



The House of Whispers

By William Johnston

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

A BEAUTIFUL GHOST.

Synopsis.—Spalding Nelson is occupying the apartments of his great-uncle, Rufus Gaston. The Gastons, leaving on a trip, tell him about mysterious noises and "whispers" that have scared them. He becomes acquainted with Barbara Bradford, who lives in the same big building. He instinctively dislikes and distrusts the superstitious, Wick. The mysteries in his apartments begin with the disappearance of the Gaston pearls from the wall safe. He decides not to call in the police, but to do his own investigating. It is soon evident that someone has access to his rooms. Becoming friendly with Barbara, he learns that her adventures are equally mysterious. She tells him that several years before her sister Claire, who lives with her, had made a run-away marriage with an adventurer, from whom she was soon parted, and the marriage had been annulled. Claire is engaged to be married and someone has stolen documents concerning the affair from the Bradford apartment and is attempting to blackmail the Bradfords. Nelson takes Miss Kelly, the telephone girl, to dinner with the idea of pumping her. Gorman, a hotel detective, recognizes her as the wife of Lefty Moore, a noted burglar. Nelson partly confides in the detective and arranges to meet him.

CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"You're right about that," I replied, "and say, look here. Why can't you meet me somewhere tomorrow afternoon. There are a lot of mysterious things happening in the Grandchild. Maybe you can help me in trying to clear them up."

"It's a date. I'll be in the back room of Jim Connor's place over on Third avenue at three o'clock waiting for you."

"I'll be there," I said, as I bade him good night.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "Do you know where Lefty Moore's wife lives now?"

I recalled the number she had told me to give the taxi man and repeated it to him, an address way over on East Sixty-second street near the river.

"I like to know them sort of things," he explained. "In our business you never know when you'll be needing them."

On my way home, after I left him, I congratulated myself on having made James Gorman's acquaintance. In him I had found a man with police and detective experience. The fact that he held a responsible position with a big hotel ought to be sufficient voucher for his honesty. Of course Miss Bradford must be consulted before I met Gorman the next afternoon. I could hardly tell him my own almost unbelievable experiences without bringing in the attempts to blackmail her sister. Surely Miss Bradford would not object to my plan. We were making such poor headway in solving the mystery ourselves that I was certain she would welcome Gorman's advice.

And would it not be a surprise to Barbara Bradford to learn that a criminal—or at least the wife of a criminal—was employed as a telephone girl in the apartment house? I was hoping that she would be at home and in her room when I arrived at the house so that I might signal her and tell her my great news at once.

I let myself into the apartment and without bothering to turn on the lights made my way back toward my own room.

I gained the door without my presence having been discovered. In the dim half-light that came from the open window I could detect a figure standing on a chair apparently feeling along the wall near the ceiling. I recalled with curiosity that it was from that spot that the whispers I had heard had seemed to come.

Inch by inch I edged noiselessly forward, my eyes on the intruder until at last my fingers found the electric light button. As the light flooded the room

there was a suppressed scream, followed by a frightened gasp. The figure on the chair turned quickly and faced me. I saw that it was a woman, a badly frightened woman, with her hands clutching at her heart. Almost instantly I recognized her. It was not Barbara Bradford, but her sister, Claire. She was clad in some sort of a dark house gown thrown over her nightgown. Her slippered feet were bare of stockings, and her hair hung in a great braid down her back.

As I stared at her she sprang from the chair and made a rush for the open doorway. I grabbed for her and though she fought desperately I managed to hold her fast and to drag her away from the window. After a moment's futile resistance she suddenly collapsed in my arms, moaning in a tense whisper:

"Let me go, please let me go."

I placed her in a chair, and still keeping a tight hold on one of her arms, studied her, debating what to do. What desperate motive could have driven this girl to the daring journey across the narrow ledge by which she had gained access to my quarters? Was she, I wondered, once more in the power of that evil ex-husband of hers, driven by fear of him to such desperate deeds.

"Let me go," she moaned again. "Not until you tell me what you were doing in my rooms," I answered firmly.

"I did not know there was any one here. I thought the apartment was vacant. I thought the Gastons were away."

