

HAROLD AVERY

UNDER
PADLOCK AND
SEAL

Harold Avery

Under Padlock and Seal

«Public Domain»

Avery H.

Under Padlock and Seal / H. Avery — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	8
CHAPTER III.	12
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	15

Under Padlock and Seal

CHAPTER I.

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE DARK

Elsie pushed away the bed-clothes which were covering her ear, and listened; then she sat up in bed, and listened again.

There was no doubt that it was an actual sound, and not mere imagination. How long it had been going on, or when it first began to mingle in a confused manner with her dreams, she could not say; but now she heard it plainly enough, and recognized what it was – the peculiar, grating hiss of a grindstone, punctuated every now and then with a subdued little squeak made by the treadle.

Who on earth should want to be grinding anything at that time of night?

The Pines was a rambling old house; the girls always slept with their window open; and just below was an outbuilding, part of which was used as a tool-house, in which stood the grindstone; and thus the sound had reached Elsie at a moment when perhaps her slumber was not as deep as usual. The noise continued, with pauses at regular intervals, when whatever was being sharpened was removed from the stone. Taking care not to disturb her elder sister, Ida, whose heavy breathing showed that she was sound asleep, the little girl slipped out of bed, and crept softly over to the window. By straining her neck, and pressing her cheek close against the pane, she could just get a glimpse of the tool-house window, which she noticed was faintly illuminated, as it might have been by the feeble rays of a night-light.

A sudden thought occurred to Elsie that it must be her cousin, Brian Seaton, who lived at the Pines, and went to school with her brother Guy. Brian was always boat-building; sometimes he sat up later than he ought to have done, and continued to work long after every one else was in bed. No doubt the rascal was doing so now, and had stolen down to put a fresh edge on his chisel. Elsie was a spirited young monkey, and she and Brian were great chums.

"I'll just creep down and show him I've found him out," she said to herself. "What fun to take him by surprise!"

To put on dressing-gown and slippers was but the work of a few moments. Softly opening the bedroom door, she passed out on to the landing, and groping in the darkness until she found the rail of the banisters, she proceeded down the stairs.

How still and quiet the house seemed! Nothing broke the silence but the solemn "tick-tack" of the big clock in the hall, which had been ticking in the same sedate manner since the days when Elsie's grandmother had been a little girl. Feeling her way down the length of the hall, not without an occasional bump against chairs and other such obstacles, Elsie came to a little lobby or cloak-room, having at the farther end a half-glass door, which opened on the yard, and from which the tool-house was distant not more than a dozen paces. She quite expected to find this door open, and was surprised to discover that it was not only shut, but locked on the inside.

"What a beggar Brian is!" thought the girl. "He must have climbed out of his window, and come down the water-pipe, as he did one day last summer."

She laid her hand on the key, when a low growling noise gave her quite a little fright, until she remembered that it was the old clock in the hall preparing to strike – "clearing his throat," as Ida called the operation. The next moment the bell struck —

"Ting! ting!"

Elsie listened with a gasp of astonishment; the old clock ignored the halves and quarters, so the time must be two o'clock in the morning! She never remembered having been up so early or so late before, and the thought that she was wandering about the house at that unearthly hour made her feel quite queer.

"What can Brian be about?" she murmured. "He can't have been sitting up working till this time."

She turned the handle of the door, and stepped across the threshold. The cold night air made her shiver, the whirl of the grindstone came clear and distinct from the tool-house, and the window still gleamed with the same subdued, ghostly light. Elsie had intended to rush across the flagstones, fling open the door, shout "Brian, go to bed!" and then herself beat a hasty retreat; but, just when she was on the point of doing so, she hesitated.

What if it shouldn't be Brian after all? And if it were not her cousin, who or what could be there in the tool-house turning the grindstone at two o'clock in the morning?

It is when we pause to think that fear often takes hold of us. Elsie was a brave child; but, somehow, just then her courage seemed to desert her. She remained for an instant listening to the whispering of the night wind, and the mysterious sound which had first roused her from her slumbers; then she drew back in sudden panic, locked the door as if in the fear of some lion, and went quickly back the way she had come.

"Tick-tack! tick-tack!" muttered the old clock. He never felt afraid at having to stand alone all night in the darkness. Elsie hurried past him, and after one or two stumbles on the stairs, regained her bedroom.

"Ida! Wake up!"

