

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 408 Holliday Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.
Copyright, 1925, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

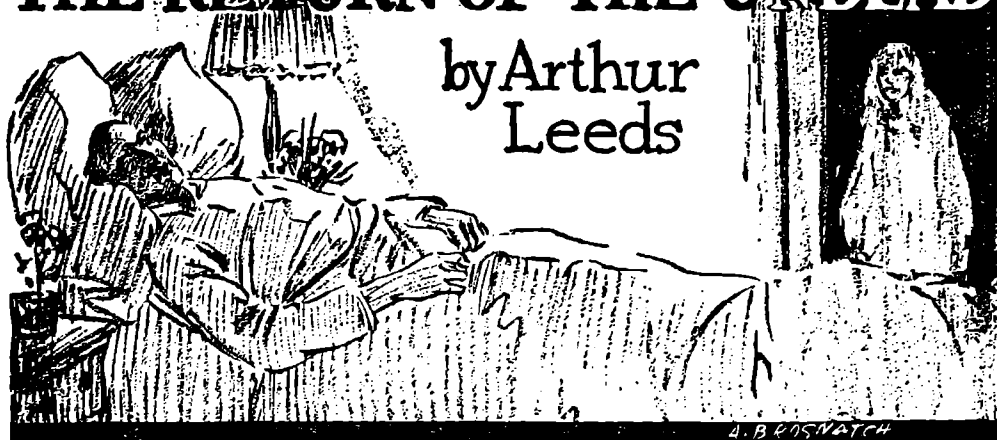
Contents for November, 1925

- Cover Design ----- Andrew Brosnatch
- The Stolen Body ----- H. G. Wells 581
Evil Entity Seizes a Man's Body and Tries to Destroy It
- The Return of the Undead ----- Arthur Leeds 589
A Hospital Vampire—Morphine—and a Ward Full of Children
- Lukundoo ----- Edward Lucas White 599
Every Tale of African Pigmies That Whistled and Jabbered
- Vale of the Corbies ----- Arthur J. Burks 607
The Beating of Unseen Wings Filled the Valley of Ravens
- Midnight Realism ----- William Sanford 612
At Midnight the Phantom Stepped Down and Stabbed Itself

(Continued on Next Page)

THE RETURN OF THE UNDEAD

by Arthur
Leeds



"That the ghastly extremes of agony are endured by man the unit, and never by man the mass—for this let us thank a merciful God."—Edgar Allan Poe, *The Premature Burial*.

TO HAVE died—and yet to be undead! What a horrible thought! And yet, what a fascinating story, albeit one that fairly set every nerve in my pain-racked body trembling with the frightful suggestion contained in it! And to think that this book that I had just finished reading told, in the form of fiction, what the poor devil of a German also had told me as he lay there beside me in shell-scarred "No Man's Land," waiting for his ticket to "go West," only a few months before.

"Yes, there are wehr-wolves," he assured me, solemnly, his face contorted with pain the while he talked—in his own language, which I spoke almost as well as himself; "they are the slaves of the vampires—the *undead*—those beings who claim their victims after death, and who carry on their terrible act of mutilation and desecration"—he paused to cross himself and murmur a word of prayer—"forever and forever! Doubt it not, *Kamerad*. My brother, now, knew a man, an Austrian, who had met a wehr-wolf at midnight, in the forest

district of his own homeland. Shortly after that, in our own Black Forest, my brother himself encountered a wehr-wolf. In the following year, my brother died; and as he lay on his death-bed, he called me to his side.

"'Karl,' he declared, laying his hand on my arm, 'remember what I have told you in the past. The undead are as swift in their movements and as immune to harm from human hands as were the valkyries of old. I am marked by a being, a vampire—one of the undead host; an overlord of wehr-wolves—and he—it—has given me the sign. Therefore, brother of mine, heed what I say; and, as you love me, carry out this, my last request, even as you hope for the death of a Christian and for salvation after death. After they have buried me, you must take my body out of the ground—on the day of my burial, remember, and before sunset. Do not forget that—*before sunset*. You must have help; Heinrich Arndt will assist you; I have spoken to him as I am now speaking to you. Take me from the coffin, and plunge the old sword of our great-great-grandfather straight through my heart. Leave the sword in my body; bind it there with wire. Then, bind the crucifix in the clasp of both my dead hands. Return

my body to the grave, and rest content that you have done what I most desire, in life and death, for so only can you save me from everlasting torment.' ”

I had been unconscious, from the pain of my wound and from the horrible thirst, when the scouting party picked me up that night. The dead German was left where he had fallen. When I returned to consciousness, it all seemed like a bad dream; and when sober realization of all that I had been through, and all that he had told me, came to me, the poor fellow's story seemed to be only the raving of a thirst-tortured brain. Human vampires! Beings that lived forever upon the blood of others; wehr-wolves; the damnable clan of the undead! Such things never were, I assured myself, in heaven, earth, or hell itself!

