

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 2

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Number 2

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Gray People

by John Campbell Haywood

Introduction

by Sam Moskowitz

MODERN READERS first became aware of *The Gray People* by John Campbell Haywood in the first

issue (November, 1936) of the short-lived magazine *THE WITCH'S TALES*. The title of that magazine

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| Suddenly they were there, and the folk around dreaded the sight of them . . . |
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was derived from a popular radio program of the same name, first broadcast May, 1931, which presented listeners with as diabolical an array of supernatural and horror chillers as have ever been heard. The program was on once-a-week and the bedlamite catalogue of terrors was written by Alonzo Dean Cole and narrated by the ancient Witch, Nancy, usually opening with a hideous cackle and a preface addressed to her coal-black cat: "Hundred and eleven years old I be tonight, Satan."

The magazine was larger-than-letter-size, printed on pulp paper, and died with its second issue, dated December, 1936. The feature of each issue was a fictionalization of a radio script from "The Witch's Tales" program, adapted by Alonzo Dean Cole, who also was listed as the "editor" of the magazine—though it is more likely that the necessary duties were performed by managing editor, Tom Chadburn.

Though crudely printed, and the names of the authors virtually unknown to contemporary readers, some of

the stories in the magazine were of surprising quality. They appeared to be reprints, but there was no credit line on any of them.

Research indicates that some, if not all, were from the pages of the American edition of *PEARSON'S MAGAZINE*, an outstanding publication of fact and fiction started in 1896 by the British publisher C. Arthur Pearson as a very successful copy of *THE STRAND*. *PEARSON'S* ran a great deal of fantasy and science fiction, including some of the finest works of H. G. Wells; and *The Gray People* appeared in its March, 1906 issue. When reprinted in *THE WITCH'S TALES*, the title was changed to *Phantom of the Links*.

Several other of the stories from *THE WITCH'S TALES* have been traced to *PEARSON'S*. *The Death Trap*, a remarkable horror story of a prehistoric monster in the sewers of New York, written by George Daulton was initially published in its March, 1908 issue; *The Monster of Lake La Metrie* by Warden Allan Curtis, a highly-advanced

concept of the transplantation of the brain of a man into the body of a prehistoric reptile originally appeared in *PEARSON'S* for September, 1899. Both of these were published in the second, and last issue of *THE WITCH'S TALES*.

John Campbell Haywood, author of *The Gray People* has left little record in the literary world, but his golf-course ghosts are modern spirits and offered something different and accomplished in the supernatural story.



"IS THIS THE Doctor's?" asked Hartley, as the carriage stopped. Through the darkness only a small gate was visible. The house beyond lay in the shadow of trees that silhouetted their tall heads against the night pall of the sky. No light shone but the reflected gleam of the carriage lamps. There was no sound, no voice of the night in the village street, only the rattling of the horse trappings. It was long after midnight. The footman opened the carriage door and Hartley repeated his question in a low tone.

"Yessir— Doctor Stout's sir!"

"Ring quickly! If the doctor is in ask him to light up, and then you come and help me to get Mr. Thorne in. He seems to be sleeping heavily!"

It was not many minutes before there were lights in the lower rooms and the sound of a figure wrapped in a dressing-gown could be seen talking to the footman.

Hartley meanwhile was trying to awaken his companion. When the footman reached the carriage he was half lifting, half dragging an apparently unconscious figure toward the little gate.

"He is still half asleep," he said to the footman, in a low tone.

Between them they carried him up the pathway. The doctor's office was by this time fully lighted and it seemed to them that the glare of the electric lights brought some helpful movement from the man they bore between them and placed in the one deep seated chair in the room.

Hartley was a stranger to Dr. Stout. In fact he had only been in the village a few days as Thorne's guest, spending most of his time on the golf links. The doctor and Thorne, however, were old friends, and it was with a quick note of anxiety in the former's voice that he asked:

"What's the matter? What's the matter? Has there been an accident?"

"None at all! None!-- That I call an accident! He tripped and fell on the golf links a short time ago. He . . ."

