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The Stealer of Sight

BY LUCK WILLIAMS.

PART II.

I looked at him wonderingly, perhaps a little frightened.

"You with sight cannot understand that," he continued, now angrily. "I learned to play with my violin so that I could feel color. There is no sound so beautiful or awful that I cannot achieve. And to me every sound is colored." He stopped, and recommenced abruptly with what I thought was another topic. "Have you ever heard of the Secret Note of Tibet?"

He paused again and then went on. "It is practiced in Tibet, in the Hidden City. There they have secrets centuries old. Sometimes, to punish a criminal, they place him in a cell, and every so often a certain curious note is sounded. The constant repetition of that note is so awful that in some way it destroys the optic nerves. The man goes blind forever * * * I know that note!"

Then and not until then did my befogged brain realize this was a madman speaking.

"For some years I have been searching for that sound, and at last I found it. I did it by the colors I feel. Ah! you can't understand, but you will soon. I am going to sound that note again and again until you are blind. It can't hurt me. How could it?" He gave a laugh that was born of something blacker than mere blindness.

"And why you?" he went on. "It is not just because it is you. I've been waiting, preparing months for some one to come into my web. You happen to be the one. But you will be only the first. You should live in darkness. All the world should * * * Yes, I am going to drag you into the pit with me, where light never comes. Then you will know."

He went to the window, and, pulling aside the blinds, drew across the old-fashioned windows their heavy wood shutters.

"No one will hear us now," he muttered.

Without another word he took up his violin and bow and stood facing me. He was full in the glare of the gas, which was well behind me, and the silver of his hair and beard and the varnish of the violin reflected back the light. But his lustreless eyes seemed to absorb it.

He drew the bow slowly across the strings of his instrument. It is hard to describe what I heard. Beginning with a high-pitched sigh, it gradually rose and rose to a repressed painful shriek, ending in a discordant crackle

that made me think of diabolical chuckling.

It set my teeth on edge, it was in such a high register. The note, if such it could be called, lasted about six seconds. He paused for about the same length of time before repeating it.

After the first unpleasant shock my feelings subsided into those of faint irritation as he continued to produce the note, punctuating it with evenly timed intervals. Then I laughed at him for the madman he was. What harm could that do?

The minutes sped on. I had no idea of the time or how it passed. Then I became aware that instead of the monotonous repetition of the sound having a soporific effect on me, it was riveting my attention all the time. During the pauses I was restless. I followed the rise of the note to the climax, and after the crackle was over I felt a temporary sense of relief.

He stood before me in the same position. His arms and fingers never seemed to tire, and never once did his staring eyes blink.

He must have repeated it many hundred times before my exasperation began to get acute. Why could I not get away from this madman and his strange, disturbing noise? The pauses appeared to be less lengthy, and as the Tibetan note commenced it would clutch something in my brain and bear it up to impossible heights. It was a genuine relief when the crackle was over.

"Quit fooling, madman," I tried to say, but the gag in my mouth permitted only a gurgle.

The man before me continued unmoved. Again and again he drew the bow across the strings, always producing the same sound. I watched his arm now to tell when the sound was going to begin. I anticipated it with dread. "Oh, for heaven's sake, stop!" I tried futilely to say. "It's unnerving." But he never stopped.

Slowly, subtly, I believed he had reduced the pause until there was no more of it. But, no, according to my eyes his arm still continued to rest the six seconds. My brain then was repeating the note to itself in the brief silence, like an echo. Would his arm never tire? Would he never cease?

On it went. Sigh, scream, crackle. But those three words of varying sounds cannot describe the horror of it. Five to the minute, five periods of intense annoyance, if not pain, five dull repetitions in my brain. And on, on, it went.

