WHEN LOVE

Came Too Late.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Lost Man.

He did not utter the dreadful word, but the pause supplied it.

Faradeane looked down at him with pale, calm face.

"Now, most men would be satisfied with that," continued Mr. McAndrew, "but I'm not. I don't want you to give me any information that shall go further toward convicting you. No, I could get that for myself, but I want you to tell me," he rose and stretched out one forefinger, **"who did this murder?"**

It was a strange and startling speech, and another man would have been thrown off his guard and committed himself; but Faradeane had steeled himself for all ordeals.

"Be content," he said, gravely, almost solemnly. "You have your evidence; act upon it, and do your duty, sir!"

Mr. McAndrew reached for his hat at once.

"Very good, sir!" he said, as if he accepted Faradeane's response to his appeal as final. "I shall do my duty. Is there anything I can do for you—any message? You will communicate with your lawyers at once, of course?"

Faradeane was silent for a moment, then he said:

"I shall not need a lawyer."

The detective looked at him fixedly.

"No lawyer! No counsel!" he said.

"What lawyer, clever though he might be, could disprove the evidence?" said Faradeane, wearily. "You yourself have said it is conclusive."

Mr. McAndrew turned his hat round in his hands, still watching him.

"Very good, sir; and there is nothing I can do—no message?"

Faradeane went to the window, and his lips twitched.

"If you should see Mr. Vanley—the squire," he began, "will you tell him, please——" He stopped, then shook his head. "No, I can send no message even to him. Things must take their course."

"And no message to—Mrs. Bradstone, sir?" inquired Mr. McAndrew, softly, and with the deepest respect.

For a moment Faradeane's face changed color, then he said, almost haughtily:

What message should I have to send to that lady?"

Mr. McAndrew inclined his head.

"Very good, sir," he said. "I wish you good-day." He tapped at the door, and as the warder opened it for him he looked over his shoulder. "I forgot to say that Mr. Bradstone asked me if there was anything he could do for you, Mr. Faradeane."

Faradeane's face did not move a muscle.

"Thank him; no," he replied, firmly.

Mr. McAndrew paused outside the closed door, with his hand to his mouth, looking hard at the stone floor; then he went out. As he was passing the office the governor tapped at the window.

"Well," he said, with an affectation of carelessness.

"It isn't well; it's bad, colonel," replied Mr. McAndrew, grimly, and with just a shade of annoyance and disappointment. "Your friend—Mr. Faradeane, the prisoner—is resolved upon giving himself away, as the Americans say, and I'm afraid he'll be sorry when it's too late."

With these oracular words Mr. McAndrew left the governor, and went back to the hotel for his lunch. Several times during the consumption of a modest chop he paused with a morsel on his fork, and stared thoughtfully before him, as if he were struggling with some knotty problem; and after his lunch was finished and paid for, he lit a cigar and sauntered to Hawkwood Woods. He stood in the glade where the murder had been committed and Faradeane arrested, for several minutes, carefully noting the fallen tree, and indeed every inch of ground; then he walked back to the Grange, and back from the Grange to The Maples. Having surveyed that huge pile of red bricks for some minutes, he made his way to the railway station and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Prisoner and His Visitor.

For more than a fortnight Olivia wandered in the valley of the shadow of death; then the crisis came and passed, and life still counted her among its subjects. But her recovery was so slow that another fortnight elapsed before, thin and pale, a bruised and broken lily, she was carried from her bedroom to her boudoir.

During all the time of almost unendurable anxiety and suspense Bessie had scarcely left her. No nurse could have shown more devotion, no sister more tender and self-sacrificing love.

Almost as thin and pale as Olivia, she watched beside her night and day, fully repaid if Olivia's hand closed upon hers with a feeble pressure, or if she murmured gratefully her name.

Quite a thrill of relief ran through the county at the news of her convalescence, and attention, which had been mainly devoted to her, concentrated itself upon the man who lay in prison awaiting his trial, and upon Mr. Bartley Bradstone.