"Every one of my sums is right," murmured Ida drowsily. "You can always get them right with a blue pencil."

"Wake up, Ida! I want to tell you something."

"Oh, bother!" grumbled the elder girl. "What's the matter, Elsie? What d'you want to keep shaking me for when I'm sound asleep?"

"Why, I want to tell you there's some one turning our grindstone."

"Well, what if they are? I suppose it's meant to be turned."

"But not now. It's two o'clock in the morning. No one ought to be about there at this time."

Ida sat up, rubbed her eyes, and yawned.

"What d'you mean?" she exclaimed.

"Listen!" was the answer. "You'll hear the noise. Some one was working the grindstone. Why, I heard the little squeak of the treadle as plainly as anything."

"You have been dreaming, you little silly!"

"No, I *haven't*! What I say is quite true."

There was something in the speaker's tone which showed that she was very much in earnest.

"And you mean to say that you've been all the way downstairs?"

"Yes; I went to the yard door. I meant to have gone across to the tool-house, but I was frightened."

"Well, if any one was there, it must have been Guy or Brian – probably Brian, for he's the only one who can sharpen tools. I'll go across and ask."

Throwing the dressing-gown over her shoulders, Ida left the room. She still did not believe that either of the boys had been up at that unearthly hour using the grindstone, but she wished to prove to Elsie that it was all imagination. As she passed the head of the stairs she suddenly stopped. Somewhere, down below, she distinctly heard a soft noise like the patter of slippered feet. Ida leant over the banisters.

"Brian!" she cried in a whisper. "What are you doing?"

There was a scuffling noise, and a moment later, to the girl's astonishment, a black dog came jumping up the stairs as fast as it could go.

"Why, Bob, you rascal, whatever brings you in here?"

The dog capered about with a whining noise, which showed his delight.

"Hush! don't bark!" commanded the girl; "you ought to be in your kennel. Go downstairs, and lie on the mat."

The dog obeyed, and pattered off down the stairs, while Ida went on and tapped at the door of the room in which the two boys slept. The knocking had to be repeated several times before there was any answer. At last there came a sleepy, "All ri'. What 'er want?"

"Have you been down turning the grindstone in the tool-house, Guy?"

"No, of course not."

"Has Brian?"

"No; he's here asleep."

"Have either of you been down there?"

"No, you stupid!"

"Well, some one's let Bob into the house."

"Oh, bother Bob! I say, Ida, you are a fool to go waking a fellow up like this. What's the joke?"

"It's no joke," she said. "Good-night; go to sleep."

"You are a little noodle, Elsie!" Ida exclaimed as she jumped back into bed, her teeth chattering with the cold. "The boys are both in bed, and haven't been near the tool-house. And d'you know what you've done? You've let in Bob."

"I'm sure I didn't."

"But you *did*. He's just run upstairs. He must have slipped in when you opened the yard door. His collar's broken, and he gets loose sometimes."

"I'm sure he didn't come into the house when I opened the door," persisted Elsie. "I only stood there half a minute. The servants must have let him in when they were locking up."

"Well, if it was a robber working the grindstone," answered Ida jokingly, "he can't get into the house without Bob barking and waking everybody up. Now, good-night; don't wake me up again."

Ida's breathing soon showed that she was once more in the land of dreams, but try as Elsie would she could not get off to sleep. As often as she closed her eyes she seemed to see the dark outline of the tool-house, the single window illuminated with a ghostly glimmer, and again she heard the hiss and whirl of the grindstone as she had heard it before.

Who could have been at work there, if Guy and Brian were both in bed? If she had run across and opened the door of the little den, what would she have seen? She was still lying awake thinking, when the old clock downstairs struck three. Gradually her excitement gave place to a sensation of drowsiness, and at length she fell asleep. Even now her puzzled brain was not quite content to let her rest. In her dreams she once more went downstairs, and this time the door of the tool-house opened, and out came the grindstone of its own accord, staggering along on its wooden stand, and whizzing round all the time with a buzzing sound like a big angry bee. It chased her along endless passages, and up and down countless flights of stairs. Then Brian appeared on the scene; she rushed forward to beg his help, and in doing so awoke to find that she was in bed.

CHAPTER II. THE LOST CARVING-KNIFE

There was a great deal of chattering going on at the breakfast table next morning, seldom less than two people talking at once.

