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## The Ghost Book

BY CLARENCE MEILY.

### PART II.

"What kind of a man was he?" Wombold asked, when he had mastered the contraction in his throat.

"Why, he was a large man—rather slightly built, perhaps about thirty-five. He had brown hair and eyes, but he was somewhat gray, and had a kind of worried look. He is hard to describe exactly—rather odd looking."

"How was he odd?" Wombold put the question harshly, in a tone that grated with sharp insistence. The puzzled frown on Miss Armitage's forehead deepened.

"Why, he was dressed rather queerly, for one thing, as if his clothes had been laid away for thirty years or more. I noticed he wore one of those old-fashioned stiff white shirts, and he had a queer flat collar and bow tie. His coat was long, and his trousers weren't creased, but ironed smooth all round, and he had a low-crowned derby hat and buttoned shoes. He was pervaded by a general air of antiquity, one might say."

"Did he have a beard?" the old man interrupted chokingly, his face suddenly gone gray.

"Yes, a short brown beard. Why, Mr. Wombold?"

Mr. Wombold had fallen back into the depths of the chair, with one whispered syllable that the girl did not understand. His ashen cheeks stood out in high relief against the dark upholstery. Miss Armitage sprang to his side.

"Your heart? Mr. Wombold, did you say it was your heart? Oh, Mr. Wombold, are you ill?"

After two days of troubled cogitation, during which he had steadied his nerves by the exercise of that steadfast will which served him in lieu of physical strength, Mr. Wombold fixed upon two methods of investigation, the one material, the other psychic. One or the other of them, he felt, should disclose the nature of the forces that menaced him.

To carry out the first, he employed a well-known detective agency, instructing the superintendent to ascertain the origin of the last card received, and the identity of the person who had presented it. He waited for a report before resorting to the second line of inquiry.

The report, when it came, proved baffling. As far as the mysterious caller who had appeared before Miss Armitage was concerned, absolutely no trace of him could be discovered.

In short, the search of the detectives had ended against a blank wall. With a sickening apprehension, Wombold

turned to his alternative line of research.

"Make an appointment with Mme. Charleroi for to-morrow afternoon," he told Miss Armitage.

The seance was held in Mr. Wombold's library, none being present but himself and the medium. The shades were drawn to half length, filling the room with a mellow, golden gloom.

Mme. Charleroi, a small, stout woman, garbed in black and with the flat features, high cheekbones and neutral complexion of the Baltic littoral, was a noted psychic, enjoying an exclusive clientele among the well-to-do and far removed from common class of irresponsible charlatans. The aged magnate had consulted her often in recent years, not infrequently with remarkable results.

The two confronted each other now in an accustomed comradeship, the medium impassive, Wombold under a severely repressed strain that showed in his intent eyes and the slight, nervous movements of his lips and hands. "Tell me what comes to you," he said. "Allow a free inflow of suggestion from across the border."

Mme. Charleroi leaned back and closed her eyes. She was motionless for ten or fifteen minutes, during which a slightly increased paleness and regular breathing denoted the heightening of psychic susceptibility. Wombold's gaze never left her face as he waited tensely the result of the experiment. At last the medium's lips moved, and as he leaned forward he could catch a faint form of words: "I see—darkness!"

There was another pause, and then Wombold commanded sternly. "Yes. Go forward! Try to pierce the darkness!"

An expression of pity and pain gradually came upon Mme. Charleroi's sleeping countenance.

"A wrong, very great and very old," she whispered. "There is some one to communicate with you—a troubled spirit. He speaks the name of Henry Hart."

The listener gasped. "Go on!" he stammered.

Suddenly the quality of Mme. Charleroi's voice changed. It assumed a masculine ring, genial and cheery, yet with a note of reproach in it.

"George, you remember that mortgage I put on my house to meet the Macey Woolen Company bill, don't you? George, they're going to foreclose that mortgage. I can't meet everything, and if I lose my home there'll be nothing for my family but beggary. I'm trying to see you—"

"Henry, have mercy!" Wombold's stifled cry broke the thread of the medium's monologue. Mme. Charleroi's body was wrenched violently to one side, and she opened her eyes.

It was three days before Wombold left his bed, and when he reappeared it was as if five or six years had elapsed, so much older and more broken did he appear. He seemed to have become a haunted man.

Mr. Wombold had now definitely surrendered the idea of any human agency as responsible for the phenomena he had experienced. His preoccupation with spiritualism deepened, and his studies became more absorbing, though he no longer resorted to Mme. Charleroi or even permitted her to be mentioned. He still employed the detective agency, however, directing it to make discreet inquiry as to Henry Hart's relatives and their history. He learned in this way that Hart's widow still lived in Bracksford, and that the family had finally, after years of hardship, settled the last of the claims against the old partnership though not until anxiety and stress had cost the life of Hart himself while still in his early manhood.

