

THE HOUSE OF SOULS



Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS LIBRARY
At URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
BOOKSTACKS

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

To renew call Telephone Center, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

APR 22 1985	FEB 02 1997
APR 24 1985	NOV 21 1998
OCT 02 1990	DEC 18 1998
30 Oct 90	MAR 21 1999
OCT 18 1990	Apr. 27th '99
MAR 07 1991	JUN 21 1999
FEB 28 1991	SEP 25 2000
JUL 25 1991	AUG 04 2000
JUL 22 1991	
FEB 18 1992	
MAR 03 1992	
FEB 28 1997	

L161—O-1096



THE HOUSE OF SOULS

RECENT FICTION

PARSON BRAND

By L. COPE CORNFORD

THE SANDS OF PLEASURE

By FILSON YOUNG

IGDRASIL

By W. TRAFFORD-TAUNTON

THE SAME CLAY

By JAMES BLYTH

THE BLACK MOTOR-CAR

By HARRIS BURLAND

TERENCE O'ROURKE

By L. J. VANCE

AUDREY, THE ACTRESS

By HORACE WYNDHAM

A TANGLED I

By MONTAGU WOOD

Six Shillings each

E. GRANT RICHARDS

7 CARLTON STREET, LONDON, S.W.

The House of Souls

By
Arthur Machen



London
E. Grant Richards
7 Carlton Street, S.W.
1906

L 3 dln 53 dln

823
M183h
1906

NOTE

ON the suggestion of my publisher I have collected in one volume the six stories that follow: "A Fragment of Life," "The White People," "The Great God Pan," "The Inmost Light," "The Three Impostors," and "The Red Hand." Three of these have already been published in book form; the rest will, I think, be new to the great majority of my readers.

My fellow-authors will, I am sure, sympathize with me in the difficult task of finding a general title which is not obviously impertinent. The difficulty of the task will appear when it is recollected that Mr. Kipling, the inventor of some of the most wonderful and admirable tales that have ever been written, has been content (or compelled) to shirk the issue with such titles as "Life's Handicap" and "Many Inventions"; and Poe was not conspicuously happy in qualifying his tales as "Arabesque and Grotesque." Failure, then, is not altogether disgraceful; and the title I have chosen, "The House of Souls," will at all events hint at the nature of the contents.

v

Don't know where to find it

The House of Souls

And here, by the way, I may, perhaps, be permitted to say a word in defence of the method and milieu of these tales. In a frivolous community, such as the French, this would be pure impertinence; since in Paris it is agreed that imagination and fantasy are to work as they will and as they can, and are to be judged by their own laws. He who carves gurgoyles admirably is praised for his curious excellence in the invention and execution of these grinning monsters; and if he is blamed it is for bad carving, not because he has failed to produce pet lambs. In England, of course, we judge very differently; we lay stress on usefulness and serious aims, and Imagination itself is expected to improve the occasion, to reform while it entertains, and to instruct under the guise of story-telling. This, doubtless, is one of the many benefits which we owe to our sturdy Puritan ancestors, those architects of England's true greatness, fathers of huge banking accounts, of flourishing industrial communities, of Gower Street, of Manchester and its environs, of "substitutes" in every trade, of the "open Bible"—in short, of all the blessings of civil and religious liberty. But, indeed, I think we scarcely realize the debt that our English Art owes to English Puritanism. We have all learnt the story of its more

Note

tangible benefits ; we know how Hampden died that England might be free, first under the martial law of the Great Protector, and afterwards under the Whig Oligarchy. We have read how Cromwell secured Representative Institutions from the attack of Tyrants, firstly by "Pride's Purge," and then by the sterner, simpler method of abolishing the House of Commons. There must be few members of the great Anglo-Saxon family who have not thrilled at the story of the "Mayflower" and its Pilgrims, of those brave men who left their homes in England and settled on the dreary inhospitable shores of the Massachusetts, martyrs in the cause of Humanity. We know how these foes of superstition hanged witches in Salem, how these friends of religious freedom flogged and hanged the Quakers, how the enemies of the cruel Star Chamber caused the savage Indian to disappear from the land ; while their allies at home baptized foals in cathedrals, hewed down the statues of the saints, shut up the theatres, and gave us the English Sunday.

