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HALL'S CORNER.

SECOND SIGHT.

By J. H. CONNELLY.

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As a rule the consciousness of adult human beings is determined by their conscious perceptions. But all rules have their exceptions, and there are persons who do not find themselves trammelled by such limitations. They see, hear and know things remote, silent and hidden. Some scientists tell us that is due to telepathic influence by mental vibrations—which by no means covers all the ground. Others, who did big chunks of the incomprehensible out of the unknowable, call the faculty "percipience in the astral plane of consciousness." But, after all, the old Scotch name for it is best—"second sight." Everybody has heard enough of that to at least know what it means, and he must be an obstinately stupid person who will deny its reality, inexplicable as it may appear. You and I may not have it sufficiently to even realize its possession; but perhaps we cannot do all the other things that some folks find easy—distinguishing delicate gradations in tones and faint shades in colors, for instance, or even turning handsprings.

It is more than probable that we all possess more of this capacity in early youth, when it is loosely called "intuition," than we retain in later life, after we have been trained to distrust it and put our confidence in those architectonic, our physical senses, and that most variable quantity we call "reason." As unused faculties are lost, it is quite rare to find, among people who have grown up to years of indiscretion, any who possess clear "second sight," except perhaps such as have enough Gaelic blood for it to linger in as an hereditary accomplishment.

Florence Cameron was one of these exceptions. "The gift of second sight" belonged to her, as it had to her mother, her grandmother, and yet more remote ancestresses, and though the power had been much weakened in transmission—if half the stories cherished in family history were half true—Flossy had enough of it to make her seem to some folks quite a surprising and rather uncanny young person. Certainly that was the only exception the severest critic could have taken to her. She was as accomplished as a girl needs to be, good as any girl wishes to be considered, and pretty as all girls like to consider themselves. Not so blond as to be colorless or so brunette as to seem murky, she was a delicious medium between the two, with soft chestnut brown hair in dainty little waves and curls, and a broad white brow, and tender brown eyes full of expression and soul.

Yet, withal, Flossy was a dangerous girl. Her fortune was fair, her social position good and nothing could be said against her family. She had only one brother, a young man so good that he always seemed sad, a plump and amiable mother and a father absolutely safe, since he had been dead ten years. And yet Flossy was dangerous. Why? Simply because of her "gift of second sight." Her faculty of "seeing things" was altogether independent of her volition, never more than momentary in manifestation, but intensely vivid while it lasted, like clear glimpses of actual sight, and might be exercised upon a friend or a total stranger, near or far, at any moment. To some extent unusual mental excitation both stimulated and directed the power, but she could never apply it by will or prolong it even a fraction of a second. It was as if a rapidly shifting mirror in her mind from time to time caught instantaneous reflections of whatever might happen to be in the right line of incidence. And unfortunately the power did not extend to hearing or intuitive understanding of the real meaning in things she saw. She could see moving lips of a person many miles away and so know he was speaking, but would not be able to hear him any more than if he had been in the moon. If we make so many blunders in life, even with all our senses to aid us, how is it natural to suppose that Flossy should have escaped grievous mistakes in judging things simply by sight? That reflection, in its legitimate, logical extensions should have made marriage with Flossy seem a hazardous thing to prudent young men. But it did not even occur to the mind of Algernon Thimberly. Miss Cameron's "second sight" amused and even pleased, instead of frightening him. That she could and often did see him when he was far away from her evidenced to his thinking that he was much in her thoughts and flattered him. He did not realize how differently some things seem under the fierce light that beats upon a marriage certificate. Yet fate was kind enough to give him ample warning.

"Do not go and play billiards again tonight," Flossy said to him one evening when he was leaving her.
"I shall not," he replied. "I hardly ever play billiards now."
"But you did last night."
"Yes. Some friends I met would have me go along. But how did you know it?"
"I saw you."
"Some one told you."
"No. I saw you." She told him the truth, but he, knowing nothing as yet of her "gift," thought she was jokingly covering information obtained from some meddling gossip.

Again, when he was making love to her, she said to him quite coldly: "That will do. You had better reserve such confidences for the lady who was in your office this afternoon."
He was agitated and stammered, "Lady in my office!"
"Yes, a pretty little woman dressed in black."
It made him dizzy. The little widow certainly was not devoid of personal attractions, but was altogether a stranger to him and had visited his office only for a minute to solicit typewriting work, as others did daily. But how could Flossy have known she was there at all? Who could have told her? This time, when

she repeated "I saw her," he could not quite ignore the fact that she was thrusting upon his attention, and when he pressed for an explanation, having first cleared away her suspicions, which were probably more affected than real, she frankly told him of her strange power. He had read of the almost miraculous psychic perceptions of Miss Mollie Fancher of Brooklyn, whose case has become famous, and was too sensible to disbelieve her. Yet even then he was just as much bent upon carrying her as he was before, seeing which, fate abandoned him to his own devices, that experience might make him wiser.