And yet, now, in this small-town hospital in New York state, where a sudden attack of appendicitis had been the cause of my enforced confinement to a hospital cot for the second time in my career, I had again come upon that horrible suggestion.

You have read Bram Stoker's *Dracula*? Nothing that Poe, or Doyle, or Ambrose Bierce, or even Marion Crawford ever wrote quite equals it in undiluted horror. It deals—in case you have *not* read it—with the strange and terrible adventures of a young Englishman who goes into the mountains of Carpathia to purchase for the firm by which he is employed a certain extensive estate, belonging to a Count Dracula, a mysterious individual who lives secluded in his ancient castle in the mountains. Dracula is greatly disturbed by the sight of blood, when his guest happens to cut himself, in his host's presence, while shaving. He warns the young man never to let him see blood of any kind, asserting that it has a terrible effect upon him.

Subsequently, his visitor learns to his horror that the count is one of

what the author—like my acquaintance of the battlefield—refers to as *the undead*. Throughout the day, Dracula lies in an open coffin in the vaults of the castle; at night—as soon as the sun has set—he, as it were, returns to life, when he becomes, while retaining his human form, a blood-sucking vampire, with the power to climb the outer walls of the castle after the manner of a fly, and to transport himself, as if by magic, from place to place about the countryside.

The “*undead*,” the story explains, nightly seek a victim, from whom, while asleep, they suck the life blood, drawing it from two minute holes which they bite in the throat. When the person eventually dies as a result of this draining of the vital fluid—the operation of sucking the blood is not completed in one night, but continues, perhaps, for a week or more—the *victim, also, after death, becomes one of the horrible society of the undead* and, although buried, nightly comes from the tomb to draw the life blood from others—men, women, and little children—thus always increasing the terrible breed of human vampires and propagating their hellish practises.

MY READING of this absorbing though terrifying book had been greatly disturbed by the unending cries, moans, and uncontrolled expositions of a child in the outer ward. The little hospital was crowded to the limit, an epidemic of typhoid having broken out in the town only a few weeks before my admission. My own case being an unusually acute and dangerous one, requiring, as the doctors agreed, a great deal of special treatment preliminary to the operation, Dr. Spalding had insisted upon a private room, and the only one then vacant was situated just off the women's general ward, which was on the upper floor of the little, two-story,

building. To enter my room, one had to pass through this ward, crowded with beds filled with girls and women ranging in age from three and four years up.

The "starvation" treatment for typhoid was still in use among the physicians in the town, and from early morning until the hour when the lights were extinguished in the evening, a constant source of annoyance was the incessant conversation of the younger patients in connection with what they were going to eat when they got better. Restricted in diet as they were, this was only natural; but the repeated discussion of their gastronomic abilities and inclinations, which had, at first, been highly diverting, was beginning to get on my nerves. Every sound from this outer ward was distinctly audible in my room, whereas I had to call pretty loudly if, instead of merely ringing the bell on the cord at the head of my bed, I wished to summon a nurse. Finally, since there was no escape from it, I grew resigned to the situation, and tried to read without noticing them.

Then, about a week before the day which had been set for my operation arrived,* this child of whom I have spoken, Martha Walton, was brought into the ward. Her parents were poor people, and very ignorant. As the night nurse, Miss Richards, remarked to me, their idea of taking care of a sick child evidently was to be as "good" to it as they knew how, and to indulge its every wish so far as lay in their power. Consequently—the nurse had learned from the doctor—when the parents discovered that the little one was very ill, before calling in medical aid they had stuffed her with all the "goodies" for which she cried, and had done a dozen other things to heighten the fever and hurry the case to a crisis. The result was that when the child was admitted to the hospital, she was in a much more

critical condition than any of the others. Added to this, she was but ten years old, with no understanding of her trouble; a child who, constantly petted and "given in to" at home, made the very worst kind of a typhoid patient.

