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THE HAUNTED PORTRAIT

How the Ghost Was Unearthed

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The Baker homestead stood on a hill and alone. It was a bleak looking place in winter and after David Baker's death was suffered to fall into semi-decay. David Baker's nephew, Edward, went there occasionally in the autumn to use the place for a hunting box.

One autumn he persuaded his friend James Laidlaw to go there with him. There was a portrait of Nicholas Baker hanging on the wall, and during an evening, after a hunt, the following conversation occurred between the two men while they smoked:

"Do you really mean that you wish to sell your uncle's portrait?" asked Laidlaw incredulously.

"Yes," returned Baker shortly. "One doesn't usually sell family portraits," hinted his friend.

Baker lighted another cigar and pushed the box toward Laidlaw.

"Of course I would not dream of such a thing," he apologized, "but"—He glanced quickly at the great oil painting over the mantelpiece.

"But?" prompted Laidlaw.

"The confounded thing has got on my nerves!"

"How?"

"It watches me."

"All portraits appear to do that."

"I know what you mean, Jim, but this is different. The eyes not only watch me continually, but they change expression. Sometimes they positively glare at me murderously." He shivered.

"Better close the place and go away."

"I did last spring, but I haven't been able to keep even a caretaker here, and then, you know, came that series of robberies in the neighborhood, and so I'm rather sticking around to keep an eye on my own property."

"You say you can't keep any servants? You mean they believe the place is haunted?"

"That's the idea. Men and maids declare they hear footsteps and hissing whispers and all that sort of thing."

"You haven't seen or heard anything out of the ordinary?" asked Laidlaw.

"Nothing except the eyes."

Laidlaw glanced up at the portrait of Nicholas Baker. It represented the head and shoulders of a mild eyed old gentleman dressed correctly in black.

In the dimming light of the library the snowy shirt front and collar and the abundant white hair and whiskers stood out sharply.

The gray eyes gazed benignly upon the two men.

"I can't imagine your mild uncle, Nicholas, looking fierce," smiled Laidlaw, looking at Ned Baker.

Baker was staring fixedly at the portrait. "Look now!" he muttered between clenched teeth.

Laidlaw looked.

"Good heavens!" he gasped in astonishment.

Nicholas Baker's face still wore that expression of benevolent pity, but the eyes were no longer gray and mild.

They were fiercely rolling in their sockets—black, black as night. Baker switched on the electric lamp, but the eyes remained the same, flashing angrily from one man to another.

"What do you make of that?" demanded Baker, poking the fire into a blaze.

Laidlaw studied the glowing end of his cigar. His hand shook a little, and he was angry with himself for feeling that thrill of horror.

He looked up at the portrait, intending to stare it out of countenance, but what he saw was a pair of kindly gray eyes regarding him fixedly.

"The deuce!" he exploded, leaping to his feet. "What ails the thing?"

Baker smiled wearily.

"It's got you, too, eh?"

Laidlaw sank back in his chair and stared at the fire.

"You thought of selling the portrait," he said at last. "Would you feel bad if anything happened to it?"

"Something will happen to it, and soon!" growled Baker.

"I've an idea," murmured Laidlaw. Baker laughed harshly. "You needn't whisper," he gibed. "It isn't likely his ears are on duty as well as his eyes."

Laidlaw smiled quietly.

"We are dining out, I believe," he said, with a quick change of topic.

"Yes, and, Jove, it's time to dress!" Ned Baker jumped up and rang a bell.

After a long while a woman poked her head in the door. She wore a hat and cloak.

"Where is Ames, Nora?" asked Baker in a displeased tone.

"Please, sir, he's left, and Hannah and Mary and I'm going this minute. We're sorry, Mr. Baker, but it's the ghosts. We can't stand it no longer!" She vanished, and in the distance an outer door closed noisily.

Baker laughed. "I paid them today. They managed to calm their fears until the month was up. Well, Jim, I guess we'll have to close up the house and go back to town."

"I hate to lose that quail shooting," said Laidlaw, yawning.

A clock in the hall struck 6.

"We must dress," said Baker. "but first I'm going around to lock up."

"I'll go with you," volunteered the other, and he added in a low tone, "Is it safe to leave the place unprotected?"

"I'll switch on all the lights and turn Hero loose. It would be a desperate burglar who would tackle a bulldog with his reputation."

"Or a clever one," added Laidlaw dryly.

As they left the front hall to enter the motorcar which Baker had brought around to the door Laidlaw switched off the lights from the whole house.

"What?" began Baker, when Laidlaw's grip on his arm stilled him.

"Go on out and say nothing," whispered Laidlaw, and the mystified host meekly obeyed.

As soon as they had left the gates of the estate Laidlaw spoke:

"Put out your lights, run the machine into the field yonder, in the shadow of the trees, then beat it back to the house by the shortest cut. You'll see something."

"And the dinner engagement?" was Baker's only objection.

"Can go hang."

Five minutes later they stole through the grape arbor and reached the kitchen door.

