

THE BLACK ABBOT

SYNOPSIS.

HARRY, LORD CHELFORD, occupies Fossaway Manor, the home of the Chelfords for hundreds of years. Here he lives with his half-brother, Dick Alford, who manages his estate. Lord Harry devotes most of his time to gathering together the legends concerning Chelford. The picturesque ruins of an old abbey lie at one end of the estate, and they are supposed to be the haunt of one of its former occupants. The apparition is known in the neighborhood as the Black Abbot. Lord Chelford is engaged to marry Leslie Gwyn, whose brother, Arthur, acts as Lord Chelford's solicitor.

INSTALLMENT II.

The Spy Reports.

DICK listened patiently. He knew by heart the story of the thousand bars of pure gold, each weighing thirty-five pounds. The legend of the Chelford treasure was inseparable from the Chelford estate.

Harry walked quickly to his desk, pulled open a drawer and took out a small vellum covered book. The pages were yellow with age and covered with writing that had faded to a pale green. "Listen," he said, and began reading:

"On the fifteenth of the month, the same being the feast day of St. James, came Sir Walter Hythe, Kt., from his cruise in the Spanish seas, for the cost of which I raised first three thousand eight hundred pounds and eight thousand pounds from Bel-litti the Lombard, and Sir Walter Hythe brought with him on ten wagons one thousand ingots of gold each of thirty-five pounds weight which he had taken from the two Spanish ships Esperanza and Escorial, and these ingots he shall put away in the safe place if yet the weather shall be dry and the drought continue, though rain is near at hand, to judge by the portents, deeming it wise not to inform my Lord Burleigh of the gold because of the queen's majesty and her covetousness. Also he brought the crystal flask of Life Water which was given to Don Cortes by the priest of the Aztec people, a drop of which upon the tongue will revive even the dead, this being sworn to by Fra Pedro of Sevilla. This I shall hide with great care in the secret place where the gold will be stored. To Sir Walter Hythe, Kt., I had given permission that he keep for himself one hundred bars of like weight and this he did thanking me civilly and sailed off from Chichester in his ship the Good Father which ship was wrecked on the Kentish coast, Sir Walter Hythe, his shipmaster and all his company perishing. Such was his terrible misfortune. As for myself, being in some danger because of the part I have taken in promoting the welfare of my true sovereign lady, Mary—" Lord Chelford looked up and met the steady eyes of his brother.

By Edgar Wallace

—and the passer-by who saw him, noting the perfect shine of his silk hat, the glitter of his patent shoes, and the ebony stick that he carried in his gloved hand, thought he was a bridegroom stopping on his way to church.



"The writing ends there," he said. "I am certain that he was not interrupted by the arrival of Elizabeth's soldiers to arrest him for his share in the conspiracy to put Mary on the throne. He must have had time to secrete the treasure. Where is the crystal flask?"

"Where rather is the gold?" asked the practical Dick. "If I know anything about Queen Elizabeth, she bagged it! Nobody ever found it—for four hundred years our respected forefathers have been searching for this gold—"

Lord Chelford made an angry gesture. "Gold—gold—gold! You think of nothing else! Curse the gold! Find it and keep it. It is the flask I want!" His voice sank to a whisper, his face had grown suddenly moist. "Dick, I'm

afraid of death! God! You don't know how afraid! The fear of it haunts me day and night—I sit here counting the hours, wondering at which my spirit will go from me! You'll laugh—at that—laugh, laugh!"

But Dick Alford's face was set, unsmiling.

"I do not laugh—but can't you see, Harry, that such a thing as an elixir of life is preposterous?"

"Why?" Lord Chelford's eyes were shining. "Why shouldn't this discovery have been made by the ancient civilizations? Why is it more wonderful than wireless telegraphy or the disintegration of atoms? Thirty years ago flying was regarded as a miracle. The

flask—I want the flask of Life Water! The gold—throw it into the road—let the poor devils take it who want it. I want life—do you understand? Life and the end of fear."

He dropped heavily into his chair and wiped his streaming forehead.

