A Century's Lapse

What Was Accomplished Under an Indian Fakir's Instructions

By F. A. MITCHEL

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There are many singular processes known in the east that are not understood in the west. In India we hear of people being buried and a long while afterward resurrected. Ordinarily persons shake their heads at such stories, but there has been so much testimony as to these strange doings that the feeling has gained ground that there is something in them. There is certainly nothing new in them. What these Indians know has been handed down to them through centuries.

During the reign of terror in France a young girl, Marie de Maurier, the daughter of a nobleman, was condemned to death with others of her class whom the revolutionists desired to eliminate. She was expecting to be taken to the guillotine and executed when the door of her cell was opened and a man of swarthy features, with a fez on his head, entered. He lighted a taper he held in his hand, and a strange odor soon pervaded the cell. The girl sat on a pile of straw in a corner, but the man stood with his face near a window, holding at the same time a vial under his nose. Mlle. de Maurier sank down apparently dead. The man took her in his arms and carried her out to the prison dead house, where she was put into a coffin. The coffin was then placed in a cart and driven away in charge of the swarthy man, who before leaving dropped several gold pieces into the palm of the jailer.

The body of Mlle. de Maurier was carried to the laboratory of a distinguished French savant, Professor Chantan, who received it from the swarthy man. Both entered the laboratory with it, and the professor locked the doors. That was the last seen of Marie de Maurier for a hundred years.

In 1898 Paul Chantan, the great-great-grandson of Professor Chantan, a young scientist of promise, went to the family vault in the cemetery of Pere Lachaise and, taking down from an upper shelf a casket, had it removed to his laboratory. There he lifted from the coffin the body of a young girl. Having laid it on a table, he took from his pocket a manuscript and began to read:

Record of the case of Mlle. Marie de Maurier, who was to have been guillotined on the 5th of March, 1793. Her jailer was bribed to permit Hyder Caslm, an Indian fakir, to place her in a comatose condition, and she, being considered dead, was taken to the laboratory of Professor Antoine Chantan, where the Indian in the presence of Chantan prepared her to lie dormant for an indefinite period. One hundred years after the application of this process to the elder, born direct descendant of Professor Chantan take the body from the family vault in Pere Lachaise and determine if it can be resuscitated under the following instructions, to wit—

Then followed minute instructions, which young Chantan read carefully again and again. Finally, when he had thoroughly familiarized himself with them, he began to apply them.

Two hours after the commencement of the process Mlle. de Maurier showed a faint tinge of redness in the cheeks, and in thirty minutes more the operator noticed a pink tinge under the finger nails. Placing a mirror under the nostrils, he detected a slight moisture on the glass. Listening for the heartbeat, he discovered that it throbbed very slowly. All these symptoms gradually gained ground until three hours and fifty minutes after the young scientist had begun the resuscitation, when the subject opened her eyes.

"Is it time?" she moaned.

"Don't excite yourself," said Chantan. "You are in a critical condition, but if you can avoid giving way to any strong emotion you will come out all right."

"But why do I care, since I am to be executed?"

"That matter is past and gone. You have been unconscious for a long while. The revolution is accomplished. The republic is established on a permanent basis, and there is no longer need for executions."

"Thank heaven!"

The professor had prepared a lounge and, taking the girl in his arms, lifted her from the table on to it, covering her with an afghan. He noticed that the body was quite warm.

"Have the emigres returned?" asked the girl as soon as she was made comfortable.

"Long ago."

"I wonder if my uncle and my cousins are here."

To this the young man made no reply. Presently he asked her if she had any consciousness whatever before recovering her faculties.

"I fancy it could not have been long before I opened my eyes. The first thing I knew was you standing over me saying what you said." A blush overspread his features.

"What did I say?"

He was obliged to urge her, but she finally told him that he had said:

"If I succeed in bringing you back to life I will love you forever."

He had spoken the words believing that they were said to a dead person and never dreamed that a living being heard them. He was silent a few moments and then said with great feeling:

"And I will."

He was bending over her as he spoke. Her joy at living been told that she was not to be beheaded, but instead that this young man, who had brought her from nothingness to life, loved her, knew no bounds. She threw her arms about his neck.

Notwithstanding that Chantan reciprocated the emotion that caused this act he shuddered. A terrible gulf stood between him and this new and suddenly born love. A hundred years intervened between her going to sleep and her awakening. How could he tell her that during that long period she had been on a shelf in a tomb in Pere Lachaise; that those she would expect to find alive to rejoice with her in her escape from death on the guillotine had been in their graves for many years? And what would he do with her? He had kept the secret that he intended to obey an injunction handed down to him from his great-great-grandfather to resuscitate one supposed to be dead. How could he take this homeless girl to his mother and sisters dressed in a fashion of a hundred years ago? Indeed, he dreaded lest the faded and rotten fabrics of her clothing would fall to pieces as soon as she left the laboratory.

