

THE POWER OF A DREAM

A Further Instalment in What Happened to Hoag

A STRUGGLE between two Principles expressed by two Opposite Personalities. Hoag is an Agent of the Unseen, a believer in what some people call psychics—which he did not pretend to understand. Henry Markham is an Agent of the Hidden Hand, a believer in an Earthly Force whose power has a right to make him a slave.

Hoag is offered a large salary by Henry Markham to be a spiritual spy among Markham iron-workers. He refuses. He became labor reporter on the Clarion, an organ of the working-men, and Saturday editor of a psychic and socialistic column entitled "Other Worlds Than Ours." Markham discovers a new iron mine in the north and carries out a new cycle of

iron and steel industries. He is a man of tremendous ambition and tireless energy, a shrewd manipulator of men, and a man of industrial vision. Part of his scheme is marriage to Helen Munro, life-long friend of Martin Hoag. The lean shadow-man, absorbed in psychics, in democracy of the imagination, in dreams, in moving pictures, sets himself the task of circumventing Markham, who uses newspapers, philanthropy, politics, business—everything to gain his purpose. The part of the story comprised in this issue contains twelve pictures in words, some of them illustrated, after the manner of the screen. You can trace the Power of a Dream instalment if you have read this brief summary.

By THOMAS TOPLEY

MRS. BARTOP became obsessed with secret strange ideas concerning Mr. Hoag. The stairs that creaked so loudly to other lodgers, the landing whose pine boards were warped under the carpet and persistently sounded like a trombone whenever she stepped on them—none of these ever made a sound for Mr. Hoag. The front door which always opened with a thud because it stuck a bit at the top, slid open to his touch as secretly as a bud opens in April. His latch key never rattled. Even the hinges of his own door which she slyly doused with water to rust them a bit so that she might hear them squeak when he came in, never made a sound as he entered.

"I do declare," she said to herself as she made his bed, "it seems as though a ghost had rumpled these sheets, and never a man. He's worse nor any Raffles. He's that slow, and that quick, and that sly and soople, and he's always slow when I think he's going to be quick, that a body never knows how to catch him at all."

But she never spoke to him about himself now. Some weird glint in his eyes forbade her. She remembered his casual talks to her about soul and body; and she read all those things in Other Worlds in the Clarion. Oh how she read them! Besides of all mortals she was favored by Mr. Hoag in being told many of his dreams the morning after. Mrs. Bartop, prying body as she was, could not be blamed that she came to think Mr. Hoag was some new combination of clairvoyant, housebreaker, levitationist, sleight-of-handist, dream-man, sleep-walker, and all the rest of the disembodied and crafty lingo she ever had heard about.

"I know he's been asleep," she concluded, "because he has them packs o' dreams he tells me about. But I don't know why he bothers about sleepin' at all."

WHEN Helen Munro left the office for good, preliminary to her approaching marriage, Markham persuaded her to live with his sister, Madame Markham-Malone, at Cragtop, Rosemount Road.

"I'd rather not, Henry," she said.

"But it's necessary, and more agreeable."

"Tell me why?"

He avoided an answer.

"Don't imagine I shall try to see—"

"I imagine nothing. My sister offers you a home. She will help you design the decorations for the new house—"

"Oh, yes, I know all that, Henry."

"Well, where's the obstacle? Gretchen is a charming and immensely clever woman. She has a beautiful home where you can meet many of the people with whom you will associate after we're married. Excuse me if I insist. And you really have no arguments against it."

She yielded, against her own judgment. But

out of the office she was no longer conscious of the influence she had helping to manage Markham affairs. Markham's Consolidated was different from Markham's, Ltd. Her business now was to prepare for becoming the wife of Henry Markham.

It was a strange thing for a business.

Why was it—such a business?

Who was making it so?

Besides—she mistrusted Madame Markham-Malone.

CUNNING thing, Mrs. Bartop—conceived the idea of really testing out Mr. Hoag's powers of divination. Probably she over-estimated that. Hoag had never posed as a diviner; in fact he had been sceptical of some cabinet tricks and seances. But Mrs. Bartop having listened to his talks, having him on her hands, liking the spook as she said, was unwilling to limit his powers to anything less than a miracle.

One evening when for a wonder Hoag came home early, she began to fluster herself in the hallway.

"I do declare," she said. "For the first time since I've had them these twenty years I can't lay me hands on me common scissors. And I've got a job that needs them this very evening."

Mrs. Bartop's lamentations over lost articles usually extended from garret to cellar. Never she lost a thimble but most of the lodgers knew about it. This one she naively confided to Mr. Hoag, as though perhaps—

"Now I'm sure ye can locate them scissors, Mr.

Hoag," she said persuadingly. "Whisht now—have a try."

Agreeably she did not flap her apron at him.

"Madam," he said with a cool smile, "I am not a human magnet. Where had you them last?"

Such a commonplace question! But to oblige her Mr. Hoag overturned and rummaged up every cushion, every cranny, every corner in the two rooms in front of the kitchen—just as she had done, and with no better result.

"Sorry," he concluded. "I can't find them. Oh, no doubt they will turn up."

But the scissors did not turn up. Mrs. Bartop, still hoping that Mr. Hoag would have a sudden inspiration and come down to find the scissors—where she had hidden them—went to bed.

But not to sleep. She found herself wondering if she had put her mind into the right condition for thought-transference. Indeed she had been thinking the exact spot where those scissors were every moment he had been searching; she had been saying to herself cold, warm, hot, and so on, every turn he made. She could think of nothing more. Poor man! He also might be staying awake, worrying. She decided—it was then past one o'clock and the house as still as a grave—that she would go down and move the scissors.

Never a sound from his room above.

The house was terrifyingly still.

Mrs. Bartop never liked prowling.

She felt nervous; too nervous to turn on a light for fear she might see something unpleasant. And when she came to the bottom of the stairs where the turn was to the cellar below, she crouched near the cellar door listening. The longer so, the more scared she got. She felt herself crizzling up in her dressing-gown.

Whisht! Now what was this?

Not a creak on the stairs, but in the glimmer oozing in from the street Mrs. Bartop beheld as plain as could be, the spectral form of Mr. Hoag in his dressing gown pass along the hall, out to the kitchen without a sound—and she crouched on the floor to listen. Merciful goodness! The spook went straight through the kitchen without touching a chair or a table or a stove; straight to the kitchen clock which she knew he had opened because the tick-tock was suddenly louder—then muffled again.

Here he came back. He stopped in front of her.

"Mrs. Bartop," he said—his voice just froze her blood—"here are your scissors. I'm sorry I was so long finding them. I hope you get the work done you wanted to this evening—before you go to bed."

He passed along. A sudden inspiration clambered all over Mrs. Bartop. She rushed to the hall light and pulled on the gas. The light flared full on her lodger's face.

His eyes were somehow—open. But they were as sightless as marbles. Hoag was walking in his sleep.



Markham persuades Helen Munro to go under the tutelage of his clever sister.