

## STRANGE STORIES FROM A MAGIC PEN

By  
H. G. Wells

Consigned, 1915  
THE transitory mental aberration of Sidney Davidson, remarkable enough in itself, is still more remarkable if Wade's explanation is to be credited.

It happened that I was the immediate witness of Davidson's seizure, and so it falls naturally to me to put the story upon paper.

When I say that I was the immediate witness of his seizure, I mean that I was the first on the scene.

The thing happened at the Harlow Technical College just beyond the Highgate Archway. He was alone

in the larger laboratory when the thing happened. I was in the smaller room, where the balances are

writing up some notes. The thunderstorm had completely upset my

work, of course. It was just after

one of the louder peals that I

thought I heard some glass smash

in the other room. I stopped writing, and turned round to listen. For

a moment I heard nothing; the rain

was playing the devil's tattoo on

the corrugated zinc of the roof.

Then came another sound, a smash

no doubt of it this time. Something heavy had been knocked off

the bench. I jumped up at once

and went and opened the door leading into the big laboratory.

I was surprised to hear a queer

sort of laugh, and saw Davidson

standing unsteadily in the middle

of the room, with a dazzled look on

his face. My first impression was

that he was drunk. He did not notice me. He was clawing out at

something invisible a card in front

of his face. He put out his hand,

slowly, rather hesitatingly, and then clutched nothing. "What's come to it?" he said. He held up his hands to his face, fingers spread out. "Great Scott!" he said. The thing happened three or four years ago, when every one swore by that personage. Then he began raising his feet clumsily, as though he had expected to find them glued to the door.

"Davidson!" cried I. "What's the matter with you?" He turned

round in my direction and looked about for me. He looked over me and at me and on either side of me, without the slightest sign of seeing me. "Waves," he said; "and a remarkably neat schooner. I'd swear that was Bellow's voice. Hello!" he shouted suddenly at the top of his voice.

I thought he was up to some

trick. Then I saw hattered about

the shattered remains of

one of our electrometers.

"What's up, man?" said I. "You've got the electrometer?"

"Don't talk nonsense. You're very much alive. You are in the laboratory, blundering about. You've just smashed a new electrometer. I don't envy you when Boyce arrives."

He started away from me toward

the diagrams of carbohydrates.

"I must be deaf," said he.

"They've fired a gun, for there goes

the putt of a speaker, and I never heard a sound."

I put my hand on his arm again,

and this time he was less alarmed.

"We seem to have a sort of

seeing you can feel and hear, but not

visible bodies," said he. "By Jove! see. Do you follow me?"

"It seems to me that I see too

much," said he. "Davidson rubbed his

old life after all to a different

climate."

I shook his arm. "Davidson," I cried, "wake up!"

It was just then that Boyce came

in. So soon as he spoke Davidson

exclaimed: "Hold, Boyce! Dead too! What a lark!"

I hastened to explain that David

son was in a kind of somnambulistic

trance. Boyce was interested at

once. We both did all we could to

rouse the fellow out of his extra-

ordinary state. He answered our

questions, and asked us some of his

own, but his attention seemed di-

rected by his hallucination about a

beach and a ship. He kept interro-

gating observations concerning

some boat and the davits and sails

filling with the wind. It made one

feel queer, in the dusk, laboratory,

to hear him saying such things.

He was blind and helpless. We

had to walk him down the passage,

one at each elbow, to Boyce's pri-

ate room, and while Boyce talked

to him there, and humored him

about this ship idea, I went along

the corridor and laid my hand

upon his arm. I never saw a man

more startled in my life. He jumped

away from me, and came round

into an attitude of self-defense, his

face fairly distorted with terror.

"Good God!" he cried. "What was that?"

"It's I, Bellow. Confound it, Davidson!"

He jumped when I answered

him and stared—how can I express

this?—right through me. He began

alking, not to me, but to himself.

"Here in broad daylight on a clear

beach. Not a place to hide in." He

looked about him wildly. "Here!

"I'm off!"

He suddenly turned and ran

headlong into the big electro-mag-

net—so violently that, as we found

afterward, he bruised his shoulder

and jawbone cruelly. At that he

stepped back a pace, and cried out

with almost a whimper, "What, in

heaven's name, has come over

me?" He stood, blanched with ter-

ror and trembling violently, with

his right arm clutching his left,

where that had collided with the

magnet.

By that time I was excited, and

fairly excited. "Davidson," said I,

"don't be afraid."

He was startled at my voice, but

not so excessively as before. I re-

peated my words in as clear and

firm a tone as I could assume.

"Bellow," he said, "is that you?"

"Can't you see it's me?"

He laughed. "I can't even see it's

myself. Where the devil are we?"

"Here," said I, "in the labora-

tory."

"The laboratory?" he answered,

in a puzzled tone, and put his hand

to his forehead. "I was in the lab-

oratory till that flash came, but

I'm hanged if I'm there now. What

ship is that?"

"There's no ship," said I. "Do

be sensible, old chap."

"No ship?" he repeated, and

seemed to forget my detail forth-

with. "I suppose," said he, slowly,

"we're both dead." But the runaway

part is I feel just as though I still

had a body. Don't get used to it

all at once, I suppose. The old ship

was struck by lightning, I suppose,

Jolly quick thing, Bellow's eight

o'clock."

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very much alive. You are in the

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