

He knew that Sidney Grant's father had been the original owner of the Lone Gully mine. Some years before he had seen Sidney Grant, and although he scarcely remembered her, he felt tolerably certain that the charming young lady who came to the Castle in her name was not the Sidney Grant he had once been introduced to. He said nothing, however, preferring to turn his suspicion into certainty, and then see what use he could make of his knowledge before he acted.

The evident partiality of the Hon. Ronald Keith for Sybil had forced his hand; and after declaring himself to Sybil he had left the Castle, determined to discover what in reality was the nature of the claim which she had upon Mr. Mitchell. If, as he suspected, she was entitled to the mine which Mitchell and McPhail had sold to the Lone Gully Company, he would be in a magnificent position for making terms with her. Either out of gratitude, or out of a regard for her own interests, Sybil would be sure to listen to him when he let her see that her success depended upon him. And (as her husband) the immense fortune he meant to win for her would practically belong to him.

This was his scheme; and this was the reason why he was so anxious to know whether Sybil had any papers belonging to her father in her possession.

Durant had made up his mind that if necessary he would go to Australia; but he found that by the help of the telegraph cable he could direct his inquiries from London, and he did this to such advantage that one day in December he issued from a certain office in a back street in the city with his face radiant. He had penetrated the secret which he had wilfully refrained from investigating when he pretended to examine the title of the Lone Gully Company and their mine, and he told himself that now he held that old rascal Mitchell in the hollow of his hand.

In the joy of his heart Durant went to the best restaurant he could find in the city, and treated himself to the most dainty luncheon the house could supply, with an adequate allowance of champagne. He then lit a cigar, and passed half an hour in running over the columns of the evening journals. As he was about to throw down the last of them, the following advertisement caught his eye:

"Signor Zucatti, Professor of Palmistry, Astrology, and the Allied Arts, receives every morning from eleven to one, and every afternoon from four to seven. Those who consult the Professor may rely on the strictest confidence being maintained concerning their affairs."

"By Jove," said Durant to himself, tossing down the newspaper, "that was the Italian fellow I saw with Sybil the first time I saw her. I remember I recognised him as the man who was accused of being concerned in a murder in Italy. I wonder what connection there can have been between him and Sybil. Suppose I were to go to see him, and under pretence of consulting him try to find out—Bah! is it worth while?"

He almost decided that he would let the Italian alone; but he had nothing particular to do that afternoon; and he ended by making up his mind to pay the Professor a visit. Even if he learned nothing about Sybil, he thought the man's pretensions to mystical lore might be amusing. So he asked a waiter to call a hansom, and gave the cabman the address of the Professor's house.

(To be continued.)

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On the Leads: A Ghost Story.

By S. BARING-GOULD.

Author of "Mehalah," "John Herring," etc.

Having realised a competence in Australia, and having a hankering after country life for the remainder of my days in the old home, on my return to England I went to an agent with the object of renting a house with shooting attached, over at least three thousand acres, with the option of a purchase should the place suit me. I was no more intending to buy a country seat without having tried what it was like, than is a king disposed to go to war without knowing something of the force that can be brought against him. I was rather taken with photographs of a manor called Fernwood, and I was still further engaged when I saw the place itself on a beautiful October day, when St. Luke's summer was turning the country into a world of rainbow tints under a warm sun, and a soft vaporous blue haze tinted all shadows cobalt, and gave to the hills a stateliness that made them look like mountains. Fernwood was an old house, built in the shape of the letter H, and therefore, presumably, dating from the time of the early Tudor monarchs. The porch opened into the hall which was on the left of the cross stroke, and the drawing room was on the right. There was one inconvenience about the house; it had a staircase at each extremity of the cross stroke, and there was no upstairs communication between the two wings of the mansion. But as a practical man, I saw how this might be remedied. The front door faced the south, and the hall was windowless on the north. Nothing easier than to run a corridor along at the back, giving communication both upstairs and downstairs, without passing through the hall. The whole thing could be done for, at the outside, two hundred pounds, and would be no disfigurement to the place. I agreed to become tenant of Fernwood for a twelve-month, in which time I should be able to judge whether the place would suit me, the neighbours be pleasant, and the climate agree with my wife. We went down to Fernwood at once, and settled ourselves comfortably in by the first week in November.

The house was furnished, it was the property of an elderly gentleman, a bachelor named Framett, who lived in rooms in Town, and spent most of his time at the club. He was supposed to have been jilted by his intended, after which he eschewed female society, and remained unmarried.

I called on him before taking up our residence at Fernwood, and found him a somewhat blasé, languid, cold-blooded creature, not at all proud of having a noble manor house that had belonged to his family for four centuries; very willing to sell it, so as to spite a cousin who calculated on coming in for the estate, and whom Mr Framett, with the malignity that is sometimes found in old people, was particularly desirous of disappointing.

"The house has been let before, I suppose," said I.

"Oh, yes," he replied indifferently, "I believe so, several times."

"For long?"

"No—o. I believe, not for long."

"Have the tenants had any particular reasons for not remaining on there—if I may be so bold as to inquire?"

"All people have reasons to offer, but what they offer you are not supposed to receive as genuine."

I could get no more from him than this. "I think, sir, if I were you I would not go down to Fernwood till after November was out."

"But," said I, "I want the shooting."

with the black bars up and down, and the division of the panes. But I saw more than that; I saw the shadow of a lean arm with a hand and thin lengthy fingers across a portion of the window, apparently groping at where was the latch by which the casement could be opened.