He had never been popular; but those who liked him least—and no one liked him overmuch—felt constrained to pity him. He seldom left The Maples, excepting to walk up to the Grange to inquire after his bride, and those few persons who chanced to meet him were struck by the change in his appearance. He had been rather ruddy and robust, but he was now thin and emaciated, and looked ten years older than he had done on the day of his wedding. There was not only a look of age, but an expression of anxious unrest, which struck every one who saw him; and, strange to say, the wan and haggard expression on his face did not leave it when Olivia was pronounced out of danger.

"That poor devil Bradstone has been completely bowled over," one man said. "Looks as if he had all the care of the world on his shoulders," and that very exactly described Bartley Bradstone's appearance.

He haunted the Grange daily; but he had not seen Olivia since the wedding day.

"Keep him away from her, if you wish her recovery to continue," the doctor had said, and the poor squire repeated his words.

"Oh, I won't worry her," said Bartley Bradstone, in the dull, apathetic manner which had settled upon him. "Sick people take all sorts of fancies; she'll see me when she's better, and—and we'll get away."

"Yes, yes," said the squire, with a heavy sigh. "When all this trouble is over. It is this terrible murder which hangs like a dark cloud over us all."

"Does—does she speak of it at all?" asked Bartley Bradstone, looking down at the carpet, as if he were suddenly interested in the pattern.

The squire shook his head.

"Not to me; not to Bessie, I think. She has seen no one else, excepting the doctor."

"That's right," said Bartley Bradstone. "Don't let anybody talk to her about it; she'll forget it before long."

It almost seemed as if Olivia had already forgotten it, for day after day passed and she made no mention of the terrible incident which had stricken her down. She lay on the sofa, her thin and now fragile form carefully enwrapped, her hands folded lightly in her lap; her lovely eyes, strained with hidden pain, fixed on the elms which showed through the window. Bessie, who even now scarcely ever left her, would sit silent for hours, sometimes with a book, sometimes at needlework. It was only when the squire entered that Olivia's pale face warmed with a smile. But one morning, after a long silence, she said, so quietly but suddenly that Bessie started and let the work fall from her hands:

"Bessie, tell me all; tell me the truth."

"About Mr. Faradeane, miss?" faltered Bessie, who had not yet learned to call her mistress by her wedded title.

"Yes," said Olivia, turning her eyes upon her with solemn entreaty and insistence. "Don't be afraid; I am strong enough. Tell me all. What have they done with him?"

Bessie's lips quivered and her eyes filled.

"They have sent him for trial, miss," she replied in a low voice.

Olivia looked at her steadily, and her breath came in quick little pants.

"Sent him for trial? They think he is guilty?" she said. "He, who would not hurt a dog, shoot a helpless woman! Why should he do it? Who was she?"

Bessie shook her head.

"No one knows, miss. Mr. Faradeane will not say anything, and—and that is why they say he did it. If he would only speak and explain, then people would believe him."

Olivia remained silent for a few moments, thinking deeply, her hands tightly clasped.

"And he will say nothing?" she inquired in a low voice.

"Nothing, miss; not a word!" said Bessie, the tears rolling down her cheeks; "and they all say—the servants in the hall—that the detective from London"—Olivia started and looked at her—"says that if he will not explain he—he will——"

She stopped with a choking little sob.

There were no tears in Olivia's eyes. Hot and brilliant, they looked out at the window, the lines graven deep in her white forehead.

"There is some mystery," she said in a low voice. "I know that he did not do it."

"Who did, miss?" sobbed Bessie. "Some one did it—some one they can't find; and everybody knowing Mr. Faradeane was in the wood, and that the pistol was his, will believe him guilty. Why, oh, why doesn't he speak out?"

Olivia was silent for a moment, then she raised herself on her elbow.

"Where is he?" she asked.

(To be Continued.)

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A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents in silver or stamps.

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1756—Striped wool suiting in brown tones was used in this instance.

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