Since the sitting with Mme. Charleroi, Wombold's sleep had been fitful and dream-laden—owing in part, perhaps, to the freer and more nutritious

diet solicitously urged on him by Miss Armitage, coupled with a lack of his usual exercise. In his somnolent brain visions of a far-off boyhood mingled with broken images of present surroundings.

He woke thus one night, about the spectral hour of two in the morning, with the distressing intuition of an alien presence in the room. He listened, but could hear nothing more than his own panting breath.

By the dim glow of the night lamp he could make out the recumbent figure of Otu on a cot at the other side of the room. The sight of the Japanese, and of the vague shapes of familiar articles in the room, reassured him. He could neither see nor hear anything to justify his alarm and presently, with practiced self-control, he recomposed himself to sleep.

Some time later his dreams, which had flowed through his mind in the usual incongruous jumble of sense images, resolved themselves into the definite impression of burial. He seemed to lie entombed, a mass of earth or stone pressing down upon him with an intolerable yet hopeless weight.

As his consciousness rose to the waking plane, this impression took on the poignant reality that constitutes a nightmare. He strove to cry out, to move, to escape. He groped wildly with his hands, which encountered a heavy object lying on his breast.

In an access of terror, he sprang to a sitting posture with a shriek. The thing slipped to his lap and lay there, massive, hard, ponderous. His hands explored its angular outline as he screamed again. In an instant Otu was by his side and had switched on the electric lights.

(To be concluded.)

### The Nut Pasture.

As I let down the pasture bars  
I saw the nut trees on the hill  
Huddled in their copper coats  
Against the autumn chill:

The shagbarks all in rusty gold  
Scalloped softly on the sky;  
And I heard the wind among the boughs  
As I went walking by.

And the rattle of the little nuts  
Bursting out of their frosted shells  
And clicking on the old gray stones  
Among the dips and dells.

And it was all so bright and still—  
The crickets lisp in the weeds,  
And juncos on the goldenrod  
Picking the yellow seeds;

So still and bright there seemed to brew  
Out of the rolling pastures all  
A kind of amber mellowness,  
The rich wild flower of the fall,

Seemed to brew deliciously.  
And through my drowsy veins to run  
Till I was drugged with mead of the air  
And syrup of the sun.  
—Christina Turner Curtis in Youth's Companion.

### Sanctuary.

There's a tingy sort of feeling  
In the atmosphere to-day;  
And the wild goose is starting  
For the southland away.

The night wind is crooning  
Dirges o'er the lonely nest,  
For the pilot-bird is trailing  
The horizon in the west.

"Honk, honk!" it is the tocsin  
Of the dusky cavalcade.  
Flying swiftly and unerring  
For the southern everglad.

The marshland is lonely,  
And the lone and empty nest,  
But the pilot-bird is veering  
For the sanctuary blest.  
—Horace Seymour Kelley.

### TRY THIS WORD GAME.

The next time the children are pining away in idleness for something to do, get them started on this word game.

The first player spells out a word—just any little word—of three letters. The next player spells another word of three letters, but it must begin with the last letter of the word before. For instance, if b-e-d was given first, the second player might spell d-r-y, and the next player y-e-t.