"On the golf links! At this hour?" The doctor, without listening to Hartley's reply, quickly undid the heavy overcoat and head wrappings of the now thoroughly inert man. After holding his ear to Thorne's chest for a moment he said, with a keen look at Hartley:

"Help me to lift him to that sofa -- at once!"

Hartley did as he was told and then sank back in the doctor's chair whilst the grave-eyed practitioner applied restoratives. Doctor Stout appeared each moment more anxious. Saturating a sponge with ammonia, so strong that Hartley felt the effect of the fumes, he held it for an instant to his patient's nostrils. There was a sharp contraction, a convulsive

movement of the whole frame that caused the doctor to rise from his stooping position. Thorne sighed deeply. Feeling sure that consciousness was returning Hartley began a torrent of explanatory words.

"Not now! Not now!" Doctor Stout spoke brusquely, again bending over Thorne. Then he turned and said something to Hartley in a low tone. Hartley sprang from his chair, answering almost fiercely:

"It is not possible!"

"It is a fact, the man is dead!" replied the doctor, who went quickly to the telephone.

THE MORNING PREVIOUS to the events related broke cold and gray over the Downs. The golf links, a nine-hole course of wonderful natural beauty, was blanketed in a bank of fog that had rolled up from the southeast during the night. What little wind there was served now and again to lift the veil and to reveal wisps of mist scurrying across the fair greens, forming in their drift, weird fantastic shapes. From the Shelter, an artistic structure which stood upon a rocky knoll overlooking the first and home stretch of the course, the gray draperies of the fog seemed to hang more thickly about the copse surrounding "the graveyard." The "graveyard" was

the resting place of many a lost ball—the penalty of a sliced drive from the seventh tee.

At ten o'clock Hartley, the only occupant of the Shelter, knocked out the ashes from his pipe on the low stone coping and peered gloomily into the fog. The first tee was dimly visible.

He was an ardent golfer, and gathered no new thoughts beyond golfing disabilities from the mist. He had no inspiration from the drift of vapor that hung over the links, and saw nothing, in fact, that was not tedious and irritating in the vagaries of the fog sprays as they curled and spirated over the fair greens. His mind was on golf. He wanted to play and his partner, Thorne, was not on time. He execrated the fog and his recalcitrant partner, and then picking up his bag decided to go to the caddy house. As he left the Shelter his eyes wistfully turned to the first tee. There were people there, who had come unnoticed by him; people he had not heard or seen coming up the slope, but through the mist their outline was now distinctly visible—a man and a woman.

"By Jove," he said, "a woman, and in this weather; plucky, whoever they are! A man might, but a woman, too!—Phew!"

He stood, a silent watcher, and

saw, although he could not hear what was said, that they were apparently in dispute over the honor, as both stood upon the square of the tee.

Hartley drew closer, a few feet only, and as he did so, the woman—a figure in a long gray cloak, stepped back from the tee, still with her back to him. The man's form, looming large in the fog, went through the motions of driving, a full clean swing and follow through apparently, but there was no sound. Then the woman quickly followed with a drive, sweet and clean for distance, and the two, leaving the tee, were swallowed in the bank of fog. Hartley watched intently—he listened for voices but the silence was unbroken except for the stirring of the leaves in the grove about the Shelter. He stood for some moments with a cold chill creeping over him, and then went back, loath to leave the chance of a game, if others had gone out.

"Must ask Thorne who she is," he muttered to himself, refilling and lighting his pipe. "A girl in a gray cloak and a man—yes, a man with a grouch." That seemed to him all he knew of them and the grouch seemed evident from the way they had acted upon the tee and their silence when leaving it.

"What rot it is," he said to him-

self. "a woman going out in this drizzling weather."

The rattling sticks in a caddy bag coming from the slope leading to the caddy house signaled the approach of Thorne.

"Hullo, old chap," he said, throwing down his sticks near the tee and hastening into the Shelter. "Want to go out? Sorry to keep you waiting, but I'm on the Green's Committee, you know, and had some things to attend to as we have a match on with Litchfield tomorrow—but now I'm ready if you are. Beasty day, isn't it?"