He had prepared a luncheon in case he was successful in his experiment, realizing that food would be at once needed, and now, noticing a pallor come over the girl's face, he brought her a glass of wine and offered her some dainty bits to eat. She partook of both and seemed refreshed. Then she began anew her questionings.

"How long have I been asleep?"

"Oh, a long while."

"What has happened since I began my slumber?"

"Many things. Napoleon Bonaparte made himself emperor, but was overpowered by the other European sovereigns and abdicated."

"I never heard of him. What a long time I have slept! Go on."

"Then the Bourbons were placed again on the throne of France, but the people would not remain tranquil under their rule and drove them out. After that Napoleon's nephew was elected president and afterward made himself emperor. He was conquered by the Prussians and a republic was proclaimed. This is the government we live under now."

"Heavens, how old I must be!"

"I have told you all of what has happened since you went to sleep that I can tell you now. I must take action with regard to your future. Since you are comfortable here and I don't dare for the present to permit you to make the slightest effort I will leave you, though only long enough to make certain provisions. You will need a woman to attend you, and that is the first matter for me to arrange. Do you fear to remain, say, half an hour, alone?"

"No."

He bent over her and kissed her. There was a cold clamminess to her lips he did not like. He was much troubled. This bringing a woman back from a past century appalled him. The brief synopsis of what had passed since she had become unconscious was in itself harrowing. What would he say when she began to ask where were those who had been near and dear to her?

At the door he turned for another look. He started. It seemed to him that since her resuscitation Marie had grown ten years older.

Locking his charge in the laboratory, he went out, thinking as he went what course to pursue. He felt that but one plan was practicable—he must go to his mother and give her his confidence. Calling a fiacre, he directed the driver to take him home.

Arriving, he called for his mother to follow him and, leading her to his own room, showed her the mandate of the first Chantan to resuscitate the body of Mlle. de Maurier. Mme. Chantan read the paper without displaying any especial interest, but when her son began to tell his story her face assumed a very different expression. When he recounted his taking the body from Pere Lachaise her features grew anxious. But when he told her that he had actually brought back to life a body that had been in the tomb a hundred years she had no doubt whatever that her son was insane.

Mme. Chantan was a remarkably self contained woman. As soon as her son began to tell her that he wished her to help him take care of the resuscitated girl, she arose, stepped to the door, passed out, closed it and turned the key. Paul Chantan was a prisoner.

The idea that Marie would be left alone locked in his laboratory with but such provisions as he had provided for immediate use threw him into a terrible agony. He hammered on the door, called, screamed and acted like a veritable madman. In an hour two men came, overpowered him and, taking him down to a carriage, drove him to a lunatic asylum.

How long Chantan remained in the asylum he did not know, for he was attacked with brain fever and passed into delirium. When he came to himself he could see by the leaves on the trees without his window and by the heat that the season had changed. Before the attendants knew of his altered condition he had had time to lay his plans. He wrote to his mother that he was aware he had suffered from insanity, but had recovered. Mme. Chantan came at once to see him, and within a few days he was permitted to order a fiacre and drive away.

He drove at once to his laboratory.

After he had inserted the key in the lock it was some time before he could nerve himself to turn it. When he entered, there on the lounge was a body, but it was not the body of a young girl. He saw instead a small dried up figure the hue of papier mache. The eyes were entirely sunken away, and the teeth had disappeared. It was the corpse of a woman more than a hundred years old.

Playing Hero

A Story of a Virginia House Haunted Before the Ruin

By WORTH WOODBURY

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There has never been and never will be again any such life as existed on the southern plantation up to the period when the system of slavery ceased to exist. In many respects it was an ideal life. Its pleasanter features were more pronounced in Virginia than in any other state, it having been the first of the colonies and planted by the cavaliers of England. Two hundred years later their descendants formed a unique people. The plantation was a patriarchal institution. The planter stood in the place of the patriarch, his children constituted the next grade, the negro house servants the next, and lastly came the field hands.

The children of the planter were educated in accordance with the somewhat lofty ideas of their English ancestors who lost their cause at Naseby some two centuries before. The young men lived an out of door life and mostly in the saddle. The young women's duties consisted largely in visiting the negroes on the plantation and ministering to their wants. There was no actual work done except by the negroes, and they were not overworked. The plantation supported every one on it and was administered equally with justice to all.

I saw the end of this system not as a part of it, but as a participator in the military struggle by which it fell. The plantation on which the incidents narrated in this story occurred is now divided into thirty parts. Even the beautiful grounds in which the manor house stood and still stands, slowly rotting away, are covered with potato vines, and the immense trees that shaded the roof from the hot southern sun have been cut down for firewood.

