

The detectives were still on her track, or at least they thought they were.

A quarter of an hour later Mrs. Smedley and Miss Elmore were together in a little sitting-room at Guildford street.

And outside the door a man stood with his hands in his pockets and whistled in sheer astonishment. "Well, I'm hanged," he exclaimed to the woman who accompanied him, and who had just alighted with him from a hansom cab at the top of the street. "Well, I'm hanged," he exclaimed. "This takes it. This is Mrs. Smedley's place, and the girl's in with her. John Smedley can't have been there all the while without my knowing it."

"It's not likely," replied the woman. "If he was it's hardly probable that the wife would ask this girl to come and see him there."

"You wouldn't think so, but then who would think of them two being together at all, unless it was to pull each other's hair out?"

"Well, they are there and it's pretty certain that John Smedley isn't. What do you propose to do?"

"I'm hanged if I know," exclaimed the detective. "The thing looked straight enough this morning, but it looks deucedly crooked now. It's my belief one of 'em's fly, and having a game with us. But we'll stop about a bit. The girl will come out again presently and then I'll follow her. I'm going to see where she sleeps to-night, anyway."

"Do you want me any more?"

"You'd better wait a bit. I may want to leave you while I go after Mrs. Wilson. You'd better watch from the other end of the street and I'll take this corner. It's my opinion that one of 'em's tumbled, and there'll be nothing done while we're in sight."

The man and woman separated at once, and took each an end of that portion of Guildford street in which Mrs. Smedley lodged. They were too far away to be noticed by any one coming out of the house, but nobody could leave it without being seen by them.

When Rose Smedley saw how pale Miss Elmore looked, her first feeling was one of pity for her, and she hesitated to tell her who she was.

For a moment the two women looked at each other in silence.

Miss Elmore was the first to speak.

"Madam," she said, "I don't know who you are, but you evidently know something of me. You told me I was being followed. If that was so there was a danger in my going home. Do you know what that danger was?"

"I do," said Rose, quietly; "it was danger to the man who calls himself Wilson—the man you call your husband."

"He is my husband, madam!" exclaimed Miss Elmore, the blood rushing to her pale cheeks.

"Miss Elmore is only my stage name."

"You mean that he has married you?" cried Rose.

"Certainly. I—"

Rose sprang to her feet and ran to Miss Elmore's assistance.

The poor girl, who had been standing up as she spoke, had suddenly tottered. Rose was only just in time to catch her in her arms and to prevent her falling to the ground.

"It is nothing," gasped the girl, as Rose helped her to the sofa. "I am not well, and this anxiety and suspense has—has—Oh, my heart!"

The young actress put her hand to her heart with a cry of pain. Her face was livid, her lips were blue. In another second she fell back upon the sofa, senseless.

Rose rang the bell for the servant, and told her to fetch a doctor at once, then she tried to force the poor girl's lips open and give her some brandy. She was terribly alarmed at her appearance, and wondered what she should do if the illness was serious.

When the doctor came he shook his head. "She must be put to bed at once," he said. "I will wait till she is a little better, and then send you in something for her to take. She is evidently subject to these attacks, but this one is severe. She has probably been over-excited, and she is evidently in a weak state."

"Put to bed at once!" exclaimed Rose, "she doesn't live here. She is almost a stranger to me. She will be well enough to go home to-night."

"Certainly not! To attempt such a thing would be to kill her."

Rose hesitated no more. With the help of the servant poor Miss Elmore was placed in Rose's bed, and as soon as she had recovered a little the doctor ordered her to be kept perfectly quiet, and leaving Rose certain instructions, he went away.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when he left, and Rose, now thoroughly bewildered, wondered what on earth she should do. Here was the woman she actually believed to be her husband's mistress lying ill in her house, and she was nursing her. It would be cruel of her to tell the poor girl the truth now. For the present, at any rate, she must be kept in ignorance of that. The shock might kill her.

But what of the man who was somewhere, evidently expecting the girl's return? Both women thought of him. Miss Elmore was the first to speak.

"I'm better now," she gasped, as she tried to sit up in bed, and was gently restrained by Rose.

"You must let me go home; indeed, you must. Jack will be in a terrible state unless I come home."