"Look here, Ida," cried Guy; "next time you come waking me up in the middle of the night, I'll have a sponge of cold water ready for you; see if I don't!"

"I tell you it was Elsie's fault," was the answer. "She declared she heard some one turning the grindstone."

"Well, so I did," persisted Elsie, who did not like her word being doubted. "I heard it quite plainly; and there was a light in the tool-house."

"Are you sure you were not dreaming?" asked Mrs. Ormond.

"Yes, quite sure, mother."

"Did you grind any of your tools last night, Brian?"

"Oh no, aunt. I haven't touched the grindstone for a week at least. Besides, I'm too fond of bed to get up and sharpen chisels at two o'clock in the morning."

The speaker was a sturdy, good-natured boy, two years older than Guy, and greatly distinguished this term by having received the cap of the Rexbury Grammar School football team.

"You two girls are a couple of noodles," went on Guy. "I suppose you thought it was a ghost working at the stone?"

"Well, look here," cried Ida, anxious to turn the conversation; "who let Bob in last night? Elsie says she didn't, but he was in the house when I came over to your room."

"He was fastened up when I crossed the yard about eight o'clock last night," said Brian.

"Where did you find him this morning, Jane?" asked Ida, turning to the parlour-maid.

"He was outside, chained up to his kennel, miss," was the answer.

"Outside! But when he was once in the house he couldn't possibly get out again. He came running up the stairs, and I couldn't think what it was for a minute."

"He was in his kennel when we came down this morning, miss," said Jane.

Guy burst out into a roar of laughter.

"Well, I'm blest!" he cried. "You are a pair! First there's Elsie's yarn about that grindstone, and now you try to stuff some silly story into us of Bob's running about the house when he was outside all the time."

"But he *was* in the house," cried Ida, flushing. "He came upstairs to me, and I sent him down again."

"Then if he was in the house, will you tell me how he could have got out again before the servants came down to open the door? You girls must have eaten something for supper last night that didn't agree with you, and both had nightmare. Next time you get it, don't come across to our door."

"Now, now!" interrupted Mrs. Ormond, who saw that Ida was about to make an angry retort, and judged that the discussion had gone far enough. "Come, you boys will be late if you don't make haste with your breakfast. Are you going to play football this afternoon, Brian?"

"Yes, aunt; it's a match."

"Shall you want to take your things with you?"

"No, thank you. The game's on our ground, so I shall come home to change."

Mr. Ormond, who had not been paying much attention to the conversation, now laid aside the newspaper he had been reading, at the same time remarking, —

"I see that the *Arcadia* left the docks in London yesterday bound for Australia, so I suppose by this time Mr. William Cole has begun his first experience of being 'rocked in the cradle of the deep.'"

"Was the *Arcadia* the ship he was going out on?" asked Ida.

"Yes," replied her father; "that was the one in which he had booked his passage."

"Old King Cole was a merry old soul," chanted Guy, with his mouth half full of toast and butter. "I wish he hadn't gone. I'm sure we shan't ever have such a nice man again."

"He was a civil, sharp young fellow," said Mr. Ormond. "I suppose he hopes to do better in the Colonies than by staying on in the old country. Well, it's very possible he may get on. He's a handy sort of chap, and can turn his hand to all kinds of jobs."

William Cole, the subject of these remarks, had, until about a week previous to the commencement of this story, been gardener and man-of-all-work at the Pines. Being easy-going, and clever with his hands, he had been a great favourite with the children. Whether it was to clean a bicycle, splice the broken joint of a fishing-rod, blow birds' eggs, or cut the fork of a catapult, William was always the man to whom to apply; and he never failed in the performance of these services to win the entire satisfaction of his youthful admirers.

"I am sorry he's gone," said Ida. "He was always so polite, and never grumbled when you asked him to run an errand."

"It's time we were off," exclaimed Brian, glancing at the clock. – "Will you excuse me, aunt? I've got to find my books."

The children rose from the table, and rushed out into the hall, where a fresh dispute, though of a friendly nature, occurred between Ida and Guy with regard to the ownership of a certain book-strap. There was a good deal of racing up and down stairs, and at length the bang of the front door proclaimed the fact that they had all started – the boys for the big school in the centre of the town, and the girls for one a little nearer home.

"It seems strange that both Ida and Elsie should have had such queer fancies last night," said Mrs. Ormond to her husband as they remained seated together at the breakfast table.

