

# The Vanishing Lady

*A Kensington Ghost*

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

An interesting story, in which the principals were people of high social position, was told from a church pulpit and much discussed last year. A correspondent in Italy sent me a cutting relating to it from our English *Globe* of December 20, 1913, in which the story (told in several newspapers) is repeated, which I now reproduce for the benefit of readers who may have missed it at the time.

The story runs as follows—

“A Kensington vicar was leaving the church after choir practice, when a lady stepped out of the aisle and asked him in agitated tones to come with her at once to an address near by.

“ ‘A gentleman is dying there,’ she said. ‘He is extremely concerned about the state of his soul, and anxious to see you before he dies.’

“The clergyman followed her to a waiting taxicab, and a short drive round the corner brought them to a mansion. The lady, who seemed so extremely agitated, urged the vicar to hurry. He sprang out of the cab, rang the bell, and a butler appeared.

“ ‘Does Mr. — live here?

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘I hear he is seriously ill, and has sent for me.’

“The butler seemed astonished almost beyond words. He expostulated that his master was not ill; that, as a matter of fact, he was in the best of health.

“ ‘But this lady—’ exclaimed the vicar, as he turned round; and then an expression of blank astonishment came over him.

“The taxi-cab and the lady had completely disappeared.

“The butler looked on the clergyman as either a madman or a practical joker, and was about to slam the door, when his master came along the passage and inquired what it was all about.

“ ‘Are you Mr. —?’ asked the clergyman. ‘I heard that you were seriously ill, and you were concerned about your soul, and that you had sent for me.’

“He described the lady who had brought him, and the ‘dying’ man said he could not identify her; that he had no such friend or acquaintance. They discussed this matter on the doorstep for a few moments, and then the clergyman was invited to come inside.

“ ‘It is very strange,’ said Mr. — ‘that you should have been sent on such an errand in such a mysterious way. As a matter of fact, although I am perfectly well, I have been troubled lately about the state of my soul, and I have been seriously contemplating calling upon you to discuss the matter with you. Now that you are here let us brush aside this strange incident, and if you will give me the time we will discuss what has been on my conscience.’

“The clergyman stayed for an hour or so, and it was then arranged that his new acquaintance should come to the church the next morning, and they would continue their discussion after service. He did not appear at the church, and the vicar, very much interested, called to see what was the matter. He was met at the door by the butler, who

told him that his master had died ten minutes after he left the house on the previous evening.

“They went upstairs to the bedroom where the dead man lay, and on a table in the middle of the room stood a portrait of the lady who had brought the clergyman in the cab from the church.

“ ‘Who is that?’ asked the astonished clergy man.

“ ‘That, sir,’ replied the butler, ‘is my master’s wife, who died fifteen years ago.’”