"I'm ready, but we had better wait for the people ahead to get out of distance! They've only just driven off."

"People ahead? Who is out except ourselves?"

"Don't know; was going to ask you who they are. A man and a woman just drove off, however, and cannot be much over the brow of the hill."

"A man and a woman!" Thorne looked incredulous. "Who, on a day like this . . ."

"Don't know, I tell you." Hartley broke in impatiently, "but I saw them drive off. A man with a frown and a woman in a gray dress!"

"Gray!" Thorne strode excitedly nearer the speaker. "Gray, did you say, and a woman?"

"Certainly, a tall man and a woman in gray. They . . ."

HARTLEY WAS NOT allowed to finish.

"The 'Gray People!'" Thorne grasped Hartley's arm. "Come! Never mind the first hole; we can catch them about the gully at the second! Come! They are wraiths, man! Golfing spirits! Ghosts! Anything you like to call them, unreal and intangible, but a part of the history of this course. I have wanted to see them for years—sought them time and again without success! Come! Come!"

Down the slope across the fair green to the second tee the golfers hurried, stumbling and slipping upon the wet grass, Thorne, as they went telling again that these they followed were spirits of a bygone age. He grew almost incoherent in his excitement and Hartley listened, incredulous and composed.

There was no sign of any players on the links. The second, third and fourth greens were hastily searched. At times they hid in the dripping bushes and waited—then hurried on again, Thorne insistent, whilst Hartley grew rebellious and weary.

The sixth hole is a carry from the drive, about one hundred and sixty-five yards, to a sunken green, a pit about forty feet square sur-

rounded by shrubbery except upon the side facing the tee. Hartley and Thorne crossed the fair green to the elevation over the pit and saw that, although the fog had perceptibly lightened on the higher levels, it still hung thick and impenetrable in the lower reaches.

"They cannot have passed here," said Hartley, "and I'll bet you they've cut the course! This is a wild ghost chase and I'm for heading in!"

Thorne's answer, a plea for seriousness, was stayed by the sound of voices—voices that seemed to come from beneath the sea of vapor lying almost at their feet.

"It is the 'Gray People'! I know it!" he whispered hoarsely. "Listen!"

His excitement choked him until Hartley, mentally cool, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"It must be here," began Thorne again, "that they . . ."

"Man! be still! look!" It was Hartley, calmly pointing to the spindle that rose out of the gray carpet in the venter of the green. It rose, as though floating in the air—then sank—to appear again, swaying violently. As it swayed there came shrill voices from the pit, voices that broke sharply in the thick silence, and that swelled as though in anger. The fog muffled the words, but there seemed

a hideous meaning in the spindle that swayed above the sounds.

As the men strained their eyes and ears to penetrate the veil, there came from beneath it a cry horrible in its intensity. It mounted, and mounting filled all the sides of the hollow above which they stood. It hung quivering in the air above them and then—it seemed hours to them—it grew fainter and fainter until it died in the rustling of leaves in the surrounding shrubbery.

"What fools we are!" said Hartley, "to be scared by a . . ."

"Hush! Look there!"

Thorne pointed into the pit. A vagrant breeze had swept the green clear of fog. There was nothing there but the spindle lying on the grass beside the hole—a spindle bent and crumpled from misuse.

"YOU ARE hopelessly skeptical," said Thorne after dinner. With the curtains drawn in his cozy bachelor quarters at Churley, the two men were resting after an arduous day. "You have seen more than most men, yet you don't believe in the 'Gray People'. As an investigator you lack faith with more than half the evidence before you. To me," he continued, "the opportunity this morning afforded seemed to be one for which I have waited a good many years, and I am frankly disappointed at

the outcome of our chase through the mist. I have been wondering if it was your spirit, antagonistic to the ones we sought, that prevented our seeing more!"

"That's right! Blame it on me!" exclaimed the other. "All that was to be seen I saw! A man and a woman driving off into the mist! It was you, you must remember, who insisted upon our following these players. The result does not seem to me unusual. They probably found the dampness too much for them and harked back to the caddy house after playing the first hole!"

