few pieces of jewellery in a bureau drawer had been moved, but not taken. A small collection of good, solid plate on the sideboard was left.

The whole affair seemed wrapped in mystery. Many theories were suggested, but a solution seemed far away, until one of the constables who had been called in expressed the

opinion that the person or persons, whoever he or they were, had been looking for something of value that had been secreted in or about the cottage and forgotten when the Lassals moved away. The visitation was a nine-days' wonder, when it was driven out of people's minds by some other occurrence of local importance and forgotten except by the sufferers and their immediate friends, who never tired of talking of the mysterious affair.

The exact date of the occurrence of another exciting incident at the Goodwin cottage has escaped my memory. I only know that it must have been early in August, 1860, as the picnic excursion referred to was in the latter part of July. Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin occupied adjoining rooms, the lady sleeping in the front bedroom with the child, and Mr. Goodwin occupying the back bedroom. It was a Sunday evening and they had retired early. In the middle of the night Mrs. Goodwin was awakened by what she afterward described as a "rustling sound." She listened with a wildly beating heart, but hearing nothing more was about to again seek repose when she distinctly heard a sound as of some one walking stealthily across the room.

"Is that you, George?" she asked, thinking that her husband had entered the room.

There was no response. She reached out her hand to strike a light, when her arm was grasped firmly and a man's voice hissed in her ear:

"Make a noise or cry out and you'll be a dead woman. Hush!"

The woman's heart stood still; her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. She strove to speak but could not articulate a sound. Her voice had left her. She weakly struggled to rise and then fell back motionless on the bed.

What happened after that Mrs. Goodwin could never tell. She had an indistinct recollection of a noise apparently caused by some one moving about the room with short and stealthy footsteps; that was all.

Day was breaking when she returned to full consciousness and gradually it entered her mind that a stranger had been in the house during the night. She glanced timidly about the room, and as the daylight grew stronger and she discovered that everything was in its place and there was no one in the room save

herself and the child, she took refuge in the woman's favorite method of defence and—screamed!

Her husband, awakened by the scream, hastened in, revolver in hand, and after hearing his wife's story of the night's adventure, went for the police. A vigorous search revealed nothing. No door or window had been disturbed. All were as tightly fastened as when the family retired. There were no marks of footsteps in the garden and no evidence of the presence of a stranger in or about the house during the night. As on the previous occasion nothing had been stolen. All was darkly mysterious and the police could make nothing of the affair, for they had not the slightest clue. After a solemn consultation one of the constables remarked:

"It's our opinion that as nothing has been stolen, it is not plunder the thieves sought. They were after something or somebody. Have you an—er—er—that is to say, have you a pretty servant girl? You'll excuse me for asking the question, madam, but in the strict line of duty we have often to ask very disagreeable things."

Mrs. Goodwin assured him that there was not a servant girl, either pretty or ugly, on the premises. The men conferred together again for a few moments and then one said:

"Well, as you haven't a pretty servant girl, and as there are no signs to show how the man got in or out, we've come to the conclusion that this house is—haunted!"

Mrs. Goodwin again took refuge behind a scream and a faint, and the constables took their departure. The little cottage became known far and wide as "The Haunted House." Superstitious people who had occasion to pass it after dark hurried by, and many took to the muddy street, fearing to follow the sidewalk. The pretty little evenings that Mrs. Goodwin was in the habit of giving were discontinued indefinitely. Strange noises were said to be heard by the occupants. In the middle of the night Mrs. Goodwin, who no longer slept alone, would awaken her husband with screams of terror. She was always hearing footsteps in the dark, her arm was often grasped by a strong hand and a raucous voice hissed in her ear, "Make an outcry and you are a dead woman." She grew pale and thin and black half-circles under her eyes showed how

fearful was the strain upon her nerves. From a good-natured, well conditioned woman, rolling in good health, she was rapidly wasting away, under the strain. If a friend called to see her the visitor was constantly looking fearfully over her shoulder as if there was something dreadful behind her, something that meant to harm her. All said that they were not afraid of ghosts, yet no one offered to join Mr. Goodwin in an effort to bag his special household bogey. Two or three young fellows did undertake to sit up one night, but before the witching hour of midnight, with one excuse and another, they took their departure and did not return.

"What did you see?" was asked of one of these men.

"We didn't see anything," was the reply.

"What did you hear?"

"We didn't hear anything."

"Then why did you leave poor Goodwin to fight the ghosts alone?"

"Because we couldn't stand the creepy feeling that ran up our spine, and made our hair

palpitate and set our blood on end."

At last the Goodwins decided to move, and lost no time in carrying out the resolve. They tried to let the cottage. None who knew the story would take it. A strange family did move in one day; but so soon as they learned the cottage's bad reputation they moved out again, and for a long time it stood empty.

