

# The HOUSE in the

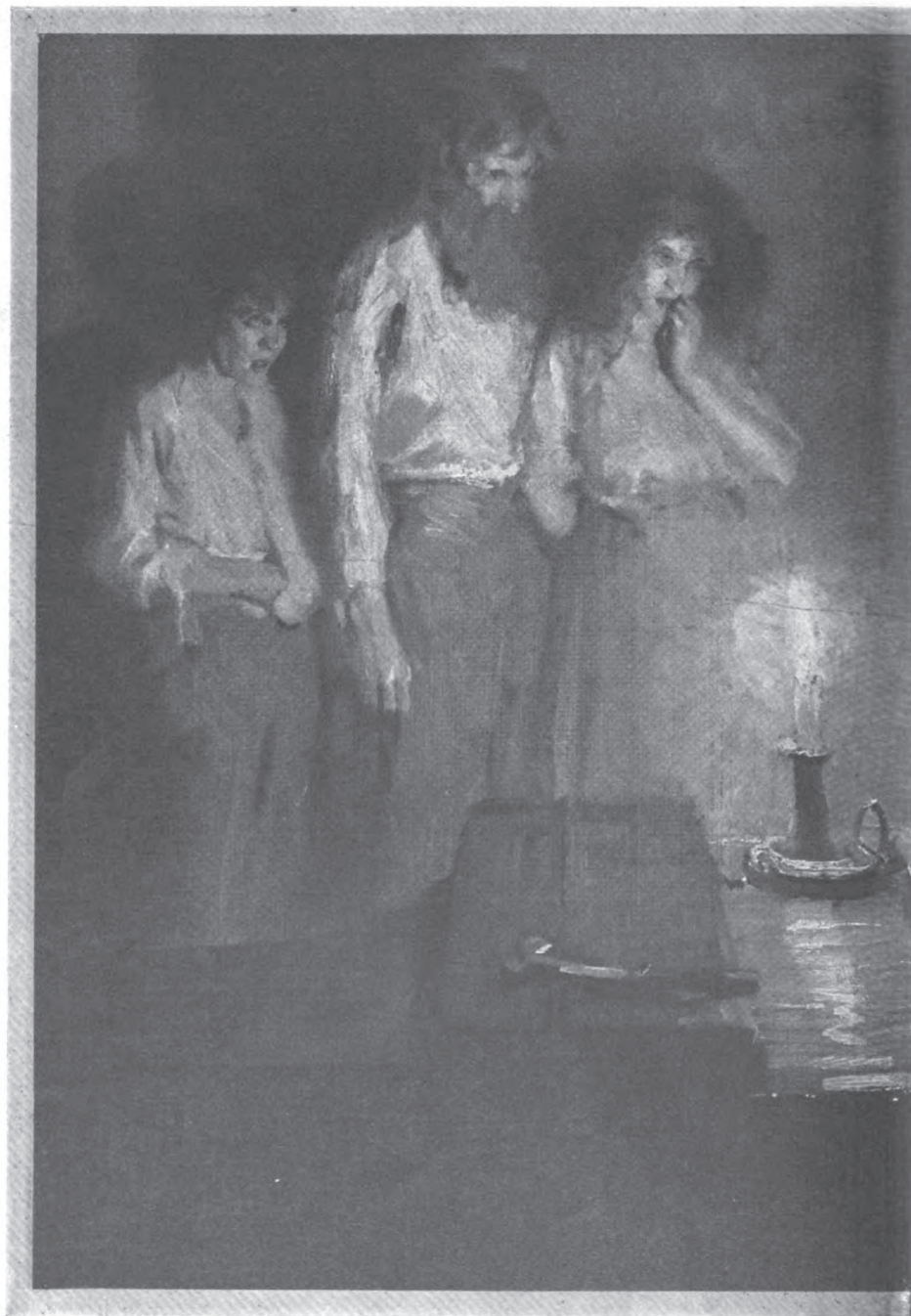
ONE of the many curious human characteristics is an apparent inability to believe that anything told in the form of a story can be mere simple fact and not more or less wild romancing. When I wrote, as literally as possible, my own childish recollections, under the title of "The One I Knew the Best of All," there came to me from my readers the persistent question, "Is it true?" Again when I recorded the details of my intimate friendship with "My Robin," I received one letter after another containing the question, "Was it a real robin?" When I began the *Romantick Lady* sketches, questions came thick and fast. "Did you collect the pennies on the steamer and were you held up in the Mersey through the 'Christmas in a Fog'?" "Can that delightful attic in the House on Long Island, actually have existed?" It is apparently no use replying. "I did." "I was." "Yes, as real as any attic you may have in your modern house today." The reason for my recording these incidents is that they are real. That is their point—and mine. There is no other. They are things which happened.

The present episode, "The House in the Dismal Swamp," was related to me by my brother half a lifetime ago. He told the story again to a party of friends who were spending the week-end at my house on Long Island

IN the house which looks out on the Bay of Enchanted After-glooms this story was told after dinner one evening to a week-end party of four. It was the brother of the *Romantick Lady* who related it, because it happened to be a weird adventure of his own.

He was a nice, adorably amiable, more than middle-aged Englishman who had come to America in his teens. He believed himself to be entirely Americanized, but a certain youthful ingenuousness of healthy, frank blue eyes, a tremendous enjoyment of things in general, and a deprecatory, half-embarrassed chuckle he was given to rather reminded one of an English school-boy of mid-Victorian type. Everybody liked him immensely, because it was quite impossible to help it.