"But why did you come?"

"I can't tell that," she moaned. "I can't! I can't!"

"You must," I repeated. "I am going to keep you here until you do tell me."

"You must not keep me here," she said. "I don't want my people to know about my having been here. You look like a gentleman. Please let me go."

"Doesn't Barbara—doesn't your sister know you are here?"

At my mention of her sister's name an expression of amazement escaped her.

"Who are you?" she asked excitedly. "How did you know who I was?"

"I am a friend of your sister," I answered. "She will tell you who I am. You must trust me. I feel I have a right to know what you are doing here. Won't you tell me?"

A strange look came into her eyes and she shook her head.

"You wouldn't understand. I was trying to trace the whispers."

"The whispers?" I cried excitedly. "You have heard them, too?"

"Often," she said. "I heard them tonight. Mother and Barbara were out to the theater. They seemed to come from near the ceiling in my sister's room. They seemed to vanish in the direction of this room."

I thought there was no one here. I decided to creep along the ledge and see if I could trace them."

"And did you succeed?"

She shook her head.

"When I first came in this room I could still hear them. They seemed to be coming from up near the ceiling. I got up on a chair and put my ear to the wall to listen. Then they stopped altogether and then—you came in. May I go now—before my mother comes home?"

"On one condition," I answered, "that you tell your sister about your having been here."

"I'll tell her if you wish me to," she replied. "And now, please may I go? Could you let me out of your door?"

See, I brought a key to my apartment with me. I don't think I dare make that trip across the ledge tonight."

As I escorted her to the door, my mind in a whirl over the events of the evening, I suddenly remembered how important it was that I should see her sister for a long talk before I kept my appointment with Gorman.

"Tell your sister," I said to Claire Bradford as she departed, "that it is imperative that she meet me at luncheon tomorrow. I have news of the utmost importance—news that concerns all of us. Tell her to meet me at the Astor at one. She must come."

"I'll tell her," she replied.

CHAPTER VII.

It was the next evening that I made my astounding discovery, when pure chance led me pump into what both Barbara Bradford and I recognized at once as our first real clue to the mysteries surrounding us.

My find came unexpectedly at the end of an exciting day. As may be imagined I slept little in the hours following my unexpected meeting with Claire Bradford in my rooms, coming as it did right on top of Detective Gorman's revelations as to the identity of the telephone girl. Coupled with these circumstances was the fact that if my hopes were realized, Barbara would be within a very few hours lurching with me for the first time.

I just had to see her before I met Gorman. The tale I was so unfold to him was so improbable, so almost unbelievable, that I wanted to go over it with her step by step, in order to be able to convince the detective that it was the absolute truth.

I could not help but realize how preposterous it would sound in the telling. Mr. Gorman could hardly be blamed for believing that my mind had been inflamed by witnessing too many movie thrillers. Yet I had proof. There were the entries in my great-uncle's diary that I could show. I had the anonymous notes. My story of the strange whispers, if need be, could be confirmed by the old landlady, by

Barbara Bradford, yes, and by Claire, too. That is, if the reason Claire had given to account for her presence in my room was the true one. It sounded logical, and yet I did not place the confidence in her that I did in Barbara. But what I relied on most of all to convince Gorman of the truth of my preposterous tale was his own knowledge of who the telephone girl was. Just when I had reached the deduction that the band plotting against us must have a coadjutor in the building, he had come forward with the knowledge that pointed toward the person most apt to be involved.

I was pondering it all over in my mind as I left the house to meet Barbara. I was out on the street and just turning the corner when I remembered that I had spent most of the money in my pocket the night before. Retracing my steps, I returned to my apartment and took some bills from their hiding-place in the bookcase. As I emerged into the street again, I became aware that across the street was a man whose appearance seemed vaguely familiar. As I once more turned the corner, walking briskly, I glanced back for a second look at him and was surprised to see him coming in my direction.

Then all at once my subconscious mind came to my rescue. I realized when it was that I had seen him before and what made his appearance so familiar. As I left the house not ten minutes ago that very same man had been standing across the street. As I had turned back at the corner he had been coming in my direction just as he was now.