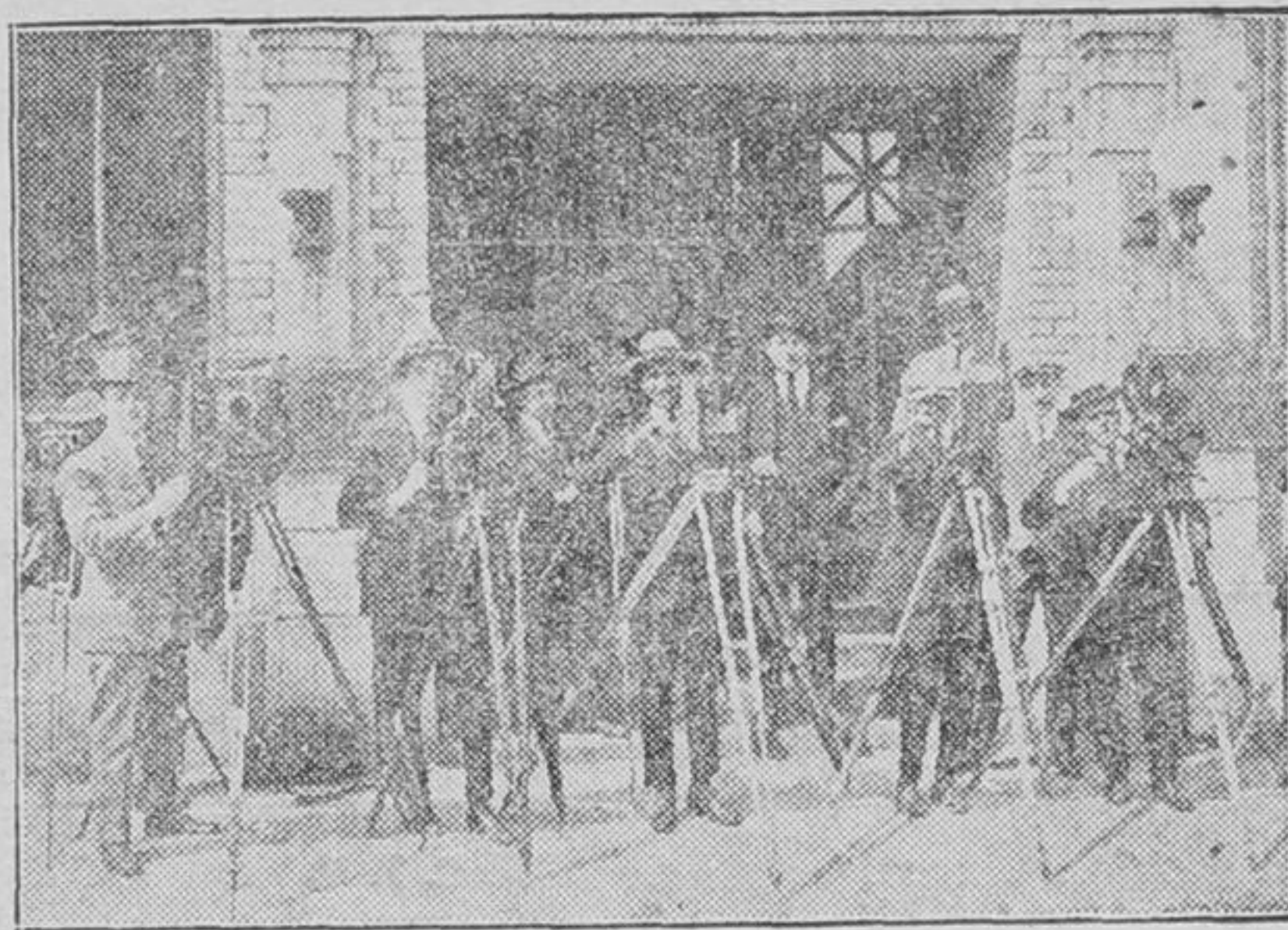
I was becoming angry, uselessly, wildly angry. The note was beginning to scratch the diaphragms of my ears like a red-hot needle; it was burning itself into my brain. "Is there something in it?" I began to ask myself. "Will it really send me blind?" Mad certainly he would drive me eventually.

Sigh, scream, crackle, always, endless it seemed in the air. "Oh, God," I prayed frenziedly, "cause him to stop." His arm rose and fell, his fingers crept the same as before. The set face betrayed no feeling, though the curve of his bitter mouth might have been more pronounced.

Then I thought I felt a burning pain at the back of my eyes, and a tight iron band seemed to compress my temples. I was becoming exhausted, and I prayed for forgetfulness to come over me. But the sigh, the crackle, held me firmly to consciousness. Not once was it fainter or louder, always the same sound, piercing, searing through my brain; one continual, awful note.

The pain at the back of my eyes grew more intense.

Then—was it my fancy or was the light in the room less brilliant? "Not that! Not that!" I mumbled to myself. "It can't be. It's impossible." I closed my eyes in fear. Sigh, scream, crackle. Sigh, scream, crackle.



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Could the light in my eyes be really darkening? I opened them again. The pain behind them was scorching. My brain was all afire.

At that moment had the gag permitted it I should have shrieked aloud. My eyesight was failing. The varnish on the violin threw back no gleam as it had done before. The madman's eyes were no longer visible to me; they were just two black sockets. My vision became dimmer and dimmer. I could barely perceive the figure standing in front of me now. Sigh, scream, crackle. It was ever sounding.

In the violent movements of my mouth, to speak, the gag slipped away, and I cried aloud. The terrible note stopped suddenly. My glance flickered here and there, but the room was growing darker and darker, until at last blackness pressed against my eyes, thick and impenetrable.

"You've done it, you devil!" I cried madly. "You've driven me blind!"

I heard a laugh ring out, fiendish in its triumph. My head fell forward, and, my mind reeling in that blank, stifling blackness, I remembered no more.

