

# THE BETRAYAL

BY E. PHILLIPS  
OPPENHEIM



## CHAPTER XXX.

Mostyn Ray's Love Story.

In a dark corner of the library, sitting motionless before a small writing-desk, I found the duke. The table was littered all over with papers, a ledger or two and various documents. I had met Mr. Hulshaw, the agent to the estates, in the drive, so I judged that the two had had business together.

The duke had not greeted me on my entrance, and he seemed to be asleep in his chair. But at the sound of the electric bell, which announced the opening of the safe, he turned sharply round.

"Is that you, Ducaine?"

"Yes, your grace," I answered.

"What are you doing there?"

"I have brought up the last batch of copy, sir," I answered.

"You have sealed it properly?"

"With Lord Chelsford's seal, sir," I told him.

He turned round in his chair sharply. "What's that?" he asked.

"Lord Chelsford gave me an old signet ring before he left, sir," I said, "with a very peculiar design. I wear it attached by a chain to an iron bracelet round my arm."

"Let me see it," the duke ordered.

I took off my coat, and baring my arm, showed him the ring hanging by a few inches of strong chain from the bracelet. He examined the design curiously.

"How do you detach it?" he asked.

"I cannot detach it, sir," I answered.

"The bracelet has a Bramah lock, and Lord Chelsford has the key. He used to wear it many years ago when he was Queen's messenger."

The duke examined the ring long and searchingly. Then he looked from it into my face.

"You mean to say that you cannot take that off?"

"A locksmith might, sir. I certainly could not."

The duke shrugged his shoulders.

"Chelsford's method seems to me to favor a little of opera bouffe," he remarked dryly. "For my own part I believe that these marvelous documents would be perfectly safe in the unlocked drawer of my desk. I do not believe any of these stories which come from Paris about copies of our work being in existence. I do not wish you to be careless, of course, but don't overdo your precautions. This place is scarcely so much a nest of conspirators as faddists like Chelsford and Ray would have us believe."

"I am glad to hear that you think so, sir," I answered. "Our precautions are as to where I live. It seems quite certain that the Winchester papers were disturbed."

"I do not choose to believe it, Ducaine," the duke said irritably. "Kindly remember that!"

"Very good, sir," I answered. "There is nothing else you wish to say to me?"

"There is something else," the duke answered coldly. "I understand that the police yesterday, on a sworn affidavit, were granted a search warrant to examine your premises for stolen property. What the devil is the meaning of this?"

"I think, sir," I answered, "that the stolen property was a pretext. It seems that during the last few days has come to light that the man whose body I found on the sands was not a stranger, who had arrived in Braster the previous evening, and had made inquiries as to where I lived. It seems to be the desire of the police, therefore, to connect me in some way with the affair."

The duke looked at me searchingly.

"I presume," he said, "that they had something in the nature of evidence, or they would scarcely have been able to swear the affidavit for the search warrant."

"They have nothing more direct, sir, than that the body was found close to my cottage, that he had presumably left Braster to see me, and that I was foolish enough to persuade the person, of whom the men made these inquiries in Braster, not to come forward at the inquest."

"Stop! Stop!" the duke said irritably. "You did what?"

"The young woman of whom he inquired was close at hand when I discovered the body of the man," I said. "She told me about him. I was a little upset, and I suggested that there was no necessity for her to disclose the fact of having seen him."

"It was a remarkably foolish thing of you to do," the duke said.

"I am realizing it now, sir," I answered.

"Did this person call on you at all?" the duke asked.

"No, sir. You may remember that it was the night of Colonel Ray's lecture. He called to see me on his way back and found me ill. I believe that this person looked in at the window and went away. I saw no more of him alive after this."

"You have some idea, I presume, as to his identity?"

"I have no definite information, your grace," I answered.

The duke did not look at me for several moments.

"I am afraid," he said, stiffly, "that you may experience some inconvenience from this most ill-advised attempt of yours to suppress evidence which should most certainly have been given at the inquest. However, I have no doubt that your story is true. I have some inquiries now before me from the police station. I will do what I can for you. Good evening, Ducaine."

"Good evening, sir," I answered. "I am much obliged to you."

I walked homewards across the park. The carriage had gone from the private road, and Ray was alone when I entered. It was impossible to tell what had happened from his expression. He sat stretched out in my easy chair, smoking furiously, and his face was impassive. Grooton served us with dinner, and he ate and drank with only a few curt remarks. But afterwards, when I was deep in my work, he suddenly addressed me.