"What was it? I didn't quite catch what they were saying."

"Why, Elsie says she was awakened by hearing the grindstone turning in the tool-house. She went down to see if it was Brian sharpening his chisels, but she got frightened, so returned and woke Ida. Then Ida declares that, when she went across to the boys' room to see if they were awake, Bob was in the house, and came running up the stairs to her; but Jane says that, when they came down this morning, Bob was outside in his kennel."

"I expect Ida was more than half asleep," answered her father, "and thought she saw the dog. I know I've still gone on dreaming when I've been roused up suddenly out of a sound sleep. What Elsie heard was, no doubt, the wind."

"But she says there was a light in the tool-house."

"Oh, nothing but the reflection of the moonlight on the glass, you may depend. If there had been any one about who had no business there, the dog would have barked."

The boys were rather late in getting back to dinner, and when they arrived they were in a hurry to get the meal over and be off again. Brian had to change and walk to the football ground, while Guy intended to go with him and watch the game.

"Whom is the match against?" asked Mrs. Ormond.

"Against Newford College, mother," was the reply. "We ought to lick 'em this time. We've got a ripping strong team."

"I expect you'll come back with that nice red and white shirt of yours mud all over, Brian," said Ida.

"Oh, that doesn't matter so long as we win," answered her cousin.

"If the ladies will excuse it, I think I'd better serve you first, Brian," said Mr. Ormond, as the cover was removed, disclosing a couple of roast fowls. "Then you'll have time to get into your war paint. – My dear," the speaker continued, addressing his wife, "I wish I could have the proper poultry-carver instead of this big knife."

"Isn't it laid?" inquired Mrs. Ormond. – "Jane, you should have put the smaller carving-knife."

"Please, 'm," answered the maid. "I meant to do so, but I can't find it."

"Can't find it! Doesn't Sarah know where it is?"

"No, ma'am; she says she remembers it being brought in the last time it was sent out to be cleaned, but we can't find it now. We turned the cupboard out just before dinner-time."

"Are you sure that Henry hasn't had it to clean, and left it behind in the tool-house when he brought in the other knives?"

"Yes, 'm; we've looked there."

"Oh, never mind," said the master of the house; "I'll make this knife do now; you'll find the other somewhere."

"But there's no reason why it should have been lost," replied Mrs. Ormond. "I can't imagine where it's gone to."

"I say," cried Guy, "perhaps it was the poultry-carver that Elsie's ghost was grinding last night! Ha! ha! That's where it went!"

"I never said it was a ghost, you stupid," answered Elsie, a good bit nettled.

"Well, some one said it was."

"You said so yourself, Guy; and it's not fair to put it off on me."

"You were the person who heard it; and so, if it was a ghost, it was your ghost."

"It *isn't* my ghost!" cried Elsie, thumping the table, and getting very red. "It isn't a ghost at all, so shut up, Guy."

"How d'you know it wasn't a ghost? If you didn't see what it was, it might as well be a ghost as anything else."

"Come now," interrupted Mrs. Ormond; "I think we discussed this matter quite enough at breakfast, so now you'd better let it rest. Your father thinks that it was nothing but the wind whistling through some crack that Elsie mistook for the noise of the stone."

"But, mother – " began the little girl.

"Never mind, Elsie," interrupted Mrs. Ormond; "we won't talk about it any more just now. There's nothing to be ashamed of in mistaking one sound for another, especially when you wake up in the middle of the night, and everything seems strange."

Elsie subsided, but she was far from satisfied, especially as Guy covertly pulled a face at her across the table. She ate her dinner in silence, and as soon as the meal was over left the room and went outside in a pet. As the tool-house had been uppermost in her mind lately, she naturally found her way there, and sat down on an old hamper to think. Though sensitive, she was a courageous child, and she did not like being made fun of, especially when the taunt implied that she had been frightened at nothing.

There before her stood the grindstone, looking exactly the same as it had always done. The girl rose, walked over to it, and put her foot on the treadle.

"Squeak! squeak!" Yes, that was exactly the noise she had heard in the night, coupled with the grate of the stone against the hard metal. She felt more than ever sure that she had not been mistaken.

