

# Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT.

## CHAPTER IX

To walk straight up to the door of a strange house, with nothing but a plain shawl thrown over your head, requires a considerable amount of courage and nerve. At every step of the way Miss Marjorie's scruples grew stronger—her sense of outraged propriety more clear. At last she came to the outer gate of Hollow Ash Hall.

"What is it now?" asked Cowley, patting her head encouragingly. "I really can't go in, Charles!" "Nonsense!"

"They will think I am mad. Only see! I know that my hair is half down and I have no bonnet! Don't make me go there, Charles, till I am more presentable—there's a dear."

"Madam, do you intend to obey your lawful husband or not?" said Mr. Cowley, with mock solemnity. "But, Charles, do hear reason."

"No, I won't! I've had enough of reason in my life. So come along, my love. The moment you enter yonder door you will get a warm greeting for my sake, and no one will stop to think whether you have a bonnet on or not. But that is just like you women! You can't even die comfortably unless you have a fashionable winding sheet to be wrapped in!"

"Men never study appearance—that is a fact well known!" said Miss Marjorie, quietly. He laughed, and led her up the avenue.

The shutters of the house were all closed, but through a crevice in one of the low windows came a bright line of light, testifying to the presence of its occupants.

"Now look for it! Look as dignified as you can, Marjorie," said Mr. Cowley, and rang the bell.

A light came rapidly through the hall. The door was opened, and a stout female, with a candle in her hand, peered doubtfully out into the night.

"Is it you, master?" she began. And just then catching sight of the shrill figure of Marjorie, she gave a shrill yell of horror and ran away.

"It's our Queen Bess herself, and a tall black man with her!" they heard her scream—and then came a babble of voices from the inner room.

"Shut the door! Lock it! Keep them out!" said one.

"I do wish papa would come! It is too bad to leave us in such a place alone!" sighed another.

"But some one is really at the door," spoke up a third. "It is all nonsense about Queen Bess; I am going to see what they want!"

"Oh, don't, Rose!" cried her mother and sister.

"Indeed, Miss Rose, it is Queen Bess as natural as life!" put in Mrs. MacCarthy.

"Nonsense," replied Rose, and taking the candle she went out to the door with a firm step.

"Who is it, and what do you want?" she asked, quietly.

Mr. Cowley stepped in, and let the light shine full upon his face.

"Don't you know me, Rose?"

"Why Charles—Cousin Charles, can it be you?"

"It is really me."

"But I thought you were in Australia."

"So I was till a few weeks ago. Don't be alarmed, Rose; I am no ghost, but solid flesh and blood. And here is some one else, for whom I must crave a welcome—my wife, Rose, whom your servant mistook for the apparition of Queen Elizabeth."

Rose stared, as well she might, when he drew in Miss Marjorie beside him. But Cousin Charles was her great favorite, and she had faith in everything he did—in everybody he loved. So she held out her hand to the bonnetless stranger, with a pleasant smile, and then led the way to the drawing room.

"Mamma, you will never guess who has come!" she exclaimed. "Cousin Charles Cowley from Australia, and his wife."

Greatly bewildered, Mrs. Cowley came forward to welcome her guests. She had the wildest notions about the manners and customs of foreign countries and seeing a tall, stately lady with a plaid cloak doing duty for head and shoulders, as bonnet and shawl, she instantly fancied that it must be the native costume of the land from which she came—the ne plus ultra of all elegance and grace among the ladies of Melbourne and Sydney. It was good to see Mr. Cowley's face as the consciousness of her mistake dawned upon him by degrees.

"Dear me! Charles from Australia, and his wife! My dear, you are most welcome. Will you lay aside your—she was at a loss how to designate the articles of dress, but finally hit upon the word "burnous" as being the most suitable to the purpose. "Will you take off your burnous, my dear?"

At that Mr. Cowley burst out laughing. "My dear aunt, it is not a burnous, but an old plaid cloak!" he exclaimed. "And my wife never saw Australia in her life. She has been living in this neighborhood for more than a year, and I just found her out by the nearest chance in the world to-night, and immediately ran away with her."

"Very well, even Mrs. MacCarthy's, expressed the most intense interest and sympathy.

"If you will sit down I will tell you the story in a very few words," he observed; and within five minutes he was the centre of a most cosy-looking circle, with Miss Marjorie upon his right hand and Rose upon his left.

"You must at know that my Marjorie is an orphan," he began. "I met her first at a house in London, where, among the gayest of parties, her little pale, sad face caught my eye, and without my knowing it won my heart. It was her uncle's house, but she was not happy there. Her cousins tyrannized over her—her aunt snubbed her—and I soon found that her uncle and myself were almost the only friends she had in the world. No doubt I twisted this fact to my own purpose. I own candidly that I rejoiced when others were rude to her, so that she might see that I was kind. I won her, I do believe, more because she was grateful to me than because she loved me; but the love came afterwards, so that it did not matter. I won her, and made her my wife, in spite of all the sneers of her cousins, and the discouraging coldness of her aunt."

