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Stella Mordaunt.

—OR—

The Cruise of the "Kingfisher."

CHAPTER XXI.

Upon the court fell the silence, the stupor of amazement, and that interest which is too intense to be called mere curiosity. The magistrates gazed from one to the other, from the prisoner in the dock to the lovely girl who appeared as a witness against him. The crowd was as still as if turned to stone, its eyes moving from one figure to another, and every person present was asking what it meant.

Edward was as astonished as the rest, and sat gazing first at Rath and then at Stella; and Mr. Bulpit, who had been as startled as the others at the sudden cry—the twin notes of joy and love—was, perhaps, the first to recover his calm.

"Who is she? What does it mean?" he asked abruptly of Edward.

"I don't know! I can't guess; I never saw her before—wait. Yes! Idiot that I am! It is she—the girl of the island."

"What 'she'—what girl?" demanded Mr. Bulpit, still more abruptly.

"The girl he lost—the girl he—Oh, I can't explain—there isn't time. But how is it that she is here—how does she come here? Look at Lisle. What is the matter with him?"

For Lisle had sunk into his seat again, and was leaning his head upon his hand as if he had received a sudden blow.

Mr. Bulpit stared from one to the other, and frowned heavily; his legal mind resented these sudden shocks and surprises, and he looked up at the magistrates as if for guidance.

Meanwhile, Stella had realized that though Rath was here, he was separated from her, that he was held back by policemen, that he was charged with—murder! And that she was going to bear witness against him! The colour died from her face, and she succeeded by a deep pallor, her arms fell, and she clutched the edge of the box.

"Stella!" cried Rath, as if they were alone—and, indeed, at that moment, to his mind and eyes, hers was the only presence, and the bench of magistrates, the crowd, were "as if they were not." "Stella—speak to me! How did you come here?"

"Silence!" called the usher, recovering from his stupor. "Silence! You must not speak to the witness."

Rath's face flushed ominously, and he looked at the usher with stern anger; but Stella, turned with piteous eyes to the line of magistrates.

"He is innocent!" she cried, brokenly. "He is innocent! I did not

know that it was he. No one told me! Let me go—let me speak—to him!"

"Silence!" cried the usher again, as if it were the only word of which he were capable; but the clerk, at a sign from Lord Hatherley, went to the witness.

"Be calm," he said to Stella. "You cannot leave the box. You shall speak to the prisoner presently. You have to give your evidence."

Stella swayed slightly and her eyes closed, and Lord Hatherley poured out a glass of water and handed it to the usher, who carried it to Stella; but she waved it aside, and, with a great effort, recovered from the threatened swoon, and stood upright, her eyes fixed on Rath as if they would draw him to her.

The superintendent rose, evidently much discomposd by the sudden diversion from the regular legal procedure.

"Take the Testament; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God!" mumbled the usher, quickly.

Stella took the oath, her eyes never swerving from Rath's face.

"Your name is?" said the superintendent.

"Stella Mordaunt," answered Stella, mechanically.

"You knew the deceased—Madame Nita? You lived in the same house with her? And saw her the night of her death? Will you tell us how you came to know her?"

In low but clear accents Stella faltered out the account of her meeting with poor Nita; and as she told the story of the murdered woman's tender charity, the crowd murmured sympathetically and glanced at the prisoner darkly. It made his crime, if he were guilty, all the blacker.

"You know that she was married—Beg pardon, your worship. I'll ask if she knew the name of the deceased's husband."

As he put the question, there was a movement on the bench.

Ralph had shifted his chair, as if voluntarily, so that he was now almost hidden behind Lord Hatherley.

"No," replied Stella.

"You were present on the Tuesday night when the deceased said she saw her husband from the window?"

"Yes."

"She came home late that same night. Do you know whether she went to meet anyone?"

"No; oh, no; she did not tell me."

"Or that she was going to meet anyone on the night of the murder—on the night of her death?"

"No; she did not tell me. She went to the music-hall as usual," Stella answered, still mechanically, for her whole mind was concerned with Rath.

"Why was he standing there? Why had they accused him—him of all men—of this dreadful murder?"

"As a rule she came straight home after the performance?"

"Yes; those were the only two nights—Oh! I know nothing more—nothing!"

As Mr. Bulpit rose, Lord Hatherley said in a low voice:

"Place a chair for the witness."

Rath looked at him with swift gratitude; but Stella would not sit down. The front of the box was nearer Rath, you see.