At that moment the door opened, and Brian appeared. In his short blue knickers, and with the gaily coloured shirt showing beneath his coat, he looked what he was – a thoroughly manly boy. He and Elsie were always the best of good comrades, and the latter was always ready to tell Brian her troubles, feeling sure of a sympathetic hearing.

"Are my football boots out here?" he asked.

"Yes, they're over there. And, I say, Bri, I *did* hear the grindstone turning last night, and it's too bad of them to say I didn't."

"Well, if you did, you did," answered Brian consolingly. "There's no reason to fret yourself about such a trifle."

"But Guy tries to make out I was frightened at nothing, and I wasn't."

"Not you," grunted Brian, dragging on his boots. "You're a good plucked un, I know."

"D'you really think so?" answered Elsie, much relieved. "Bri, you're a brick. I hope you'll kick ten goals this afternoon."

"I shall be content if I kick two," answered the boy, stamping his feet on the flagstones to settle them into his stiff boots. As he went out he paused for a moment to look at the grindstone. On the wooden framework were some dark spots; he examined them more closely, and scratched one with his nail.

"Humph! – candle-grease!" he muttered.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE ROGER'S BOX

"Hullo! What d'you want?"

"Come here a minute."

In three days the incident of the grindstone had been almost forgotten, and Elsie was no longer troubled by any more of Guy's chaff on the subject of her night alarm. At the present moment she was standing in her father's library, and had called to her cousin, who happened to be passing outside in the passage.

"Well, what d'you want?" he repeated as he entered the room.

"Look!" said Elsie, pointing with her finger; "only two more days, and it'll be time to open *that*. Aren't you longing to know what's inside?"

The object in question stood stowed away in a dark corner of the room, and the children all knew its history. It was an oak box or small chest, dark with age and strongly bound with bands of iron; the panels were ornamented with rough carvings of dragons and other curious beasts, and where the iron clamps met they were secured with good-sized padlocks.

This box had stood in its present position ever since the children could remember, and, indeed, it had been there before even Ida, the eldest of the three, was born. It had been left to Mr. Ormond by an eccentric old relative, who had given special instructions in his will that the chest should not be opened for twenty years after the date of his death. The children were never tired of speculating as to what would be found in "Uncle Roger's Box," as it was called; and of late their interest in the legacy had steadily increased as the time drew near when the riddle would at last be answered.

"Father says he is going to open it on Thursday morning," continued Elsie. "November the third; that's the exact date. I say, Brian, what d'you think's inside?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered the boy, laughing. "Old clothes, perhaps."

"Oh, no; it's sure to be something valuable. Just fancy – it hasn't been opened for twenty years! T-w-e-n-t-y years! That's twice as long as the whole of my life!"

"Then," said Brian, who was good at mental arithmetic, "it's been shut up for 7,300 days, all but two."

"And on Thursday morning it's to be opened!" cried Elsie, dancing round the room. "I'm simply dying to know what's inside. I asked Sarah once what she thought it would be, and she said she believed it must be money. I dreamt once that I came down and saw it open, and that it was full of the most lovely jewellery – chains, and rings, and bracelets, with the most beautiful precious stones set in them, all colours of the rainbow!"

"Good-night! Why didn't you collar a few? You might have grabbed a handful, and given some to me."

"I was just going to, when I woke up," answered Elsie. "That's always the way in dreams."

"I know," replied Brian, laughing. "I've dreamt I was turned loose in a confectioner's shop, and I could have anything I liked; and just when I was going to start on a plate of cheesecakes, Jane came hammering at the door, saying it was time to get up. It's a queer old thing," he continued, alluding to the box. "Let's have a look at the gentleman."

"It's pretty heavy," he continued, as he lifted the box out into the light of the window; "but that may be the weight of the wood and iron. I'm afraid it isn't full of gold, Elsie; if it were, I shouldn't be able to move it at all."

"Look!" cried the little girl. "The locks can't be opened because they are sealed. That thing like one of the chessmen with a leopard standing on top putting his tongue out was Uncle Roger's crest. He did that himself just before he died."

The front of each of the padlocks was ornamented with a big circular lump of dark blue sealing-wax, on which the impression of the old gentleman's seal was distinctly visible. While these remained unbroken it was impossible to put a key into either of the locks.

"I suppose he did that to make sure that no one should open the box before the proper time?"

"Yes," answered Elsie. "You see, even if a person had keys which would fit the locks, he couldn't use them unless he first broke the seals; and no one would do that, because it would show that the box had been meddled with."