"It was the queerest thing that ever happened to me," he said slowly, looking as if memory had suddenly laid hands on



After I'd played a few bars the door opened, and three creatures came shuffling door and listened. I can still hear those jangling wires wailing out in the hollow-

By Frances Hodgson Burnett

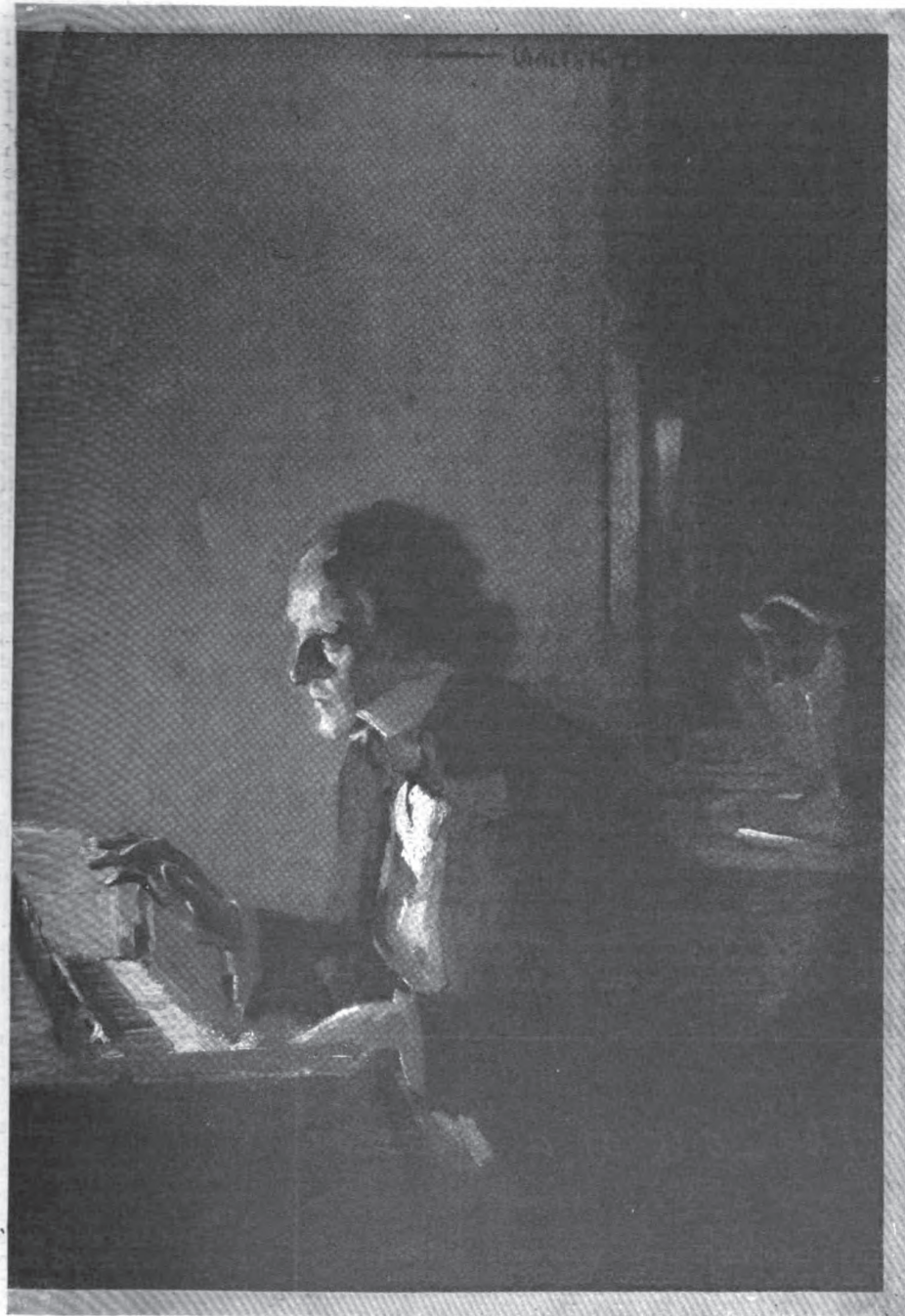
him and was dragging him rather far away. "I'm hanged if it wasn't about the queerest thing I ever heard of happening to any one!"

"It happened half a lifetime ago," the *Romantick Lady* explained. "It must be nearly fifteen years since he first told it to me. It's the kind of thing one treasures. Certain scenes in it have a way of rising before me as if they were weird moving pictures." She turned to her brother with

a delighted little reminiscent shudder. "The brimming, moveless, black water, Jem," she said, "the desolateness of the swamp—the last look of the house—the woman with the wild black hair staring down at you from the falling porch—the carvings—the amazing silver!"

One of her guests broke in. "Here's richness!" he said. "Moveless, black swamp water—lost houses—wild-haired women looking down from falling porches!"

# DISMAL SWAMP



in who might have been ghosts themselves. And there they hung about near the  
ness of that big, empty room yet—and the three swamp ghosts standing listening

*Illustrated by Walter Biggs*

"Carvings! Amazing silver! She's trying to excite us," said another. "She has excited me. Mr. Harwold, you must tell us."

"Well, you see," he answered with his half-shy chuckle, "the queerness of it was that there is no explaining it. I've been trying to explain it myself ever since, but there is no explaining it—in any way I could ever get at."

"Let us try to get at it," said the woman

nearest to him. "Tell us the story, and we will all make guesses at the answer."

So he told it, and this was it.