Now, hospital romances have been one of the interesting features of the Great War; but my hospital romance was not a part of my experience in France. I had loved my present little day nurse, Viola Manning, ever since she first came into my room with a few sympathetic words which were the preliminary to another of those abominable ice-caps beneath which the doctor insisted I was to be kept half buried. She had agreed with me that it was pretty tough to have to take the count with an attack of appendicitis after pulling through an operation on my head, where the shrapnel splinter had "got" me, and also recovering from the effects of a gassing—between which and appendicitis I felt there was little choice—administered by the ever attentive Huns. "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them." She was—well, just a real, old-fashioned, womanly girl who understood her chosen work and carried it on with the alertness and expedition of an army nurse combined with the tenderness of a woman who is born to "mother." To paraphrase another and more up-to-date dramatist, who is also a song writer, "if I came out (of the ether, after the operation), and I would come out, there'd be a real girl waiting for me."

ON THE day following Martha's arrival, Viola had come into my room and opened the door wide, so that I could see out into the women's ward.

"There's the little nuisance—poor little thing!—who's been giving us all so much trouble since yesterday after-

noon," she said, pointing to a cot set in an angle of the ward directly across from my own door. "I'm afraid she has only one chance in a thousand of ever getting better. Just look at the poor little creature, Frank."

The youngster was hardly any larger than a properly developed child of seven; and her long, straight, straw-colored hair accentuated the pallor of her wan little face, even with the fever at its height. As she lay there, for the moment with only her face turned toward me, the watery gray eyes seemed to shine with a kind of pinkish glow, reminding me of the eyes of an animal, seen in the dark.

She was frightfully thin, the arms and hands mere bones, covered with yellow, parchmentlike skin. The poor little cheeks were deeply sunken; while the thin lips seemed constantly to tremble, giving a consequent tremolo sound to her continual crying and muttering. Altogether, she reminded me of a very old and decrepit woman, instead of a child of ten. But I had small opportunity to study the features, for she tossed almost continually, meanwhile keeping up the unending, whimpering cry that had so affected everyone about her, and which filled me with a peculiar, nameless fear rather than with pity for her condition.

"If that sort of thing has disturbed your reading, it has almost driven the other patients crazy," remarked Viola, watching the child as I was doing. "At first they only laughed at her, teasing her in a friendly way; but when the temper that is still raging in that nerve-racked little body let itself go—as it did last night, you remember—they soon changed their tactics, and tried to reason with her, telling her to try, for her own sake, to be as quiet as possible, so she'd get well sooner. But Martha showed them that she won't listen to anyone—and the matron and her doctor are

no exceptions. So the other children, advised by us and by the older patients, are now disregarding her utterly; and the poor little thing just tosses and cries, although she's always ready almost to fight with the nurses when they go near her. I've never had a case get on *my* nerves as this one has; the child just doesn't seem human—I can't explain the way I feel about her."

"Why don't they give her a hypodermic?" I inquired.

"Morphine? She's had enough morphine to quiet two grown-ups," my little nurse replied. "You must have heard her terrible screams when they gave her the first injection yesterday, just after they brought her in. If we had a single private room that we could use for her, we'd take her out of the ward in a minute, in justice to the other patients. Even during her short periods of sleep, she tosses and mutters nearly all the time. I only hope—"

She had been looking at me and studying my face while speaking, and now she stopped dead, looking at me with reproachful eyes.

"Oh, Frank! How could you, after my last warning!" she almost gasped.

"Why? What do you mean?" I came back.

"Now, my dear, don't attempt to deceive me; you can't do it! I *know*; that beastly Holloway has been up here again, and he's managed to get some more morphine. I'm going to tell Miss Gregory, as sure as I hope to see you get well, and have him removed from the hospital. How—how could you, Frank?"

I might have known that it was no use to try to lie to my little nurse. No physician had a sharper eye for certain "signs" of a patient's condition than had this little girl who had promised to marry me. It hurt, but I confessed.

"You're right. But don't blame poor old Holloway. I don't know

just how he got it; but I do know that I had almost to swear my life away and beg for half an hour before he'd come through with a few tablets. I needed them, girlie; really I did. I'd had a simply rotten day, with pain and 'nerves', and I wanted so much just to sleep soundly through one night."