"It's open," whispered Baker, "though I locked it myself before we left!"

"I unlocked it so we could enter quietly," confessed Laidlaw. "Come now to the library, and I think we can lay Uncle Nicholas' ghost. Have you got a gun?"

"In the drawer of my desk. Evidently you consider the ghost a material one," laughed Baker.

"Just a guess on my part."

"They tiptoed through the utter darkness of the house, Baker leading the way, until they were within the velvet blackness of the library."

Laidlaw locked the door and slipped the key in his pocket. Baker had found his revolver, and the two friends groped toward each other until they met in front of the smoldering fire.

Laidlaw leaned over and smothered the embers with ashes.

"Where is the light switch?" he whispered.

"Right here, almost under my hand."

"Switch on the light when I tell you and have your gun ready."

"This is pure melodrama," growled Baker. "Hark! What was that?"

Laidlaw's hand gripped him into silence.

Somewhere near by, seemingly in the room, came the creak of a board as if under a cautious tread.

Something moved behind the panelled walls. Even the skeptical host knew that it was not the sound of scurrying mice.

The sounds continued until they became distinct footfalls.

"Ready!" warned Laidlaw, crouching forward and facing the left end of the fireplace.

Baker's finger hovered over the button.

There was a creak as of an opened door and a gust of cedar perfumed air. And there was the indefinable feeling that they were not alone in the room. There was another presence in the library.

"Now!" breathed Laidlaw, and instantly the room was flooded with light.

Baker's amazed eyes saw his friend crouched forward, a revolver in each hand. The blue noses of these weapons were covering two men, who stared in absurd dismay while they reluctantly put up their hands at arms' length above their heads.

They were shifty eyed, evil faced fellows, with lithe, slender forms and small hands and feet.

They cursed bitterly as Baker searched them and deprived them of their weapons as well as two complete sets of burglars' tools.

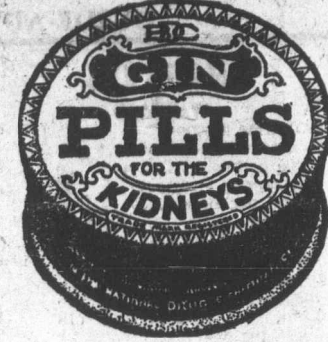
The black eyed man rolled his eyes fiercely as Baker neatly tied his wrists and ankles with curtain cords. When the same thing had been done for his companion Laidlaw lowered his guns and moved to the telephone.

"I'll just call up the nearest police station—that will be New Lorimer—and tell them to come over and get this precious pair. I guess it's the end of these neighborhood robberies."

It was almost dawn when they returned to the house and faced each other across the library table.

"And now for your uncle's ghost," laughed Laidlaw, opening the narrow door to the chimney end. It was a small cupboard, with a bookshelf in the back.

They searched and found the spring mentioned by Beebe, the burglar, and



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when the bookcase had opened and disclosed a narrow staircase winding up they mounted the stairs until they were directly behind Mr. Nicholas Dane's portrait.

A sliding panel revealed the canvas of the portrait, and an ingenious little contrivance, of which the clever Beebe had admitted himself the inventor, enabled one to pull a string, whereupon the partially cut out eyeballs of the picture flapped inside and enabled Mr. Jim Beebe to roll his wild black eyes at Ned Baker or any other intruder in the library.

It appeared that Beebe had an accomplice in the house in the person of Ames, Baker's butler. It was Ames who had discovered the secret stairway which led to an unsuspected room in the middle of the attic. This room had served as a hiding place for the burglars, and its existence was not even known to Baker himself.

In the course of time Ames was captured and, with his confederates, is serving a term in the penitentiary.

Ned Baker has no trouble in keeping servants, and Jim Laidlaw spends much time under the hospitable roof.

The restored portrait of Uncle Nicholas has been returned to its place over the mantel, and now the gray eyes do not change color. Nor will they ever again, for the secret stair has been sealed up.

SHIP CANALS.

Each Has Troubles of Its Own That Require Constant Care.

Leave any ship canal alone for even a year and it would no longer be fit for navigation. Within five years a small boat would be unable to go through it.

The United States has anxieties over the Culebra cut in the Panama, but not more so than the Germans over their waterway, the Kiel canal, for the ground through which the latter is cut is in most places nothing but peat-rotten black stuff which keeps on breaking up and falling back into the canal.

Also the bottom continually "bumps up," thus lowering the depth of the passage. The craft that use the Kiel canal have to crawl along. They say that if a cruiser were to make a dash through at top speed it would take a year and several millions of money to remedy the damage done by her stern wave.

Each canal has its own special troubles. That of the Panama is land-slides. Many have taken place during its construction. Many more will have to be dealt with in coming years. It is estimated that if the dredging work on the Suez were abandoned within less than ten years the Turks or any one else could cross it dryshod. On both sides of the canal stretch miles of dry desert, from which every wind that blows lifts the sand in edging spirals and carries it in great clouds. A single storm may drop a thousand tons of sand into one mile of the canal.