Among other things the brother of the Romantick Lady was a musician in the sense of having a love for music which was the central pivot of his being. He composed and improvised upon the piano, not as an accomplishment, but as in the performance of a simple natural function. It was merely part of his daily existence

and had been since his boyhood. He had in addition an extraordinary genius for mending, disciplining, and restoring any musical instrument whatever which had got out of temper or order. The most cantankerous and hopelessly injured of them could not resist him. He seemed in secret to feel toward them as if they were living creatures with temperaments and emotions, and they responded to his sympathetic and reflective studies of their ailments as though the understanding between them was mutual and they did not mind being taken to pieces and put together again by such comprehending and affectionate friendliness. In his youth he had settled in a picturesque old Southern seaport town, and as years passed, his special gift not only became known in his own neighborhood, but also crossed bays and mountains and rivers and wandered into other small towns and villages at gradually increasing distance. Sharing what his sister calls her "gypsy and vagabond" tendencies, the most interesting parts of his life became in time his wanderings far afield on the trail of some incapacitated church organ, or long-treasured piano, or ancient harp, or cymbal, pipe, or dulcimer. He did not care which it was, so that it wanted him. The more remote his wanderings, the more he enjoyed them, and he made friends in every simple place he went to. He played sweet-temperedly for every one on organ, antique piano, and cracked melodeon. He took roundabout journeys for sheer pleasure in them, and having the nature which in itself gives birth to welcome, he enjoyed himself greatly.

"He doesn't know that he is like a sort of wandering minstrel of ancient days," the Romantick Lady said of him. "You know the story-book minstrel who used to carry his 'wild harp' with him and play and tell stories to the feasters in the banquet hall when they wanted cheering up. If there were castles in the queer places Jem goes to, the drawbridges would be let down for him, and the feasters would love him. As it is, he sits down beamingly to play on wheezing parlor organs and pianos which rattle like tin pans—if he finds nothing better. He does it to please people, and he is just as pleased himself as his hearers are."

We all knew something of this, so it was easy to see how he wandered into the

mysterious story for which there was no explanation and which he related as ingeniously and with as much simplicity of wholly unliterary and boyish phrasing as if he had been sixteen instead of nearing sixty. That was the great charm of the telling—as also was the evident fact that he was as interested as his audience.

"I don't believe a hundredth part of America knows or even guesses what lots of queer old places and things and people are hidden away in corners of their own country—though they're not exactly *hidden*; they just stayed where they belonged, and everything else went in another direction. I think there are more of them in the South, perhaps, than there are in other places. But there are not nearly so many in the South as there used to be. I used to come upon them often at first, and they were not only 'before the war' houses and things and people, but before the Revolution—and before that. I was always wishing my sister was with me. She's romantic, you know."

"He's romantic himself," put in the Romantick Lady, "but he doesn't know he is. He sees as many stories as I do, but he doesn't happen to write them for a living."

"Well, as to seeing," he answered, "who could help it? And yet somehow most people didn't seem to notice them or talk about them. Think of the Lost Colony! Lots of people don't even seem to have heard of it, or if they have heard, haven't thought it worth remembering. And I'm hanged if that wasn't romance and mystery enough."

"A story with Sir Walter Raleigh for its hero one might suppose would have a certain arresting interest," said the Romantick Lady. "And yet— Do you remember it, Janet?" to a guest.

"If I learned about it in school, I have forgotten," was the guest's answer.

"I believe I never heard of it at all until Jem told me his story," the Romantick Lady said. "But then I am a yawning and bottomless abyss of ignorance."

"One hundred and twenty men, women, and children that chap White left on Roanoke Island in 1587—Sir Walter Raleigh's Colony they called them, because he sent them out from England," said Harwold. "He had to leave them to go back for supplies. The row that ended with the defeat of the Armada kept him away until 1590. And when he came back and landed, the Colony had disappeared! Not a soul was left on the island, and no human being of the lot was ever seen or heard of again. And there was no trace or clue left behind. It's remained the Lost Colony from that day to this."

"If we don't stop at this point, we shall follow the Lost Colony and forget the House in the Dismal Swamp," was the Romantick Lady's warn-

ing. "I know that Lost Colony of old. One can't resist it."

"The swamp wasn't a hundred miles from the island, and that reminded me of it," Harwold went on. "There was a little town called Lisleport I used to go to sometimes—one of those little Southern places with a courthouse and a church, and some houses and stores, and lots of trees. It was a place I got fond of, and I was always glad when something called me there. Near it there was a mysterious little river that ran through the swamp, and to me it was an unearthly little stream. It didn't look or act like a real river, and in fact, there was an idea that it wasn't a river at all, but a fissure in the earth made by volcanic action and filled up from the bottom by water that oozed out of the swamp. It looked like it. It was narrow, and the black water brimmed level with the flat banks. The trees and bushes reflected themselves in it as if they were painted there. The queerest thing about it was that it seemed to have no current. Scarlet and yellow leaves that dropped down on it from the branches in the autumn would lie on it without seeming to move.

"About once a week, during certain months, a tiny steam launch pushed its way between the cypress trees and cane-brake and wound in and out of the crooks and curves from one end of the swamp to the other. It took it nearly a whole day to do it, and I often used to wonder what would happen to the few passengers if it sprang a leak and sank in midstream. If a man could swim a few strokes and could drag himself up among the canes, he would find himself in a swamp without path or foothold he could be sure of. Any step might land him neck-deep in a quagmire that would suck him down. There would be no chance of striking out and trying to get anywhere if you didn't know the ground. There wasn't anywhere to get to, and there wasn't any chance of finding anything to eat. I'm fond of ad-

ventures, but I shouldn't have liked to try that one.