He must be following me, trailing me, shadowing me. I determined to test out my theory. At the next corner I turned sharply, glancing quickly back as I did so. He was still following me, though on the other side of



"She Shouldn't Have Gone to Your Room. That's Just Like Her, Though."

the street and perhaps half a block away. I went a few steps out of sight and then stopped as if to look in a shop window. He came hurrying around the corner an instant later, slowing down as soon as he spotted me again and walked on slowly past me as if not noticing me. I waited until he was some distance beyond and retracing my steps quickly to the avenue again stopped in the shelter of a building to light a cigar, purposely wasting a number of matches. In hardly ten seconds he was back, covertly watching me from the other side of the street.

There was no question about it. He was trailing me. But who could be having me shadowed? Certainly he was not in the employ of the Bradfords or of Detective Gorman. Either he must be one of the band of plotters, or—I hated to voice my suspicion, but somehow the thought of my great-uncle, Rufus kept obtruding itself. It would be just like the suspicious old miser, if it was he who had planned all this devilment, to put me in a position of trust and then to have me watched night and day.

Whoever it was that inspired this pursuit, I determined to lead my shadow a merry chase. Jumping into a taxi I bade the driver take me to a department store. Looking back I saw the shadow hastily entering another cab. Arrived at my destination I thrust fare and tip into the driver's hand and hurrying inside managed to catch an elevator just ascending. One flight up I got out and descended to the main floor by a staircase at the rear, emerging thence on to a side street. A second taxi took me to the Twenty-eighth street subway station, and there, with no sign of my pursuer, I took a train to Times square and went to the Astor to meet Barbara Bradford, arriving on the dot of one. She was there awaiting me and we quickly found a secluded table in one of the less conspicuous rooms.

"I've told Claire everything," she said as soon as we were seated. "I hope you're not angry with me."

"Of course not. You had to tell her. I am sorry to have frightened her."

"She shouldn't have gone to your room. That's just like her, though. She always acts on the spur of the moment. She's awfully worried, too, poor girl."

"We can save her," I said.

"Why," she asked quickly, "what have you learned?"

"I was convinced that they must have someone in the house aiding them. I've found out who it is. It's the telephone girl—Nellie Kelly is the name she goes by."

"I can't believe it," cried the girl, shocked at my statement. "She's only a girl like myself. I have talked to her lots of times. I'm certain there's nothing wicked or wrong about her."

"I'm afraid there is," I explained. "I took her out to dinner last night, to the White Room. The house detective, while she was off telephoning, practically ordered me out of the place before I was with her. She's notorious. Her husband is Lefty Moore, a well-known burglar. He's in Sing Sing now. Detective Gorman arrested him. He ought to know."

"Oh, the poor girl," exclaimed Miss Bradford, tears welling up in her eyes. "I'm so sorry for her."

"But think of your sister. Think what they are trying to do with Miss Kelly's aid."

"More fish are eaten by the Japanese than by any other nation."

"But how do you know she's aiding them?"

"I don't know it. But I do know that nobody could pull off all the things that have been happening in the Grandchild without some one there helping them. We've found someone used to helping criminals—a criminal's wife. Isn't that enough? All we need to do now is to watch her closely and fasten the thing on her."

"How are you going to do that?"

"That's why I insisted on your coming here today. I am to meet Detective Gorman at three. I feel that he could aid us, and I think we ought to tell him everything."

"Tell the police?" Her face grew white at the thought. "Wouldn't that mean a scandal—the newspapers and all that sort of thing?"

I shook my head decisively.

"Gorman's not with the police now. He is employed as a hotel detective. But he is just the man we need to help us. He knows all about criminals and how to track them. With his aid we can quickly clear the whole thing up."

"Will you have to tell him everything—about Claire's marriage?"

"We've either got to tell him everything or nothing."

"Oh, how I wish we did not have to. The more people there are who know about things the more likely they are to become public."

"Yet you trusted me with your sister's secret."

She gave me a quick glance of confidence.

"You're different."

"I'm afraid most people would not agree with you. They would regard me as a worthless, discredited young fellow out of a job."

"But it's not your fault."