"Boy," he then said, "turn round and listen to me."

"Listen well," he said, "for I am not

given to confidences. Yet I am going to speak to you of the secret places of my life."

I laid down the pen which I had been holding between my fingers, and turned my chair. I judged that it was not necessary for me to speak, nor apparently did he think so.

"I have been solitary all my days," he said, "since I was a child almost. It is a glorious life. God knows I have never grumbled a single month of it. But when one comes back once more to dwell amongst civilians one realizes that there is another side to life. It is so with me. I am not given to doubts or to asking advice from any man. But the time has come when I have the one and need of the other."

He paused, knocked out some ashes from his pipe, and relighted it.

"I have loved two women in my life, Guy," he went on slowly. "The first was your mother, but I still hold my peace. He looked hard into the ashes of the fire, and continued.

"I tried my best," he said, "to be a friend to her after her marriage, and I hope, I think, that I succeeded. I even did my best to fight that woman's influence with your father at Gibraltar. There I failed. I was foredoomed to failure. She had the trick of playing what time she cared to on a man's heartstrings. After it was all over, and your father and she had left the place, I spent years trying to persuade my mother to get a divorce and marry me. But she was the daughter of a bishop, a High Churchwoman, and a holy woman. She died with your father's name upon her lips."

I shuddered. The words were spoken so deliberately, and yet with such vibrant force.

"After that," Ray continued, "came Egypt, then India, and afterwards Khiva. I came home before the last war, and I met Lady Angela. I am so little of a woman's man that I suppose the girl whom I thought of at all became like an angel, a creature altogether apart from that sex of whom I know so little. However that may be, she was the second woman to hold any place in my heart—as she most surely will be the last. Then the war broke out, luck came my way, and I returned with a greater reputation than I deserved. The very night of my return I asked Lady Angela to marry me, and she consented."

He puffed vigorously at his pipe, but he seemed wholly ignorant of the fact that it was out. His face was set in its grimest lines. He looked steadily at a certain spot in the fire, and went on.

"There are things," he said, "which troubled me little at the time, but which lately have been on my mind. The first is that I am nearly 50, and Lady Angela is 21. The second is that I came home with all the tinsel and glamour of a popular hero. Heaven knows I loathed it, but the fact remains. The King's reception, the V. C., and all that sort of thing, I suppose, accounted for it. Anyway, I am troubled with this reflection. Lady Angela was very young, and I fear that her imagination was touched. She accepted my offer, and she has been very loyal. Until tonight no word of disagreement has passed between us. There have been times lately when I have fancied that I have noticed a change. A time has come now when I could give her back her freedom without reproach on either side. I want to know whether it is my duty to give it her back."

Then Ray looked straight into my face, and the color faded from his cheeks. "What do you think, Guy? You are only a boy, but you are of her age, and you have seen a little of her lately. You are only a boy, but then only boys and novelists understand women. Speak up and tell me what is in your mind."

"I will tell you this," I answered hotly. "If I were you, and Lady Angela had promised to be my wife, I would not sit and hatch schemes about marrying her. I would marry her first, and make up my mind afterwards, and as for the rest—for the questions which you have asked me, and yet not put into words—I have never heard or seen in Lady Angela the slightest sign that you were not her lover as well as the man whom she was engaged to marry. As for my own folly, since you seem to have noticed it, I know better than that I am in the rankest, most absurd presumption. But with me it begins and ends. That is a most absolute and certain fact."

Ray rapped his pipe upon the table.

"Listen," he said. "I found you nameless and practically lost. Yet you have been some time, and your family is equal to the duke's. There may be money too some day. Bear these things in mind. Can you repeat what you have said?"

It was a wild dream—a wonderful one. But, before me I saw the stern, white face of the man, eager for his share of happiness after all these magnificent years of dauntless service. I forgot my own distrust of him, his coldness, his brutality. I remembered only those other and greater things.

"Even were I in such a position," I said, "it would make no difference. I am sure that Lady Angela is loyal. She has no idea—and it is not worth while that she should have."

"You would have me marry her, then?" he asked slowly.

"There is only one thing," I said, taking my courage into my hands.

"And that?" he asked sharply.

"That," I answered, "lies between you and your conscience."

"Wait here," he said, "and I will show you my justification."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

My Father's Letter.

I heard Ray's heavy footsteps ascending the stairs to his room. In a few moments he returned, bearing in his hand a letter.

