

Stories of Myrta

and Not a Picture Drama
Dramatized by Charles W. Goddard.

Written by Hereward Carrington.

Copyright, 1916, by the Star Company.
All Foreign Rights Reserved.

(Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.)

Dr. Payson Alden, a physician, who has spent years in studying the occult, discovers the plot of a group of Black Magicians and Devil Worshipers to cause the suicide of Myrta Maynard. He endeavors to warn her mother of the danger, but is rebuffed. Myrta, a wealthy girl, who lives in the city, is taking tea with her mother. Myrta slips into the house, hurried by the steps and finds the knob of the door leading to Myrta's room with a black substance, which later shows that it is her mother's blood. Through this she enters a hidden chamber of the mansion. In this room, under the influence of the Black Order, Myrta Maynard automatically promises to obey the mandates of the unseen mentors. The next evening, while the residence is guarded by a drowsy private detective, the girl repeats her sleep-walking. It is the eve of her twentieth birthday—the anniversary of the suicide of her two sisters. Again she enters the hidden chamber and is about to plunge a dagger into her mother's heart when she is arrested. She has been smugged into the residence wrapped in the folds of a rug, reaches her room in time to say her good night. She is dazed and frightened, to realize that she is the victim of unseen forces of evil. Her mother's hysterical fear of all things psychic, hinders her efforts at assistance.

CHAPTER IX.

The Chamber of Horrors.
It all seemed so pleasant, so comfortably normal, when Dr. Payson Alden called an early afternoon call at the Maynard home. He could hardly believe that only a few short hours before the beautiful lifeless drifted helplessly between life and the black beyond, in the mysterious current of unreason. Yet there was the window through which he had made his forcible entry for the fortunate recognition of the girl's presence. He felt triumphant in a sense. But a foreboding chill, a vague fear for another day's morning that she would upon him, as he walked thoughtfully up the long drive, through the grounds of the estate.

"If she would only get away from this place she might escape the clutches of these assassins," he thought. He must suggest it to her mother without frightening either of them too much. Then I will fight it out alone, until the battle is won. That is the best plan, after all. But the best laid plans have the worst manner of going wrong. Myrta greeted him with just enough suggestion of intimate interest to send a thrill through his once impervious heart. The scientific coldness of the physical was not mixed with the mellow glow of those surprising blue eyes.

"Oh, Dr. Alden! It seems ages since I saw you last," she began, as she led him into the drawing room. "Mother has been so nervous this morning that she could not bear to tell me all about it." Myrta smiled and dimpled, as she continued eagerly. "And poor Willis, he has been spluttering demagogically, and with what looks to me like a great deal of right in anything else. When I ask him questions he turns turkey red and stammers. Five times I have seen him found him looking under chairs and davenport, beds, and chiffoniers with a broom handle. Here is the way he looks at the books and crannies!"

And Myrta laughingly rolled her eyes, puffing out her cheeks and then staring in a droll way, as she used the doctor's walking stick, to imitate the suspicious Willis. "Well, he is not to be blamed, Miss Maynard," responded Alden, rather caustically. "If he had been as cautious about investigating your case, and panels on the wall, he might have saved you from all this."

"He paused in thought for an instant. "Why, what do you mean?" saved me from what?" "From death! And something besides that, something more intangible. I'm sure you know what I mean. You, Miss Maynard, for this is not the end of the affair."

Myrta regarded him with an incredulous look on her girlish face, but the intense sincerity of his manner made her realize after a few words that there was no feinting matter. The physician explained the happenings, so far as he was able, of the two dramatic nights before. He told of his clandestine visit to her room, where he placed the black stain upon the door knob, so that when she repeated her sleep-walking she might leave the traces along whatever banisters and walls she touched.

He told of his later discovery, while she was playing the piano for her mother and Arthur Varney, of the fingerprints upon the panel and the discovery of the secret panel. Myrta's eyes flashed with horror, as Alden described her descent into the chamber of horrors below. When he narrated his own third "burglaring" entry, which he made in the night, she gasped, but she had been so surprised the drowsy watchman and followed her barely fifty feet to save her from suicide in the black chamber, the girl trembled and covered her eyes with her delicate fingers.