"But once in a while I liked to make that queer day's journey in the little launch. It was like living in a weird dream—stealing along that narrow, black, still waterway with the tall canes and bushes closing in on you as you went and shutting out the way ahead where there was a bend—and the stream bent like a snake. By the way, the launch never went through after warmish weather began, because the snakes had a way of crawling up to sun themselves on the branches that hung over the water and dropped down when they saw fit. That little habit, combined with clouds of mosquitoes and blood-drawing yellow flies, closed the river during the summer months. But when I was going to my little town on business, I always chose my time and went through the swamp by the launch. There was nothing on earth like that day's crawling along and winding in and out between the flat banks with the jungle of swamp on each side and the big, dead, skeleton cypresses standing up out of the black water at their feet with their writhing white arms like angry ghosts warning you to keep off. There was one huge one standing on the point of a bend of the river, that I always remember, because the first time I saw it the gaunt, bare whiteness of its stripped trunk and branches gave me a start—and on the top of it there was sitting a big, solemn eagle. It never moved—the eagle—but just sat there and disdained us as we sneaked by on the black water below its tree."

"That little, narrow, crawling, winding, black river is a sure way to a story," remarked the Romantick Lady.

"That's why I'm trying to describe it," said Harwold, "but I'm no good at description."

"We are satisfied," a listener encouraged him. "I can see the yellow leaves lying still on the black water."

"One spring I went early to Lisleport," the friendly Jem went on. "I had some business up the country and made the place my headquarters. I could get a horse there and ride where there were no railroads. One of my friends was a man who had the chief store. He was a nice old chap, and he knew the country and liked to tell me old stories about it because he knew I liked to hear them. He had lots of theories about the Lost Colony and about certain curious people he was certain were descendants of the women carried away by Indians who had fallen on the settlement and massacred the men. We used to sit on his store porch at night, and tilt back our chairs, and smoke and talk while the tree-frogs sang away, and night birds struck in with queer cries now and then, and the (Continued on page 166)

## The Song of a Lass

By Ruth Sawyer

'Tis Spring o' the Year—the whole world's a-bloom;  
There's a carpet of green from Granny Earth's loom.  
The curlew calls far—the rooks circle high—  
And the wisp of a moon hangs low in the sky.  
Oh, the fair things I see and the rare songs I hear!  
For Love wakes my heart at the Spring o' the Year.

'T is the Full o' the Year—the roses are blown;  
The lambs are full fleeced and the fledglings are flown.  
The throstle's note lingers, the summer winds croon,  
And kisses hang ripe at the full of the moon.  
Oh, there's little I'm wanting—there's little I fear  
For my heart is as full as the full of the year.

'T is the Dole o' the Year—there's naught left of her giving;  
Earth is bare of her yield, Life is drained of her living.  
The turf smoke blows east, and the turf smoke blows west  
But the breath of my longing knows little of rest.  
A moment I catch it—the better to hear  
The song that was mine at the Spring o' the Year.



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## The House in the Dismal Swamp

(Continued from page 18)

fireflies flickered in and out. I tell you I used to enjoy it. When I went into his store, that day, we had a comfortable chat for a while, as usual, and then he said:

"Say, I most forgot something I had to tell you. A queer fellow came in here a few days ago—one of a family that lives way back in the swamp—and he left a message for you. I reckon it was meant for a message, though he's hard to understand. He's got no palate to his mouth, and he don't look quite bright anyhow. Hardly ever speaks at all when he comes in—mostly makes signs—and he doesn't come to town more than about once a year. What I made out was that they've got some sort of curis old pi-anner out at his place, and he's somehow heard about you and wants you to go and make it play."

"Well, you know, that was the kind of thing to stir me up."

"Of course it would!" cried the Romantick Lady. "The kind of thing with a story sneaking in the background of it. The piano was like one of those signs with hands pointing and 'This Way to the Story' written underneath."

"THERE was a story fast enough, but there was neither beginning nor end to it, I've warned you," Harwold answered. "What I said was: 'I say! that's interesting! An old piano hidden in the Dismal Swamp. Where did it come from? Who are the people?' He didn't know. Nobody knew. Nobody had seen any one but the man without a palate, but there was a sort of rumor of there being a very old house far back in the swamp, but my friend had never met any one who had seen it and didn't know the foundation for the belief that there was 'more'n one of 'em in fam'ly.' He explained it this way:

"If a body could stand it to live like the dead, there's sort of islands of solid ground here and there, and the soil's as rich as grease. You could raise anything. They say there's a few nigger and Indian cabins hid away there, and the niggers and Indians know where the paths are and can find their way in and out. Big Black Joe squats on a bit of land back there, folks tell you. There's a sort of road through one part, if you can find it, but you have to canoe in through narrow, twisting creeks, and it's mighty easy to get lost."

"Upon hearing which inspiring report, he girded up his oins and issued lightly forth in search of adventure," the Romantick Lady remarked with glee.

"Adventure," said Mr. Jem Harwold with his nice, rather sheepish chuckle—"just going after a thing to see how it will turn out—is something you get in the habit of doing—if you like it. I like it. And that piano in the heart of the Dismal Swamp—with no clue but a half-witted chap without a palate—really just got into my blood. I couldn't have left it alone, because it wouldn't leave me alone. If I hadn't had a shot at it—well, it would have waked me up in the night for the rest of my life."

"The truth is that a disabled piano all alone and in the heart of the Dismal Swamp called to him as a creature in pain might. Sheer humanity demanded that he should go and ease its sufferings," the Romantick Lady put in.

Jem Harwold did not deny the impeachment, but good-temperedly grinned. "I went about asking questions," he went on, "and the more I asked, the more I didn't find out. Some of the people had seen the fellow without a palate and said he was a sort of half-idiot. As he scarcely ever spoke, and half he said was too indistinct to be understood, it was hard to find out where the rumor of the house had come from. One chap had even heard that it was a

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big house, but of course that sounded like a yarn, and he didn't know who had told it—perhaps one of the negro or Indian squatters. All I could get at was that I should have to go up the river until I reached a creek that branched off into the swamp, where I should find a negro cabin. There I could get a canoe and a boy to bring it back to its owner when I had done with it. After that I should have to follow the creeks until I found a place where I could land, and there I must follow a sort of path and trust to luck. I tell you the directions were not much to rely on. The impression seemed to be that if I walked far enough, I would find the house somewhere—if it existed—and that beyond it, if I walked far enough again, I should get out of the swamp and into open country.