"Guy," he said thoughtfully, "I am a man who is slow to place trust in any one. For that reason, and perhaps because ignorance was better for

you, I have told you little of the events of that night. Now my first opinion of you has undergone some modifications. You are stronger than I thought, you have shown faith in me, too, or I should not be here practically a guest under your roof to-night. Listen! The man whom you found dead in the marshes was not your father!"

I was not surprised. Always I had doubted it.

"Who was he, then?" I asked calmly.

"When your father went mad at Gibraltar," Ray said, "he needed help. This man, Clery by name, supplied it. When I knew them both he was your father's valet. Since then he has been his confederate in many schemes. Your father on many occasions manifested the remnants of a sense of honor. This creature set himself deliberately and successfully to corrupt it. He was a parasite, a nerveless, bloodless thing without a single human attribute. He and that woman were alike responsible for your father's ruined life."

"Once before," Ray continued, after a moment's pause, "I had told him that if ever we should meet where his life would cost me nothing, I would kill him as I would set my hand upon an adder—and he only smiled, as though I had paid him some delicate compliment. And that night, Guy, a hundred yards from your cottage, he sidled up to me in that lonely road and bade me direct him to the abode of Mr. Guy Ducaine. A moment after he recognized me."

A grim smile parted Ray's lips, but I could not repress a shudder. Invariably at any reference to that awful night the old fear came back.

"He seemed at first paralyzed with fear," Ray continued. "He tried to slip away into the marshes, but I caught him easily, and held him so

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.

I had meant to be careful whom I admitted, but I had scarcely withdrawn the latch when the door was pushed open, and a slim, thickly-cloaked figure glided past me into the room. I knew her by the supple swiftness of her movements. Ray sat still, and smoked with the face of a sphinx.

I think that at first she did not see him. She swept round upon me and raised her veil.

"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

"I could not help it," I have made a mummy of myself, and I have walked

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.

I had meant to be careful whom I admitted, but I had scarcely withdrawn the latch when the door was pushed open, and a slim, thickly-cloaked figure glided past me into the room. I knew her by the supple swiftness of her movements. Ray sat still, and smoked with the face of a sphinx.

I think that at first she did not see him. She swept round upon me and raised her veil.

"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

"I could not help it," I have made a mummy of myself, and I have walked

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.

I had meant to be careful whom I admitted, but I had scarcely withdrawn the latch when the door was pushed open, and a slim, thickly-cloaked figure glided past me into the room. I knew her by the supple swiftness of her movements. Ray sat still, and smoked with the face of a sphinx.

I think that at first she did not see him. She swept round upon me and raised her veil.

"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

"I could not help it," I have made a mummy of myself, and I have walked

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.

I had meant to be careful whom I admitted, but I had scarcely withdrawn the latch when the door was pushed open, and a slim, thickly-cloaked figure glided past me into the room. I knew her by the supple swiftness of her movements. Ray sat still, and smoked with the face of a sphinx.

I think that at first she did not see him. She swept round upon me and raised her veil.

"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

"I could not help it," I have made a mummy of myself, and I have walked

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.



"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

that he could not escape. He admitted that he had come to find you with a message from your father. He denied at first having a letter, but I searched him until I found it. As you see, it is addressed to you. Nevertheless I struck matches, opened it, and with some difficulty managed to read it. All the time this creature was doubling about like an eel trying to get away. Read the letter."

I drew it from the envelope. It was dated from the Savoy Hotel.

"My Dear Son,—I do not deserve that you should read beyond these three words. I have a little right to call you my son as you can have desire to claim me for your father. I am here, however, purely on an errand of justice. I have learned that you have been robbed of the sum set aside to give you a start in life. I am here to endeavor to replace it, for which purpose I desire that you will grant me a business interview within the next few days. I beg your reply by Clery, my faithful companion and servant. I am known here as

"RICHARD DREW FOSTER."

I laid the letter down without remark. Ray had filled his pipe whilst I had been reading, and was sitting now on the arm of his easy chair, facing me.

"I understood the letter and its meaning," he continued. "I knew that the whole neighborhood was under the observation of the French secret service, and the man who signed himself Richard Drew Foster saw in you an excellent tool ready to his hand. It is very certain also that the matter would probably have presented itself to you in a wholly different light. Accordingly, I placed the letter in my own pocket, and I released my hold of Clery."

