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THE ROMANCE OF A HAUNTED HOUSE.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEAUTIFUL PHANTOM.

I mechanically sought the door, and

was startled, indeed, upon suddenly

counting Burton, who was leisurely

pacing up and down the north balcony.

He noticed my astonishment, laughing,

and motioned me to be seated upon the

balcony railing.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "but whether

I enjoyed a dream or a reality I cannot

determine. Is this an enchanted house

where a person is deluded into passing

through all these things, or were those

actually spirits gathered together on a

festal occasion?"

"Those were the shades of the people

who once lived here," replied Burton.

"They were here to celebrate a popular

family anniversary, and also to receive

in becoming state a person, who, you

have undoubtedly heard, was destined

to work out an important mission in

connection with the house."

"That means me, I presume," said I.

"But what," I asked, "is this mission—

this all mysterious mission—that I have

heard referred to so many times within

the past few days?"

"It has been ordained that others

should acquaint you with the

necessary information," replied

Burton. "Besides, the most mys-

terious part of the mission has been

studiously kept secret from me. Every-

thing will undoubtedly be made plain to

you as you need to proceed."

The glorious prospect of the waking

day, as the sun's great orb slowly crept

out of the eastern void, fixed our atten-

tion and stayed our words for a spell,

and we drank in the radiant effect in

silence.

When the sun had crept up its length

or so along the firmament, Burton arose

and said that he must leave me for the

day as he had to go to a neighboring

village on a business errand. He in-

formed me that dinner would be ready

for me at noon, and that if I got lonely

some of the old family library had a rich

store of the wherewith to while away

time. Then he wished me a pleasant

morning and left me in charge of my

mission.

For an hour or so I walked around the

lonely old place. Sadly neglected had

it been for years. Becoming tired

at length of the drearful dullness of the

place, I sought the library, as Burton

had directed. The door had been shut

so long that it came open with difficulty,

but finally yielded and I walked in.

The room was filled with easy chairs,

writing desks and various-sized book-

cases. Opening the door to the latter, I

drew forth a quaint little volume which

had attracted my attention through the

glass front, and opened it. A small

parcel fell to the floor. I picked this

up to see what it contained. A large

white rose, discolored by age, lay on

evening in the book, and a musty wrap-

age, was drawn out from it. I then

issued a delicate fragrance that was

charming to the sense. The stem of

this rose was uniquely attached by a

small blue ribbon to a thick piece of

pretty note paper, and the opposite side

of which were written some verses,

headed with the words, "To Zeyna,"

and signed by Burton Auld. I was so

curious as to read these verses. They

were as follows:

All the flowers, dear, that grow

Up from the fertile sod,

The fragrant white rose is, I know,

Sweet as the smile of God;

As sweet, Zeyna, thy nature true,

As sweet as the love I have

Then take this rose and wear it where

'Twill catch the changing breeze

That darts along thy raven hair,

Or glances bright between

The lashes of thy sparkling eyes

And on thy fair cheek lies

Wear it love, where thy breath, twice

sweet,

Can kiss its fragrant leaves;

Look not, then, think, my dear, to meet

Me 'neath the house of the

Of the old rose-bower to-night,

Prepared for secret flight.

I fell to musing upon this little relic

of Burton's courtship, which had been

cut short, so to have this open, by the

death of Zeyna. But I was disturbed

presently by a slight step upon the floor.

Startled, I looked up.

Angel of light! Dream of spiritual

loveliness! Was heaven at hand, and

was the queen of heaven standing within

the gates? Thus I, indeed, thought for

the moment.

I had seen beauty before in this won-

derful world, both upon the painter's

canvas and in reality. I have seen it

since. I had seen it the night before

among the quarions of the spirit-

revelry; but may the beings that people

paradise be one-half so lovely as the

radiant spirit maiden who stood so

divinely there in that ancient and dusty

library before me.

My wildest, most indulgent flights of

imagination were eclipsed in that face

and form. I knelt in an ecstasy of re-

verence in the presence. Majestic and

queenly, with a slight halo about the

head; long, loosely flowing tresses; a

pale, sweet, purr face, tender, lustrous

eyes, that seemed to melt the very soul

with sympathy and rapture; a divinely

perfect form, molded exquisitely within

the transparent folds of a great zephyr

mantle of pure white—thus stood the

spirit before me.

I endeavored to speak but the phan-

tom placed a finger upon her lips and

shook her head.