"And then what you are talking about, spiritualism—and such silly rubbish!"

"Not as silly as some people would like to think," was the surprising response. "I will explain them all to you by good time. But, come—follow me."

"Somehow or other, Myrta experienced an almost childish trustfulness in this broad-shouldered, assured stranger—for she had the feeling that she had known him words with him since their first old introduction. She went down the steep steps, as he indicated the path before them. "There, do you see the altar?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

Myrta was transfixed with horror, as she gazed about the black-draped chamber. "Do you see that?" cried Alden. "You kneel before that, and then I will show you a scroll. I must take with me to study the fabric and take a photograph of the handwriting. It is a trill-tale clue which may some day be of great value to you."

the smallest advertisement. Not a line."

He rose, pushing the sheets angrily to the floor. He went to the telephone, resting on a small mission table at the side of the room. Three times he essayed to lift the receiver of the hook and as many times he dropped it back nervously.

The black eyes burned like evil coals; his voluptuous mouth was bluish gray, no longer hued with its customary full-blooded scarlet. Heavy puffs sagged beneath either eye, and across his forehead was some faint lurid mark suggestive of a healed burn. Deep lines checked on either side of his nose, and a purple hollow in either flabby cheek gave further evidence of a night of wild debauch.

"And yet a man seldom lies to himself, when he is all alone," Varney roared, and staggered toward the black wood buffet, talked to himself, as though to force some spirit into his aching body. "I need a drink, that's it. I need some whiskey. Of course, I do. Not a drink after all these awful hours. No wonder I'm groggy on my legs!"

He poured out an extravagant tumbler of whisky, and drank it down. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours. He had been sitting there for two hours.

protection that he allowed to continue his investigation with her assistance.

The mother had finally given a grudging consent—yielding, as she believed, to the lesser of two evils. Alden had not even dreamed at the short telephone conversation; perhaps later developments might have been different had he done so.

Myrta, after Varney's promise to call immediately, left the library and entered the drawing room in time to hear her mother's admiring—"Dr. Alden, I don't know why I have yielded to you. I will absolutely forbid any further experiments of this dreadfully nonsensical nature. No good can come of it, and a world of evil may result."

"But, Mrs. Maynard, I believe your daughter has unusual psychic power—she has shown in several ways that she is mediate. I want you to be with her when we try it, and then your mind will be at ease. It is very simple."

The girl came to them, her radiant earnestness again tinging the oval face with the wonted peach-blow.

licked his parched lips and waited for further instructions. "Come to me at once, as soon as you have learned the situation. You have had no lesson, is another needed? Lay your plans, to complete the task before midnight tonight. This is your last chance!"

And the word ended in a curious hissing resembling the warning of the cobra! Arthur Varney dropped the receiver into place, and sprang toward his bedroom. A quick survey of his features convinced him that his appearance would betray his nervousness. He rang the bell for his valet.

"A quick message, James, I did not sleep well last night, and I look ten years older than I should. Hurry, now, and call me a taxicab, for I have an important call to make. Myrta is ready for her mission. What a turmoil was racking his mind as he entered a taxicab to start on the long ride to the Maynard home! His feelings toward Myrta had been concentrated by the warp and woof of the curious wooing, which had its inception in the pull of the master, to develop into an absorb-

ing passion tugging at his heart strings, demanding a betrayal of his very powers to which he owed his present wealth, and threatening a destruction of life and death. Do you hear?"

"Mother, I hate these occult things worse than you do. But Dr. Alden and I are going to start right now!" she declared. There was a finality in her voice which set aside further objections. Her mother sank nervously into a chair to watch the mad proceeding.

Before beginning, Payson Alden summoned Willis. "Under the circumstances at all must we be disturbed, Miss Maynard and her mother are very busy—so keep any one from entering this room. It is a matter of life and death. Do you hear?"

The tumbler dodged frigidly and left the library, wondering at the surrender of the mother. "New sit in this big chair, Miss Myrta. Relax. Don't think of anything. Let your muscles, your nerves and your mind just drift, and keep watching me. Here, that is a good position and will do you no harm."