"Nonsense!" she cried, sharply. "You had too much of the dreadful stuff over in France. You've become too used to it. But you'll positively not get more than an eighth of a grain without Dr. Spalding's orders if I can help it. How much did Holloway give you?"

Then, confound me, I did lie to her. So it is with the man or woman upon whom morphine has set its grip. The drug *makes* you lie; and you do so with an easy conscience, unblushingly and whole-heartedly.

"Six quarter-grain tablets. They lasted me all night. I woke up three times. But I feel fine—comparatively speaking—this morning; and—never again, honey, I promise!"

"Never again if I can prevent it," she assured me, solemnly. "I may not speak to Miss Gregory now; but I'll find a way to keep Holloway down in the men's ward. He should have been discharged before this, anyway. And he knows very well he has no right even to visit on this floor without special permission. That's the worst of these little institutions; rules are made only to be broken. Promise me, Frank, dear, that you'll obey the doctor's orders without question, and not even ask for more morphine than he prescribes. You know—don't you?—what your recovery means to me."

I promised, and I meant to try to keep my promise. I kissed her, and she went out into the ward. But what I did not tell her was that, safely hidden in the pocket of my night-gown, wrapped in a handkerchief, was a small, brown bottle, as

yet unopened, containing an even hundred half-grain morphine tablets. Exactly how Holloway had managed to get hold of them, I had no idea; but that is exactly what he had done—and had stolen them, probably, with no more compunction than any other drug addict has in getting his favorite "dope" in any way that presents itself. I say "drug addict" advisedly, for the difference between those sick people who manage to get more than is prescribed for them and those others, on the outside, who use it regularly as the result of an unconquerable habit, is a difference of degree, rather than of kind.

Both of us—Holloway, especially, I know—felt the urgent need of the drug, and, regardless of hospital or hygienic rules, we, possessing it, were making use of it. Holloway had simply declared that the drug cabinet in the anesthetizing room was "as good as wide open." The great thing was to have it on hand when the crying need for its soothing influence asserted itself. I would "go easy" in the future—if I was not able to content myself with my allowance of the drug, at least Viola must not know that I was breaking my promise to her; and soon, I felt certain, I would be through with the operation, convalescent, well again, and out of the hospital—ready to claim Viola as my wife. Then I would be through with the accursed drug forever. But it was not accursed to me now. Let Barrie sing the praises of his "Lady Nicotine"; for just a little while I would have two loves—Viola and "My Lady Morphia".

But a word or two is necessary in connection with the effect of the drug upon me. Each night I was allowed the eighth-of-a-grain injection—which, alone, produced no effect whatsoever. I had long since passed the eighth-of-a-grain stage. It was what I managed to obtain through Holloway that soothed my aching

nerves during the night. And the direct effect of the drug was to so greatly accelerate the brain action as to entirely drive sleep away, leaving me lying there, throughout the long hours, with my mind a strange panorama of fantasies. There were times, during these nocturnal mental ramblings, when my soul seemed to be entirely separated from my body. I appeared to stand apart and watch, fascinated, that part of me—the physical body containing the disordered mind—which lay there on the bed. And this very mental condition, the fascinating guess-work as to what new pictures would unfold themselves each night, the mystery and uncertainty of it all—irresistibly enticing to a mind such as mine—these were the things that made me cling to my little bottle of white tablets as the drowning man clings to the proverbial straw.

But I had given Viola my promise, and for her dear sake I would—try to—keep it.

2

WHY seek to battle with forces which one knows one can not combat successfully—unaided? I do not believe that anyone, unaided, has ever successfully flung off the grip of a drug habit such as that which now held me in its power. Every night preceding the operation I had had a little—just a little—extra morphine. Enough, as it were, to feed the desire for it. Not enough to show itself; or at any rate Viola made no comment that led me to believe that she had noticed anything. If she had, I suppose I should have done my best to lie out of it—and felt justified in so doing.

And now, the operation was successfully over. Two days had passed since they carried me back into my little room and congratulated me upon having won out against death

again, coming through an operation that was—and, I believe, remains—unique in the history of operations upon that annoying physical excess baggage known as the vermiform appendix. It would be another month, perhaps, before I could get up; two weeks, probably, before I even could take solid food. My guardian angel, Viola, was with me during the day just as much as proper attention to her other duties would permit her to be.