"I wouldn't start out to do it myself," my friend at the store said. "It wouldn't be no pleasure excursion to me. But I reckon you're different."

"The swamp launch was going through the next day, and it took me with it as far as the entrance to the creek where the negro cabin was. I got some information about the creek from the man who ran the launch. He said there were a lot of them running through the swamp and they were tough propositions. They wound in and out and twisted back on themselves, and sometimes you got into places where they narrowed down and closed in on you, and you had to back your canoe out and try to find the right branch, and whether you found it or not, and how long you wandered around, and how often you lost your way were all a matter of luck."

"And the more it was a matter of luck, the more he liked the thought of it," said the Romantick Lady.

"Not knowing a hanged thing about where you were going or how you were going to get there made it more of an adventure," admitted Harwold. "I never liked the still blackness of the little river more than I did that morning. It was spring, and there was a sort of haze of green and yellow creeping over the things growing in the swamp—and the sun and the silence almost put you to sleep."

"When we got to the entrance of the creek, I remembered I'd noticed it before and wondered how on earth any one lived there. There was an acre or so of black, rich land with a sort of hut on it, and the negro owner was planting something in his truck garden. He told me, when we began to talk together, that he had made his canoe himself, so that he could get to town when he wanted to do trading. He let me hire it and sent his ragged, twelve-year-old boy with me.

"Whar's you want ter go?" he asked. "There's an old house somewhere back in the swamp where a man called Morency lives—Deevo Morency," I told him.

"You gwine thar?" he said. "Never heard of any one gwine thar. They's all deaf an' dumb an' crazy, folks says—an' they's Portugee or French or Croatan anyhow." But he let me have the canoe, and I started on my way into the swamp."

JEM paused and chuckled, and thoughtfully rubbed the back of his head—which was one of his unconscious tricks also and as characteristic as the chuckle.

"I'll be hanged if I wouldn't like to do it all over again," he said. "It's more than thirty-five years ago, and I always meant to go back, but somehow I never found time. There's such a deuced lot of things to do. I canoed and wound round and round through those narrow, black creeks for hours. The boy wasn't any particular help. I'd thought he might be.

"Me an' paw never goes far, an' we never goes this way," he said.

"So we canoed up creeks we couldn't get out of, and got tangled up in bushes that hung over the water, and you felt as if you were wandering about in a dream that was made up of spring heat and dampness and that yellowish green of young growth just starting out on trees and bushes. When you are shut

## How We Saved \$600 In Six Months

(By Mrs. E. C. B.)

When I came home from the hospital last fall, we were \$600 in debt. John had given a note to our local bank for that amount. His salary was \$2600 a year, and we had never been able to save. Prices kept going higher and higher, so we were forced to "cut corners" to make our income buy food, shelter and clothes.

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John thought by giving me \$25 instead of \$30 every week, cutting his personal expenses and eliminating all non-essentials, we might manage to save \$475 in a year. So I was to save the other \$125 from my house money. And I didn't believe I could do it!

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Well, night before last we opened the bank and counted the money—and there in cash before our eyes was \$447.25—saved from my house money in just six months!

John was fairly stunned! Then he told me HE had saved \$155! So we paid off the note and opened a little savings account at the bank. What is more, we are never going back to the old, extravagant way we used to live.

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## SUMMER CAMPS

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ments of 67 summer camps, located in various parts  
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Director, the School Department  
Good Housekeeping, 119 W. 40th St., N. Y. City

## The House in the Dismal Swamp

in by it and the sun shines, it seems to be part of the light. The snakes were waking up, and every now and then you'd hear a *flop*, and it would be a moccasin or a rat dropping into the water to swim somewhere. The warm, damp scent of things was queer. It wasn't like anything else. It took so many kinds of leaves and roots and canes and grass tussocks, dead and alive, to make it.

"I thought more than once that I should have to give it up and try to get back, but after an hour or so I saw sticking up out of water the ruins of what had once been a sort of boat landing. Nothing was left of it but a few crazy old posts and a plank or two, but you could climb from them on to the shore, which began to be high there and looked as if it must be the place where you might strike into the road. When I stopped the canoe and climbed up, I found the road was there—such as it was. It was scarcely more than a path, but it looked solid, though it would like a snake through the swamp just as the creeks did, and things had grown across it in places so that you saw you'd have to push your way through—perhaps cut it through here and there. Anyway I knew it must be the road that would lead me to the house—if I walked far enough, and didn't lose myself on the way, and wasn't snake-bitten or jumped on by a wildcat, and had sense enough not to stray off into a quagmire that looked solid on top.

"I'M a pretty good walker, and I'd made up my mind to walk far enough, so I paid the boy and sent him back with the canoe and as many reminders about the turns he had to take as I thought he could remember. Then I set out. The next hour or so was like one of those stories you tell to children when you say, 'He walked, and he walked, and he walked, and he walked,' to increase the suspense and the distance to the place where some one is going. It was like that. I walked, and I walked, between trees and bushes and tall canes, and through them, and round them, and under them, and with the swamp on each side of me, though sometimes it was hidden by the undergrowth. And there was the greenish-yellow color everywhere, and the queer light, and the queer scent of things beginning to grow.