Some four years later an English gentleman who had a mercantile interest in Victoria, visited Paris. He was strolling along a boulevard one morning and stopped to admire the Palace of the Tuilleries, now obliterated and its site occupied as a public square. His guide was showing him the window at which King Louis, who was guillotined during the Reign of Terror, stood to address the mob that was howling for his head, and from which he was torn and dragged to a prison which he only left for execution.

As they stood there, a gay party of gentlemen and ladies emerged from the palace, and walked toward them. There were ten or twelve in the party, in the centre of which walked a stout, fat man, plainly dressed and wearing the tall, clumsy-looking hat, then much in fashion. His face had a sallow, unhealthy, expressionless appearance, not unlike a piece of paste when it is rolled out for the oven. He wore a heavily-waxed moustache brought to a pencil-point at each end and curled with an upward slant.

"L'Empereur!" exclaimed the guide in a low voice, as he removed his hat. "Monsieur will please uncover."

The Englishman removed his hat.

As the group passed leisurely and carelessly along, the visitor's attention was caught by the face of a most beautiful woman, who walked beside the emperor and engaged him in conversation. Her remarks must have pleased his majesty, for he smiled and nodded his head with approval, as he walked on.

The party disappeared and the Englishman, with his hat still in his hand, stood gazing with wide open eyes and mouth in the direction in which they had passed out of view. A word from the guide recalled him. He placed his hat on his head and soliloquized:

"I know that face—I know that woman—I have seen her somewhere. Who can she be?"

"Do you mean the lady who occupied the emperor's attention?" asked the guide, who had overheard the soliloquy.

"Yes."

"That is Madame Lassal. She is the emperor's very good friend. The empress is very jealous of her and seldom appears when Madame is in the company. She is the most beautiful woman in France—in Europe—and the cleverest. Madame has great influence with the emperor and, some people say, directs his policy. I don't know," he added with a shrug of his shoulder, "People will talk, you know. You can't help that; and they say that M. Lassal is to be made a Count and appointed Minister to Spain, or some other foreign country."

The Englishman never saw the beautiful woman again, but on his return to Victoria he told what he had seen while in France. Mr. Goodwin secured the services of the grave-digger and proceeding to the cemetery dug up the coffin that was supposed to contain the body of Lassal. It was opened and found to be filled with broken stones. There were no signs of human remains. It was plain that with the connivance of the family doctor Lassal's funeral was a mock one, that Mme. Lassal's grief was assumed, and that when her husband was supposed to be cold in his grave he was a sentient human being on his way in a sailing ship to France with his booty, for he was heavily indebted to San Francisco merchants.

That he was followed by his wife, who, by her beauty and wit got into the good graces of Napoleon and made the fortunes of both, was clear. Who and what the "ghost" was that startled the Goodwins and drew upon their pretty cottage the appellation of "The Haunted House" can only be conjectured. It is supposed that the woman left something very valuable behind—perhaps a costly gem—neglecting to bring it away with her, and that some friend adopted the burglarious method described to search for it. Whether he found it or not, was never known; but the cottage has been for a long time tenanted and no one has ever again heard that it was haunted.

Canada and Westminster Hall

By Rev. Dr. Campbell, Victoria.



THIS is an age of education, not only for the classes, but also for the masses in the English speaking world. Canada, although comparatively a new country, stands prominently among the most highly educated. Her educational system is thorough and practical, comprising what is best in the systems of England, France, Germany and the United States of America. The progress of education in Canada, particularly during the last century, is marvelous. The first school was opened in 1632, with only four pupils, at Quebec, which, with the exception of Jamestown, in Virginia, was the first permanent settlement in North America. The first grammar school was established in 1808, and the common school system was introduced in Upper Canada in 1816. There are now in the Dominion over 20,000 public schools, attended by 1,245,000 pupils, and taught by 31,000 teachers. Besides these, there are 21 universities and 56 colleges, attended by over 15,000 students. Canada has taken an honorable stand in carrying off Rhodes scholarships, a test of high scholarly attainments. This year that honor was secured by H. Logan, B.A., of Eburne, which reflects no little credit on British Columbia, the most westerly province of our great Dominion. The territorial extent and economic resources of British Columbia assure possibilities of development and growth of population which the most optimistic are not likely to overestimate. The province is as large as England, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Switzerland and Italy, and is a world of rich valleys, and not as some suppose, a "sea of mountains." The possibilities of her horticultural and agricultural products, her fisheries, her forests and her mines are immense. Her religious denominations, in spreading the Gospel of Christianity, the safety valve and balance wheel of the nation, have kept pace with the growth and development of the country. The Presbyterian church, of which Westminster hall is one of her theological colleges, is among the strongest numerically, financially and influentially of the Protestant churches in Canada, having nearly 4,000 preaching places, 300,000 members, besides adherents, and 1,800 ministers. She has had for many years five theological colleges, located in Halifax, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and Winnipeg. The Presbyterian church of the Pacific slope finding that the nearest college, that at Winnipeg, was too far away to provide men for the mission fields of the West, through the synod of British Columbia and Alberta, in 1906 memorialized the general assembly to establish a college in British Columbia. The general assembly appointed a committee to consider the whole situation, and to gather information as to the probable cost of establishing and equipping such a college, and the amount of financial support it might count on in the