Jack!

There was no longer any doubt in Rose's mind as to who Miss Elmore's "husband" really was.

"You can't go, my dear," she said, quickly; "I shall not allow it."

"Then I must send a message to him."

Rose had thought of that. But how was it to be

done? She felt certain that the detectives were still on the watch, that any attempt to communicate with Wilson would be the means of giving them the clue they wanted to his whereabouts. And she was determined that he should not fall into their hands.

Presently Rose had an idea. "I will send a telegram," she said, "if you will give me his address."

Miss Elmore hesitated. But there was no alternative. She gave the address. It was a street running out of the Lambeth road, and presently Rose wrote out the following telegram: "Have had one of my old attacks, but am better. Am with friends and safe, but cannot leave till morning. Don't worry. Kate."

It cost Rose a pang to sign another woman's name to a message to her husband, but she had steeled herself to carry her resolve out, cost her what it might.

As soon as the telegram was written she put on her things, and leaving the servant with the patient, went out. She wasn't going to the office herself.

The nearest office was in a grocer's shop, and the young man might be tricked by the police into giving the address upon the telegram. So she went to the doctor's, told him a little romance about his patient, and he promised to send the telegram off himself when he went out, which would be in half an hour. The detective was hardly likely to follow the doctor's brougham, or to suspect his errand.

And if he did he would get no information from him. As a medical man, any information that came into his hands through a patient was sacred.

This task accomplished, Rose went back and tried to comfort and soothe the invalid.

At ten o'clock the female detective went away. The man remained till midnight. He knew that someone was ill in the house. He had seen the servant go for the doctor, and he had seen Mrs. Smedley go to the doctor afterwards. Miss Elmore had not come out. It was probably Miss Elmore.

The case was getting more complicated than ever, but he made up his mind that the young lady wouldn't oblige him by coming out while he was there, and so he went away.

It was evident to him that for the present he was foiled. That John Smedley was in London he felt sure, that he was the actor who called himself Wilson he was convinced, and his view was strengthened by the fact that he had ascertained through his female assistant that Miss Elmore had given no address at the agent's except a well-known post-office, where people of all sorts were in the habit of having their letters left.

The next morning Miss Elmore was much better. Rose had watched her till she slept, and had then gone to lie down on the sofa in the sitting-room.

She was so much better that towards middle day, when the doctor came, he allowed her to get up.

Then she and Rose talked the situation over, and little by little the young actress told her story.

She had been playing with a company in America when she first met Wilson, who was then taken to the stage. He was not a good actor, but he was a gentleman, and made himself agreeable, and people liked him. They saw a good deal of each other and they fell in love. He asked her to be his wife and she consented, and they were married. Soon afterwards she heard that her mother was seriously ill in England, and she wanted to return and see her. At first her husband objected, but at last, upon thinking it over, he consented, but she noticed that he seemed very nervous as soon as they landed upon English soil. She returned to find her mother dead.

All their funds had been exhausted by their journey, and she proposed that they should get engagements in England. At last she succeeded in obtaining one with a travelling company for herself and for her husband. One night, in a little town near London, a message was brought to her husband that a gentleman named Yarborough wanted to see him. He was terribly agitated, and exclaimed, "My God, they've recognized me. I thought after all these years I was forgotten."

That night he told her his story. He confessed that some years before he had been in an office in London, and had been accused of embezzlement. He assured her that he was innocent, but could not prove it, and that if he were taken he would be sent to prison for years. She was terrified, and they left the place at once and came to London. Jack after that rarely went out. He seemed in constant terror of being recognized. They were very poor, and she had had to pawn to pay their rent. Then they saw the advertisement for an actor and an actress to go to the Cape with a company. Her husband said that would be the best thing for them, and he had sent her to try and get the engagement. Rose knew the rest.

"So," thought Rose to herself, "he has deceived this poor girl, and she really believes that she is his wife! What am I to say to her? What will she do when she knows the truth?"

A great pity swelled up in the heart of Rose Smedley for this poor girl who had been so loyal to the man she loved. She ceased to regard her as a rival and looked upon her only as a fellow victim.