Turning out of the room, and beckon-

ing me to follow, she flitted down the

hall, through several bare rooms, then

into a small office in a wing of the build-

ing. Here she stopped by the side of a

narrow door which she motioned me to

open. It led us into a vault, set in the

side of which was a rusty iron box, with

its door partly ajar. The phantom

seemed to have this opened, and with

the aid of an iron bar that I found

upon the floor I pried the door back. A

roll of parchment fell out. I started to

open this, but she shook her head, and

placing her finger against the dark side

of the vault, traced, in pale phosphor-

escent letters, that faded away almost

as fast as she wrote, this sentence: "My

intrusting to you this paper is a part

of your preordained fate; it is a part

of your mission here; do not open it until

you are well acquainted with the object

of the mission." With this she bowed

her thanks and vanished.

CHAPTER V.

THE INVESTIGATORS.

I hurried back out of the vault, for it

was a cold, dismal place, and looking in

my traveling valise the document in-

vested to me, sought the open air just

in time to see a posse of men ride up

the street.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD NEGRO'S STORY.

About a half mile above the house there

was a shady valley with a slight bluff

upon one side. This had attracted my

attention, and after I had eaten my

lunch I started forthwith to explore in

that direction.

At the foot of this valley I noticed a

little, badly weather-beaten shanty,

upon a stool in front of which an aged

negro was sitting, playing snatches of

jigs and tounabouts on a dilapidated

old banjo. I took it into my head to in-

terview this man, and stepping up to

him I accosted him with, "Hello, old

man!"

"Never shall I forget the amazed look

of that patriarch as he started up in re-

sponse to my salute.

He then stopped his twanging banjo

and sat as one dumb, for a moment;

then jumping up, ran to me and clasp-

ing both arms about me, cried between

sobs and laughter:

"Me 'ress y' Massa Man! dey tol'

me y' was dead an' burried in d' grave

y' d' down dah, an' dis dun kep y'

grave green fur fifteen year!"

That I who had been born and reared

in the North, and knew but little of

the glory of owning slaves, should be ad-

ressed as "Massa," was queer enough;

but to be thus warmly fawned upon by

strange, dark, and earnestly told that

my grave had been kept green for fifteen

years, was startling indeed. Of course,

I immediately saw that the venerable

black had simply made a mistake in

identity. As he insisted on continuing

to go on stating over and over again to

me as his "own good Massa Man," I

had to shake him away and explain to

him his error. He seemed very reluc-

tant to accept the truth and was really

disappointed. After I had convinced

him that I was not his deceased master

come to life, no matter how closely I

might resemble that gentleman, we had

a long talk concerning the Villa Mon-

tegni. I learned from him that his mas-

ter had been one of the younger El

Muraz; also that the El Muraz, and an-

other family, the El Zegals, who had

been in partnership with the Montinis,

and had made their home at the villa for

many years, were Spaniards of Moorish

ancestry, descendants of princes of the

Alhambra, and were very proud of the

purity of their lineage.

The old negro's views of the haunted

house were queer. He held the idea that

all the doors, pieces of furniture, etc.,

were animated with life and could move

around just as they chose. He had seen

them move back out of the way, ex-

change places, etc., but did not seem to

understand that this was the work of

invisible hands. His common

negro instinct gave him a terror of

ghosts, but notwithstanding this he had

frequently ventured into the old house

in the day time. Only once had he be-

held a spiritual manifestation, and then

he fell down upon his face and prayed

for mercy, for he thought that his time

to perish had come; but his fear had

turned to rapture when he beheld the

fair face of the phantom lady fixed in

the air before him. He thought she

was an angel come to take him to the

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

INTERESTING INCIDENTS OF HIS LIFE.

Washington and the Spy—How He Sub-

dued a Whole Band of Rebels—The

Great Man's Mother—Remembering His

Two Pretty Sisters—Portrait of Wash-

ington, Etc.

Our Country's Sire.

It has now been ninety-three years

since the death of George Washington.

During that long period many brilliant

reputations have shone upon us for

awhile, only to fade away and lapse into

oblivion. His name retains all its

interest for us, and probably more peo-

ple have been particularly occupied of

late with his career, its relics and its

records, than ever before.

At the great sale of Washington mementos,

held in Philadelphia, the prices

paid even for trifling objects once pos-

sessed by the great man and his family

were extraordinary.

A legal document relating to the ex-

ecution of his will, which his hand had

never touched, brought fifty dollars, and

an autograph letter eighty-five.

A list of his slaves, written and signed

by his own hand, brought four hundred

and fifty dollars. Two of his mono-

gram books closely written brought

eight hundred dollars. His family Bible

was sold for seven hundred and sixty

dollars, and books from his library, con-

taining his signature or that of his wife,

commanded prices varying from sixty

dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars

each.

Pieces of piano music which had been

played by Miss Custis brought consid-

erable sums, and a dinner invitation was

sold for eighteen dollars.

The sale attracted universal attention,

and every one lamented that the whole

collection had not been bought by Con-

gress and deposited at Mount Vernon.

The visible results of the policy in-

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