

I got up from the sofa and led the way into the dining-room. Mrs. Rayner was still sitting, pale and upright, with staring gray eyes, Maynard still sleeping. The other detective shook him, and glanced at the wine.

"Drugged," said he shortly.

With a few vigorous shakes he succeeded in rousing Maynard, and when he began to look around him in a dazed way, the other said sharply:

"Pretty fellow you are to be hoodwinked like that, and drink and sleep quietly under the very roof of one of the greatest scoundrels unhung!"

"Who?" said the other, startled. "Mr. Rayner?"

"Mr. Rayner! Yes, Mr. Rayner! to simple folk like you; but to me and every thief-taker that knows his business—the missing forger, James Woodfall!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

As the detective pronounced the name "James Woodfall," I gave a cry that startled them all. I shrank even from Laurence as he would have put his arms round me, and my wild, wondering eyes fell upon Mrs. Rayner, who sat with her hands tightly clasped and head bent, listening to the proclamation of the secret which had weighed her down for years.

I sank down upon the floor beside her, and she put her thin, wasted arms round my neck and kissed me without a word. And the three men quietly left the room.

"Oh, Mrs. Rayner," I whispered, "it is terrible for you!"

"I have known it for years—almost ever since I married him. But don't talk about it any more," said she, glancing furtively round the room. "He may be in the house at this moment; and they might search and watch for months, but they would never catch him."

Laurence tapped at the door at that moment to say that the constables had returned to the house, having failed in the fog to find any trace of Gordon, or of any of the others. He was going to return with them to the Hall, where they would sleep, leaving Maynard to pass the night at the Alders. Then he said, very gently to poor Mrs. Rayner—

"Will you forgive me for what I have done in all innocence? I had some vague suspicions, but indeed I never thought to bring such a blow as this upon you."

"It is no blow to me," said she. "That man—my husband—would have got rid of me long ago, but that he hated violence and dreaded it."

There was a tap at the door, and the voice of the elder detective said—

"Are you ready, sir?"

"All right," said Laurence; and then added, in a voice for me only, "I'm not ready a bit. I should like to stay and comfort you forever. Take care of your poor little wounded arm. Good-night, good-night, my darling!"

I just managed to crawl upstairs to my room, and, throwing myself upon the bed without undressing, I fell into a deep sleep which was more like a swoon. In the early morning I woke with hot and aching head, and found that my arm was beginning to be very painful.

I was just going to see how Mrs. Rayner was when Dr. Lowe arrived on his daily visit to Sarah. He said very little in comment beyond telling me that I was a "little simpleton to be easily humbugged," and that he had always mistrusted Mr. Rayner; and then, strictly forbidding me to leave my bed until his visit next day, he left me.

Laurence told me, in one of his little notes he kept leaving for me all day long, that it was expected that Mr. Rayner would brave everything and return to the Alders sooner or later, if only for a flying visit, and that, in consequence, the search of the house which must take place was to be postponed, and the place watched, with as much caution as possible, from the outside.

Mrs. Rayner brought one of these notes up to me late in the afternoon.

"I have something to tell you," she whispered in my ear. "Mrs. Saunders drinks, and is not a proper guardian for Sarah. Last night she was in nearly as excited a state as her patient, and was very rough with her. I ought to be used to terrors, but I am afraid. Will you leave your door open and the door at the foot of the turret staircase?"

I promised; and two or three times during the night I rose and stood at the top of my staircase, listening. And this time I heard a faint cry, and presently the soft shutting of a door. I crept half-way down the stairs and found Sarah crouched in a corner muttering to herself—

"I've done it—I've done it! He'll come back now. I've done what he wanted. He can marry the Christie girl now."

I dashed along the corridor to Mrs. Rayner's room and went straight in. The atmosphere, stifling. Mrs. Rayner was lying with a cloth over her face! I snatched it off. It was steeped in something which I afterwards learnt was chloroform. I rushed to the two windows and flung them wide open, pulled the bell-rope until the house echoed, and moved her arms up and down. The cook and Jane came in, terribly alarmed, in their night-gowns. I left them with Mrs. Rayner while I ran down stairs for some brandy.

I was returning with it when I caught sight of a man in the gloom at the end of the passage leading from the hall. It was impossible to recognize him; but I could not doubt that it was Mr. Rayner.

I crept upstairs, too much agitated to be of any use any longer; but happily Mrs. Rayner was already recovering, and the brandy and water restored her to consciousness. I spent the rest of the night in her room, after I had, with the cook's assistance, persuaded the unhappy lunatic to return to her room.