"You still think they were real people?"

"Why shouldn't I?" Hartley was amused at the insistence of the other. "Real enough! Odd perhaps—but not ghosts!" He laughed openly.

For some minutes Thorne seemed to be weighing something in his mind. He was wondering whether he should more fully confide in his companion and brave his further ridicule.

"You forget," he said at last, "the voices on the sixth green! You forget . . ."

"Nonsense," interrupted Hartley. "A fog exaggerates everything, even sound! What we thought were voices were probably stray birds—bluejays, perhaps—or animals

quarreling under the misty veil! They disappeared in a very natural manner when the fog lifted and they saw us, or, more likely, heard us above the row they made themselves. We must have made some noise breathing heavily and . . .

"But the spindle! You saw that!"

"I thought I did, and by Jove, the thought wasn't pleasant! I'll admit my mind ran on murder for the moment but then one can't explain everything, you know! That was a bit spookey, but for that there is an explanation—probably fog mirage, if there can be such a thing, seems most likely!"

"I might accept your view," Thorne answered, "if the Downs had no legendary history, but they have—they have," he repeated, "and one that I want to incorporate in the book of folklore I have in preparation, but I want to substantiate it! I want to bring it in as strengthened by a personal experience of my own. You know the tale of the phantom dory off Thatcher's Island, the Gloucester people tell about. I saw that myself, night after night!"

It was impossible for Hartley to underestimate the earnestness of Thorne; he liked it but his own feelings were not shaken. He had traveled extensively; he loved all

legends for their poetic imagery, and he liked to read without trying to believe. In his travels he had seen many examples of occult mysticism, had seen them exposed or heard them explained. He was convinced that every apparent visitation from the spirit world was capable of materialistic interpretation.

Thorne understood thoroughly these views of his friend without sharing them, and so was loath to go more fully into the tale of the "Gray People" as he had heard and understood it. To a man of his nature, however, the indifference, amounting almost to ridicule, on Hartley was irritating.

"I wish I could convince you," he began. "It seems so much easier to believe a tale that many tell than to think people gullible and foolish."

Hartley reached for the decanter, slowly and methodically mixed himself a drink, and then asked:

"If there is a yarn that will not strain your imagination in the telling, tell it, but do not pin me down to any belief in it!"

"I didn't invent it," Thorne answered quickly. "I can only tell you the common talk amongst the settlers! Shall I? Would it really interest you?"

"Fire away! I'll be interested if unconvinced."

"IT WAS probably forty years ago, when a Scotchman traveling through this country first noticed that the Downs were a natural golf links. From the day Dugal Macferson saw them they have not been touched as to formation. In fact but a little cutting of the bushes and seeding of the putting greens was needed to make the perfect course it is today. You can imagine, therefore, the impressions of the man, a born golfer, when his eyes lit upon an undoubted golf course so far from his home greens.

"There was no golf in or about these parts at that time. The game had made no start in this country. It was some years later that golf took hold upon the American people. But Macferson was, as I have said, a golfer, once of the Tom Morris school, and the sight of this natural course stirred in him all the blood of a generation of golfers. It was not long before he had holes made in the smoother greens for putting, and with driver and brassie and cleek was making solitary rounds, to the wonder of the native element who watched, but would not play. One day he went back to the village with a strange tale of other players, a

man and a woman. The players had come out of the mist when he was looking for a lost ball in the gully at the second hole. He had called to them and they had not answered. Then he had gone toward them and had seen that they were not of his day or his people. They were dressed in gray, but it was not a style of dress he knew. The man had a loose cloak that opened with the swing of his stride and showed a frilled shirt, topping breeches, with buckles at the knee—buckles which glistened in the wet fog. The woman, who followed, had a bonnet hanging over her shoulder by a broad ribbon. A mass of tangled hair hid her face and she wore a mantle of gray so long it dragged the bracken as she passed. They played golf, but with shapeless clubs, and balls that gleamed dully in the air with a pale phosphorescence.