And the craving for the morphine was upon me again, stronger than ever. My nerves constantly cried out for the rest-producing, though never sleep-inducing, drug. I slept—*actually* slept—throughout the day, mostly in the morning, but hardly at all during the night. And at night I used the morphine just as much as I actually dared to do without leaving myself in such a state as to draw the attention of the girl to whom I had given my promise. Indeed, I was aware that I was doing for my conscience, my better self, just what the drug was intended to do with my mind and body. I was gradually producing what might be termed a state of somniphathy of the soul.

Next to the way in which my mind constantly speculated upon the possibilities of increasing the doses of the morphine, I seemed to be interested, most morbidly, I realized, in the way in which the child, Martha, clung tenaciously to life.

To my left as I lay in bed, was a large bow-window, overlooking the hospital grounds. Since the operation, I was allowed to sit up in bed more than formerly, and, the hospital being situated on the outskirts of the little town, beyond the white brick walls surrounding the not very extensive grounds, I could see the open, snow-covered country.

In the extreme southwestern corner of the yard stood two gray stone buildings, the larger one, I had been

informed, being the ice-house. There was always a well-trodden path leading to it through the snow; the porter, Jennings, was kept busy carrying ice into the hospital for the fever patients. To the other building there was no path; and this fact, somehow, seemed to disturb me. Why, I asked myself, had nobody died in the hospital since the last snow-fall? For this smaller building, Viola had rather reluctantly explained, was a sort of private morgue. Viola, I felt sure, had wished to keep my mind free from gloomy thoughts; which was why, at first, she had hesitated about answering my question in regard to this particular out-building. But, since finding out what it really was, my first act each morning, after my blind was raised, was to lift myself gently until I could see out of the window, and then to look for the long-anticipated track through the snow to the door of what I fantastically termed "The House of the Dead."

"Today," I would say each morning upon starting to look out, "there will be a path to the door." But in these two days, there had been no change. Snow had fallen once, covering the path to the ice-house; but it was quickly trodden down where that path led. Only in front of the smaller gray building, the snow remained undisturbed.

And then, that same night, Martha died.

My light had been turned out, as usual, about 10 o'clock; and I lay there in the darkened room under the spell of the morphine, though far from being inclined to sleep. The blinds were drawn down to within an inch or two of the bottom of the window; but beneath them there entered the reflection of a bright, full moon. I could just make out the time by the little traveling-clock on the table; it was twenty minutes to 1. The door of my room was standing open half-

way, as I always asked to have it left after the children had quieted down for the night. I could hear the single night nurse on that floor, Miss Richards, moving about in the ward-kitchen.

Martha had not been asleep since early in the evening. She lay there, tossing as was her habit, and moaning in a way that caused my nerves fairly to dance, although the peculiar fascination I felt in watching her made me bear with the annoyance.

I listened to the monotonous, jarring sounds until I was on the point of ringing for the nurse to come and close my door; my hand reached out for the bell-cord; then, abruptly, all sounds from the child ceased.

Instinctively, I knew what the sudden silence meant; and, involuntarily, I shuddered. I had never feared death—and God knows I had faced it often enough during the past two years. But how strangely, with what terrific suddenness, death had come to this poor, tortured child! A sharp intake of the breath, the suggestion of a final, low moan, *and that was the end!*

The silence of the next minute or two was doubly oppressive; my heart sounded like the beating of a drum. Apparently, the other children slept peacefully on. Then, my hand still holding the button on the bell-cord, I rang once, very gently.

A couple of minutes passed; then Miss Richards came to the door and looked in.

"What do you want, Mr. Herndon? I thought you'd be sound asleep hours ago. Or did you just wake up?"

"Miss Richards," I said quietly, "I think you had better call Jennings and have him carry Martha's body out of the ward before any of the others wake up. She died about five minutes ago."

She looked at me in utter astonishment, but said nothing. Evidently, she could see that I was quite in earnest, and that I was sure of my statement being correct. Leaving my room, I heard her tiptoe across to the corner of the ward where Martha's bed stood, and I knew that, in the darkness, she was making a hurried examination of the body. A moment later, I heard her going softly down the stairs.

When she returned with the porter, he carried the child's body out of the ward; I heard him stumble once as, half asleep, he descended the stairway. The nurse made up the cot; and in the morning the other occupants of the ward were told that Martha had been removed during the night to a private room, in order that she should no longer disturb those about her. The children accepted the explanation, apparently well satisfied to be rid of such an uncongenial companion. And Martha, as I knew, was indeed occupying a "private room."