As I lay thinking of all the strange and horrible events which had filled my life lately, the thought of Mr. Rayner lying concealed in some cellar, the existence of which was unknown to everyone else, came uppermost in my mind. How could a man who was so kind and sweet-tempered have no redeeming points at all? There were only two things that I could do now. I could pray for him, and I could perhaps let him know how the thought that it was I who had brought down justice upon him tormented me.

A possible means of communicating with him occurred to me. I sprang out of bed and wrote a note asking his forgiveness, and giving him a full explanation of the way in which, in all innocence, I had written the letter which had led to this pursuit of him. And then I put on my dressing-gown and slipped down to his study, where I put the note, directed simply to "G. Rayner, Esq.," just outside the drawer of his writing-table, and crept guiltily upstairs again.

Mrs. Mannors came to see me that afternoon. She told me that, when Laurence had heard of the night's adventure, he had gone to Dr. Lowe and insisted upon Sarah's removal to the county lunatic asylum that very day, and I never saw the poor creature again.

I wanted to see Mrs. Rayner, and find out whether she had heard of Sarah's departure.

I was opposite to the store-room door, when it was softly opened, and without being able to make any resistance, I was drawn inside by a man's arm. I looked up, expecting to see Mr. Rayner, and was horror-stricken to find myself in the arms of Gordon, the man who had shot me.

"Don't tremble so," said he. "I meant to do for you before I left this house; but this has saved you." And he showed me my letter to Mr. Rayner.

"Do you know where he is?" I asked eagerly.

"No, ma'am," said he in his respectful servant's manner; "but I should say that he is on his way to America by now, where he meant to have taken you."

"Me! America?"

"Yes, ma'am. Miss Haidee was to have been left at Liverpool Street Station, and brought back to the Alders."

"But I wouldn't have gone."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am; but I don't think your will would have stood out against James—Mr. Rayner's. And, if this letter had not shown you to be loyal to him, I would not have left you here alive. I may take this opportunity of apologising for having once borrowed a trinket of yours while you were staying at Denham Court. But, as it was one which I

myself had had the pleasure of assisting Mr. Rayner to procure from Lord Dalston, I thought it wisest to pull off the little plate at the back, for fear of its being recognized by Mr. Carruthers, in whose service I was when I was first introduced to Lord Dalston's seat in Derbyshire."

"My pendant!" I cried. "It—it was real then?"

"Yes, ma'am. I have nothing to keep me here now, ma'am; so I shall be off to-night."

He led me courteously to the door, bowed me out, and shut himself in again, while I went on, trembling and bewildered, toward Mrs. Rayner's room.

"May I come in, Mrs. Rayner? I have something to tell you."

"I can't let you in. Can you speak through the door?"

"No, no; I must see you. I have something very important to say about Mr. Rayner," I whispered into the keyhole.

"Is he here?" she faltered.

"No; he is gone to America," I whispered.

She turned the key slowly, while I trembled with impatience outside the door.

But as I stepped forward into the room, I drew my breath fast in horror. For I became aware of a smell of damp and decay; I felt that the boards of the floor under the carpet were rotten and yielding to my feet, and I saw that the paper was peeling off the wet and moldy walls, and that the water was slowly trickling down them.

"Oh, Mrs. Rayner," I cried, aghast, "is this your room—where you sleep?"

"I have slept in it for three years," said she. "If my husband had had his will, it would have been my tomb."

CHAPTER XXX.

"But why did you stay? Why did you say nothing about it? And why were you not glad to go upstairs, instead of begging as you did to remain here?"

"Because," she whispered, "I knew that while I remained down here they would not kill me outright; they could not let me die down here, and introduce doctors and strangers to examine into the cause of my death into this room. I knew that a change of room was my death-warrant; and so it would have been, but for the accident which happened to Sarah on the very night when, but for you, I should have been sleeping upstairs ready to her hand."

I staggered back, suddenly remembering the message Mr. Rayner had in his letter told me to give to Sarah. It was this—"Tell Sarah not to forget the work she has to do in my absence. And I remembered also the grim way in which she had received it. Could he have meant that!"

Before the end of the day I heard that Mrs. Saunders had disappeared, without any warning or any application for payment of her services, as soon as Sarah had been taken off to the lunatic asylum. She had spared us any pangs of self-reproach on her account, however, by taking with her Mrs. Rayner's watch, and also the cook's, which had been left in the rooms of their respective owners.

"She doesn't expect to see Mr. Rayner again then," I whispered to Mrs. Rayner, who came to my bedside to tell me the news, "or she would never dare to do that."