Knowledge of Flossy's faculty did him moral good no doubt. The ever haunting consciousness that her eye might be upon him at any moment made him a very correct young man, much better than he had ever been before. But he did not find that unpleasant. On the contrary, he enjoyed being good, much more than he had ever before imagined he could. Only he sometimes wished she could hear as well as see in her mysterious way and so understand things better, for he had to admit to himself that if Flossy had one fault it was that of being inclined to jealousy.

Even that, however, made her more charming to him, for he fatuously argued to himself that it was evidence of her love for him, which was ardent folly, since jealousy is an inherent vice, the fruit of excessive self love, and may be spurred to demonstration on behalf of a cat or a pet goat, as well as a lover. That it might make her gift of second sight dangerous he knew was impossible, for, since he would always be faithful and innocent, he would have nothing to fear from her adventitious supervision. Alas, it is the innocent who are most likely to get caught. At least, that is, circumstances conspire to make them seem to be caught doing things they really have no mind to, and to appear guilty when you are innocent may be more exasperating under certain conditions, and certainly is more hurtful to your reputation, than to seem innocent when you are not so.

CHAPTER II.

In due course of time, when the apple trees were in bloom, Algernon and Flossy were married and deemed their happiness thenceforth assured. Married life finds its parallel in streams. From the pretty, merry, silvery, singing and laughing little brooks—which symbolize courtship days—the current grows wide and deep, gliding placidly and strong, as the great, calm, contented joy of thorough union between two loving hearts may be supposed to fill existence with a flood of bliss. But all the time, you observe, going down hill toward the falls, the precipice, the jumping off place where the third party waits. Of course it is not always so in either streams or lives. Some currents flow so sluggishly they hardly seem to move at all, and with no rapids or falls to vary their monotony, and by dumping their almost stagnant volume into the cloud veiled ocean which may as well be called death as anything else. But of their sort stories are seldom written.

Flossy's second sight frequently made little ripples in the domestic stream, but not unpleasantly as yet for Algernon. When she said to him, "Algernon, my dear, where were you going in such haste on Broadway this afternoon?" or, "Who was that ugly, black browed man with the crooked nose who was in your office today?" or something else of the sort, her pretty sympathetic way of questioning not only afforded cues for pleasant, confidential chats about his affairs, but sweetened his existence with the happy thought that she was all the time thinking of him; that her heart ever turned toward her love as the faithful needle to the pole—or the hungry cat to the canary, he could also have thought, only he did not.

On the way to his office one morning Algernon was met by a friend, Mr. Samuel Wagstaff, who put in his hands a package of letters, saying: "Thimberly, I was just looking for you. I wish you would take care of these for me a day or two. They are Jennie's letters. My wife is on the war path, and I don't dare to keep them either at home or in my office, for I must be in a position to let her search everywhere if she demands it, as I have no doubt she will when fully worked up. The letters are innocent enough when all the circumstances are understood, but I wouldn't like to undertake making Mrs. Wagstaff understand them properly. They ought to be burned, but Jennie wants to do that herself to make sure they don't go astray, and so she shall as soon as I can put her in possession of them."

Algernon threw the package into a drawer of his desk, and, being busy, soon



"Algernon, my dear, where were you going in such haste this afternoon?"
"I forgot all about it. But in the course of the forenoon it was sharply recalled to his remembrance, when the lady who had been reported as "on the war path" called upon him.
"Mr. Thimberly," she said, "I come to you as a friend, and I am sure when you know the cause of my trouble you will make allowances for my agitation."
He bowed with a vaguely deprecatory gesture, which might have meant a universal full of allowances or inability to see her agitation or polite disbelief that

so charming a woman could have any trouble, or indeed almost anything she might choose, but it seemed to reassure her, and she went on more confidently and very rapidly.

"I don't want Sammy to know I have been here, but I felt that I must see you, because I'm sure you can tell me all about it if you will. And you will, won't you? Mr. Thimberly—Algernon—for we are such old friends, and you used to pretend that you thought a little bit of me once, though I suppose you have forgotten all about it by this time—you men are so forgetful."