My impression at the moment was that there was a burglar on the leads, trying to enter the house by means of this dormer.

Without a minute's hesitation I ran into the passage and looked up at the window, but could see only a portion of it, as in shape it was low, though broad, and, as already stated, was set at a great height. But at that moment something fluttered past it, like a rush of flapping draperies, obscuring the light.

I had placed the ladder, which I found hooked up to the wall, in position, and planted my foot on the lowest rung, when my wife arrived. She had been alarmed by the housemaid, and now she clung to me, and protested that I was not to ascend without my pistol.

To satisfy her I got my Colt's revolver, that I always kept loaded, and then, but only hesitatingly, did she allow me to mount. I ascended to the casement, unshaped it, and looked out. I could see nothing. The ladder was overshoot, and it required an effort to heave oneself from it, through the casement on the leads. I am stout, and not as nimble as I was when younger. After one or two efforts, and after presenting from below an appearance that would have provoked laughter at any other time, I succeeded in getting through and upon the leads.

I looked up and down the valley—there was absolutely nothing to be seen except an accumulation of leaves carried there from the trees that were shedding their foliage.

The situation was vastly puzzling. As far as I could judge there was no way off the roof, no other window opening into the valley. I did not go along upon the leads, as it was night, and the moonlight is treacherous. Moreover, I was wholly unacquainted with the arrangement of the roof, and had no wish to risk a fall.

I descended from the window with my feet groping for the upper rung of the ladder in a manner even more grotesque than my ascent through the casement, but neither my wife—usually extremely alive to anything ridiculous in my appearance—nor the domestics were in a mood to make merry. I fastened the window after me, and had hardly reached the bottom of the ladder before again a shadow flickered across the patch of moonlight.

I was fairly perplexed and stood musing. Then I recalled that immediately behind the house the ground rose; that, in fact, the house lay under a considerable hill. It was just possible by ascending the slope to reach the level of the gutter and rake the leads from one extremity to the other with my eye.

I mentioned this to my wife, and at once the whole set of maids trailed down the stairs after us. They were afraid to remain in the passage, and they were curious to see if there really were some person on the leads.

We went out at the back of the house and ascended at the bank till we were on a level with the broad gutter between the gables. I now saw that this gutter did not run straight, but stopped against the hall roof; consequently, unless there were some opening of which I knew nothing, the person on the leads could not leave the place, save by the dormer window when open, or by swarming down the fall pipe.

It at once occurred to me that if what I had seen were the shadow of a burglar he might have mounted by means of the main water pipe. But if so, how had he vanished the moment my head was protruded through the window? And how was it that I had seen the shadow flicker past the light immediately after I had descended the ladder? It was conceivable that the man had concealed himself in the shadow of the hall roof and had taken advantage of my withdrawal to run past the window so as to reach the fall pipe and let himself down by that.

I could, however, see no one running away, as I must have done going outside so soon after his supposed descent.

But the whole affair became more perplexing when, looking towards the leads, I saw in the moonlight something with fluttering garments run-

"Ah, to be sure—the shooting, ah! I should have preferred if you could have waited till December began."

"That would not suit me," I said, and so the matter ended.

When we were settled in, we occupied the right wing of the house. The left, or west wing was but scantily furnished, and looked cheerless, as though rarely tenanted. We were not a large family, my wife and myself alone; there was consequently ample accommodation in the east wing for us. The servants were placed above the kitchen, in a portion of the house I have not yet described. It was a half wing, if I may so describe it, built on the north side parallel with the upper arm of the western limb of the hall, and the H. This block had a gable to the north like the wings, and a broad lead valley was between them, that, as I learned from the agent, had to be attended to after the fall of the leaf, and in times of snow, to clear it.

Access to this valley could be had from within, by means of a little window in the roof, formed as a dormer. A short ladder allowed anyone to ascend from the passage to this window and open or shut it. The western staircase gave access to this passage, from which the servants' rooms in the new block were reached, as also the untenanted apartments in the old wing. And as there were no windows in the extremities of this passage that ran due north and south, it derived all its light from the afore-mentioned dormer window.

One night, after we had been in the house about a week, I was sitting up smoking with a little whisky and water at my elbow, reading a review of an absurd, ignorantly written book on New South Wales, when I heard a tap at the door, and the parlour maid came in, and said in a nervous tone of voice: "Beg your pardon, sir, but cook nor I, nor none of us dare go to bed."

"Why not?" I asked, looking up in surprise.

"Please, sir, we durstn't go into the passage to get to our rooms."

"Whatever is the matter with the passage?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, with the passage. Would you mind, sir, just coming to see? We don't know what to make of it."

I put down my review with a grunt of dissatisfaction, laid my pipe aside, and followed the maid.

She led me through the hall, and up the staircase at the western extremity.

On reaching the upper landing I saw all the maids there in a cluster, and all evidently much scared.

"Whatever is all this nonsense about?" I asked.

"Please, sir, will you look? We can't say."

The parlourmaid pointed to an oblong patch of moonlight on the wall of the passage. The night was cloudless, and the full moon shone slanting in through the dormer, and painted a brilliant silver strip on the wall opposite. The window being on the side of the roof to the east, we could not see that, but did see the light thrown through it against the wall. This patch of reflected light was about seven feet above the floor.

The window itself was some ten feet up, and the passage was but four feet wide. I enter into these particulars for reasons that will presently appear.

The window was divided into three parts by wooden mullions, and was composed of four panes of glass in each compartment.

Now I could distinctly see the reflec-