"Yes," a voice was saying, when I came to; "his nerves seem badly affected. But he'll be all right presently. Of course, old Gettle will have to be put away. He's completely gone."

"He wouldn't let me come in the room at first when I went up after hearing the shouting," my landlady said. "And when I did get inside the room was in darkness. But I noticed the gas tap was on. It's a slot meter, and the light must have failed gradually, as it always does. Of course, Mr. Gettle wouldn't know it had gone out, and as for this poor young man—"

Then I opened my eyes once more to the glory of perfect sight.
(The End.)

French Cut Forests Ancestors Planted.

By a strange trick of fate the French are now cutting down a forest in the Rhineland which was planted more than a century ago by their ancestors. When during the revolution the Rhine provinces were occupied by French armies they cut down the timber in the privately owned forests of Hansrueck, Eifel and Haardt which later became a part of the Reich's holdings.

The French on taking possession of the left bank of the Rhine found it necessary to replant these devastated areas and imported large quantities of Norwegian pines and similar trees from Savoy and the Pyrenees. Before the world war the Germans considered cutting down these trees planted by the French, but the forestry experts advised waiting until 1920, when they would be fully matured. According to the best estimates this delay cost the German empire at least 500,000,000 francs.

Mixing Up the Baby.

The inventor of a new feeding-bottle for infants sent out the following among his directions to mothers:

"When the baby is done drinking it must be unscrewed and laid in a cool place under the hydrant. If the baby does not thrive on fresh milk, it should be boiled."

He who can take advice is sometimes greater than he who can give it.

The British Houses of Parliament cover an area of eight acres, and have a river frontage of 940 feet. They contain more than five hundred rooms, and about eighteen residences, the resident population being about two hundred.

Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than is expected of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself—and be lenient to others.

Minard's Liniment for Coughs & Colds

In the Highlands.

In the highlands, in the country places Where the old plain men have rosy faces,

And the young fair maidens quiet eyes, Where essential silence chills and blesses,

And for ever in the hill recesses Her more lovely music Broods and dies—

O to mount again where erst I haunted, Where the old red hills are bird-enchanted,

And the low green meadows Bright with sward;

And when even dies, the million-tinted And the night has come, and planets glistened,

Lo, the valley hollow Lamp-bestarr'd.

O to dream, O to awake and wander There, and with delight to take and render,

Through the trance of silence, Quiet breath!

Lo, for there among the flowers and grasses, Only the mightier movement sounds and passes;

Only the winds and rivers, Life and death.

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

MEASLES.

Few individuals reach adult age without having had an attack of measles. It is generally considered a disease of childhood but adults also suffer from the malady. It is not so often contracted by adults because an attack in early life has made them measles-proof.

As most experienced mothers know, and as the inexperienced should learn, an attack of measles begins just like a common cold, with a cough, slight sore throat and, running of the nose. It is only after three or four days of these symptoms that the rash comes out on the skin and the doctor is called to see the child.

The measles germ has never yet been seen but observation and experiments in monkeys teach that it is present in the discharges of the nose and throat of the patient and may be passed on in the tiny droplets sprayed out in coughing and sneezing. When such droplets, loaded as they must be with these germs, are breathed in and settle in the air passages of one who has never had measles, the germs quickly make themselves at home.

They find their way into the blood, increase rapidly in numbers, and at the end of about ten days the sufferer begins to cough as if with a cold. In reality, it is the beginning of an attack of measles. The disease is passed along from one to others by the discharges of the mouth and nose.

The measles germ is present in the secretions of the throat and nose from the very start of what may be called the measles cold, which, as already mentioned, begins about three or four days before the measles rash begins to break out.

As we feel sure that the germ is passed along in the tiny droplets of liquid sprayed out in coughing and sneezing it would seem to be a simple matter to prevent the spread of the disease. In reality health officials are almost as helpless in preventing it as they are with the "flu" for the same reason that the damage is done before the true nature of the beginning "cold" is suspected. The best that can be done is to keep children with colds from mingling with others at home, in school or in public places.

Those actually sick should be kept away from other people until the rash has all gone. This is best done in a somewhat darkened comfortably warm room, the air of which should be kept moist and soothing to the air passages by means of pans of water or by wet sheets or blankets which may advantageously be hung across doorways.

After Every Meal WRIGLEY'S

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"So the boss is going to star you in a vamp part next summer? I suppose you had to convince him you could act the part?"

"No. His wife convinced him."

Minard's Liniment for Corns and Warts

Britain's Expenditure.

During the year ending March 31, 1921, Britain spent £26,000,000 on National Insurance, £76,000,000 on Education, and £31,000,000 on Poor Relief. Thirty years ago Education and Poor Relief cost together about £18,000,000.

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