"The point is," I went on, "that we have reached a place where we need expert advice. Gorman has fortuitously turned up to give it. The only way is to tell him everything."

For a moment she debated the matter silently, her pretty forehead puckered in thought.

"Yes," she said at last, "I suppose it is the only way. But won't he want a lot of money for his services?"

"I'll attend to that," I answered. "I'll make my great-uncle reward him handsomely for recovering the Gaston jewels."

"If he does."

"He must. We've got to get them back."

From her hand-bag she produced the anonymous letters she had received and handed them to me.

"Will you want to show the detective these?"

"Yes, I think I had better. The whole tale sounds so preposterous that I need every bit of corroborative evidence we can muster."

For half an hour we lingered over the table, discussing all the aspects of the case. Eventually I think I persuaded Miss Bradford that the evidence pointed most damningly to the telephone girl as one of the conspirators or at least one of their aides. She was eager to know what plan of action Gorman would advise and as we parted we arranged to be at our adjoining windows at ten that evening in order that we might have another chat.

I found Gorman waiting for me at the place he had mentioned.

"I told you that girl was a bad one," was his greeting.

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"What have you learned about her?"

"Nothing except that the address she gave you last night was phony. The number she gave is the hospital grounds"—he pronounced it "hors-pile."

"Where does she live, then?"

"She's keeping that under cover. She shook the taxi at Fifty-ninth and Third."

"Detective Gorman to the rescue."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PINS NOT LONG PERFECTED

Production of the Really Finished Product Only Dates Back to the Year 1824.

In 1775 the American congress, realizing the absolute necessity for pins in the development of the civilization of the country, offered a bonus of \$50 for the first twenty-five dozen domestic pins equal to those imported from England.

In 1797 Timothy Harris of England devised the first solid-headed pin.

American inventive genius, as usual, continued on the job until the best idea was hit upon. Lemuel Wellman Wright of this country invented a machine in 1824 which gave the industry much headway. His machine made solid heads to the pins by a process similar to the making of nails, by driving a portion of the pin itself into a countersunk hole. This was done automatically and consisted of a device by which the wire was seized in two small grooved cheeks. When both cheeks are placed face to face, the wire is held tightly in the groove with a small portion projecting, a small hammer connected with the machine strikes on the projecting portion, thus forming the head.

Seven years later, in 1831, John Ireland Howe, a doctor in Bellevue hospital, New York, invented a machine for making perfect solid-headed pins. A company was organized and a factory started at Derby, Conn.

Old Chinese Burial Places. Shanghai's old buildings on the Bund are rapidly disappearing, and with their destruction many discoveries in the way of old burial places are being made. While excavating for a new building two Chinese graves were discovered. Upon being opened, the coffins were found to be in a good degree of preservation, considering the length of time they must have been lying in the swamp. The inscriptions upon the stone tablets marking the graves are illegible, so any conjecture as to their age is almost impossible. An urn containing a quantity of bones was also unearthed.

More fish are eaten by the Japanese than by any other nation.

PROBLEMS FACING STRICKEN WORLD

Shall Chaos or Reconstruction in Europe Follow the Great World War?

MEN TURNING TO BOLSHIEVISM

Something Profoundly Disquieting in the Constant Repetition of Word Which Seems to Convey Such a Sinister Meaning.

Article XII

By FRANK COMERFORD.

I met a young American major just back from the French front. I had known him for many years. Before the United States entered the war he was one of the many impatient at our delay. He believed that it was our duty to join the fight when the ruthless submarine campaign torpedoed the Lusitania, sending to cold, wet graves American women and children.

I distinctly remember his face as he read the headlines in the papers telling of the murderous slaughter of Americans on the high seas. Now when he greeted me he startled me with his first words. "The war is over. I'm a bolshevik." I did not know what the word meant, yet it carried to my mind an impression, and while the impression was hazy, it was clear at least in one particular. It sounded like the confession of a crime.

He had always been a quiet, conservative type. Before the war one would have judged him to be a pacifist; he was even-tempered, mild of manner, and I still think that before August, 1914, he was a pacifist in head and heart. It was only the call of a just cause, the fight for an ideal in which he believed, that had made him a soldier. In this respect he was typical of 90 per cent of his countrymen.

