

### Behind the Clock

J. Douglas MacDonald, B.A.

Not long ago I published a couple of manuscripts concerning and written by my grand-uncle, Dr. David Munroe. I now beg the privilege of presenting another manuscript which I have found in the black box left to me by my grand-uncle. Now an incident occurred with regard to this manuscript which has puzzled me, and as I can make nothing of it I shall relate it to my readers without attempting to explain.

One afternoon while delving into the black box (a task I must say which has never wearied me) I noticed what seemed to be a crack in the bottom. Upon a closer investigation I discovered that the bottom was false, and after lifting it I came upon a shallow compartment below. In this I found the manuscript which I have taken the liberty to entitle "Behind the Clock." But the perplexing part was this. At the end of the manuscript was written the name "George Clovis." Whether the events related in the manuscript concern this George Clovis or not I do not know. Certainly the hand-writing is that of Dr. Munroe, and the style seems to be his also for he had a great inclination to use portentous sounding adjectives. Perhaps this mysterious Mr. Clovis related the tale to my grand-uncle, but as I have mentioned before I am frankly bewildered. However, here is the contents of the manuscript word for word.

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One spring after an exhausting winter of hard work I contracted a heavy cold which, being neglected, laid me up with a serious illness. It was not until the verge of autumn when I was able to be up and around again. My constitution had been so severely ravaged by disease that I made preparation for going to the country as the air of London is not very conducive to health. I managed, through an agent, to lease a large mansion situated in the north country. The owner, it seemed, was an archeologist who had been absent for many years and, in point of fact, was residing at the time in Egypt.

It was a bright morning in September when I set out, and I had every reason to contemplate a restful and en-



joyable vacation. It was well that I had no idea of the fearful shock I was to receive at Regisham which was the name of my leased house. Little did I dream of the grim terror that trode the vaults of that fateful house.

The sun was just setting in a mutinous-looking cloud as I descended from the train at a small station. As I did not know where Regisham lay I accosted the agent who stood near by glancing at me curiously. At my questions regarding the direction and distance to my house he appeared to be moved a great deal.

"Regisham? You're not going there?"

"I certainly am," I answered briskly. "And it looks as if we are in for a storm, so if you will give me the information I shall be off directly."

He then informed me that Regisham was about two miles distant across the moor and explained how to get there. He spoke in a melancholy tone, but as I was convinced that he did this to entice me to ask further questions I asked him nothing more. Having given instructions to have my baggage sent over to Regisham in the morning I took my small valise and commenced my short journey.

Presently the sun set behind a black dome of threatening storm clouds which had begun to collect in the west, and a fitful breeze commenced to sough across the lonely moor. Distant thunder began to roll menacingly, and I quickened my pace to reach shelter before the storm broke.

The path which I followed went across one of the most desolate moors I had ever seen. Everything was dank and stagnant. The vegetation seemed similar to that which must grace the gardens of Pluto. Although I had started out blithely enough I now felt myself becoming more and more depressed.

Finally I came around a small mound and came in full sight of Regisham. It was made of grey stone and appeared sombrely majestic. Four gaunt towers arose from the corners of the mansion which was a square in shape; it was three stories high, the windows appearing as long, narrow slits from where I gazed. Surrounded as it was by swaying trees through which the storm squall moaned, Regisham made a dismal picture.

I went up to the front entrance and trying the massive door found it unlatched. Stepping over the threshold I found myself in a rich but forbidding hall. Not caring to upset my nerves by too close a scrutiny of the house,



I left my hat, coat, and valise on a side table and entered the library which was at my right. This was a room of vast proportions, lined on all sides with books, decorated with many curios from Egypt, Persia, Babylon, and other ancient empires. It had three windows and two doors. At the end of the room to my left stood a monstrous clock fully seven feet high. It rested on the floor and was backed to the wall, being surrounded on the top and either side by massive volumes of ancient lore. A large mummy case stood in one corner with a glass panel in its front through which, in the dim light of the moor, I could see the bandaged occupant—no doubt some long dead pharaoh.

As it was now quite dark I turned on the small table lamp and while doing so noticed that a lunch was spread on the table. A note beside the lunch apprised me that the servants would arrive in the morning. It was signed by the keeper who stated that he was called away by the sudden death of his sister—I afterwards learned that she was strangled by an unknown felon.

I crossed to the windows to draw the heavy silk curtains; large drops of rain began to drum against the panes while a livid flash of lightning lit up the dreary moor. Thunder boomed from the heavens — a night of tempest!

Pushing the lunch to one side, for I was in no mood for eating, I sat down on a large arm-chair and reached for a pile of books on the table. When I had opened the volume which I had taken I found it to be a life of Machiavelli. "A pleasant book for a pleasant night," I thought grimly. Lightning flared through the window hangings and was followed by dreadful detonations of thunder. The shriek of the wind through the trees seemed to be the wails of the lost souls while the ticking of the large time-piece which I have mentioned before sounded like that of the clock which spaces eternity in the infernal regions.

Shuddering as if trying to cast off a hideous burden, I attempted to interest myself in the book before me. But I could not—something was happening in that dread mansion. The ghastly messenger of death hovered above it. My attention was drawn to the clock; I could not take my eyes from it. Suddenly my nerves snapped, and I screamed aloud and beat against my breast with my fists. Rising and approaching the clock I looked at it fixedly. While I yet looked—horror of horrors!—it turned slowly outward and revealed a black opening in



the wall the size of a small door-way. Taking a small flash-light from the mantle-piece I stooped and entered the opening behind the clock. The battery of my light was weak so it gave a very dim light. I took a few steps and encountered a stairs which seemed to spiral down into the bowels of the earth. I commenced the descent. Shadows such as were formed by no material forms flitted along the black walls. I glanced below, and far down I could see flickerings of some gruesome light. But I kept descending. At night I still dream of that grisly descent to the chamber of terror. I was going down into the grave, into the hideous world of cadaverous beings who lived yet were dead, into the sepulchral world.

At last I reached the bottom of the stairs and saw before me a door made of some dull metal like bronze. With all my soul I wished I might be able to go back from where I came, but I could go nowhere except ahead. Placing my hand on the latch I opened the door and passed within. Then my darkest fears were realized for I stood in a dimly lighted chamber of huge dimensions which was inhabited by corpses! I use the word inhabited rightly because the occupants seemed alive and passed to and fro. Some lay gasping on rich couches, some gambled feverishly yet seemed to lose, some wept, some lay back while peals of silent mirth shook them, some tore their faces with long finger nails, some ate and drank until they retched while the only sounds to be heard were moans and death rattles. At my entrance they turned their glassy eyes towards me, raised their wax-like fingers, and gibbered ominously. It was more than the mind could stand; shriek after shriek burst from me and I ran staggering through the door. I remember no more until I awoke in a hospital in London. I was found on the lawn drenched with rain and as still and white as a corpse.



Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery.—(Micawber)—*Dickens*

When he is out of sight, quickly also is he out of mind.

—*Thomas A. Kempis*