All the rest of that night, though, I had lain there, speculating that, in the morning, there would be a path to the door of the little gray building. And, sure enough, there was. It was a bright, sunny morning, and Viola, more radiant to my eyes than sun or moon, sat beside me on the edge of the bed as we talked of Martha's merciful release from human pain and suffering. But while we talked, and even as the bright, morning sun seemed to light the whole world with the promise of health regained and happiness won, the glory of the early morning seemed to fade into a misty vista of a Transylvanian forest at sunset; and my mind continually reverted to the lost soul, Dracula, the fiery-eyed wehr-wolves, and the undead host who, like Dracula, haunted the world of the living.

Just after my light lunch, the sun

was obscured by clouds, and about 4 o'clock it commenced to snow heavily.

"Isn't this fine?" laughed Viola, coming into my room. "It will be simply grand for sleighing in the morning, and I'll get Dr. Spalding to take me into town tomorrow night, after I've got off duty, when he makes his evening call. And don't be jealous, you old silly, because he thinks Mrs. Spalding is the only woman worth talking about in the whole world."

"I'm not jealous," I answered, "but—I was just thinking the snow will cover all the paths again, won't it?"

"Of course," replied Viola. "Why?"

"Nothing," I said, settling back again on the pillow. "I guess I'll just rest again until Dr. Spalding shows up."

And, calling me an old sleepyhead, Viola, after kissing me, quietly left the room.

3

"MISS MURRAY," I said, addressing the new night nurse, "won't you please give me a half-grain injection tonight? I'm frightfully jumpy, and just about dead for a sound sleep. Miss Richards does, occasionally, when she sees that I really need it."

Her reply, after looking at me intently for a moment, was to load the hypodermic syringe as I had requested. Then a child called to her from the ward; and as she left the room I picked up the little phial she had left lying on the table, uncorked it, and dropped six or eight of the tablets it contained into my left hand. When she came back a moment or two later, she failed to notice that the phial had been moved. Every grain counted, to add to my depleted store of the drug.

"I wish you'd raise the blind, so the moonlight can come in," I said; "it won't keep me awake. It seems to be a lovely night."

"It's beautiful outside, now. But Jennings will have some snow cleaning to do in the morning. Please try to get right to sleep, Mr. Herndon. Miss Manning says that you are inclined to lie awake after getting your hypodermic, and then sleep during the day. Nothing like the good before-midnight sleep, you know. If you need me, give one short ring. Good night."

Just as I told her Miss Richards always did, she left my door open as she went out, but a little more than half way. The lights in the ward were all out; and, now that the unfortunate little Martha was no more, there was hardly a sound to be heard in the building. Even outside, there was no wind; my own breathing and the beating of my heart alone were audible.

Then I gave myself up wholly to the wooing of my false goddess, Merphia. How much of the drug I swallowed during the next two hours I have not the faintest idea; but many times I took one of the tiny white tablets from my little bottle.

My nerves were throbbing; my muscles seemed continually to relax and contract; it appeared that the spinal cord was being slowly petrified. My neck, at the base of the brain, felt as if a steel band, which was being slowly tightened, encircled it. Through it all, a thousand strange, unnatural visions swept through my brain; the moonlight in the room seemed to become a variegated color display, reminding me of the Northern Lights that I had often seen in northern Ontario, while on hunting trips, before the war. At some distance from the hospital, a dog howled mournfully. It was the first sound to break the perfect stillness of the winter night; and in-

stantly the thought of Dracula's wehr-wolves, with their frothing, blood-dripping fangs and fiery eyes, returned to me.

My mind centered on that silent, mysterious castle in the Carpathian mountains, the subterranean vaults, the open coffin with the chalk-faced count lying in it, his wide-open, glassy eyes gazing at nothing, the half-parted, blood-red lips exposing the needle-pointed teeth, bound in the trance of death but yet *undead*, waiting only for the setting of the sun to free him from death's grasp, before setting forth on his horrible, nightly mission.

The moonlight, falling across a large, potted rubber-plant standing just beside the window, threw ghostly black shadows on the wall opposite.

Then, of a sudden, there was a terrific, whirring sound within my head, accompanied by a sound like the far-away tinkling of bells, and everything went dark.