"You can go back to your master," I said, "and tell him that you have seen me, and that I have his letter. It will be sufficient. And you can tell him that I shall be in London tomorrow night, and if any such person as Mr. Drew Foster is staying at the Savoy Hotel, he will know the inside of a military prison before midnight."

"The man slunk away," I suppose he realized that with me in the way their

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

Then as we sat in silence there came a law tapping at the door. Ray looked at me keenly.

"Who visits you at this hour?" he asked.

"We will see," I answered.

I had meant to be careful whom I admitted, but I had scarcely withdrawn the latch when the door was pushed open, and a slim, thickly-cloaked figure glided past me into the room. I knew her by the supple swiftness of her movements. Ray sat still, and smoked with the face of a sphinx.

I think that at first she did not see him. She swept round upon me and raised her veil.

"Guy," she cried, "forgive me, but I could not help it."

"I could not help it," I have made a mummy of myself, and I have walked

game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I got my finger inside the slipknot, and I held him by the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marches. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely God's justice, but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"And Mr. Drew Foster?"

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said dryly, "and had omitted to leave an address."

"You might have trusted me," I remarked, thoughtfully.

"If I had known you as well then as I do now," Ray answered, "I would have risked it."

and to my surprise was informed by the servant who answered my inquiries that a room was reserved for me there. I had no sooner reached it than Lady Angela's own maid arrived with a message. Her ladyship would be glad if I could spare her a few moments in the drawing-room as soon as possible.

Lady Angela was standing upon the hearth. I stepped a little way across the threshold and stopped short. She held out her hand to me with a quiet laugh.

"Have you forgotten me?" she asked. "or I am so alarming?"

I set my teeth and moved towards her.

"You took my breath away," I said, with an ease which I was very far from feeling. "Remember that I have come from Braster."

I do not know what she wore. Her gown seemed to me to be of some soft crepe or silk, and the color of it was a smoky misty blue. There were pearls around her neck, and her hair, arranged with exquisite simplicity, seemed to be drawn back from her face and arranged low down on the back of her neck. She had still the fresh delightful color which had been in her cheeks when she left Braster, and the smile with which she welcomed me was as

delightful as ever.

"This is a charming arrangement," she declared. "You know that you are such an important person, and have to be watched so closely, that you are to stay here. I went up myself with the housekeeper to see to your rooms. I do hope that you will be comfortable."

"Comfortable is not the word," I answered. "I have never been used to such luxury."

She laughed.

"Dear me!" she said. "I have so much to tell you, and the carriage is waiting already. Thank goodness we dine alone tomorrow night. But there is one thing which I must tell you at once. Sir Michael Trogody is in town, you know. He took me in to dinner at Amberley House last night, and we talked about you."

"I had a letter from Sir Michael a few days ago," I answered. He made

a proposition to me—and asked me to call and see him."

Something in my voice, I suppose, betrayed my feelings. She laid her hand upon my arm.

"Mr. Ducaine," she said, "I do hope that you mean to be reasonable. Sir Michael is a dear old man."

"He is my mother's brother," I answered, "and he left me to starve."

"He had not the least idea," she declared, "that you were not reasonably well off. He is most interested in hearing about you, and he was delighted to have you accept the allowance he offered you. You will go and see him."

"Yes, I shall go," I promised. "I scarcely see the use of it, but I will go."

"You must not be foolish," she said softly. "Sir Michael is very rich and you are his only near relative. Besides, you have had such a lonely time, and it is quite time that you saw a little of the other side of life. Sir Michael is a particular friend of mine, and I promised him that I would talk to you about this. I am most anxious to hear that you get on well together. You can be amiable if you like, you know, and you can be very much the other thing."

"I will try," I assured her, "not to be the other thing."

She smiled.

"And tell me all about Braster."

"There is not much to tell," I answered. "I have been hard at work all the time, and I have scarcely seen a soul."

"The woman—Mrs. Smith-Lessing?"

"She left Braster before you. I have not seen her since the evening of the day I saw her last."

She appeared relieved.

"May I ask you a question?" I asked. "About Colonel Ray. Has the duke forgiven him?"

"On the contrary, he is more bitter than ever," Lady Angela answered. "I have seen him once or twice only. He does not come here."

"I saw him in the paper," I said, "that you are engaged to him."

"It is not true," she interrupted. "Everything is as it was. But it is shockingly indefinite, of course. I scarcely know whether I am to consider myself an engaged person or not. Colonel Ray offered to release me, but we agreed to wait for a little time."

</