

tempted to kill me—but each time the Giant Hand forewarned me, and I was on my guard. It is undoubtedly his lack of funds to follow closely that has enabled me to live so long!

Arthur paused and sighed wearily. Through the thick walls and the muffled windows the wind could be heard sighing wildly among the high trees; a storm had sprung up, and was increasing in violence every moment. My mind was in an utter confusion of ideas at the strange story he had told. But I began to see the meaning of this armed and hidden room.

Arthur held up his hand and listened a moment intently; again the faint creaking noise was heard—but it seemed rather like the swaying of the whole building than the movement of a human being. The storm roared louder out-

under this very roof probably—may be behind that very door.' He pointed with a white face to the object indicated. 'And why do I know this? Why? Why do I know that he will strike to-night?'

He started up, his features convulsed, his hands trembling violently, and seized me by the shoulders. I led him towards the couch, endeavouring to calm and soothe him, but in the deathly silence broken only by the wailing wind, I shrank with a nameless horror.

'Listen! Two nights ago, in the quiet of my bedroom, the Giant Hand appeared to me, ghastlier, more bloody than ever before! Last night it appeared again—the second time! It pointed its gory finger to the final end of the kindred it has so steadfastly attended! The Spectre of four hundred years shall find its consummation in me—in the

strike. Look at my preparations to avoid him, yet I know that the end will come.

'Ed, old fellow, forgive me! I have called you to what may cost you your life as well as mine. I did not think of that before. Say you forgive me.' Arthur started from his seat and grasped my hand fervently.

Suddenly he became still, staring over my shoulder. The light died quickly away as by a long cold breath sweeping through the room. It was supernaturally silent. An awful unknown sensation came creeping over me, turning my head slowly around.

A phosphorescent circle gleamed forth from the black corner, waxing brighter and brighter till it dazzled the eyes. It vibrated, wavered, and dissolved into the shape of a great shining band. It grew fainter, yet more distinct, showing



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side. Suddenly I saw that the long ceiling had cracked from end to end, making an aperture of an inch in width; I gasped and pointed to it.

Arthur nodded. 'We are under the old tower, and the wind is swaying it,' he said; 'but don't fear, the building is strong and can't fall.'

He sank back on the couch again and looked at his watch. 'Why, it is not very late; there is time enough for almost anything to happen.'

'Three months ago, as I told you,' he resumed. 'I came here to see my mother in her last few days. I made as sure as possible that my enemy did not follow me: I have not seen him since I left France—and yet he is here to-night—

last of its haunted family! Before day dawns I shall be dead!'

My old friend fell back with glaring eyes, and was still. A wild chaos of unknown terror and doubt dashed through my numbing brain. The minutes fled swiftly by as I gazed at his form by the dying light. Then he moved and spoke:

'I knew it was all useless—all in vain. Yet I have done it. I have selected this distant, unused room, blinded its windows, bolted it, armed it, called you to help me. I have dared to try to escape the death from which there is no escaping. I was well—wonderfully well—and strong, as you heard the doctor say. I saw that I must die by external violence; and so I knew that the Hindoo was about to

the raw and bleeding end—the half closed fist. Then the index finger straightened out, and turning slowly, pointed at my companion. He fell back senseless in my arms—it was gone.

In a few moments I seemed to awake from a lethargy. I placed my unconscious friend on the couch and strove to arouse him; I piled wood on the fire and it leaped up brightly once more.

Arthur opened his eyes and looked quietly into mine as I bent over him. 'Arthur, dear fellow, rouse up, we will get through this,' I said.

He shook his head and smiled. 'No, Ed, this will be