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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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Folks Used to Believe

by ALVIN F.
HARLOW

The Murderer's Touch



ONE of the most fixed of all beliefs in centuries past was that the corpse of a murdered man would bleed if his assassin came near him or touched him. A famous instance of a trial by this practise is found in Denmark in the Sixteenth Century. A number of gentlemen who were in an inn together one evening fell into a quarrel, and from words came to blows. The candles were overturned and in the darkness a man was stabbed to death. Several of the party accused an equerry of the king as the murderer, but he stoutly denied it.

Christian II, the king, to discover the murderer, caused them all to be assembled in a room around the dead body as it lay on a bier; and he ordered that one after another they should lay their right hands on the dead man's naked breast and swear their innocence. The gentlemen did so, and no sign appeared as witness against them; but the equerry, holding off until the last, and pretending great grief, first kissed the dead man's feet; then, as he laid his hand on the breast, the blood gushed forth in abundance, not only from the dagger-wound but also from the nostrils of the corpse. With a great cry of fear, the guilty man fell on his knees and confessed his crime.

"Hereupon," says an old chronicler, "arose that practise (which is

now ordinary in many places) of finding out unknown murderers, which, by the admirable power of God, are for the most part revealed, either by the bleeding of the corpse or the opening of its eyes, or some other extraordinary sign, as daily experience teaches."

On another occasion a traveler was found murdered on the highway in Denmark; and, the murderer being unknown, the magistrates caused one hand of the victim to be cut off and hung by a string to the ceiling of the office of the town prison, where as months and years passed, it dried and shriveled.

Ten years had gone by when one day a well-known citizen entered the prison on business. As he spoke to the jailor, those in the room heard a dripping sound, and looking up, saw to their horror that drops of blood were falling from the withered hand to the table beneath it.

For a moment they all gazed, breathless with stupefaction. Then the jailor sprang to his feet and seized the visitor by the collar.

"You are my prisoner!" he said, hoarsely. Limp with terror, the man's legs sagged beneath him. He was dragged before a magistrate, where he sobbed out a confession of his crime, and a few days later he was sent to the gallows.