"It was old Nathaniel Curtis, the innkeeper, who sounded the deeps of the Scotchman's tale.

"Who were they?" he asked, sternly. Then without waiting for a reply continued, looking about him at the little crowd about the big box stove: "Ye cannot tell! No man can! but I say t'ye ye've seen the 'Gray People!' Ye've seen the same as many a man hez afore ye, but there's no man afore this as

hez said they were playin' a game! Are ye sure of this?"

"'Man,' it is said the Scotchman answered, 'wull ye say a' canna tell t'game o' gowf? I dinna ken who the 'Gray Folks' are, but a brassie! Lad! An' a braw approach tae th' green—Hoot!"

"'Tut! Tut!' the innkeeper broke in. 'The "Gray People" have walked the Downs for years. Many a farmer has seen 'em, aye an' many a man kep away from them same Downs for fear o' the sight o' them. 'Tis said by some that they never go west o' the meadow that leads to the green pit, but that they go into the pit! There's cries bin heard, cries that scairt and hindered the breath o' them that heard!'"

"I'm trying," said Thorne, at this point, "to give you an idea of the reception of the Scotchman's tale at the inn and to repeat, as it has been repeated to me a score of times, the conversation that ensued. The townfolks, you see, knew of the 'Gray People.' It was the Scotchman who discovered they were golfers."

"Go on," answered Hartley. "Tell it your own way! What happened next?"

"Then," went on Thorne, "the innkeeper asked the Scotchman if he had followed them any part of the way."

" 'I'm no a fu!' Macferson replied. ' 'Tis no ma way tae be following speerits! "

" 'Tis well it isn't,' Curtis Wild told him, 'there's deaths laid to their door!' With this statement made as impressive as possible and allowed to sink in, he continued, 'Ye speak o' little balls they played with! There's them as says balls o' fire can be seen o' nights risin' an fallin' on the Downs. Like as not 'tis the Gray ones out. D'ye remember Rogers? "

"The innkeeper's sudden question was answered by a solemn nod of assent from one or two.

" 'Rogers,' went on the innkeeper, 'lost a sheep, an' looking for it late one night, he saw them same lights and follered 'em. Curiosity it was, an' it done him! "

" 'Is the mon deid?' The Scotchman is said to have asked in an awe-stricken voice, fearful of the answer.

" 'Aye! dead, an' there's others! There's many says the lights bring death, but may be if it's just a game they're playin', as you say — well! I dunno! It's a fool game monkeyin' with them things. I'm only tellin' ye what some thinks! "

"That is about the end of it," said Thorne, "but knowing all this talk, this belief of the natives in the 'Gray People' of the Downs,

you cannot wonder at my anxiety to see something for myself! "

For some minutes Hartley was silent. "Old tales," he exclaimed. "Old wives' tales, built of fog and mist sprays! Phosphorescent gleams in the night! The same the sailor sees in corposants upon the yards and stays of his ship! In fact there is some similarity in the fatality supposed to follow in each case — a fatality never more than a coincidence! The sailor says, you know, ' 'tis death to the man that the light shines on;' so they don't go aloft if they can help it when the Corpo Santo is perched upon the yard-arms. I've seen them many times in my old seafaring days — ay! and had their ghastly glare in my face too — yet am I here! "

"Here! and still skeptical I see!" Thorne smiled. "Will nothing ever change, I wonder, your prosaic and materialistic tendency? "

"Yes!" Hartley rose suddenly from his chair and went to the window. Pulling the curtains aside he looked out into the night. "You shall show me the lights! "

"DO YOU really mean it?" said Hartley, peering out into the black blue of the moonless night from the carriage window. "Do you really mean it? "

"Mean what?"—neither of the men had spoken since the carriage had left the house. It was now slowly mounting the up-drive of the private way to the links. The bright end of a cigarette in Thorne's hand glowed fitfully with the indraught of his lips and then, as he threw it out, made a bright parabola to the ground. "Mean what! Do you think an old wives' tale would draw me to the Downs at this hour if I did not know that there are some things beyond your ken or mine! If I did not believe that the world holds many in so-called spirit form, treading the paths that lie between heaven and . . ."