All this is common knowledge, but I scarcely think we realize how the Puritan "seriousness" has penetrated all our artistic conceptions. It is this seriousness which has made the success of many recent works of fiction, the names of which I need not men-

The House of Souls

tion; it has tacitly, if not openly, ordered that the English Novel is only great when it is a sermon, a tract, or a pamphlet in disguise. The hard-headed men of business, whose judgment is, very properly, supreme in all questions of art and letters, have never disguised their intolerance of imagination qua imagination, since they have rightly felt that in the imaginative world, pure and simple, they have no part. He whose mind is occupied throughout the hours of business with, say, the complicated and scientific operation of brewing, who knows the strange rich alchemy by which a beverage still called (out of respect for antiquity) by the name of beer is extracted from glucose, sulphuric acid, arsenic, and many other chemicals, such a man will be little inclined to waste his leisure in perusing idle fantasies. Rather he will desire to keep abreast with serious contemporary thought, with the movements of the day, with the trend of politics; or at all events, if he desire fiction pure and simple, he will be more pleased with a plain unvarnished transcript of plain English Life as he knows it than with matter that is dream and fantasy. In a word, English fiction must justify itself either as containing useful doctrine and information, or as a manifest transcript of life as it is known to the average reader; due regard being had,

Note

of course, to the salutary conventions of the social order.

Such is the régime under which Literature, as obedient and useful to its masters as any good civil servant, exists in England; the journalism of our less strenuous moments—the leading article, the social column, the Divorce Report of those serious morning half-hours in the train, reduced to a more attractive form, in which Fancy gilds the shape of the Higher Critic, and Marriage Reform appears in even more attractive colours than it had assumed in the Divorce Court or the Police Column. Art, it has been well observed, excels and surpasses life; so while the hard truth of the newspaper seems at times almost a history of blackguards and wantons, fiction with gentle, serious hand shows us virtually the same characters as the Luthers and Calvins of a new social era, as hedonist philosophers or priestesses of Humanity. And on the lighter side of the literary art; who has not enjoyed a letter from an aunt in the country, giving the last news of six parishes, with births, marriages, deaths, dances, and engagements, to say nothing of the hunting? What more delightful than a book which is practically just such a letter extended to five hundred pages, breathing the calm of the vicarage, exuding, as it were, the quinta

The House of Souls

essentia of all county families? It may be said that there are exceptions to these canons, but they will be found of little weight. Dickens, it is true, has strange fantasies: but these have been forgiven him for the sake of his zeal for reform in Church and State. Hawthorne has kindled a light not altogether of this world that shines on his pages; but how true the moral of the "Scarlet Letter"! How clearly we may deduce from its chapters the conclusion that no blessing can attend the unhallowed amours of an Independent minister! Let us always remember that Longfellow, besides translating the works of Dante and of other foreign Romanists, gave us the "Psalm of Life."

These, then, are the conditions under which imagination works in our happy country; and for these conditions I say that we have to thank our sturdy Puritan ancestors. No doubt the popular mind has, as I have noted, been captured by the tangible and contemporary achievements of the stout Commonwealth's men. It has remembered that in the seventeenth century England stood at the parting of the ways: the flunkey's motto—"Honour the King"—was being reasserted with renewed force, with much superstitious and absurd nonsense about the "Lord's Anointed." Laud was clearing away the wholesome

Note

deposit of honest English dirt and filth which the glorious Elizabethans had allowed to gather in the churches, and the Sabbath itself was menaced by the royal authority. The Puritans saved us from disaster in those directions; but they did much more. For it must never be forgotten that the very root and essence of Puritanism is the denial of all Sacraments and of all Mysteries; so that at the present day we find the legitimate and accredited representatives of these great men applauding and quoting such enlightened French thinkers as Combes and Gambetta. Now, after the victory has been won, we can hardly realize the bondage, the Egyptian darkness, from which we have been delivered. What was it that Laud and Charles endeavoured to restore? Here is Longfellow's only too faithful picture:

*And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!*

We can hardly conceive, perhaps, how in the Dark Ages man lived in a world of mystery and love and adoration, how sacraments stood about all his ways, how the Veil of the Temple grew thin before his gaze, and he saw the Great Sacrifice offered in the Holy

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A FRAGMENT OF LIFE	3
THE WHITE PEOPLE	113
THE GREAT GOD PAN	169
THE INMOST LIGHT	247
THE THREE IMPOSTORS	289
ADVENTURE OF THE GOLD TIBERIUS	293
THE ENCOUNTER OF THE PAVEMENT	303
ADVENTURE OF THE MISSING BROTHER	331
INCIDENT OF THE PRIVATE BAR	396
THE RECLUSE OF BAYSWATER	410
STRANGE OCCURRENCE IN CLERKENWELL	442
ADVENTURE OF THE DESERTED RESIDENCE	467
THE RED HAND	475

EDWARD DARNELL awoke from a dream of an ancient wood, and of a clear well rising into grey film and vapour beneath a misty, glimmering heat; and as his eyes opened he saw the sunlight bright in the room, sparkling on the varnish of the new furniture. He turned and found his wife's place vacant, and with some confusion and wonder of the dream still lingering in his mind, he rose also, and began hurriedly to set about his dressing, for he had overslept a little, and the 'bus passed the corner at 9.15. He was a tall, thin man, dark-haired and dark-eyed, and in spite of the routine of the City, the counting of coupons, and all the mechanical drudgery that had lasted for ten years, there still remained about him the curious hint of a wild grace, as if he had been born a creature of the antique wood, and had seen the fountain rising from the green moss and the grey rocks.

The breakfast was laid in the room on the ground floor, the back room with the French windows looking on the garden, and before he sat down to his fried bacon he kissed his wife seriously and dutifully. She had brown hair and brown eyes, and though her lovely face was grave and quiet, one would have said that she might have awaited her husband under the old trees, and bathed in the pool hollowed out of the rocks.

The House of Souls

They had a good deal to talk over while the coffee was poured out and the bacon eaten, and Darnell's egg brought in by the stupid, staring servant-girl of the dusty face. They had been married for a year, and they had got on excellently, rarely sitting silent for more than an hour, but for the past few weeks Aunt Marian's present had afforded a subject for conversation which seemed inexhaustible. Mrs. Darnell had been Miss Mary Reynolds, the daughter of an auctioneer and estate agent in Notting Hill, and Aunt Marian was her mother's sister, who was supposed rather to have lowered herself by marrying a coal merchant, in a small way, at Turnham Green. Marian had felt the family attitude a good deal, and the Reynoldses were sorry for many things that had been said, when the coal merchant saved money and took up land on building leases in the neighbourhood of Crouch End, greatly to his advantage, as it appeared. Nobody had thought that Nixon could ever do very much; but he and his wife had been living for years in a beautiful house at Barnet, with bow-windows, shrubs, and a paddock, and the two families saw but little of each other, for Mr. Reynolds was not very prosperous. Of course, Aunt Marian and her husband had been asked to Mary's wedding, but they had sent excuses with a nice little set of silver apostle spoons, and it was feared that nothing more was to be looked for. However, on Mary's birthday her aunt had written a most affectionate letter, enclosing a cheque for a hundred pounds from 'Robert' and herself, and ever since the receipt of the money the Darnells had discussed the question of its judicious disposal. Mrs. Darnell had wished to invest the whole sum in Government securities, but Mr. Darnell had pointed

A Fragment of Life

out that the rate of interest was absurdly low, and after a good deal of talk he had persuaded his wife to put ninety pounds of the money in a safe mine, which was paying five per cent. This was very well, but the remaining ten pounds, which Mrs. Darnell had insisted on reserving, gave rise to legends and discourses as interminable as the disputes of the schools.