Of late years a great quantity of trees have been planted along the banks in order to prevent the sand from drifting into the water, yet even so great steam dredgers are always at work scooping from the bottom the blown in sand and dumping it along the shore. / Other trouble of those in charge of the Suez canal is caused by fresh water springs, which burst up in its deep bed and pile the sand in ridges.

—Exchange.

GET READY THE SILO.

It will save time if the silo and machinery are all ready before they have to be used. All silos should be cleaned thoroughly and any leaks or weak places repaired. A thin cement wash can be applied to stone, brick, or concrete walls. Wood silos may be painted with boiled linseed oil or hot creosote. One gallon of the latter will cover 200 square feet of surface, two coats. The creosote should be heated to just under the boiling point, but care must be taken to prevent its boiling over into the fire. A large kettle like those used in making soft soap is suitable for heating and the creosote may be applied with a brush the same as in painting, allowing the first to dry before the second is put on.

FALL AND SPRING PLOWING.

August and September Rains Often Make Autumn Plowing Advisable.

The average yields of spring crops, such as wheat, oats and corn, in the great plains area from spring and from fall plowing show that the blind following of a rule prescribing any particular time of plowing might cause a reduction as often as it does an increase in the yields. The great variation in the time and amount of precipitation in this region must be constantly kept in mind when considering the time of plowing. No dependence can be placed on a heavy precipitation in August and September, yet it frequently occurs. As moisture is considered the most important factor in crop production in the great plains area, its conservation is the primary object in cultivation.

Stubble, weeds and uneven ground are common means of retaining snow and holding a large part of the winter precipitation. In deciding when a field should be plowed, the question of whether a greater amount of moisture will be accumulated by holding the snow that falls than will be dissipated by the growth of weeds is paramount. It must be decided by the man on the ground.

In answering this question several factors must be considered—namely, the amount of moisture already in the soil that may be lost through weed growth, the probable time before the weeds will be killed by frost, the possibility of increasing the water in storage in the soil by holding the snow that may come, the danger of soil blowing if the stubble and weeds are removed and the distribution of farm labor.

In deciding the time to plow the advantages and disadvantages of both spring plowing and fall plowing must be taken into consideration. Heavy rains in August indicate that fall plowing should be done, as the gain of moisture during the winter by the stubble land probably would not equal the loss of moisture taken by the weeds in the fall. If only light rains occur, however, the moisture in the soil produced by these rains probably would be more than offset by the greater quantity of snow held by the stubble during the winter and the reduction of the weeds in the crop. Spring plowing would then be better. The availability of labor in the fall will influence the amount of plowing done, but a greater effort should be made to do the plowing if there is heavy precipitation than if the rainfall is light. The only advantage in late fall plowing is that the amount of spring labor in preparing the seed bed is reduced.

Seed Row Drills.

A good way to make drills or seed rows of uniform width and depth is to have an attachment for the garden rake as shown in the sketch, writes Bert W. Verne of San Diego, Cal., in Popular Mechanics. The device consists of a piece of tin or sheet metal

having V shaped projections on one edge of the width of the rows. The other edge of the metal is inserted between the teeth on the rake. Thus it can be easily drawn over the garden bed to mark the rows. After the seed has been planted, reverse the tin and use it as a hoe for filling the row.

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Wireless Telephony

Sir Oliver Lodge in a recent interview expressed the opinion that wireless telephony was the one useful invention which had been developed to a practical stage under the stimulus of war. The remarkable success achieved by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in sending a wireless telephone message from Arlington, Va., to the Eiffel Tower, Paris, a distance of 3,800 miles, is a tremendous advance in the practical experiments that have been carried on in various countries during the past few years. Until the recent triumph between Arlington and Paris, the longest distance at which conversations were plainly heard was between California and Virginia, two thousand miles apart. Before that the record was held by the Telefunken Company which established wireless telephone communication between Berlin and Vienna, a distance of 375 miles. The Germans have made considerable progress in wireless telephony, although the utmost secrecy now prevails regarding its use in war. It is stated that their submarines are fitted with a wireless telephone apparatus. It is known that conversations have been carried on between the German coast and a cruiser on the high seas with a wireless instrument invented by Count Arco.

Several wireless telephone systems are now in operation. Mr. Marconi has been experimenting for some time, and may be expected soon to report progress. In 1909 two French naval officers, Lieutenants Colin and Jeanne, invented an apparatus which can be used for telephonic as well as telegraphic purposes, and last year were able to carry on a conversation over a distance of sixty miles. Last year also a Yorkshire mining firm installed a system in use in German collieries. Portable instruments, weighing about twenty pounds each, enable the miner to communicate with the fixed stations by attaching two loose wires to any metallic substance within reach. Dr. Varni has been able to carry on a conversation between Rome and Tripoli, a distance of over six hundred miles.

There is no authoritative information as to the part played by wireless telephony in this war, but it is evident from Sir Oliver Lodge's guarded statement that much has been accomplished under the incentive of military needs of which the world has no knowledge.

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