She was a plump, little woman, with big eyes, into which she could cast a very appealing expression or make them so round and babyish that they seemed to the unsophisticated masculine mind full of innocence and grace. Sincere and trustfulness, in which estimate the masculine mind would have been distinctly wrong. Algernon stammered and blushed, actually blushed, and she believed him at her mercy. He said hesitatingly: "I don't seem to exactly grasp the idea of how I can be of any service to you, as naturally, you know, I would wish to be, Mrs. Wagstaff."
"No! Haven't I told you? I thought I had, but I'm so flustered. Well, it is all in one word. I want to know all about Jennie. Who is Jennie?"
"Jennie, Jennie," he replied, assuming his most puzzled expression and looking as if laboring to dig up from unfathomable abysses in his memory some reminiscent suggestion of having heard some such name. "Jennie who?"
"That is what I ask you, and Jennie? What? Oh, now, Algernon, don't pretend you don't know, for I'm sure you do. You will tell me, won't you, Algernon?" In her wily feminine way of eagerness she laid her chubby little hand upon his shoulder almost caressingly and filled her round eyes with appeal.

At that precise moment Flossy, sewing in her own room, miles away, clearly saw, with her mind's eyes, the tableau thus presented—Algernon, in the private room of his office, caressed—or rather, she should say, familiarly pawed—by a creature who made baby eyes at him! And he seemed to like it! What an astounding revelation of perfidy!

To understand correctly even the best pantomimic performance on the stage one must know something of the canons of expression by which certain abstract ideas are arbitrarily conveyed, and is, furthermore, aided by the sequence of action through which the story is progressively developed. But from a momentary glimpse, such as one might catch in tumbling from the gallery to the parquet, little could be accurately apprehended. So it is in real life. An instant's view of the attitudes of two persons may suggest an infinite wealth of various misunderstandings. We need words, and even with them do not always succeed in putting things any too clearly. Judging by imperfect sight alone our deductions from what we see are necessarily simply reflections of subjective conditions in our own minds. Had Mrs. Thimberly been a very unsophisticated and unsuspecting person, she would probably—erat least possibly—have imagined that her husband's visitor was simply soliciting typewriting work, or selling tickets for some charitable "benefit," or seeking subscriptions to something—the common amusements of office men. But she was naturally jealous, and—another wife was started "on the warpath." She dropped her sewing and began dressing hastily to go down town.

Algernon stood well the assault by Mrs. Wagstaff's eyes. He met them firmly, thought of his duty to his fellow man and said, "I don't know anything about any Jennie." The recording angel doubtless sighed as he jotted down the words, but perhaps, when balancing his books, made a little credit entry for Algernon's fidelity to his friend. "If you know there is a Jennie," he continued, "your knowledge is just that much more comprehensive than mine."
"But that is all I know. And I insist upon knowing everything. I have no doubt she was one of Sammy's old flames before we were married, who continues flirting with him yet—the shameless thing."
"But how do you know she exists or ever has?"
"Ah! It was fate! I called at my husband's office yesterday and went into his private room, as I always do. He was out, but his desk was open, and there, written on a pad to catch his eye when he came in, was a message from his confidential bookkeeper, Mr. Morgan, who, as it happened, had also been called out. The message ran: 'Jennie was in. I told her you were in the country and I didn't expect you back for a month.' I hunted his desk through and through for further information about her, but found nothing. The safe was locked, so I could not search it, or I'm sure I would have found a lot of her letters, possibly her picture. I left the message where it was, and when he came in pretended to be reading a paper and never let on I knew anything of his villainy, but I watched the wretch out of the corner of my eye and read his guilt in the furtive glance he cast at me while he tore the message up in little bits. Still I made no scene. He does not suspect that I know anything or am on his track. ('Oh, don't be, though?' thought Algernon.) And I do not mean that he shall until I have the proofs. Then let him tremble. I shall tell all to my mother."

"Well, I don't see how you could suppose I should know anything about it."
"Because you and Sammy have always been so thick together, and you men know each other's goings on. Maybe you think Mr. Wagstaff hasn't told me a lot about you?"

Even that failed. Against such armor of innocence as Algernon wore, the keen darts of innuendo hurtless break. So Mrs. Wagstaff gave up her attempt and went away, by no means convinced, however, that he could not, if he would, have told her a great deal, and it is truly amazing how correct woman's intuitions sometimes are in such matters.

[To be Continued.]

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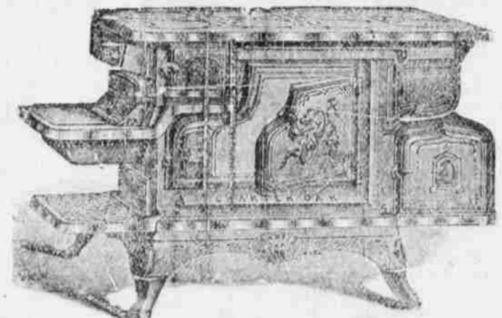
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