

(CONTINUED.) Now all this worked upon the young wife's sensitive nature, and it would upon most sensitive people, making her sad and perhaps a little fearful. Her husband tried to cheer her drooping spirits, and to laugh her fears away, but it was all in vain. She began to have a vague apprehension of coming evil, which she could not throw off, and it speedily began to tell upon her health and spirits. It had been in the telegraph office about a month, when a messenger came one day addressed to Isabel Merton, which read as follows: "I will visit you in two months. Be ready to go with me then."

CAPTAIN CHANNING. It was given to me to deliver, and I carried it up to the office, and placed it in the lady's hand myself. I shall never forget the white face of the woman as she read that message, nor the look of unutterable horror that I saw flicker across her face, though I should live a thousand years, I could not give him information, of course, beyond the fact that it had been delivered to me at the office, in bringing to Mrs. Merton. He then took his wife tenderly in his arms and carried her away while I sought the office again. In a few hours Mr. Merton came to the office himself, and made minute inquiries concerning the message. I had declared that I could be told him, of course, beyond the fact that it had been received from the city of A. To satisfy him, however, as to who had sent the message, an inquiry was made of the A. office, when the reply came back that no such message had been sent from there. This astonished those in our office considerably, for there was the message, and just as all others are, and the operator who had read it off declared it was Barnes who had sent it—Barnes was one of the operators in the A. office.

But Barnes declared that he never saw the message, and he was considered one of the most honest men living, and there was no inducement for deception. In the case, he had to be believed. But the message remained a mystery to the whole office, for it had already been announced to us that Captain Channing was dead. Mr. Merton was deeply mortified when Barnes independently informed him that he had been deeply mortified about the mysterious telegram, but he quickly gained his composure, and requested that nothing be said of the matter outside of the telegraph office.

I saw no more of Isabel Merton after this visit, but from the old housekeeper we gleaned enough to keep constantly peering in regard to the occurrence of the next few weeks. What I shall now relate will be understood as having been learned from this source. From the time that I took the telegram to Mrs. Merton she was a changed woman. She grew pale and then the light faded from her eyes, and her laugh was heard no more. She became extremely nervous and fearful, and the slightest noise sometimes served to throw her into most extreme terror. She lived in dread expectation of a coming evil. The husband tried to banish the mad ideas and fears from her mind, but it was of no avail. She, who but a short time before had laughed at superstition, had become the most superstitious, and she declared that those who succeed at such things would yet become convinced of their mistake.

About a month after the mysterious message had been received, Mr. Merton said one night to his wife in the library, when there came a ring of the bell of the street door. Mr. Merton laid down his book and went to answer it, the servant having all been allowed an evening out, but he was surprised to find no one there. Looking up and down the street and seeing no one, he concluded it was the work of some mischievous boys, and shutting the door, he returned to the library.

He was startled as he entered the room to see his wife with white face, great staring eyes, gazing intently at a distant corner of the room. "Why, Isabel, what is the matter?" "Look there! Don't you see him?" "See his great staring eyes, and his long hand pointed at me. See him, Ralph! It is Uncle Channing, come to curse me!" shrieked Isabel Merton, dowering in her chair and trembling fearfully. "I see nothing, dear Isabel, come, it is only your own over-credulity that tries to banish such thoughts from your mind."

"I tell you it is not fancy, Ralph, cannot you see him there, gazing at me?" "Oh, now he is coming toward me. See, he reaches out his hands to seize me. Take him away! Take him away!" "To be continued."

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