"But supposing you got some more blue wax of the same colour – " began Brian. "But, no; of course you'd want the seal. What became of it, d'you know?"

"Father's got it. He keeps it locked up in one of the drawers of the big safe at his office. He showed it to us once. It's on the end of one of those chains that old gentlemen used to wear hanging down under their waistcoats."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Guy and Ida, who had just returned from a walk.

"Hullo!" cried the former. "What are you two doing with Uncle Roger's box?"

"Only looking at it," answered Brian.

"What a crank the old chap must have been!" continued Guy. "Why didn't he leave it in his will to be opened at once?"

"I've heard father say that he was always doing queer things," remarked Ida. "Long after his wife died he wouldn't eat his meals unless her place was laid for her opposite to him at table, where she used to sit. For the last five years of his life they say he stayed in the house, and never put his foot outside the door."

"Silly old chump!" remarked Guy. "I wonder if there really is anything in this old box of his. Look here; I'll turn it up, and you listen and tell me if you hear anything move inside."

"O Guy, don't! You may break something!" exclaimed his sister.

"Not I. I'll do it gently. Now listen." Slowly and cautiously he turned the box on end, but its contents did not appear to move.

"I believe the blessed thing's empty!" cried the boy.

"I fancied I heard something sort of trickle about inside," said Elsie.

"Oh, you're always fancying something," said her brother. "You'll say the grindstone's in there next."

"I thought I heard something too," exclaimed Brian. "But it was only a very slight sound, such as a bit of loose wood might make – a chip, perhaps, from off the inside of the lid."

Guy lowered the box, and turned it up again. "I do hear something," he admitted. "It's a bit of wood, I expect. What a sell! I'm certain the box is empty."

"Oh, nonsense; you can't tell," answered Ida. "It may be quite full of something, and so tightly packed that the contents are wedged together, and can't shake about when you move the box. Uncle Roger would never have taken the trouble to seal the locks, and leave those instructions in his will, if it were just an empty box."

"Well, here goes," said Brian. "I'm going to put it back in its place again." And with these words he lifted the chest in his strong arms, and returned it to its old corner. Guy remained for a moment balancing himself on one foot.

"Let me see," he said; "what was it I meant to do? Oh, I know! Mend the ring in Bob's collar. He's always getting loose. First I must get the tweezers."

He ran off at once to find the tool, but on entering the kitchen was at once pounced upon by the cook. Sarah had been at the Pines for many years, and the young Ormonds had grown to regard her as quite one of the family.

"Now, Master Guy," she began, "what business had you got to go and take all my methylated spirit?"

"I haven't touched it," was the answer.

"Yes, you have, now. You've been and taken it for that there model steam engine of yours. Why didn't you come and ask if you might have some?"

"I tell you I *haven't* had any," persisted the boy.

"Now, Master Guy, you're telling fibs. The bottle was half full, or nearly so, last week; and when I come to it this afternoon there wasn't a drop left, and too late to send down into town and get any."

"Look here, Sarah; you can say what you like, but I haven't touched your silly old bottle, so there! Jane must have taken the spirit, or else you used it yourself."

The boy found the tweezers, and ran out into the yard. But Sarah was still unconvinced. She had found her remaining stock of methylated spirit entirely vanished; and as Guy had been known, on one or two previous occasions, to borrow the bottle and help himself to its contents when fuel was required for his model steam engine, she naturally supposed him to be the culprit in the present instance.

Later on, when the family were assembled at the tea-table, Mrs. Ormond herself referred to the matter.

"Guy," she said, "are you sure you haven't taken cook's methylated spirit?"

"Quite sure, mother."

"I should be sorry to think that you weren't telling me the truth about such a small matter, but I must say it does seem very strange. Sarah goes and finds the bottle standing uncorked and empty, and I know myself that there was some spirit in it a few days ago."

"Perhaps if the cork wasn't in the bottle the spirit had evaporated," suggested Elsie.

"I don't think it would do that," replied her mother, laughing. "I'm rather inclined to think that it evaporated into the lamp of somebody's steam engine."

"No, it didn't!" cried Guy. "Look here, mother; you might as well believe a fellow when he tells you the truth."

"Well, if you tell me you didn't take it," replied Mrs. Ormond, "I must believe you. All I can say is, it's very strange."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.