Alden had closed the big doors between the library and the drawing room. It was well, for even as he was making the preliminary gestures of the hypnotic suggestion the machine bearing Varney had sped up the driveway, and stopped at the door. "What a knock-out!" Alden exclaimed, as he saw the caller, as Willis met him at the door.

"But, sir," and Willis coughed apologetically. "I'm sorry, but Mrs. Maynard, toasting aside his hat and coat, had excitedly started down the hallway. The butler interposed. "Excuse me, sir," he said, touching the other's shoulder. "The doctor has ordered that she must not be disturbed."

Varney whirled about nervously. "The doctor is she sick?" "No, sir; bearing your pardon, sir, she is in the library. Will you be so kind as to wait in the drawing room?" Varney erupted in aculeance, as he regarded his wits for grasp the mystery.

He sat down for a few minutes, straining his ears to catch any explanatory words from the other room. But there was no sound. He lit a cigarette and endeavored to reason out the meaning of the mystery. "But he could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. "The doctor? The doctor? I wonder if it can be that scandalous, Dr. Alden?"

He found the answer to the mental query as he silently turned toward the big door. Peering through the keyhole he beheld a slight white answer more than this one question and stimulated a dozen more in his mind, which were more disturbing than even this single thought.

For there in the big easy chair sat Mrs. Maynard. Her eyes were closed and the long lashes drooped over the white of her pale cheeks, as the head lay relaxed on the padded chair, back, surrounded by its golden aureole of ringlets.

Dr. Payson Alden, his hands gently cupping and stroking the girl's forehead, was speaking to her in soothing tones, which were inaudible to the eaves-dropper. Myrta understood too well the nature of his strange work, and he continued his speech with tentative reassurance. Myrta's own fate was deeply concerned in this psychic adventure, and yet he hesitated to interrupt until he could master

the secret of the physician's campaign.

The girl had finally sunk into the catatonic state of vacant insensibility, and the doctor drew back to survey the result with an approving satisfaction. "Myrta, myrta, myrta," Mrs. Maynard sat riveted to her chair, with terror, yet watching the proceeding with unconcealable satisfaction.

"Now, do you hear the voices?" asked Alden in a tone distinct enough to be heard by the man in the drawing room. The girl moaned and writhed in some grotesque struggle, although her eyes did not open.

Her hands opened and closed nervously and her head tilted and bobbed, as though she were enduring intense physical pain. Many times her lips moved, but no sound came forth, despite the repeated urgings of the physician.

At last a tremendous spasm of muscular stimulation seemed to bring utterance. "He says—she murmured, in a monotonous, glacial voice, not at all like her own lively tones. "He says—what does he say?"

Alden leaned over her, excitedly. "Let that friend from the other world communicate with me, please, by warning now!" commanded the physician, tensely.

The girl continued her indistinguishable gibberish as Alden strove vainly to understand her. At last he noticed a twitching of the fingers of her right hand. She made a curious spiral motion with her arm, as though writing in the air.

Alden grasped the opportunity at once. He drew the prescription pad from his pocket, and placed pencil in the girl's fingers, which closed about it tautly. "Now, write it!" he commanded. He held the pad beneath her hand, and waited.

Through the keyhole Varney observed the demonstration with growing alarm. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and hurried toward the front door, which he adjusted so that he might re-enter without ringing the bell.

At first there was no result with the pencil, until Alden held Myrta's hand gently, the encircling guidance of his own fingers, to force the pad closer to the point. After several meaningless scribbles at last legible letters appeared. Myrta's mother had drawn near, controlling her tendency to hysteria in the interest of the weird actions.

"The pencil advanced, at first with incomplete letters, and then it spelled: "Y—y—y—Your—Your—Your—"

"Yes—yes—go on!" directed Dr. Alden. The girl's hand had reached the side of the house, from where he could peer into the library window. A cautious glance showed him that Myrta was facing the open door, while the physician and her mother were too engrossed to observe him. Myrta's eyes were still diaphanous, in the spell of the mesmeristic trance.

The pencil slipped from the paper. Again Alden guided it, and new words appeared. "Your—your father!"

Mrs. Maynard started and would have spoken, had not Alden warned her with an irritated glance, that she should not utter a word. "Your father wishes!"