But now more than ever she felt bitter against her husband, and determined to let him see that his baseness was known to her. Then he might go to the Cape if he liked. She would not raise a finger to stop him. But no mercy she might show him would enable him to atone for the wrong he had done Kate Elmore.

The doctor had still forbidden Kate to leave the house under any circumstances. Leaving her at home, Rose went out. She was determined in some way to see John Smedley that day. She looked about her to make sure that the house was not watched and saw the detective at the top of the

street. He had resumed his watch. But as she came out his back was turned for a moment. A few doors below was a corner of the street—round this Mrs. Smedley darted. Then she stopped well out of sight and waited. If the detective had seen her he would come after her at once.

She waited a few minutes and he did not come. Then she was sure that he had not seen her leave the house but was still watching it.

She was safe now. She went up the side street to the top and took a short cut and made her way into Holborn—there she took a cab and drove to the address given by Kate Elmore.

It was a poor, mean, little house, with dirty blinds, and a general appearance of being left off in lodgings to people who were not too particular.

She knocked at the door, and the landlady, an untidy person with an untidy baby in her arms and a small, untidy child clinging to her skirts, opened the door.

"I came from Mrs. Wilson, with a message for her husband. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't ma'am. He's gone away."

"Gone away!" exclaimed Rose, in astonishment.

"Yes, he paid me my rent, and went away last night. He left a letter for Mrs. Wilson, which was to be given her when she came in."

"She is staying with me. I'll take the letter to her."

"Certainly, ma'am, and welcome."

The landlady went upstairs and fetched the letter, and gave it to Rose. She looked at it, and a chill feeling crept over her heart.

The last doubt was removed. It was her husband's writing. She had always believed that Wilson was her husband, but the certainty was a shock to her, none the less.

She took the letter home. She was bound to give it to Kate. It might contain something that it was necessary she should know at once.

Kate opened it, read it, and then let it fall with a cry of anguish. The next moment she buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears. "Read it," she sobbed.

Rose picked it up and read it.

It was a heartless letter. It told poor Kate, in a few words, that the man she had toiled and slaved for, the man for whom she had almost starved, had let his cowardice get the better of him. He said the nervous dread was killing him, and he couldn't stop in London. He thought they would do better apart, as he was only a drag on her, and he could keep out of the way better by himself. He was afraid that through her one day he would be run to earth. Then he would be taken from her, so perhaps it was just as well that he should go now. Some day, if he had luck, he hoped to return and claim her, &c., &c., and she was to forget her unworthy husband and be happy.

The letter omitted to say that through a friend in the profession Jack had heard of a sudden vacancy in a company going to India, and that as it was only a vacancy for one he had thought it better to accept it and be off and leave his wife to shift for herself.

"He is a coward," cried Rose, "a miserable selfish coward! My dear, such a man isn't worth fretting for."

But Kate did fret. For a time she was almost heart-broken. She little knew what cause Rose Smedley had to view "Mr. Wilson's" conduct from the harshest possible standpoint. But she got over it in time, and found a true and loyal friend in Rose.

To-day Kate Elmore is a favorite London actress, admired everywhere for her beauty, her grace, her cleverness, and her goodness.

She and Rose share a pretty little villa between them, and they are as sisters. There is a common bond of sorrow between them, but only one of them knows it. They have both been deceived and deserted by the same man.

Rose has made up her mind that she will never let Kate know the truth, though now both of them are free to marry again.

The death of an English actor named Wilson was announced a short time since in the American papers.

His death was the result of a pistol shot which was administered to him in a drinking saloon by the brother of a woman whom he had deserted after getting possession of her property.

There are degrees of contentment; but it will be found that the most contented are those who are engaged in useful work of some kind, down into which thought flows, and that the least contented are those who are idle.

A man may have a right to stint himself of comforts, and even necessities, if he prefers to employ in other directions the money thus saved; but he has no right to deny his wife, his children, his servants, their proper comforts and luxuries, that he may buy old china or rare books.

It is bad policy to be haughty, repellent or unsocial. The most resolute aspirant to wealth or position may stumble as he climbs, and, if no one stretches out a finger to save him, may roll headlong to a depth far below the point from which he started. A lift for a lift is the business rule of to-day.