How long this sleep or unconscious state lasted, I have no idea; but when next I opened my eyes it seemed to me that I had been awakened by hearing a noise, as of someone fumbling with a lock or bolt, at some considerable distance, and, apparently, outside the hospital. Then—and this occasioned me no small amount of wonder—I raised myself, without any effort, to a sitting position. Up to now, I had been unable to raise myself except very slowly, on account of the pain in the region of the operation wound.

I looked out of the window. All outdoors was still bathed in a flood of moonlight, though now the moon was sinking lower. A white mantle of glittering snow spread over fields, hospital grounds and distant hills. There was not even a path to the ice-house.

Suddenly, one of the children in the ward commenced muttering in

her sleep. From mere curiosity, I lay back, trying to catch her disconnected words. Altogether, it was perhaps five minutes before I again sat upright, feeling moved—by what force, I cannot say—to look out of the window.

As my gaze turned toward the corner of the yard, the blood in my veins seemed suddenly transformed into ice, while my heart, for a second or two, apparently stopped beating.

The moonlight had suddenly and most strangely taken on almost the brilliancy of early morning sunlight; every object in the grounds was distinctly visible; and, horror unutterable, *the door of "The House of the Dead" was flung wide open, and from the doorway there ran a single track, made by a pair of naked feet, the prints pointing, as the track ran, toward the hospital!*

Five minutes before, I had seen the door closed, the snow in the yard smooth and undisturbed. Then I recalled the noise as of the rattling lock or bolt, which sound, apparently, had awakened me.

A thought flashed into my mind that caused me to reach out for the bell-cord; but my arm fell as if paralyzed. I tried to call out, to scream; but no sound came from my dry, contracted throat.

Martha had come back—but—as *what?*

The silence in the hospital was as of the grave itself; I lay like one already dead. The brain alone remained living and conscious of the awful horror of the situation. God! This was maddening! Surely, helplessness in the presence of such terror is the climax of human agony!

Then an added dread made itself manifest; horripilation swept over me.

Distinctly I heard the patter of naked feet, steadily approaching. Up the main stairway, across the short hallway, then into and across the

ward, toward the open door of my room!

I could not cry out, could not even pray. Thought itself was almost impossible. I closed my eyes—and waited.

A board in the floor squeaked faintly; I had heard it do so often, when stepped upon. Against my will, yet compelled by a power I could in no way control, I again opened my eyes.

In the doorway, plainly seen in the moonlight, stood the dead child. Dead, did I say? This being was alive; or, rather, horrible as the realization was to me, *it was undead!*

The long, yellow hair hung straight down over the drooping, bony shoulders. The night-gown, in which the child had been carried into the dead-house, clung to her damply, as though death had been a matter of only a few minutes ago, and as though the fever-sweat had been unaffected by the chill of the winter night. And yet, it gave out a noxious, musty effluvia, as of the tomb itself. The parchmentlike skin of the face was more tightly drawn than ever; its pallor contrasted sharply with the scarlet lips, thin and cruel-looking, that now seemed drawn back in a sort of venomous smile, exposing the irregular and, in life, badly-cared-for teeth. Only the canines appeared to have escaped decay, or to have been *replaced since death had occurred*. I noticed that they were unusually long and sharply pointed.

But the eyes! Can I ever forget those terrible eyes!

Sunken in the head until they appeared almost like empty sockets, they yet burned with a fearsome, red glow, baleful and horrifying.

But, in another way, the face upon which I gazed was changed. Not alone was it the awful pallor of it that showed the work of the hand of Death. There was in it something

(Continued on page 712)

The Return of the Undead

(Continued from page 598)

terrifying to behold, soul-withering in its awful suggestion! A new life, a new mission had been given to this innocent child, returned from the grave. No longer a living mortal, yet undead, Martha had returned, to begin the horrible, dual existence of which Dracula, the vampire, was only another unwilling propagandist. For therein lay the horror of the situation: the dread work of propagation in this terrible society of the undead was an act at which, even while they carried it on, their undying souls revolted; death, true, lasting death, was the one thing for which each and every one of them longed; yet forever and forever they must live on, in the undead state, carrying out their awful work, adding to their dread clan, helpless and—*deathless!*

A cloud passed across the face of the moon. At the same moment, the creature advanced to the bedside, and bent its horrible, loathsome face over mine. A sickening sensation entered my soul; the breath of it was detestable, nauseating! The body reeked of the charnel-house; but the breath *was of blood!*

A bony hand reached out and, grasping my chin, tilted my head back upon the pillow. Closer came the horrid mouth; the fetid breath overpowered me like an anesthetic. The skeletonlike hands held me pinned down, helpless. The teeth touched my throat. Again, everything went black.