Then came another pause, as Varney peered once more. His black eyes seemed to emit veritable sparks of malevolence, as he moved his own face to the face of the unconscious Myrta.

The message progressed, as Alden dropped his commands in the girl's ear. "Your father wishes! He has a warning you—against the Black—Black Order!"

There was a sudden twitching of Myrta's fingers, as Varney concentrated all the force of his tremendous will power into one supreme effort. Myrta's hand pressed the pencil upon the paper with a force which he could point and her eye-lids fluttered, as she opened her blue orbs in surprise at the expression of her mother and the doctor.

At the same instant, Varney dodged back from his position. "Your father wishes! He has a warning you—against the Black—Black Order!"

There was a sudden twitching of Myrta's fingers, as Varney concentrated all the force of his tremendous will power into one supreme effort. Myrta's hand pressed the pencil upon the paper with a force which he could point and her eye-lids fluttered, as she opened her blue orbs in surprise at the expression of her mother and the doctor.



THE GIRL DREW AWAY FROM ALDEN



MYRTA FELL INTO HIS ARMS

ing passion tugging at his heart strings, demanding a betrayal of his very powers to which he owed his present wealth, and threatening a destruction of life and death. Do you hear?"

"Mother, I hate these occult things worse than you do. But Dr. Alden and I are going to start right now!" she declared. There was a finality in her voice which set aside further objections. Her mother sank nervously into a chair to watch the mad proceeding.

Before beginning, Payson Alden summoned Willis. "Under the circumstances at all must we be disturbed, Miss Maynard and her mother are very busy—so keep any one from entering this room. It is a matter of life and death. Do you hear?"

The tumbler dodged frigidly and left the library, wondering at the surrender of the mother. "New sit in this big chair, Miss Myrta. Relax. Don't think of anything. Let your muscles, your nerves and your mind just drift, and keep watching me. Here, that is a good position and will do you no harm."

Alden had closed the big doors between the library and the drawing room. It was well, for even as he was making the preliminary gestures of the hypnotic suggestion the machine bearing Varney had sped up the driveway, and stopped at the door. "What a knock-out!" Alden exclaimed, as he saw the caller, as Willis met him at the door.

"But, sir," and Willis coughed apologetically. "I'm sorry, but Mrs. Maynard, toasting aside his hat and coat, had excitedly started down the hallway. The butler interposed. "Excuse me, sir," he said, touching the other's shoulder. "The doctor has ordered that she must not be disturbed."

Varney whirled about nervously. "The doctor is she sick?" "No, sir; bearing your pardon, sir, she is in the library. Will you be so kind as to wait in the drawing room?" Varney erupted in aculeance, as he regarded his wits for grasp the mystery.

He sat down for a few minutes, straining his ears to catch any explanatory words from the other room. But there was no sound. He lit a cigarette and endeavored to reason out the meaning of the mystery. "But he could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. "The doctor? The doctor? I wonder if it can be that scandalous, Dr. Alden?"

He found the answer to the mental query as he silently turned toward the big door. Peering through the keyhole he beheld a slight white answer more than this one question and stimulated a dozen more in his mind, which were more disturbing than even this single thought.

For there in the big easy chair sat Mrs. Maynard. Her eyes were closed and the long lashes drooped over the white of her pale cheeks, as the head lay relaxed on the padded chair, back, surrounded by its golden aureole of ringlets.

er the secret of the physician's campaign.

The girl had finally sunk into the catatonic state of vacant insensibility, and the doctor drew back to survey the result with an approving satisfaction. "Myrta, myrta, myrta," Mrs. Maynard sat riveted to her chair, with terror, yet watching the proceeding with unconcealable satisfaction.

"Now, do you hear the voices?" asked Alden in a tone distinct enough to be heard by the man in the drawing room. The girl moaned and writhed in some grotesque struggle, although her eyes did not open.

Her hands opened and closed nervously and her head tilted and bobbed, as though she were enduring intense physical pain. Many times her lips moved, but no sound came forth, despite the repeated urgings of the physician.

At last a tremendous spasm of muscular stimulation seemed to bring utterance. "He says—she murmured, in a monotonous, glacial voice, not at all like her own lively tones. "He says—what does he say?"