At first Mr. Darnell had proposed that they should furnish the 'spare' room. There were four bedrooms in the house: their own room, the small one for the servant, and two others overlooking the garden, one of which had been used for storing boxes, ends of rope, and odd numbers of 'Quiet Days' and 'Sunday Evenings,' besides some worn suits belonging to Mr. Darnell which had been carefully wrapped up and laid by, as he scarcely knew what to do with them. The other room was frankly waste and vacant, and one Saturday afternoon, as he was coming home in the 'bus, and while he revolved that difficult question of the ten pounds, the unseemly emptiness of the spare room suddenly came into his mind, and he glowed with the idea that now, thanks to Aunt Marian, it could be furnished. He was busied with this delightful thought all the way home, but when he let himself in, he said nothing to his wife, since he felt that his idea must be matured. He told Mrs. Darnell that, having important business, he was obliged to go out again directly, but that he should be back without fail for tea at half-past six; and Mary, on her side, was not sorry to be alone, as she was a little behind-hand with the household books. The fact was, that Darnell, full of the design of furnishing the spare bedroom, wished to consult his friend Wilson, who lived at Fulham, and had

A Fragment of Life

know J. W. Bennett, don't you? Ah, he's in the House ; doing very well, I believe. He put me on to a very good thing the other day.'

'But, I say,' said Wilson, as they turned and strolled towards the front door, 'what do you wear those black things for? You look hot. Look at me. Well, I've been gardening, you know, but I feel as cool as a cucumber. I dare say you don't know where to get these things? Very few men do. Where do you suppose I got 'em?'

'In the West End, I suppose,' said Darnell, wishing to be polite.

'Yes, that's what everybody says. And it is a good cut. Well, I'll tell you, but you needn't pass it on to everybody. I got the tip from Jameson—you know him, "Jim-Jams," in the China trade, 39 Eastbrook—and he said he didn't want everybody in the City to know about it. But just go to Jennings, in Old Wall, and mention my name, and you'll be all right. And what d'you think they cost?'

'I haven't a notion,' said Darnell, who had never bought such a suit in his life.

'Well, have a guess.'

Darnell regarded Wilson gravely.

The jacket hung about his body like a sack, the knickerbockers drooped lamentably over his calves, and in prominent positions the bloom of the heather seemed about to fade and disappear.

'Three pounds, I suppose, at least,' he said at length.

'Well, I asked Dench, in our place, the other day, and he guessed four ten, and his father's got something to do with a big business in Conduit Street. But I only gave

The House of Souls

thirty-five and six. To measure? Of course; look at the cut, man.'

Darnell was astonished at so low a price.

'And, by the way,' Wilson went on, pointing to his new brown boots, 'you know where to go for shoe-leather? Oh, I thought everybody was up to that! There's only one place. "Mr. Bill," in Gunning Street, — nine and six.'

They were walking round and round the garden, and Wilson pointed out the flowers in the beds and borders. There were hardly any blossoms, but everything was neatly arranged.

'Here are the tuberous-rooted *Glasgowvias*,' he said, showing a rigid row of stunted plants; 'those are *Squintacæ*; this is a new introduction, *Moldavia Semperflorida Andersonii*; and this is *Prattsia*.'

'When do they come out?' said Darnell.

'Most of them in the end of August or beginning of September,' said Wilson briefly. He was slightly annoyed with himself for having talked so much about his plants, since he saw that Darnell cared nothing for flowers; and, indeed, the visitor could hardly dissemble vague recollections that came to him; thoughts of an old, wild garden, full of odours, beneath grey walls, of the fragrance of the meadowsweet beside the brook.

'I wanted to consult you about some furniture,' Darnell said at last. 'You know we've got a spare room, and I'm thinking of putting a few things into it. I haven't exactly made up my mind, but I thought you might advise me.'