4

I OPENED my eyes. It was morning. The position of the sun in the heavens told me that it must be about noon. Viola, with tear-stained eyes,

sat on the chair beside my bed, watching me as a physician might watch the expected signs of life in one who had been apparently drowned.

I turned my head slowly and tried to speak.

“Not now,” she said, quietly, “just rest, and be quiet. I’ll get you some strong coffee now. When Dr. Spalding comes—he’ll be here any minute—you must tell him the truth. He’ll know what to do. I’ve taken away your little bottle, and the tablets that remained. I don’t want your promise never to do it again, for you never will. After the doctor has fixed you up, you’ll be broken off the morphine as quickly as possible. Holloway has been discharged from the hospital. I heard enough of your wild mutterings to show me what kind of a night you must have had. I’ll keep my promise to you, dear, because I know what you’ve been through, and because I understand what the craving is. But you’re through with that devil’s drug—a wonderful aid to healing only when rightly used—from now on, or as quickly as you can be relieved from actually needing it. Now, I’ll go for the coffee.”

Bending to kiss me again, as I turned to look out upon the bright world of living things, she slipped out of the room and softly closed the door.

I lay there, my nerves still tingling from the reaction of the morphine and the unforgettable memory of the frightful experience through which I had passed. Through with that devil’s drug—indeed I was! Nothing on earth, not even the most exquisite physical agony, could ever make me willingly take another quarter-grain of it into my system. Could the imps of hell itself have devised a more soul-shattering torture than that which I had brought upon myself only a few hours earlier?

And poor little Martha! To have her, in that terrible fantasy of dark-

ness and death, brought back to earth, to a world where, toward the end, her frail body had been so racked with pain, her poor little brain so distraught by the dread of the hypodermic needle which I had learned to look upon as a nepenthic solace for which one might almost willingly die. And to be brought back in that appalling form! Thank God! She was now as good as in her resting grave; today she *would* be laid in it; and her sorrowing parents would pray for the repose of the soul of the little one whose death—though they probably would never realize it—was at least partly traceable to their own misguided but well-meant efforts to “be good to her.”

VOICES outside my door. I turned over on my back and, with considerable effort, raised my head from the pillow, the better to catch the words. Not the children in the ward talking together—it was Viola’s voice, and then, in vehement response, that of Jennings, the porter. Every word they uttered seemed to be burning into my very brain!

“But, I tell you, it’s impossible. There isn’t a child in the whole ward who has strength enough to stand alone at present, let alone walk about. Not one of them could leave her bed without assistance. And you surely don’t think that Miss Murray goes about her night work in her bare feet, I hope?”

“I don’t think anything so silly,” I heard the porter respond, “and I tell you again they was *small* foot-prints—a little one’s tracks. Mebbe one o’ the little boys could ‘a’ come upstairs. Mebbe one o’ your little girls walked down in her sleep, spite o’ what you say. Whoever ‘t was, the tracks went both ways, and showed up plain on my clean steps. I shined ‘em up pretty, with the oil-mop, ‘bout 1 o’clock this morning, same as I always do. Miss Murray’s

felt slippers don't track up my clean floors.

"Well, I wiped the stairs off again, while you was down in the kitchen a while ago. If you didn't have so many rugs scattered around this floor, I betcha you could tell which cot the tracks led to. An' I betcha 't was the little Ryan girl; Miss Richards told me she's always wantin' to get up an' go downstairs to talk to her big brother. This typhoid's the craziest disease I ever heard of. It gets 'em all, old and young, and makes 'em all silly in the head. I betcha 't was the little Ryan girl."

Their voices died out as they walked across the ward. I dropped my head back on the pillow. A thought that was almost unthinkable was creeping into my brain, chilling my heart, withering my soul.

For I was certain that if Jennings really had seen the prints of a child's feet on the stairs, I knew only too well whose tracks they were! And they were not those of the little Ryan girl—though perhaps they might, some morning, be traced to her bed!

Slowly my right hand crept up to feel at my throat. With my left, I reached out for the electric push-button. I wanted to ask Viola . . . to bring me a mirror.