synod. In the following year, on the recommendation of the committee which submitted a strongly optimistic report, the assembly agreed that "a theological college be established in British Columbia, to commence work in the summer of 1908." Some of the members from British Columbia were of opinion that such a step was premature, and advocated instead the opening of a summer session, to be conducted by the professors of the colleges which had their session in the winter, as this would meet the present requirements in preparing men for the Western mission fields, and in a few years demonstrate to the church the wisdom of establishing a permanent institution. However, as soon as the assembly decided to establish a new theological college in the West, they loyally wheeled into rank, and took their place in the firing line to make the college a success. A senate and board of management were appointed, with authority at a joint meeting to nominate a principal, which resulted in selecting the Rev. John MacKay, D.D., pastor of Crescent Street church, Montreal, which nomination was unanimously ratified by the general assembly at its meeting last June in the city of Winnipeg. Principal MacKay is a native of Oxford county, Ont., but resided for some time in Bruce county. After a short but successful business career in Detroit, Mich., he studied for the ministry, and graduated with the Governor-General's gold badge from the University of Toronto in 1899. The next three years were spent studying in the Free Church college, Glasgow, from which he graduated in 1902, winning the highest honors possible, and taking the regular four year's course in three. The same year he was called to Crescent Street church, Montreal, one of the most important churches in Canada, where he labored with great success until called to the principalship of Westminster hall. He was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Montreal Presbyterian college, where he had given a course of lectures on Apologetics. During his course in Glasgow, Dr. MacKay accompanied Professor George A. Smith and a company of distinguished scholars on a tour of study and exploration through Palestine; and he also traveled widely on this continent and in Europe.

The first session of this, the infant college of the Presbyterian church, Westminster hall, has been very encouraging, and was closed with academical eclat in St. Andrew's church, Vancouver, on the 29th of September. While the college is at present in the Terminal City, the understanding with the general assembly is that the permanent site shall be where the government of British Columbia may establish the provincial university. The principal was assisted during the session by professors widely known—Dr. Fraser, of Montreal; Principal Magill, of Halifax; Dr. Davidson, of the University of Toronto; Dr. Campbell, moderator of the general assembly; Dr. Talling, of London; together with local men of

good scholarship, as Rev. Dr. T. Wardlaw Taylor, Rev. J. A. Logan and Rev. J. K. Wright, B.D.

Among the noted men who will give lectures during the session of 1909 is Professor George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D. Dr. Smith was born in India, where his father held a position in the Indian civil service. He was educated in Edinburgh University, and the New College, Edinburgh University, and he studied in Germany and France. He was for many years pastor of Queen's Cross church, Aberdeen, which he made one of the best known churches in Scotland. Dr. Smith is acknowledged to be the foremost Old Testament scholar in the English speaking world. His famous commentaries on Isaiah, and the twelve minor prophets have made the Old Testament a new book to hundreds of men in all communions. His Historical Geography of the Holy Land, and his epoch making work, in two volumes, on Jerusalem are without equal in any language. Besides his scholarship, he is generally considered to be the greatest preacher in Britain.

Equally great as a preacher and teacher with Dr. George Adam Smith, is the Rev. James Denny, D.D., of the same college, who will spend two months in British Columbia, and will give a full course of lectures on the New Testament. Dr. Denny was educated in Glasgow and in Germany, and after a very brilliant pastorate of Broughty Ferry Free church, Scotland, he was appointed professor of systematic theology in Glasgow Free Church college. A few years later he was transferred to the chair of New Testament Exegesis and Literature. He is the author of "Outlines of Theology," "The Death of Christ," "The Atonement in Modern Thought." In New Testament work he has contributed many commentaries and studies of different New Testament books, until his name is a household word wherever exact and reverent study of the New Testament is pursued.

Nowhere in the whole theological world could two more distinguished men be found, and it says much for Principal MacKay that he was able to induce them, although old friends, to come so far, and give lectures next summer at Westminster hall. It augurs well for the youngest college of the church. No doubt many pastors in British Columbia will so arrange their work next summer that they may be able to attend the lectures of these eminent Bible scholars. Sed non cuivis homini contingit audire Corinthum.

Mrs. Nabor—How is your husband going to vote this fall?

Mrs. Hardsense—He will not vote at all. He says that in this age of trained men it is absolute folly to entrust the country to men who have had no experience in presiding at all. —Puck.