I had spoken to him the day he enlisted, for he was one of those who volunteered, who might have waited for conscription and claimed a just exemption. He was in the beginning of his married life, with two very young children. By profession he was an engineer. Going to war meant leaving a wife and two babies, leaving a job that promised advancement. I recall his enthusiasm, the intensity of his patriotism, his quiet disregard of the danger to himself. I am sure that there was little hate in his morale. He saw a danger to the world. The honor of his country had been offended against. He was an American, one of those upon whom the duty fell, so he went.

He a bolshevik! Why? I was confounded, confused. The only meaning I gave to his remark was that he was an anarchist. The word "bolshevik" sounded red to me. It flared of the torch, photographed disorder, lawlessness—it registered blood, violence, assassination, force, hate, insanity.

I wondered how this nine-lettered word had become the vehicle for so many sensations that disturbed peace of mind and sounded alarm.

Where had the word come from and what company had it kept that so fouled its soul? What did it really mean—had it a definite meaning? Was it a bug like the "flu" germ? Had it come among nations to destroy them and to the hearts of men to silence the heavenly message, "Peace, on earth, good will to men." Would it run around the world as a scourge? Was it a postscript to the bloody war lesson, prophesying more anguish and tears than four years' fighting had brought? Would the word, coming out of the war, now be broken?

Or was it a meaningless myth? Was the word a bogie, a bad joke, a nightmare pressing heavily on a tired, nervous world's head?

Seeking Word's Real Meaning.

Or was the meaning that men had read into the word a lie? Was bolshevism the message of a new Messiah being cried down by the money-changers of our time in the same way their ancestors had silenced the word from the Mount and destroyed the Message Bearer with the lash and the cross?

In every mind was the thought and from every tongue fell the word. Russia had given the world a word. It had encircled the globe. Everywhere people were speaking the word—it found lodgment in every brain, a living place in every language. Its use had become universal. The old, the young, rich and poor, the learned, the uneducated, the serious, the simple, the toiler, the artist, the poet, and the peddler, the tinker and the thinker, held the thought and spoke the word. Men, women and children spoke the word, read the word, and felt the thought it carried.

To the nine hundred and ninety-nine it was a word of ill-omen, a word of terror and fear. To the one in a thousand it was a word of hope, a light for the feet of a stumbling world, and the nine hundred and ninety-nine said that some of these people called bolsheviks were dreamers of a strange dream, that twisted idealism had made them mad, that the majority of those who profess faith in bolshevism were sick with a strange, social fever, that they were mischief-makers, "ner-do-wells," criminals, that they sought to burn the world.

I made up my mind that I would learn the real meaning of the word. The dictionary definition threw no light on its meaning. I came to the

conclusion that to learn what bolshevism is I might with wisdom adopt the scientific method used by the doctor of medicine in arriving at a diagnosis. The doctor examines and gathers the symptoms, the meaning of the disease. He then determines what diseases might produce these symptoms. By a process of elimination he discards one possibility after another until at last there is but one disease left, one thing that the symptoms can mean.

I discovered at the outset that most of us have the habit of using terms loosely. Seldom do we give time or thought to the exact, real meaning of things. The meaning of bolshevism is too important to the world not to try to understand it. There is a difference between having the acquaintance of a word and knowing; the former is a mere introduction, the latter an intimacy.

Since the war, when the fastidious diner wearily orders his consommé and the waiter brings it a bit tardily or cold, he thinks to himself, or if courageous enough to speak his mind, he calls the cook a bolshevik. He has found a word to express his irritation. It serves his profane feelings and at the same time saves his smug respectability.

See Bolshevism Everywhere.

Once the maid asking for an afternoon off provoked a knowing smile. Her mistress granted the request, charged it up to a possible romance and generally suspected the policeman on the beat. Since the war it is different. The maid is looked upon with suspicion. Her motives are questioned. The request is considered a symptom of the new terrible disease, bolshevism. The mistress thinks to herself: The maid doesn't want to work any more; she is down with the epidemic.