'Come into my den,' said Wilson. 'No; this way, by the back'; and he showed Darnell another ingenious

A Fragment of Life

arrangement at the side door whereby a violent high-toned bell was set pealing in the house if one did but touch the latch. Indeed, Wilson handled it so briskly that the bell rang a wild alarm, and the servant, who was trying on her mistress's things in the bedroom, jumped madly to the window and then danced a hysteric dance. There was plaster found on the drawing-room table on Sunday afternoon, and Wilson wrote a letter to the 'Fulham Chronicle,' ascribing the phenomenon 'to some disturbance of a seismic nature.'

For the moment he knew nothing of the great results of his contrivance, and solemnly led the way towards the back of the house. Here there was a patch of turf, beginning to look a little brown, with a background of shrubs. In the middle of the turf, a boy of nine or ten was standing all alone, with something of an air.

'The eldest,' said Wilson. 'Havelock. Well, Lockie, what are ye doing now? And where are your brother and sister?'

The boy was not at all shy. Indeed, he seemed eager to explain the course of events.

'I'm playing at being Gawd,' he said, with an engaging frankness. 'And I've sent Fergus and Janet to the bad place. That's in the shrubbery. And they're never to come out any more. And they're burning for ever and ever.'

'What d'you think of that?' said Wilson admiringly. 'Not bad for a youngster of nine, is it? They think a lot of him at the Sunday-school. But come into my den.'

The den was an apartment projecting from the back of the house. It had been designed as a back kitchen and

The House of Souls

washhouse, but Wilson had draped the 'copper' in art muslin and had boarded over the sink, so that it served as a workman's bench.

'Snug, isn't it?' he said, as he pushed forward one of the two wicker chairs. 'I think out things here, you know; it's quiet. And what about this furnishing? Do you want to do the thing on a grand scale?'

'Oh, not at all. Quite the reverse. In fact, I don't know whether the sum at our disposal will be sufficient. You see the spare room is ten feet by twelve, with a western exposure, and I thought if we *could* manage it, that it would seem more cheerful furnished. Besides, it's pleasant to be able to ask a visitor; our aunt, Mrs. Nixon, for example. But she is accustomed to have everything very nice.'

'And how much do you want to spend?'

'Well, I hardly think we should be justified in going much beyond ten pounds. That isn't enough, eh?'

Wilson got up and shut the door of the back kitchen impressively.

'Look here,' he said, 'I'm glad you came to me in the first place. Now you'll just tell me where you thought of going yourself.'

'Well, I had thought of the Hampstead Road,' said Darnell in a hesitating manner.

'I just thought you'd say that. But I'll ask you, what is the good of going to those expensive shops in the West End? You don't get a better article for your money. You're merely paying for fashion.'

'I've seen some nice things in Samuel's, though. They get a brilliant polish on their goods in those superior shops. We went there when we were married.'

A Fragment of Life

'Exactly, and paid ten per cent more than you need have paid. It's throwing money away. And how much did you say you had to spend? Ten pounds. Well, I can tell you where to get a beautiful bedroom suite, in the very highest finish, for six pound ten. What d'you think of that? China included, mind you; and a square of carpet, brilliant colours, will only cost you fifteen and six. Look here, go any Saturday afternoon to Dick's, in the Seven Sisters Road, mention my name, and ask for Mr. Johnston. The suite's in ash, "Elizabethan" they call it. Six pound ten, including the china, with one of their "Orient" carpets, nine by nine, for fifteen and six. Dick's.'

Wilson spoke with some eloquence on the subject of furnishing. He pointed out that the times were changed, and that the old heavy style was quite out of date.

'You know,' he said, 'it isn't like it was in the old days, when people used to buy things to last hundreds of years. Why, just before the wife and I were married, an uncle of mine died up in the North and left me his furniture. I was thinking of furnishing at the time, and I thought the things might come in handy; but I assure you there wasn't a single article that I cared to give house-room to. All dingy, old mahogany; big book-cases and bureaus, and claw-legged chairs and tables. As I said to the wife (as she was soon afterwards), "We don't exactly want to set up a chamber of horrors, do we?" So I sold off the lot for what I could get. I must confess I like a cheerful room.'

Darnell said he had heard that artists liked the old-fashioned furniture.