"For a time, we were very happy. Then some unknown correspondent began to trouble my peace. Anonymous letters came to me day after day, which told me that my wife was not what she seemed—that she loved another—that she only waited her time to play me false."

"I was foolish enough to read the slanders—to think of them—at last, to believe them. Circumstances, which looked suspicious then, but which I have seen by a far clearer light since, came up one after another to make me distrust Marjorie still more. At last I felt so convinced of her faithlessness that I deserted her."

"I left a letter saying why I had gone. I left her money, and I have never seen her face from that day till tonight it beamed upon me out of the darkness like an accusing spirit. Aunt-Rose—she has been a school teacher—a governess, a companion, during my absence. But she is one of the best and purest women on earth; and I took her away just as she was, from her drudgery, to come and tell you so. I am sure you will all befriend her. Will you not?"

"Every one of us," was the hearty reply, and Mrs. Cowley folded the young wife in a motherly embrace, and Rose and Catharine kissed her on the cheek in the most sisterly fashion. Tears stood in Marjorie's dark eyes as he did so; and her husband turned his head for a moment, as if ashamed of the weakness which he could not help feeling and showing at their kindness.

"What the good lady who employs her will say to her elopement, I cannot conjecture," remarked Mr. Cowley after a moment's pause.

"Oh, she never had a very good opinion of me!" said Marjorie, cheerfully. "And she will probably utter a devout thanksgiving when she finds that she is to see me no more. There never was much love lost between us, I am afraid."

"Was she a nice person?" asked Catharine.

"Not according to my definition of the word nice. I can describe her to you in a very short time. She is a stout woman, who thinks herself ill when she is only lazy, and who never gets out of her easy chair except to go to bed or to fly into a rage—which she does on an average of twelve times a day. No—decidedly I do not call Mrs. Magnus a nice person."

"I should think not!" said Rose, laughing. "I wish I could see her face when she hears you are gone!"

"Never mind Mrs. Magnus, now, said Mr. Cowley. "I want to hear something about my uncle and this mad freak of his. What could have put it into his head to take a haunted house?"

"Ah!" said Catharine, ruefully; "you must ask Rose that."

"Why?"

"Because she was at the bottom of it all!"

"Is that so, Rose?"

"I am afraid I must plead guilty, Charles. I thought it would be a nice and romantic life with a ghost. But I don't like it at all. There is a dreadful cradle-rocking in the kitchen every night, and not one of us dares to stop there a moment after dusk. Papa heard it the first night we came, and yet he won't go away. I think he is a little frightened, but he fancies that people will laugh at him if he goes away. And so—"

"And so it will go on till we are all carried off bodily by these horrible cradle-rocking creatures, and then your father will be satisfied," broke in Mrs. Cowley, more in sorrow than in anger.

Her nephew broke out laughing. "Ah, you may laugh, Charles; but I can assure you it is no joke to live in a place that gives you the cold shivers every time you stop to think what it really is. And Mr. Cowley actually talks of spending his Christmas here! But nothing shall tempt me to stay, even if he does. At any other time I can stand it; but I will not eat turkey and plum pudding in company with half a dozen grown-up hobgoblins to please any man alive!"

"You are quite right, aunt. But I really was not laughing at your troubles, only at your funny way of telling them. But joking apart, what is this story about a cradle?" Because I have

heard something in Australia, which I think relates to this house."

"In Australia? Why, how could any one know of it there?" asked Rose opening her eyes very wide.

"Who owns this house?"

"A Mr. Vernon."

"Exactly so. Do you know what his first name is?"

"Alfred," said Mrs. Cowley. Her nephew looked perplexed for a moment; then his face cleared again.

"Oh, I see! George was his brother. How long is it since they have lived in this house—the Vernons, I mean?"

"Oh, a great many years! Twenty or twenty-two, I think."

"That makes the story clear. You must know that I met a Mr. George Vernon in Australia—a man about forty years old. He drank to excess and gambled, desperately; and, in fact, there were a great many queer stories told of him one way and another."

"One night he was in my tent with several of his friends, and the conversation turned upon the reality of ghosts, and the amount of credulity required to believe in them. Vernon said little at first, but later in the evening he suddenly looked up at me and exclaimed, 'It is true, every syllable of it. They do come back. I have seen and heard them, too, by day and night, for twenty years past. They can come in any shape. They can turn their hands to anything. Why, I have known one to rock a cradle four-and-twenty hours without ceasing and sing all the while into the bargain!'"

"What a useful ghost to have in the house with a small family," said some one, laughing.

"I never saw any one turn as pale as Vernon did."