"Bosh!" Hartley put out his hand to stay the flow of words—words that in him raised only decided antagonism. "I've no doubt you think you believe in all this—you study and you lecture and you believe—or bring yourself to a semblance of belief—but you don't really! You can't! The thing is too flagrantly a case carrying with it all sorts of ideas and the Scotch verdict 'not proven . . .'"

"We go," Thorne said, with an aggressive positiveness in his voice, "to prove it! Here we are, and I wish . . ."

"What?"

"That for your sake we may see the lights, may speak to the

'Gray People' and—and," he repeated, "for once in your life you may exchange a doubt for faith!"

The carriage stopped under a grove behind the caddy house, and the two men walked quickly and silently across the fair green to the Shelter.

For fully half an hour the two men sat and waited, alert to anything that in the dark of the night seemed a portent of what one of them at least wished—they both wished in fact—one for the proving, the other for the disproving of the idea that lay uppermost. Hartley had begun the watch with light and trivial expression, to be quickly stilled, however, by Thorne's earnest, somber mood. From where they sat the first tee was dimly visible—its outline a blot beyond the outer wall of the knoll which bore the Shelter. There was nothing depressing in the outlook, but it imposed silence—a silence unbroken except for the champing of the horses in the woods back of the caddy house and an occasional call of a night owl or flutter of a dreaming bird. Hartley was beginning to get uneasy. The chair he sat in was hard and whilst he did it as noiselessly as possible, he constantly changed his position and at last said:

"Let's give it up, old chap!

There's nothing in it. We've given it a fair trial but tonight is not . . ."

He ceased abruptly. Clearly and distinctly on the first tee glowed a small light—a light of pale phosphorescence—greenish and uncanny!

"Look! Thorne! Wake up! What's that?"

Thorne had been dozing for a moment. Hartley's hand on his arm awakened him to instant alertness.

"The phantom ball!" he whispered.

EVEN AS THEY both watched, the disk of light rose from the tee—out into the black blue of the heavens it soared, straight down the fair green toward the first hole.

Both men were on their feet.

"Watch!" It was Thorne's voice hoarse and insistent. "Watch! The other!"

A pale blue light appeared on the tee. For a moment it flickered and then followed, though with apparently weaker force and direction, the first ball's slight over the course.

There was a rush of air as both men left the Shelter, Hartley in the lead. Instinctively the two drew together and Hartley's arm closed about Thorne.

"Let's keep together," he said,

"and follow! Follow until I know!"

There was a change in the attitude of the two. Hartley was excited to the verge of recklessness. Thorne, calm and deliberate, investigating a truth that had been to him always a truth, and not wishing to risk a false step.

"Hold on," he said. "Hold on! If they are playing golf the balls cannot be more than over the brow of the hill."

Arm linked in arm they paced to the brow of the slight declivity that the length of a fair drive from the tee.

"There they are!" The jerk of Hartley's arm almost threw Thorne off his feet. "See! Both of them."

Thorne broke loose and rushing down the slope was soon within reach of the lights—the one showing greenish white, the other and nearer one, pale blue upon the dark of the grass. As Thorne came to the first it disappeared—went out, leaving only the baleful gleam of the greenish one, about ten yards beyond where Thorne had stopped. He advanced toward it, and Hartley could see that he stooped as though hoping to catch it in his hands. As he neared it the light for an instant flickered, then darkness where it lay, whilst the pale blue light returned and shone

with gentler glow upon the ground he had passed over. Hartley stood still and watched. The night, dark as it was, yet touched with the clearness of a cloudless sky everything above the floor line with some distinctness, and he could see the efforts of the investigator as he passed from place to place, at one time seemingly within reach of the glimmering disks, the next moment encircled only in the shadow of the fair green.

"Come back," he called softly. "Cannot you see," he said, as Thorne reached his side, "that they are Will-o'-the-wisps that you cannot touch? See, there they are now!"

As he spoke the blue ball rose from the ground and dropped short, the green one following almost at once to a place within a long putting distance of where both the watchers knew the hole to be.