There was really nothing to keep the poor lady at the Alders now, as I told Laurence by letter that evening all that Gordon had said to me in the store-room, and the idea gained ground that Mr. Rayner had gone to America. But she insisted upon remaining until I was well enough to be moved, an event which I had myself retarded by rashly leaving my room three times since I had been told to keep my bed.

Meantime the fog still hung about the place, and Nap, the retriever, howled every night. When Monday came, I, anxious to be declared convalescent as soon as possible, and to be able to avail myself of Mrs. Mannors's invitation to stay at the Vicarage, persuaded Dr. Lowe to let me go downstairs. It was about twelve o'clock when I left my room, and I had made my way as far as the corridor below, when I became aware of an unusual commotion on the ground-floor, the sobbing of a woman, and a heavy tramp, tramp of men's feet through the hall and along the passage to Mr. Rayner's study.

I went to the top of the back staircase, descended a few steps, and looked over. The gardener and Sam were carrying between them a door, on which something was lying covered by a sheet. The cook opened the study door, and they took it in. A horrible dread filled my mind and kept me powerless for a few moments. Then I ran along the corridor, down the front staircase, and met little Haidee with awe on her childish face.

"Oh, Miss Christie," she whispered, clutching my arm in terror, "they've found papa!"

Jane ran forward and caught me as I tottered in the child's clasp. Before I had recovered sufficiently to go to Mrs. Rayner in the drawing-room, Laurence and Mrs. Mannors arrived, having heard the ghastly news already. They took us over to the Vicarage at once, and I never entered the Alders again.

In the evening Laurence told me all about the discovery. The garden which led down to the lake for the last few days beyond keeping the gate locked and driving away with a whip the boys who would swarm over when they got a chance, "just to have a look at the place," had been attracted that morning by the shrill cries of Mona, who, now more neglected than ever, spent all day in the garden in spite of the fog. He ran to the pond, where she was nearly always to be found, and whence her cries came, fearing she had fallen in. But he found her standing on the edge of it, screaming, "Come out, come out!" and clutching with a stick at an object in the water. It was the body of her father, entangled among the reeds.

The down-trodden grasses and rushes at that corner of the pond nearest to the stile which joined the path through the field beyond told the story of how he must have missed his way coming through the plantation in the dense fog of Wednesday night, on his way back from the Hall to the Alders, slipped into the pond, and been drowned out there in the fog and darkness, while his dog Nap, hearing his cry for help, had tried in vain, by howling and barking, to draw attention to his master's need.

I heard next day that two passages, booked in the name of "Mr. and Mrs. Norris," had actually been taken by him on board a ship which left Liverpool for New York on the very Thursday when we were to have started on our journey "to Monaco." The tickets were found upon him and also a valuable ornament of rubies that had belonged to Mrs. Cunningham. These were the only ones, of all the stolen jewels, which were ever recovered, with the exception of the diamond pendant, which I sent back to its owner, Lord Dalston. Upon the house being searched, the candle which had fallen from my hand when I first went into the cellar and the store-room was found under the stagnant water there, and also the brown portmanteau, which was identified as one belonging to Sir Jonas Mills; but the jewels, with the exception of a stray drop from an earring, had disappeared.

I was married to Laurence before the trial of poor Tom Parkes and of the subordinate who had been caught removing the plate from the Hall.

He pleaded "Guilty" to the charges brought against him of taking an active part in the robbery at Denham Court, where the various articles stolen were being quietly abstracted one by one at different times by Gordon for two or three days before the Tuesday, when they were finally carried off by Mr. Rayner, and taken by him and Tom to the Alders, where Sarah had received them, as I had seen.

As to what had become of the jewels afterward, Tom professed himself as innocent as a child; but, whether this was true or not, nobody believed him.

Poor Mrs. Rayner never entirely shook off the gloomy reserve which had grown round her during those long years of her miserable marriage. Kind-hearted Sir Jonas Mills was among the very first to come forward to help her; and, by his generous assistance and that of other friends, she went to live abroad, taking Haidee with her, and Jane, who proved a most devoted servant and friend.

Laurence and I, who were married before she left England, undertook the care of poor little savage Mona, who had grown into almost as nice a child as her sister. And now I have one of my own too.

[THE END.]

Puzzles.

All matter for this department should be addressed to Ada Armand, Pakenham, Ont.

1-CROSS WORD ENIGMA.