"You have told us all you know of this terrible business, I am sure, Miss Mordaunt," said Mr. Bulpit, more gently than anyone present had ever heard him speak. "Now I will ask you to tell us all you know of the prisoner. When you entered the box, and first saw him, you called to

him by his Christian name, as if you were old friends; that is so?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" panted Stella, clasping her hands, and looking at Rath with love and pity in her beautiful eyes.

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the island."

"On the island? What island?"

"I do not know."

The court listened, amazed.

"You—do—not—know?" slowly from Mr. Bulpit.

"No. Oh! I will tell you. I may, Rath?"

At this ingenuous appeal to the prisoner, all eyes swung to him. He made an assenting movement of his hand.

"We were shipwrecked—my mother and I. And Rath—he came out from the island in a canoe and saved us. He took care of us, worked for us, protected us; if it had not been for his care we should have died." The tears began to gather in her eyes. "He was good to us. Oh! I cannot go on; give me time—a minute."

"Pray be seated," said Lord Hatherley.

"Silence!" cried the usher, as the crowd swayed and murmured with sudden sympathy.

"He gave us shelter and food, and worked day and night for us. Then—my mother died"—her voice broke—"and we were all alone."

The crowd exchanged glances; but not a man nor woman smiled or sneered; for the sweet girlish face and voice were eloquent of innocence and purity.

"And one day I went out in the boat for fish, and a storm arose suddenly, and the boat was blown out to sea—away from him." The tears were running down her cheeks, and a woman in the crowd gave a dry sob of excitement and emotion. "I was swept away from the island, and—thought that I—I should never see him again. And now he is here, and I—No, no; I can go on! I was picked up by a yacht—"

A movement on the part of Lord Lisle drew her eyes to him, and she uttered an exclamation.

"Need I—I say any more? Oh, my lord—gentlemen—he is innocent! You do not know him as well as I do, or you would know that he could not do it! Rath kill a woman! If you knew him! He is too good and noble. He would risk his life to save another man's; he has risked his life for me—only to—gather a few poor flowers. A murderer is a coward: no brave man would kill a woman—and Rath—there is none in all the world more brave!"

All this she had poured out, her hands clasped, her eyes streaming with tears, just as one of the factory girls in the crowd might have pleaded for her lover of whose innocence she was convinced. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin; and the women in the crowd were crying, mingling their tears with those of this sister of theirs, who, with the courage of love, declared her belief in the man who had saved and befriended her, and demanded his acquittal.

It was all terribly irregular, but not one of the magistrates uttered a protest, and the usher did not utter his parrot-like demand for silence.

"Is this true?" muttered Mr. Bulpit to himself; but Edward heard him. His own eyes were moist, and his voice broken, as he replied, eagerly:

"Yes. Can't you see it is? And it bears out Rath's story. Oh! if I could only go to him, take his hand—"

"Sit still!" growled Mr. Bulpit. "There's more in this than meets the eye."

Then he turned to Stella, who, trembling, stood with her small hands clutching the edge of the box.

"One or two more questions only," he said, more gently even than before. "You were swept away from the island—you have not seen the prisoner since?"

"No, oh, no!" replied Stella, with a sob. "I do not know how he came here—why—"

"Stella!" came from Rath's lips. "When you had gone I—I thought you were dead. Then Edward came, and he gave me hope, and I came with him to find you, if you were alive—"

"Silence! You really must remain silent," said the clerk, sternly.

Rath was about to make retort, with swift anger and indignation; but Mr. Bulpit said, quietly, firmly:

"You must not speak. Say nothing, whatever you hear." To Stella: "Did you ever hear the prisoner mention the name of the deceased? Permit me to ask it, your worships, I beg."

"No," replied Stella, with surprise.

"How should he? He had never heard of her. He had been on the island, alone with his father, since he was a child! How should he know her? Tell them, Rath—oh, tell them!"

Mr. Bulpit interposed quickly:

"Miss Mordaunt, we can all make allowance for your feelings; but you must not address the prisoner, and he must not speak yet. Now, my last question: Have you ever heard him speak of his wife?"

At this apparently absurd question, Stella stared. Then a blush rose, for an instant only, to her face.

"Answer, please, no matter how un-called for my question may seem," said Mr. Bulpit.

"No, no—oh, no! He had never seen any woman in his life but my mother and me," she replied, so sweetly, so innocently, that the crowd looked at one another.