Having learned his lesson the first stretch of the course, Thorne was content to follow, without attempting to investigate too closely, the game of the phantom balls to the sixth green. There was no halt in the game; each disk rose from the tee and fell with noticeable equality—the greenish-hued being as a rule in advance on the drive, but the strokes—which the watchers were able to count—to putting distance being rarely of remark-

able difference until the sixth hole.

This was a stretch of meadowland, a short drive to a sunken green. The experiences of the morning were not forgotten. It was beyond here the innkeeper had said the "Gray People" had never been seen. It was here that Hartley and Thorne had heard voices—the one said of animal life, the other convinced of some supernatural agency.

It was therefore with something like consternation they watched the drive and saw the green disk, to their imagination more baleful in its weird gleam as it lay upon the tee than before, rise in the air and take an erratic direction. It fell far to the right of its true course into spinney. Both the watchers, being golfers, recognized at once an impossible approach to the putting green.

Slowly they made their way to the knoll overlooking the pit. The blue ball played a second time, lay in the center of the green. For some moments it glimmered in the shadows, a solitary light, glowing gently, on a field of velvet—then beside it there lay another—a ball like a clot of blood—an effulgent mass of deep red which seemed to drip a light on to the carpet of the pit!

An unreasoning terror shook the two men. Clutching each other

they stood and looked. As they looked, it seemed to them that the pit became filled with figures that swayed and fought about the pale blue light, always with the blood-red light upon them. There rose on the air a cry—a cry repeated and breaking into the silence until every breath around them bore some wail of agonized spirit form. And then—they ran—ran full of the panic of fear, clutching at their breaths, sobbing with an awful horror of the things they left behind. Once Thorne stumbled and fell; it was at the edge of the "graveyard," and Hartley helped him to his feet and over the fair greens to the caddy house. In there were light and people Thorne dashed in and fell panting to the floor.

There was no mark of hurt upon him but he asked to be driven to the doctor's.

IT WAS three years after the death of Thorne when Hartley returned to America. He had gone away immediately following the inquest at which he had repeated the legend as told him by Thorne, and had given in detail all the circumstances leading to the fatal end of his friend. That he had been looked upon with some suspicion he knew, but the verdict cleared him and he left the place, bearing

a burden of thought he sought to lighten by traveling abroad.

In the library of a mutual friend shortly after his return, he first saw *Legendary Pathways*, by Professor Albion Thorne, published by his literary executor about a year after his death. Turning to the index he saw that the last chapter, written by the executor, told of Thorne's death and the manner of it, and of the "Gray People" and of the phantom balls, but—and he thanked God for it—there was no mention of his own name, only that "a friend was with him." He turned other pages idly until he found under a chapter headed "The Contagion of Thought" this passage:

"There have been believers in legends throughout the ages and always will be. It is a belief which, inoculating childhood, saturates the blood and if not early eliminated, formulates in manhood an almost overpowering faith in mysticism and makes many followers of occultism and its attendant so-called sciences. It is quite possible to become so imbued with the apparent truth in a legend that in some natures the things sought to be seen, are made visible. Atmospheres are created, not only around the investigator, but through the strength of his belief extending to the senses and mental attitudes of his companions. This transmission

of thought from one will create a panic of fear, or the exultation of great joy in the minds of many who have no knowledge of the actual cause of fear or reason for joy. Then the imagination will operate to see and hear as the imagination of the instigator of such emotions is seeing or hearing."

Hartley closed the book . . .

"I cannot believe it," he muttered, "the thing is impossible — with me!"

For some moments he sat brooding over the trend of thought the book had conjured to his mind.

"Besides," he said, throwing the book upon the table, "I saw the 'Gray People' before Thorne did — I saw them before he came up the slope."

He went to the window and looked out . . .

"Dark," he said. "dark and foggy!" — then suddenly he stretched out his hands toward the darkness.

"Thorne," he called, "Thorne! if you are there — if you can speak to me — tell me — show me if you can — must I too believe?"

There was no answer.