One afternoon—it was in 1862—I carried from a battlefield to this manor house a brother officer who had been wounded. It was then as it always had been, but was not to be in future. Two soldiers carried the wounded man on a stretcher through an avenue of trees to the front veranda and set down the stretcher, while I stalked inside. A quadroon house servant received me. I asked for the owner of the premises.

"What is it, Clarice?"

The voice came from a person on the second story and seemed to roll melodiously down the great winding staircase. When I first heard the opening strains of "Annie Laurie" I fell in love with the song, and when I heard those words, "What is it, Clarice?" I fell in love with the unseen voice.

"I have brought a young officer," I said, "from the fight going on over the river. He is badly wounded. Can you not find it in your heart to take him in? He would die if left on the field."

As I spoke a girl of twenty, perhaps, came down the staircase. Alas! she was the last of a long line of refined dames who had passed up and down that same staircase, built in England a hundred and fifty years before. Her complexion was that olive white mixed with vermilion which was often to be found among these highborn women of the south. She cast a quick glance at the limp form, the pale face lying on the stretcher, and her features were transfigured to express profound pity.

"This way," she said and, turning, opened a door that led to a chamber on the ground floor. We followed. I ordered the men to set down the stretcher, and one of them assisted me to lift the wounded man on to the bed. Then, telling the invalid that I would be back as soon as possible, I left him. We were members of the same staff, and I went at once to our general and reported what I had done. He directed me to find a surgeon if possible and take him with me to Kirkwood—my wounded comrade—and remain with him until he was out of danger or dead. I reminded the general that it would not do to ask a surgeon to go to one from so many who needed him, and he said he would send me one as soon as he could be spared.

It was a week before we could form any opinion as to Kirkwood's recovery. During that time my general's headquarters were not far from the Rutledge manor house where Kirkwood lay, and I was with the invalid a good deal of the time. My presence there was really unnecessary, for the women of the family—the men were all in the Confederate army—could not have taken better care of a son or a brother. Lillian Rutledge, who had thrilled me with her voice before I had even seen her and afterward by her personnel, was unconsciously leading me to fraudulently let the general believe that Kirkwood needed me. I fear I wished my friend might lie there hanging between life and death till the war was over, but unfortunately for me the surgeon at last said he could be moved, and I was obliged to move with him.

While he was there a medical director looked at the house with a view to taking it for a hospital. Miss Rutledge showed him through the rooms I accompanying them. One room Miss Rutledge at first declined to open and on being pressed to do so told the medical officer that it could not be used. It required a deal of pleading to induce her to tell why. The reason finally drawn from her was that the house was haunted and any sick man put in it would be frightened to death.

The officer decided against using the house for the purpose, and I had caught the infection of curiosity. As soon as he had gone I began to question Miss Rutledge about the haunted room. She told me that during the early part of the eighteenth century one of her ancestors had been murdered there. He had married the daughter of a neighboring planter. She loved and was loved by another. This lover came to the house, and during an altercation between him and the husband in this room the latter had been stabbed there. Since then every one who had tried to sleep in the chamber had been driven out by the appearance of the murdered man.

The most natural thing in the world for a lover is to try to make a hero of himself. Virginia was full of military heroes, and as such I was merely one of thousands. I resolved to do what I could to show my courage by sleeping in the haunted room. Miss Rutledge begged me not to try it since the last person who did was thrown into a fever which, being followed by other symptoms, finally carried him off.

I was resolute, because in the first place I believed haunted chambers to be a myth, and in the second if anything marvelous did occur it would give me the desired opportunity to show my pluck. The evening before Kirkwood was moved I sent word to the general that if I could be spared from headquarters I would stay all night at the plantation with Kirkwood. He sent back an order for me to remain.

I pledged Miss Rutledge to say nothing about my intention to sleep in the haunted chamber, hoping in this way to head off any one who might be disposed to play ghost. She prepared the room herself for my occupancy, keeping watch that no one should see her doing so. I waited till a late hour before going to bed, when not a person besides myself and Miss Rutledge, except in the invalid's chamber, was stirring. Then I went to the room I had occupied whenever I had remained for the night and, removing my boots, stole in the dark to the haunted chamber.

That my presence there might not be betrayed I took off my clothes in the dark. Feeling sure that the parts of ghosts are always played by persons in the flesh and that no one on this side of the dead line knew that the room was occupied, I went to sleep within a reasonable time.

I awoke with a start. At the other end of the room I saw a glimmering such as appears in the east at the first faint dawn. I watched it and soon saw that it was increasing both spreading and growing in intensity. It grew till that end of the chamber was illuminated, or, rather, it seemed that there was no end to the chamber, but a misty, ill defined space. Then I saw in this space the bed in which I lay and asleep in it a figure. A door opened, and a man dressed in the costume in vogue at the end of the eighteenth century stole stealthily toward the bed. Reaching it, quick as a flash he buried a knife in the sleeper's bosom. Then all was dark again.