"Useful! You would not crack your jokes about them if you staid a night alone in my old house at Banley," he explained. "Gad! What with the burler's pantry and the turret-room, it's little like laughing you'd feel by morning. I am thinking! Pass me the brandy and let me get it out of my head."

"And sure enough he did get it out of his head; for it took two men to see him safe home when he left my tent at 10 o'clock that night."

"And what do you infer from that, Charles?" inquired his wife.

"Why, my dear, this is near Banley, and the only house that I have ever heard of where a cradle rocks. To make assurance doubly sure, Mr. Vernon's brother owns the place now. I would be willing to take my oath that the rocking of the cradle has something to do with one of these men; but which of the two I am not prepared to say."

"I saw George," exclaimed Rose, who had been deeply interested in the story.

"And I should like to hear the cradle," remarked Mr. Cowley.

"Oh, don't think of such a thing! It's too horrible!" exclaimed both the girls.

"I only want to convince myself that it does rock."

"But we all heard it."

"Then I confess I am like the young lady whose grandmother told her that she had found out by her own experience that love-making was very dangerous work. I want to find out by my own experience, too. Where is this cradle?"

"In the kitchen."

"Does it rock every night?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"It begins about nine."

"And it now wants a quarter to ten. It must be in full swing by this time. Rose, will you do the honors of the ghost to your old friend?"

"Not I."

"Catharine?"

"I must beg to be excused."

"Well, aunt, will you come?"

"No, Charles; I'll never set foot in that awful kitchen again, by day or night, while I have my right senses."

"Then I am sure that good servant of yours—"

Mrs. MacCarthy shrieked a quick denial before he had time to finish the sentence, and Rose laughed.

(To be continued.)

## CUT OFF HIS WOODEN FOOT.

Man Caught in Trap and No One to Help Him.

John McLeod of Millford, Me., employed as a scaler on the lumbering operations in township 31, had a strange experience recently. He was caught in a bear trap, and was obliged to cut off his foot with a jackknife. Fortunately, he had a wooden leg, and the operation was not painful. He was going from one landing to another, and thought to cut off part of the distance by taking the bank of the Athabasca stream. And he got into a bear trap, which closed upon his wooden leg with a snap, and held him in such a way that he could not reach the springs to release himself. The spot was far from the camps or logging roads, and John was in quite a predicament. But the situation was joyful even compared with what it might have been had he been blessed with two good legs, or even if he had been caught by the other. As it was, he was whipped out by his jackknife, and in a short time had whittled himself clear, leaving a considerable portion in the trap. This he got out without much difficulty, and, taking it under his arm, with the aid of a stout stick as a cane hobbled to the camp. But Mr. McLeod has bitter thoughts and is very angry with himself. After he had told the story to the crew the little French "cookee" observed: "Why you no take off your whole wood leg—ah? You get out um trap, and no spite you wood leg 'fall—ah?" It never occurred to John that he might have unstrapped his wooden limb, and when he thinks of it he grits his teeth and carries away the more vigorously upon the new leg he is making.

## JOHN RILEY TANNER DEAD

Former Governor of Illinois Suddenly Dies at Springfield.

## HEART TROUBLE IS FATAL.

The Ex-Governor Had Been Discussing Business Matters with His Son Only a Few Minutes Before His Death—His Notable Career.

"Governor Tanner is dead!" was the news that flashed over Springfield, Ill., a few minutes before 3 o'clock Thursday afternoon, causing sorrow to thousands of the former executive's friends and admirers. The former Governor expired at 2:45 o'clock, and while illness had confined him to his room in the Leland Hotel since Sunday, his sudden death was entirely unexpected, and came without warning to the members of his family and friends. Thursday morning the patient was feeling much better than he had for several days, although at no time had his illness been considered serious. During the morning he had remained in bed, but chatted and talked to those who were present in the sick chamber. Mrs. Tanner was with him throughout the day. Mrs. Colburn Fields Buck, a sister of Mrs. Tanner, went to the hotel Thursday morning and spent several hours. Mrs. Buck left the room at noon and went home for lunch, and when she returned at about 1 o'clock Mrs. Tanner released her maid, Miss Louise Kest, and told her she might go home for the afternoon. After the maid went away Mrs. Tanner helped the patient to the bathroom, and when he came back he was greatly fatigued and at once returned to his bed. Soon afterward Colonel J. Mack Tanner, his son, came to the room. Business matters were discussed by father and son for a few minutes and the former executive told his son that he was better and expected to be out and around again in a few days. Before leaving Colonel Tanner wrote two messages for his father, the latter dictating each of them. Colonel Tanner left for his office at the capitol building at 3 o'clock, and shortly after that Mr. Tanner talked to friends in Chicago over the long distance telephone in his room.