"Thank you," said Mr. Bulpit.

A policeman went towards the box to help her down; but Lord Lisle, as if awaking from a stupor, sprang to his feet, pulled the man aside, and held out his hand to her.

"Oh, Lord Lisle!" she panted, "cannot I speak to him for a moment—only a moment?"

Lisle then did a small but noble thing. He drew her arm through his, and feigning to leave the court with her, stopped suddenly and brought her quickly to the front of the prisoner's box. Instantly Rath had bent down with outstretched hands, and Stella had clasped them. No one interposed for a moment as they gazed into each other's eyes; all were too moved, too taken by surprise at Lisle's clever ruse; and when a policeman came forward to part them, Lisle slipped in front of him and whispered to Stella:

"You must come away. Come, let her go, Rayne!"

Rayne drew his hands from hers.

"Don't cry, don't be frightened, Stella," he said. "You know I did not do it; they will find out presently."

"Silence! silence!" cried the usher, as the crowd began to sway and exclaim with excitement; and Lisle managed to draw her from the court, her eyes lingering on Rath's face to the very last moment. The murmur swelled to a louder sound, but the clerk quelled it. The superintendent rose. The sympathy of the crowd—perhaps also of the bench—had swung towards the prisoner. It was his duty to see that committal was obtained.

"I call Roger Spade," he said in the official voice; and the inkeeper of Team entered the box. His simple account of Rath's appearance at the inn so soon before the murder, and the incident of the knife, brought back to the court the weight of the evidence against the prisoner.

"Is that the knife?" asked the superintendent. The inkeeper took it and turned it over.

"Yes, it's the knife, sure enough," he said.

Mr. Bulpit was upon him at once.

"Come! There are hundreds of knives like that, Mr. Spade. You may have been mistaken—the prisoner might have taken that one up in mistake for his own. There may be two knives."

Mr. Spade shook his head.

"The one the gentleman took out to eat his pastry with had a piece knocked off the handle—I seed it; so has this."

"He is quite right," said Rath, simply. "It is my knife—I said so."

Mr. Bulpit turned to him with anger and impatience.

"Hold your tongue, sir!" he said sharply.

Rath looked at him with indignant surprise.

"The man told the truth. Why—" he began; and the crowd, staring at him with astonishment, uttered something like applause.

Mr. Bulpit turned to the bench.



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The Governor, Newfoundland
In Gallipoli Peninsula, operations were undertaken 28th, resulting in substantial and the capture of several Turkish trenches.
The French Government progress on the silted road Angres and Ablain.
In the Vosges certain positions of Metzeral, which the enemy had again occupied.
The Russian Government that Russian rearguards desperate enemy attacks in Touczow region. Capture Russian forces retiring Galla-Lipa River failed, with many losses.
Bad weather interrupted operations.
BONAP

GALLIOLI OPERATIONS
LONDON, J
An official statement issued dealing with operations in Gallipoli, says: The plan of operations on June 28th was to throw the left of General Sir I. E. S. Johnston's line southeast of Kribs establish a new line facing the ground gained. Capture lines of Turkish trenches, a Saghir Dere, and three lines west, all and more hoped for the operations, was gained.
The Australian corps was to co-operate by making a demonstration. The action of 9 o'clock with bombardment by artillery. Assistance was given by the French. This bombardment proved most valuable.
At 10.30 the field artillery fire to cut the wire in front of Turkish trenches. This was effect on one of the enemy's trenches near the sea was great. Very late fire of the cruiser Scorpion, destroyed Scorpion and W. succeeded in keeping down the lery fire from that quarter.
At 10.45 a small Turkish work at Saghir Dere, known Boomerang Redoubt, was destroyed, which very strongly used and protected by extra wire entanglements, had long source of trouble. After a bombardment by a French and white bombardment of the rounding trenches was at its part of the Border regiment, exact moment prescribed, leaving their trenches as one man, pack of bounds pouring out they raced across and took the most brilliantly.
Artillery bombardment increased intensity until 11 a.m., when range lengthened. The infantry advanced, and their attack was ried out with great dash along whole line. West of Saghir Dere lines of trenches were captured. Little opposition. The trenches full of dead Turks, many having buried by the bombardment. 2000 prisoners were taken.
East of the ravine the Royal made a fine attack, capturing the lines of trenches which had been signed as their objective, but the remainder of the Brigade on their

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