"I felt as if I were going deeper and deeper into the dream as I went on. Precious few people had ever passed over that road. I got to wondering how it had been made—who had blazed the trail first and why he'd done it—whether it had been Indians—or the people who had built the house. I got keener and keener and keener to see what the house was like, because just the idea of a house being in such a place suggested all sorts of things. One of the chief things I'd noticed, when I was trying to get information about it, was that though no one knew anything more than vague rumor had drifted to them, no one spoke of it as a 'hut' or a 'cabin'; they always spoke of it as a 'house.' And a house in the depths of the Dismal Swamp must have got there in some jolly interesting way. One of the things I thought of as I walked along was that perhaps it might have been a sort of pirates' hiding-place in the good old days when pirates were thick in the seas and used to run in to quiet places along the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas. That idea rather took my fancy. I was particularly interested in pirates when I was a boy, and any story-teller in Lisleport could tell you yarns about the celebrated Blackbeard and his lot, and the governor of Virginia who was suspected of being in cahoots with them and of giving them chances to hide themselves and their booty in safe places. A house in the heart of the Dismal Swamp with apparently no way to it would have been a first-rate place for carousing and hiding treasure. They needn't have hid the treasure in the house. They could have dug holes all

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Page 6 contains an index to advertisements.

## The House in the Dismal Swamp

over the swamp and buried things and marked the places."

"Chests of doubloons and moldores and pieces of eight," softly hinted the Romantick Lady. "And ropes of pearls and collars of rubies torn off ladies' necks before their ships were scuttled. Go on, Jem."

"Oh, well!" Jem admitted. "All sorts of things might have happened—if you choose to take up the pirate idea. It gives you lots of scope. It gave me plenty as I tramped along, and it was the kind of thing that fitted in with that queer feeling of being in a dream. I had a pretty good time with myself before I came out at the place where the house stood."

Four voices exclaimed simultaneously: "What was it like?"

**JEM HARWOLD** chuckled a little and rubbed the back of his head with an enjoyably reminiscent air. "This was what it was like," he said. "It stood on solid ground—perhaps several acres of field—on a sort of rise from the swamp. And it was a good, big, brick house with a big, wooden, pillared, double-decked portico. And I'll be hanged if the double-decker hadn't sagged forward till it had broken loose from the front of the house and the upper deck hung about three feet away from the wall it belonged to."

"How could it hang loose without falling?" was asked.

"I don't pretend to know," answered Harwold with resigned cheerfulness. "This is where a fellow might say, 'You may search me.' I'm not explaining anything. I'm only trying to describe some deucedly curious facts as I saw them. Why the whole thing didn't fall, I couldn't see. It just sagged and hung away from the house about three feet. But if it fell the next day after I'd left the place, it held firm while I stood there staring up at it. I just stood and stared."

He paused and looked round his group of listeners. "I stared most because there was a woman standing on the upper deck staring down at me."


"He springs things on you like that," said one of the two men. "He expects us to applaud."

"They sprang on me," said Jem Harwold. "There she stood staring down. She was youngish and dark and had a sort of wild, vacant look on her face, and a big mop of black hair stuck out round her head. She was a queer sight. I don't know whether she was afraid of me—she looked as if she might be—but she said nothing, and when I spoke to her, she didn't answer, but just went on staring. It struck me that she didn't understand me. I tried to explain that I wanted to speak to a man named Morency if he lived there. I spoke loudly and slowly, and I was just beginning to shout when a man came from round the house and I caught sight of him."

"Then my troubles began again. He was the man without a palate, and in addition to the fact that you could scarcely understand what he was trying to say he had the same vacant look the woman had. He wasn't quite an imbecile perhaps, but he was not all there. I tried to explain to him that I had come to look at his piano because I'd been told he wanted it looked over. I suppose he understood part of what I said anyway, because he made some curious sounds and led me to the house. He led me up on the entrance floor of the portico, and I could see that it was so old that both floors and pillars were rotten enough to be jolly unsafe. The door was a wide one and with broken glasswork at the sides and top. It had been a fine door in its day, but it was going to pieces like the rest of the woodwork."

"But it was when he pushed the door open and I saw the inside of the place that I got a start. There was a wide hall that went through the middle of the house, and the walls

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# Old English BRIGHTENER

of it looked as if they were made of big squares of something like stone. What it really was I couldn't be sure—but either it was stone or some sort of composition that looked like it. And as I was still holding on to the pirate idea, I was not worrying myself as to where they got it from. They didn't get it out of the swamp. There was a fine, wide staircase, and the wood it was made of hadn't come out of the swamp either. It looked like oak black with age. I couldn't help staring about me, but the man who had brought me in didn't seem to notice. He didn't look as if he had mind enough to suggest to him that the place was unusual. And to saying anything, well, I suppose he knew people couldn't understand half he tried to say so he'd pretty well given up taking the trouble.

"He just went ahead of me and pushed open a door. There were two or three doors on either side of the hall. He walked into the room before me, and when we got inside, he said something I couldn't translate, and made a sign toward the end of it. He was pointing out the piano."

"What kind of furniture was there in the room?" some one asked eagerly.

"Not a stick except the piano and a rough wooden chair or so. But just for a minute or so I could scarcely look at the piano because I was looking at the walls. Around the top and down the corners and round the windows there was a sort of broad border of splendidly carved wood so dark that it looked black. I never saw anything so astonishing in my life. The walls themselves were stained and moldy and dirty, but the carving—all heavily cut leaves and fruits and scrolls—was something you'd expect to see in an old castle somewhere, or a museum. But there it was, and when I said something to the man about it—by way of leading the way to natural questions—he only stared and mumbled grudgingly, as if he didn't see anything in it and didn't want me to waste time I'd come to spend on the piano."

"Who wanted to play on the piano? Was he a mute, inglorious Chopin himself?" was interjected.

"Search me, again!" chuckled Jem. "That was part of the mystery. How they knew the piano ever had been played on—whether they thought it would play itself if I could set it going—what weird idea set them going themselves—those things are among the questions without answer.