The office boy, working the reliable excuse that his grandmother has died again, to get an afternoon off to go to the ball game, is trying to shirk work, in the opinion of his employer, who formerly, when such an application was made from the same source, chuckled as he granted it, while his memory took him back to his own boyhood days when he used the grandmother yarn to answer the call of the ball field.

Many captains of industry see the symptoms of the new dread in every movement and thought of the workers. The demand for living conditions and decent wages are grudgingly received by minds soured with the thought that it is bolshevism.

The hivers of child labor, looking hatefully at legislation designed to end child slavery, call the leaders of child life conservation bolsheviks. When doctors and public-spirited men and women insist that an irreparable injury is being done the nation by allowing women to work for a period in excess of the hours they are able to work without menacing their motherhood, the profiteers from woman labor cry out: "You are invading the right of private contract; you are mad with bolshevism."

Every Sort of Definition.

The wag with the wit of a barber defined bolshevism as a wild idea surrounded by whiskers. The saloon-keeper, bowled over by prohibition, screams "bolshevism." The anti-slavery leaders come back with the answer, "Your 'personal liberty' cry is only a camouflage for bolshevism."

If anyone disagrees with you, don't grant him the right to an opinion, don't reason with him—just call him a bolshevik. The word has become an epithet, a popular invective, a slur, an insult, an outlet for contempt, confusion and hate. Its parenthetical influences our definition of it. Most of us see the Russians with the eyes of the caricaturists, who for so many years have portrayed the Russian as the monk with high boots, disheveled hair, wild whiskers, the face of an assassin, the body of a terrorist in action, the suggestion of a long dagger smeared with hot blood, under his greatcoat.

If a doctor, making an examination of all of the patients in a hospital, discovered they all had certain symptoms in common, such as temperature, weakness and pain, and because of these findings should diagnose the sickness of all of the patients as pneumonia, the doctor would be regarded a lunatic, yet there are men in the world today who are as foolish as such a doctor would be. They call every symptom of unrest, without regard to its history, bolshevism.

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Rumania's Oil Wells.

Many of the Rumanian oil wells are not in working order, which is chiefly due to the military measures taken by the allies at the time of the German advance in Rumania. Although Gen. Falkenhayn's experts devoted particular attention to the reconstruction of the dismantled wells, their work was crowned with limited success, and it will take a long period of systematic work to raise the Rumanian oil fields again to their former importance. The Rumanian government is reported to have lately concluded a convention with the Austrian government whereby they are to supply the Austrians with petroleum and other material of primary necessity in exchange for industrial products.

Have Evidence Against Germans.

Evidence of German crimes is furnished by M. Delannoy, librarian of Louvain's Henri Davignon, secretary of the Belgian commission of inquiry; Paul Lambotte, director of the art galleries of Belgium, and M. Lamy, secretary of the French academy. The latter, it was said, has made a most telling indictment of those who were responsible for acts of savagery.

WHAT DROPPED.

The dining room of a very exclusive residential hotel. Dinner in full swing. Clatter of knives and forks and the usual buzz of conversation. Suddenly, a crash at one end of the room, a sound of falling dishes. An abrupt pause in the conversation, attention concentrated on the scene of the calamity. Then, suddenly, soaring above a rising murmur of inquiry, one clear voice with the desired information. "Squash, my dear, of all things!"

VETERAN RECOVERED WALLET.

Art Court of Marmarth, N. D., while plowing on his farm, two years ago, lost a wallet which contained \$40. Later he enlisted and went overseas and fought in France. Now he is back in Marmarth and the other day, as he was watching Lee Gilmore plowing the same field, the lost wallet was turned over. The bills were badly damaged, but enough remains of them so that they may be changed for new money.—Exchange.

EAT LESS AND TAKE SALTS FOR KIDNEYS

Take a Glass of Salts if Your Back Hurts or Bladder Bothers.

The American men and women must guard constantly against kidney trouble, because we eat too much and all our food is rich. Our blood is filled with uric acid which the kidneys strive to filter out, they weaken from overwork, become sluggish; the eliminative tissues clog and the result is kidney trouble, bladder weakness and a general decline in health.