Mrs. Buck says that he then seemed to be drowsy and wanted to sleep. He soon fell into a slumber. His sleep was uneasy, and several times he groaned. When his breathing became labored and hard Mrs. Tanner went to his side and made an effort to arouse him. Suddenly he appeared to be suffering great pain in the region of his heart, and Mrs. Tanner, becoming alarmed, called for Dr. J. N. Dixon, who had been the former Governor's physician for a long time, and who had been in attendance upon him since Sunday. Dr. Dixon, in less than five minutes after being called was at the bedside of his patient, but his services were not needed, life having ended a few seconds before his arrival.

He Rose from the Farm.

From the obscurity of a farm in Southern Illinois to the highest post in the gift of the people of the state, from the private soldier boy in the civil war to the commander-in-chief of the state troops of the third state in the Union; from the farm lad with but scant opportunities for education to the man who could make a speech excelled by none in a national campaign; such in brief is the history of John Riley Tanner.

State Departments Closed.

All state departments in the capitol building were closed. Governor Yates, out driving with a friend, was caught by telephone at the Lincoln monument, and was one of the first to offer condolence to the widow.

Summary of His Life.

The following are the principal events in Mr. Tanner's life and career: Born in Warwick county, Indiana, April 4, 1844; private in 98th and 61st Illinois Infantry, 1863-1865; sheriff of Clay county, 1870-1872; state senator, 1880-1884; state treasurer, 1887-1889; assistant treasurer of the United States at Chicago, 1892-1893; Governor of Illinois, 1897-1901.

Trains Delayed by Landslide.

At Pittsburg heavy rains caused a landslide which delayed the Panhandle trains for about thirty-six hours. About 600 tons of earth and stone came down from Mount Washington behind the McClintock mills, completely covering the Panhandle tracks and carrying away the twenty-foot retaining wall which had lately been built. Trains will use the Ohio connecting bridge until the damage is repaired.

Sinks in the Mississippi.

The Diamond Jo line steamer Du-buque struck a rock in the channel, eighteen miles north of Burlington, Ia., near Johnson's Island, at 7 Monday evening. The shock stove a hole eighteen feet long in the bow and the boat went down in less than one minute. It lies in about seven feet of water. There were fifty passengers on board, but all were taken off in safety.

Girl Runs an Ill-fated Ball.

Miss Mary Conley, a girl 18 years old, is the object of a vigorous search now being made by the revenue officers of Whitesburg, Ky., who claim she has been operating a moonshine still in her kitchen for the past year. For several months the officers have been trying to locate the source of the whisky upon which the lawless element have been getting drunk, but were unable to do so for some time, until they found the home of Miss Conley was frequented a great deal by the men.

## Trick of Lawyer's Trade.

The average layman who may attend any of the more conspicuous trials in the civil or criminal courts is usually amused at first by the wrangles and tilts of opposing counsel, but in the end he becomes bored and wonders what is the point of all this furious recrimination. Some light was shed on this matter the other day by a prominent criminal lawyer, who said: "I never engage in any of these controversies without an object. When I have a witness who is going along swimmingly and keeping his head, I never mix it up with my opponent, but when my witness begins to get rattled under cross-examination, for instance, I am pretty apt to interject a remark that will bring a retort from my learned friend on the other side. One word leads to another and in a jiffy we are at it hammer and tongs until the court stops us. Meanwhile my object is accomplished. The witness' mind is diverted, he gets a chance to recover himself, and, if I happen to have had the better of the argument, he feels reassured and his confidence is restored."—Chicago Journal.

## Cold-Food Cure Fad.

A new cure has appeared in Paris which is said to be much in vogue, especially among members of the smart set. It takes the form of a special diet and the particular malady at which it is aimed is overindulgence. The idea of this diet is that everything, or nearly everything must be eaten cold; and even hot coffee, tea or soup is forbidden to those following the regime. The early breakfast of toast, cold game or hard-boiled eggs and ham is accompanied by a cup of cold milk. At luncheon, again, there is nothing but cold meats and cold puddings, with bread and cheese or salad; while again, at night, the meal may consist only of mayonnaise of fish, cold entrees, and entremets.

## Gen. Wallace Charges for Photographs.

Gen. Wallace, the noted Apache chief whose bloodthirsty career as a raider in the southwest was ended years ago by his capture, is now 80 years old and lives near Fort Sill, Okla. Tourists who wish to photograph him must pay \$5 for the privilege and the old sinner before facing the camera always gets himself into war paint, strikes a ferocious attitude and looks as fendsish as possible.

## Gen. Law Wallace, author of "Ben-Hur," says in his introduction to "Tarry Thou Till I Come."

"In my judgment, the six greatest English novels are Ivanhoe, The Last of the Barons, The Tale of Two Cities, Jane Eyre, Hypatia, and this romance of Croly's."

## The gr.at serpent mound in Ohio has been transferred to the Ohio Archaeological and Historical society.

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