"I couldn't stand and look at the carvings long, so I went to the end of the room where the piano stood. It must have been one of the earliest ever made. It was small and had slender legs and was inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Its mechanism belonged to the eighteenth century—about 1750, I should say.

"ALL that was left of the maker's name suggested that it was French. The keyboard was very short, and most of the notes were dumb. A few of them jangled and squeaked like little ghosts crying out. I knew that the most I could do would be to add a few more squeaks and jangles, but I got rather excited when I began looking into it, and I was keen to find out if I could do anything at all. I knew it was no use explaining to the fellow without a palate—I just sat down on one of the wooden chairs and began to work on the thing. Morency looked at me a few minutes in a lack-lustre way and then turned round and went out of the room.

"I got at my tools and went at it. I never had a more interesting time in my life than I had that afternoon, shut up in that musty room, looking into the inside of that old piano. I forgot everything else, and when I managed to get a new jangle or a new squeak or groan. I was all up in the air. It was like trying to bring something alive. It had been shut up there alone so long! I began to feel as if it was like some fine lady who had been kept prisoner until she had lost the power to speak. Lord knows who had played on her first, and Lord knows who had played on her last."

"Perhaps the pirates had brought a lady



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## The House in the Dismal Swamp

prisoner and her piano with her and kept them both there until they died.” The Romantick Lady shuddered a little.

“It would have been a good place for prisoners,” owned Jem. “Hideously good. No getting away from there. Well, I worked until the light was going, and as I hadn’t finished, I thought I’d see if I could get Morency to let me have a candle. And it was when I got up that I saw the queerest thing of all.”

“What was it?” four voices spoke at once.

“I’d been so interested in the piano that I hadn’t looked at what was behind me, and I saw it only when I turned round. Between the two windows at the piano end of the room a long mirror was fitted into the wall. You know the kind of thing with a sort of table in the middle of it. You couldn’t see what it had been made of, but you could see it had twists and scrolls and ornaments on the frame and legs, and you guessed it had been gilded. On the table was the thing that gave me start number three. It was a massive metal tray or salver with a tall pitcher and two tall goblets on it. And they were made of metal, too, and black and tarnished as it was, I could tell at the first glance that nothing had ever been made—in such superb shapes—in any other metal than solid silver.”

“Here comes the silver!” a thrilled voice announced.

“**SILVER!**” said Jem “You bet it was silver! I forgot about the candle and picked the things up piece by piece and carried them to the window to look at them. They were tarnished to blackness, but they were covered with the most exquisite repoussée work—exquisite—big pitcher and goblets and salver and all. I turned the pieces over and over and rubbed bits of them clean enough to examine some of the work. It was like the carving. It ought to have been in a museum. It made you feel that once on a time the whole house might have been full of furniture that matched it. And you wondered where it had all come from, and where it had all gone, until your head whirled. I was looking at one of the tall goblets when the door opened and Morency came in. He brought a lighted candle with him, and I couldn’t help speaking to him.

“There’s some fine work here,” I said. ‘It’s wonderful.’

“But he only glanced toward me as he set the candle on the piano, and said something I could only about half make out. He seemed quite indifferent. What I translated his queer sounds into was something like this:

“Always been here. Here ’tore I was born. Old country.’

“But he evidently felt no interest, and he went out of the room again. I was more excited than ever, when I went back to the old piano. I’m not like my sister. I can’t write things into stories. They just go whirling round in my head. They whirled fast enough then. The feeling of living in a dream that I had as I wound through the swamp became a feeling like living in a delirium. Think of it! That house hidden away in that place—that hall—that wood-carving—that silver—and not a creature to ask a question of—no way of finding out!

“I felt as if anything might happen before I had finished my work. I did finish it as far as was possible. I made all the keys sound more or less—in their cracked, jangling way—though they rattled like bones. When I’d done all I could, I began to improvise a ghostly sort of tune on the ghostly thing. After I’d played a few bars, the door opened, and three creatures came shuffling in who might have been ghosts themselves. One was the man without a palate, the other was the woman with the wild face and the mop of black hair, and the other was a younger fellow who was plainly an idiot. I’ve never been quite sure of Morency and the wild woman, queer as



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(Advertisement)

**The House in the Dismal Swamp**

they looked, but there was no mistaking the shambling, shifting young chap. He wasn't half-witted—he had no wits at all. You didn't like to look at him. And there they hung about near the door and listened. And I went on playing the weird thing I made up as I went on. And they stared and listened. And I'm hanged if one of them said a word. Talk about dreams! I can hear those jangling wires wailing out in the hollowness of that big, empty room yet—and see the yellow flicker of the one candle, and the three swamp ghosts standing listening. I don't know whether they liked it or not. They made no sign of pleasure or even interest. They weren't an inspiring audience. They just hung about the door and stared. I remembered what the owner of the canoe had said about their being 'deef an' dumb, an' French or Portugee or Croatans anyhow.' Perhaps they had so little to talk about that speech seemed unnecessary. If a man has no palate, I suppose it's an exertion.

"After I had stopped playing, I was taken into a room across the hall and given some supper. The room was a good-sized one, but there was no carving on the walls. We sat at a rough wooden table, and the first thing I saw, when I sat down, was another big, tarnished, silver pitcher. But it was not so fine either in shape or workmanship as the one in the room with the carved frieze.

"The woman with the wild mop of hair served us, and we had a mysterious kind of home-made coffee that tasted of beans, and there was corn-bread and bacon and sorghum molasses. And nobody said a word. We sat and ate, and the idiot glared at me, and the woman darted half-frightened, sidelong glances at me when she thought I wouldn't see her. They were the kind of swift, uneasy looks a wild creature casts on a human who has come near him in the woods.