I felt all the horror one experiences in seeing a murder in cold blood. For more than a year I had seen men killed continually, sometimes thousands at a time, but that was under the exhilaration of battle. The vision, or whatever it was, left me all of a tremble. There being no further use for concealment, I lighted a candle that stood on a small table beside my bed. I would have given half my fortune—I was rich—to leave that bedroom, but my love for Lillian Rutledge was greater than my fear. I had come there to show her my pluck, and I did not propose to show the white feather. Yet I would have infinitely preferred to lead a forlorn hope against a battery of a hundred guns.

I had not long to wait for dawn, and when through a window came its first beams I blew out my candle and within half an hour had so far recovered from my disagreeable sensations as to fall asleep.

Shortly before 9 o'clock I went down to breakfast, feeling at liberty to play the hero, since no one had seen me during the night shaking like a leaf in the wind. However, that's what we both did often during the war. If we temporarily lost our grip on our courage, we looked about to learn who had seen us. Miss Rutledge's mother and other members of the family were present, so nothing was said about my experience. I assumed a careless deportment, though I confess I had not yet recovered my nerve. Finally I was alone with Miss Rutledge, and she looked at me inquiringly. I confessed that I had seen a vision of murder.

"And stayed in the room?" she asked quickly.

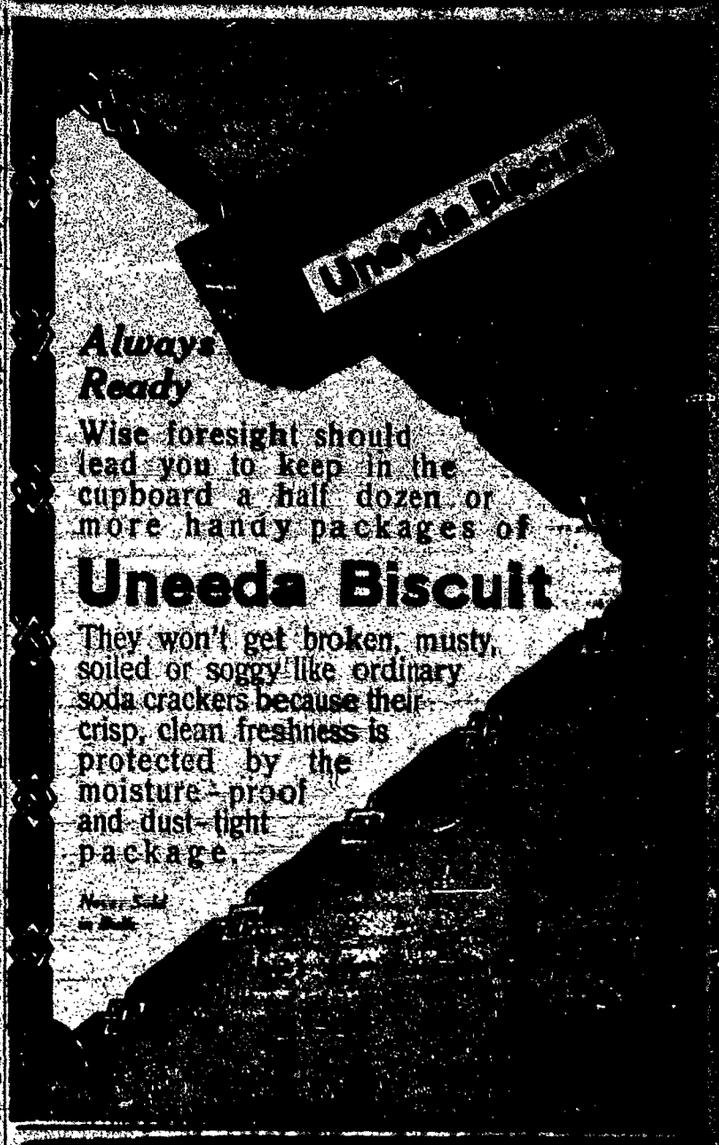
"Yes. I only left it just before breakfast."

I failed to add that it was the hardest pull on my courage I had yet met with.

I did not see the Rutledge plantation again until after the war. Then I went down into Virginia and found it a wreck. I made inquiries for the family who had occupied it and found that they had gone north, but where I could not learn. Everything in the south was in dire confusion. Every one seemed stunned, and no one knew anything.

It was several years before I found Lillian Rutledge; then I discovered her among the clerks of the treasury department at Washington. She did not remain there long after I met her. I told her that she had won me instantaneously, without my seeing her, with her sweet, melodious voice.

It was with that same voice that she gave me an answer to the most important question of my life. She is now an old woman, but even in her wrinkles something of the figure of her girlhood



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