"The end of fear!" he muttered.

Dick listened, his eyes never leaving his brother's face. And this was to be Leslie Gwyn's husband. He shivered at the thought.

If the Honorable Richard Fallington Alford had been regarded by the compilers of such volumes as being sufficiently important to have his biography enshrined in a popular work of reference,

his life's work, his hobby and his recreation would be described as "looking after the Chelford estates." His bailiffs said he knew every blade of grass; the tenant farmers swore he could price a standing crop to the last penny of its worth. He knew Fossaway Manor, its strength and weakness, better than the estate architect—could point out where the foundations were scamped by the Elizabethan builders. He could trace the walls of the old castle which Richard of York had burnt and razed, beheading the fourth earl for his treachery under the great archway, one crumbling pier of which still showed its gray and battered head above the roses that now surrounded it. He gave to the broad lands of Chelford a loyal and passionate devotion which any mistress might envy.

IN the chill of an autumnal morning, when mist blanketed the hollows and a pale sun was struggling through thin clouds, he strolled across the park toward the abbey ruins. There was little of them left. A truncated tower wrecked by lightning; a high, arched space where an oriel window had once flamed; mounds of scattered stones left where Cromwell's soldiers had overturned them; and, under the carpet of grass, a "feel" of solid pavement.

He drew his pipe as he stepped out, and the tobacco smoke smelt sweet and wholesome in the cold air.

He was on his way to the home farm, and his errand was a prosaic one. A cow had died in the night, and his cowman had reported symptoms of cattle fever.

The familiar ruins showed up ahead, the half arch, like a huge question mark, arrested his eye and raised again the well argued problem of restoration. Some day, when the Chelford ship came home; when that coal vein was proved, or when Harry had a rich wife—

This was an unpleasant thought. His lips curled in a grimace of distaste.

He stopped suddenly.

A figure was walking among the ruins—a woman. Her back was toward him and she was obviously unaware of his presence. Something about her figure seemed familiar. Dick turned from the path and walked toward her.

Evidently she did not hear him, for when he spoke she started, uttered a little scream and turned a frightened face to him.

"Good morning, Miss Wenner," he said politely. "You are up and about very early."

(Continued on page six.)

THE OPEN CASEMENT By Katharine Newlin Burt

(Continued from page three.)

breathing and murmuring. His pain left him. The nightingale's was the last voice he heard.

When Lois came to his side, she bent first to pick up the fallen book. She saw and read the paper.

"My darling Psyche, you must sit down now before you look at me and read this poem where the book lies open. Read it carefully, my dear, and think, while you read, of me. But when you reach the last four lines, just before you have to turn the page, stop and bend down and kiss me. Don't be afraid. Then finish the poem, my beloved, my beautiful, and remember that you were my greatest happiness. Your Priest."

And trembling Psyche read:

"O latest-born and loveliest vision far

Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!

Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,

Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;

Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,

Nor altar heaped with flowers;

Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan

Upon the midnight hours;

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet

From chain-swung censer teeming;

No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat

Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming . . ."

"Yes, I will be thy priest and build a fane

In some untrodden region of my mind
Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind;
Far, far around shall those dark cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged-mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep . . ."

In tears now she was reading:

"And in the midst of this wide quiet-

ness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress

With the wreath'd trelis of a working brain,

With buds and bells, and stars without a name,

With all the gardener Fancy'er could feign

Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same . . ."

Before she turned the page

blindly she bent to him, only half

conscious of his still composure,

sobbing, shocked, thrilled with a

cold sort of loving rapture at the

beauty of him, and she kissed his

cheek. Then, groping for submission,

for the beautiful and quiet obedience,

the spirit of Psyche had won for her,

she finished his command:

"And there shall be for thee all soft

delight

That shadowy thought can win,

A bright torch, and a casement ope at night
To let the warm Love in!"

She closed the book, looking up from where she knelt beside her worshiper's feet, at the faint sound of other footfalls. And there, suddenly, within the threshold of her open window, stood young Love, expectant and wide-eyed.

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