My FIRST is in place, but not in spot;
My SECOND is in heap, but not in lot;
My THIRD is in came, but not in return;
My FOURTH is in Amsterdam, but not in Berne;
My FIFTH is in John, but not in Hugh;
My SIXTH is in pierce, but not in through;
My SEVENTH is in pansy, but not in heather;
My WHOLE is a kind of valuable leather.

J. S. CRERAR.

2-DROP VOWEL.

Tr-thor-sh-dt-r-thsh-lr-s-g-n,
Th-t-rn-ly-rs-fg-d-r-h-rs;
B-t-r-r-w-ad-dwr-th-e-n-p-n
-ndd-s-m-ngh-sw-rsh-pp-rs.

ETHEL MCCREA.

3-CHARADE.

I've slung my things in my carpet sack;
Like the prodigal son I'm coming back;
You needn't bother about a calf.
My appetite's gone—I couldn't eat half.

Oh! C. E. Edwards I'm after you.
There won't one much left when I get thro';
Now what have you done with Harmond B.,
You've chased him as you couldn't chase me.

And now you kindly the prizes drop.
Two the one who'd best, you've made stop.
There! I've no inclination to fight—
Other fish to fry—so now Good-night.

L'ENVOI.

Oh! Harmond hustle to the fray,
And chase this naughty boy away;
COMPLETELY we really can't allow
Such tyrannies among us now.

A. P. HAMPTON.

4-CHARADE (phonetic) AND ANAGRAM.

Oh come with me all puzzlers gay,
Off we'll wander far away;
We'll travel east,
We'll travel west,
We'll travel whither we like best.

Over the boundless sea we'll go,
Over the MASTER GULF, you know,
And when we reach
Our journey's end,
Tidings to Uncle Tom we'll send.

We'll stop at Egypt on our trip,
Where wonders are on every lip.
We'll PRIMAL last,
If you all please,
Among the TOTAL. Pay your fees.

A. P. HAMPTON.

5-CHARADE.

In the spring when First prevails,
And Total causes much man ails,
He heaves a sigh of heartfelt thanks,
If with the well Two men he ranks;
But if the Total he's among,
A different tune you'll find is sung.

CLARA ROBINSON.

6-DOUBLE BEHEADMENT AND CURTAILMENT.

Life is short, and time is fleeting,
And our part on earth is not
Simply breathing, drinking, eating,
But to exercise our thought.

Sober thoughts together linking,
As we journey on through life,
We can, by our merely thinking,
Be a hero in the strife.

Thought immortal FIRST our being,
Infinite and uncompassed;
Shall we trifle then, foreseeing
Worlds of meaning by the LAST!

C. S. EDWARDS.

7-ARITHMETICAL.

As I was coming from town I met a man proceeding thither
with a load of turkeys. "Good-morning, sir," said I, "where
are you going with your 20 turkeys?" "I have not got 20 tur-
keys," said he, "but if I had as many as many more, half
as many, and two and a half, I would have 20 turkeys." How
many turkeys had he?

W. S. BANKS.

8-TRANSPPOSITION.

Aasi ohw gaeis hnties og gornaw
A gshi oto chmu ro a hnti ot rentox
Enth colfew a emes adn on nde fo lnpa
Dns eifil eenny hte asme gaani.

MAY MCNIE.

Answers to March 15th Puzzles.

1— T
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2— Small service is true service while it lasts;
Of friends however humble scorn not one;
The daisy by the shadow that it casts
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

3— Don, Elbe, Oder, Rhone, Trent, Orange, Ganges, Mersey.
4— Whole-some. 5— Marts—arts—star—tars.
6— He filled the lady's vessel and then filled the 3-quart
measure out of it, leaving 4 quarts, or 1 gallon, in the larger
vessel.

SOLVERS TO MARCH 15TH PUZZLES.

J. S. Crerar, Addison M. Snider, Clara Robinson, Ethel
McCrea, Edith Brown, Annie P. Hampton, Jennie Stewart.

The winners of prizes for solutions during January, Febru-
ary and March are: 1st prize, 75 cents, Miss Clara Robinson,
Markham, Ont.; 2nd prize, 50 cents, Mr. A. M. Snider, Flor-
dale, Ont.; 3rd prize, 25 cents, Mr. John S. Crerar, Brussels,
Ont.

Easter Bread.

Mix and set to rise over night, one yeast cake,
two cups of water, and two cups of flour; in the
morning, take six cups of flour, two cups of milk,
one and a half cups of currants, the same of raisins,
half a cup of sugar; rub into these a piece of butter
the size of a large hen's egg, add a teaspoonful of
salt, mix and let rise till it is light, then mold and
put into pans until light, then wet the top with
melted butter and bake one hour.

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