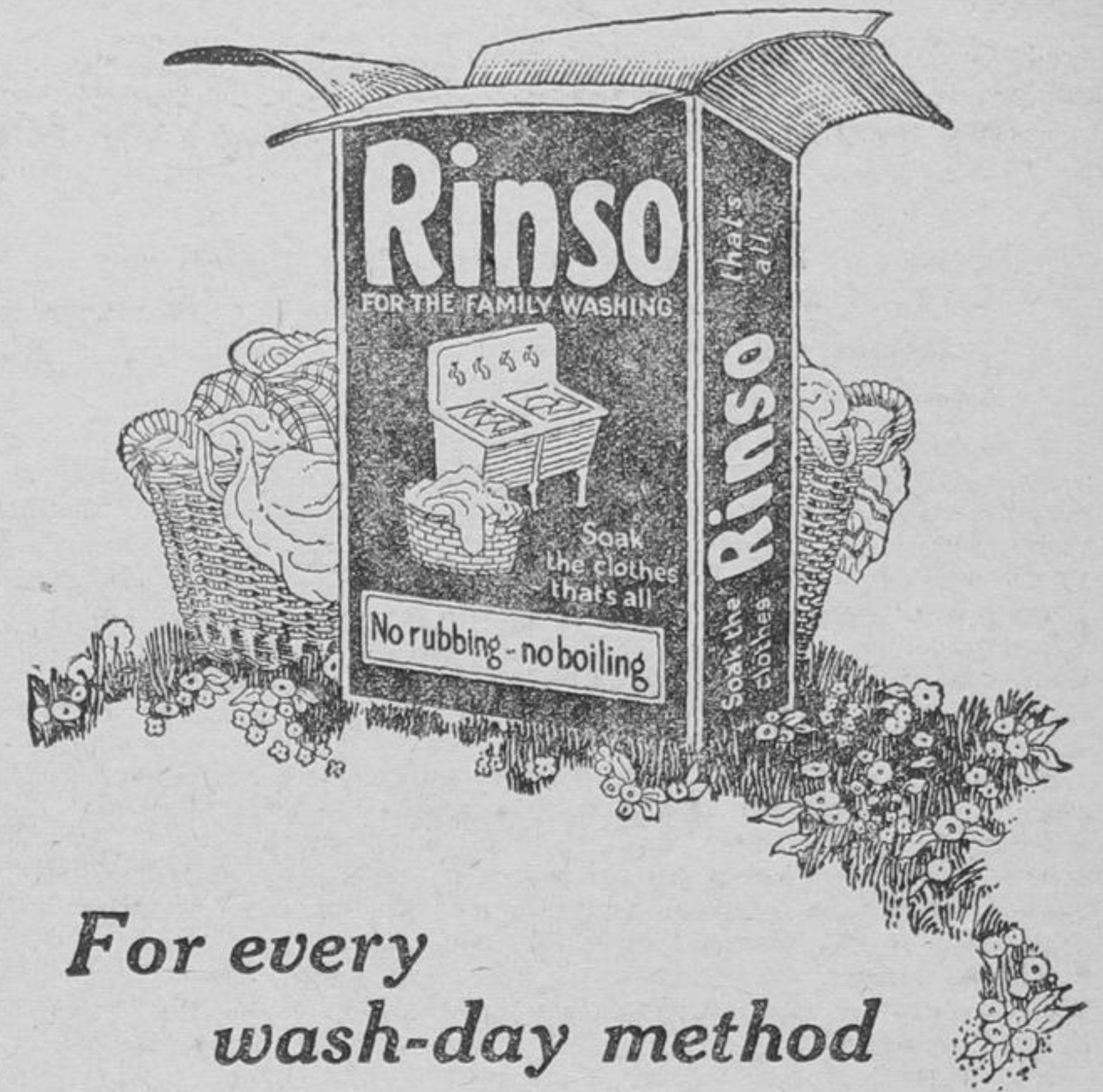
That is all there is to it. Each new word should have only three letters and must begin with the last letter of the word just before. No words can be given twice and anyone who cannot think of a word when his turn comes must drop out of the game.

### Precaution.

John wrote the following letter to his sweetheart: Dearest, darling, girl of my heart; I would swim the deepest rivers for you! I would brave the worst dangers for your sake; I would face death in any storm just for you. Your only true lover, John.

P.S.—I'll be over to-night if it doesn't rain.

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### The Old, Old Way.

The good ship stems the steady swell,  
The sea, it glistens bright,  
The land is fading fast to port,  
And all is calm and quiet,  
All, save the song the blue lips sing—  
That siren song of old,  
Which lures the hearts of gallant men  
Upon adventures bold.

The funnel fades, smoke disappears—  
A ghostly mast I see,  
And white sails fill upon the breeze  
Above the ancient sea.  
It matters not the ship or crew,  
It matters not the day,  
The sea-maid weaves her spell, and we  
Would sail the old, old way.  
—Lereine Ballantyne.

### Minard's Liniment Heals Cuts.

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No receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.—Bacon.

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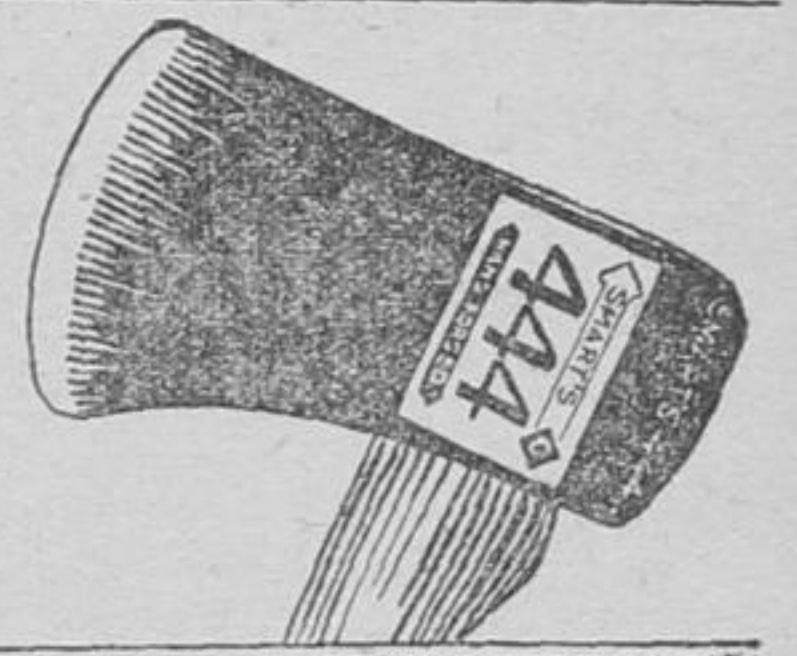
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