Alden leaned over her, excitedly. "Let that friend from the other world communicate with me, please, by warning now!" commanded the physician, tensely.

The girl continued her indistinguishable gibberish as Alden strove vainly to understand her. At last he noticed a twitching of the fingers of her right hand. She made a curious spiral motion with her arm, as though writing in the air.

Alden grasped the opportunity at once. He drew the prescription pad from his pocket, and placed pencil in the girl's fingers, which closed about it tautly. "Now, write it!" he commanded. He held the pad beneath her hand, and waited.

Through the keyhole Varney observed the demonstration with growing alarm. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and hurried toward the front door, which he adjusted so that he might re-enter without ringing the bell.

At first there was no result with the pencil, until Alden held Myrta's hand gently, the encircling guidance of his own fingers, to force the pad closer to the point. After several meaningless scribbles at last legible letters appeared. Myrta's mother had drawn near, controlling her tendency to hysteria in the interest of the weird actions.

"The pencil advanced, at first with incomplete letters, and then it spelled: "Y—y—y—Your—Your—Your—"

"Yes—yes—go on!" directed Dr. Alden. The girl's hand had reached the side of the house, from where he could peer into the library window. A cautious glance showed him that Myrta was facing the open door, while the physician and her mother were too engrossed to observe him. Myrta's eyes were still diaphanous, in the spell of the mesmeristic trance.

The pencil slipped from the paper. Again Alden guided it, and new words appeared. "Your—your father!"

Mrs. Maynard started and would have spoken, had not Alden warned her with an irritated glance, that she should not utter a word. "Your father wishes!"

Then came another pause, as Varney peered once more. His black eyes seemed to emit veritable sparks of malevolence, as he moved his own face to the face of the unconscious Myrta.

The message progressed, as Alden dropped his commands in the girl's ear. "Your father wishes! He has a warning you—against the Black—Black Order!"

There was a sudden twitching of Myrta's fingers, as Varney concentrated all the force of his tremendous will power into one supreme effort. Myrta's hand pressed the pencil upon the paper with a force which he could point and her eye-lids fluttered, as she opened her blue orbs in surprise at the expression of her mother and the doctor.

At the same instant, Varney dodged back from his position. "Your father wishes! He has a warning you—against the Black—Black Order!"

There was a sudden twitching of Myrta's fingers, as Varney concentrated all the force of his tremendous will power into one supreme effort. Myrta's hand pressed the pencil upon the paper with a force which he could point and her eye-lids fluttered, as she opened her blue orbs in surprise at the expression of her mother and the doctor.

physiognomy of the visitor, without vouchsafing any comment. Varney restrained, to Alden's surprise, from any questions addressed to the physician.

"At last Varney ventured to speak. "You shouldn't allow it, Mrs. Maynard. I've known of people going insane from meddling with this spirit business. It is very silly and dangerous."

"He was holding the paper in his hand, and he smiled incredulously at the words. "I think you have been playing a little joke on yourself, Myrta. Take my advice and let it all alone after this. I'm surprised at a physician and a man of science, like Dr. Alden, wasting time with such childish stuff. Thing what I am surprised at is that you should be so silly as to believe in the occult."

Alden answered his irony with an amiable shrug of the shoulders. Myrta, quick to sense the possibility of bitter discussion, walked toward the drawing room. "We must have some tea," she said. She rang the bell, and Lisa, her maid, stopped in the hallway, by the door.

"Yes, Miss Myrta. I'll come right in as soon as I throw out this old plan." Myrta looked at the pot which the girl held in her hand. "Oh," she said regretfully. "My beautiful afternoon tea has been withering away. I loved it, and I shall miss it. I'm surprised at a physician and a man of science, like Dr. Alden, wasting time with such childish stuff. Thing what I am surprised at is that you should be so silly as to believe in the occult."

"Well, why worry—there are hundreds of doctors in the city, and there's no reason why you should not have another," said Varney. Then suddenly looking at his watch, he added: "But, gracious, it's time I was off. I have an appointment at my club, and must be getting down there. I rushed over to see if I could help you in any way. But, I see nothing to be done. You may as well give up that stupid writing matter. Just avoid it, my dear girl. I'll try to see you later."