"After supper I took my pipe and went outside and wandered about for a while, but there was nothing to be noticed but darkness and swamp scents and swamp sounds—now and then a night bird and once or twice the yell of a wildcat. When I went into the house again, Morency took me up-stairs to the room where I was to sleep. There was nothing in it but a four-post bed with ragged hangings. The thing I slept on was not exactly a mattress, but a ticking stuffed with some dried stuff that rustled—dried leaves or corn-shucks or swamp grass. I mention the rustling, because just as I was falling asleep it began rustling on its own account and not because I was moving. Something alive had made a nest in it—I suppose it was a mouse or some sort of big beetle. Anyhow it crawled about and rustled. But I was so dead tired with my long tramp that I fell asleep while I was listening to it.

"I SLEPT like a log. The first thing I knew after that was that broad daylight was pouring in through the windows and I was wide-awake. I got up and went down-stairs and had some more corn-bread and home-made coffee, while the shock-headed wild woman watched me out of the ends of her eyes and the idiot glared and gobbled his food. I don't think he liked my looks. I don't think Morency did either. I didn't like theirs, and I wasn't sorry to set out on my tramp when Morency started me on a path that gave me a chance to walk my way out of the swamp after a good long trudge."

Jem paused a moment reflectively and shook his head. One saw in his nice-tempered blue eyes that the past had got hold of him again.

"It comes back to me like a picture—that house—as I looked back at it just before I pushed my way into the swamp again," he meditated. "I felt as if I had to make sure it was really there, and I turned round and just stood and stared at it. It was there—sagging porch and all. And what I was wondering was



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—this dainty little frock of sheer white lawn—for it can go pop into the tub and come out as fresh as when new. Its cunning little tabbed collar and cuffs, the tiny pockets in front and the perky sash in the back are all made of a contrasting color—blue, rose or pink. And of course, being strictly up-to-date, there are fascinating touches of hand-stitching here and there. Ask for Style 8562 at your favorite store. Plenty of other dainty Mildred Louise models there, too, all well made and moderately priced.

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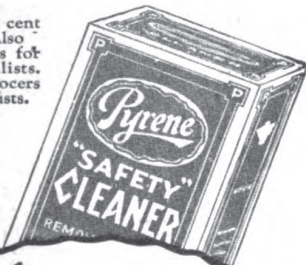
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**Summer Camps**

are presenting their announcements on pages 11, 12 and 13 of this issue. These camps are recommended to you as worthy in every way of your confidence and patronage.

Director, School Dept

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, 119 W. 40th St., N. Y. C.

how it had come there—and when and why. And what sort of things had happened in it—to what sort of people. A fellow couldn't help feeling a bit queer. It wasn't natural that it should be in that place. Somehow it seemed to mean unnatural things.

"But there it was, and there I left it when I turned into the path. When I got out of the swamp, I was only a few miles from a branch railroad, and I took a train and went home."

He came to such an evident full stop that there followed a moment of silence. Then some one cried out—almost indignantly.

"But—but what else?"

"Nothing else," answered Jem Harwold, "There ought to have been, but there wasn't. I knew you'd feel that way. My sister does. I did myself."

"And you never found out—?"

"There was no way of finding out. When I went back to Lisleport a year or two later, Lisleport knew no more than it had done when I first went about asking questions. And it cared less. That's thirty-five years ago, and if the house hasn't burned down or fallen to pieces, it's probably there yet. If the man without a palate and the wild woman with the mop of black hair and the idiot are not dead, I wonder what they look like. That's the end of the story."

**Helps for the Sugar Bill**

(Continued from page 56)

From a reader in New Jersey comes a recipe for a delicious cake filling requiring no sugar. Beat one tablespoonful of marshmallow cream into one cupful of any kind of jam or fruit conserve. The marshmallow stiffens the jam and keeps it from running. Spread on the cake and sprinkle a little shredded cocoanut over the surface. This filling is quickly made and is most tasty.

From a reader in Washington comes a sugarless recipe for Pineapple Rice. Scald one quart of milk in a double-boiler. Add one cupful of rice which has been carefully washed, and cook until the kernels are soft. Add three-fourths teaspoonful of salt and one-quarter cupful of marshmallow cream. Remove from the fire, cool, and add one teaspoonful of vanilla, one-half cupful of almonds or walnuts chopped fine, and one cupful of diced, canned pineapple. Pour into small, wet molds and chill until firm. Place the molds of rice on individual plates and serve with one cupful of pineapple diced, and a small amount of whipped cream on top. We found that by beating two tablespoonsful of marshmallow cream into one-half pint of cream, there was no need of adding any sugar, as the whipped cream had a delicious flavor without it.

From New York comes a recipe for Surprise Pudding. Whip one pint of cream and add to it one-half cupful of cooked rice, two tablespoonsful of gelatin which have been soaked in one-fourth cupful of water for five minutes, and one teaspoonful of vanilla. Fold in carefully and then add one cupful of chopped walnuts or hickory nuts, one-half cupful of chopped figs, and one-fourth cupful of chopped, preserved, candied ginger. Pour into a cold, wet mold, chill, and serve very cold.

From Massachusetts comes a recipe which will delight the children, called Chocolate Animals. Melt one-half pound of sweet dipping chocolate in the top of a double-boiler, and add while it is melting one tablespoonful of olive or any good salad oil. Let the chocolate melt, stirring it frequent. Pour about half of it into a shallow dish and manipulate the chocolate with the fingers until it has become cool, about 80° F., and has started to harden on the sides of the dish. Then dip animal crackers, such as can be purchased in any good grocery store, into the chocolate, covering each one entirely. Drop on paraffin paper to dry. These chocolate animals are delicious and more wholesome than candy. Try them for the children.

*Little Men and Little Women*  
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