

# THE ACADIAN

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### THE ACADIAN.

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### The Master of the Mine.

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

I thanked him, with tears standing in my eyes, for his kindness touched me. Then I was led into the house, and in a little while was facing the Coroner, in the great old-fashioned dining-hall, where the inquest was being held.

I forgot many of the details of that miserable day. Only one thing I vividly remember—the sight of the dead man's body, stretched out for inspection in the kitchen. Why I was taken to see it I do not know; but I felt that I was closely watched as I looked over it. Poor Johnson! I forgot to give him all the trouble he had ever known me, seeing the bloodstained and disfigured mass which had once been his living self!

As the inquest proceeded, I realized the full extent of my peril. Several of the men came forward (voluntarily enough, I am bound to say), and testi-

fied I heard them bring in their verdict—a verdict of Wilful Murder against "Hugh Trelawney," who was straightway committed for trial at the next Assizes.

### CHAPTER XXII.

After the inquest was over, I was led into a small room fitted up as a library, still hounded and still attended by the two policemen who had brought me over. They gave me refreshments—biscuits, which I did not touch, and a glass of wine, which I drank off eagerly.

Ever since my arrival at the house, I had been looking eagerly for some sign of Madeline Graham; but she had not appeared. While I sat apart, however, George Redruth entered the room, and after glancing at me with (I thought) a certain compassion, addressed me.

"This is a bad business, Trelawney," he said, looking very pale and agitated. I glanced at him but made no reply.

"Let me tell you, however," he continued, "that ugly as the evidence looks against you, I hope that you'll succeed in proving your innocence at the trial. I haven't much cause to love you, and poor Johnson had still less, but upon my word, I believe you incapable of such a crime as this."

"Thank you, Sir," I replied, trembling, for I could have borne his anger or indifference better than his sympathy. "You at least do me that justice!"

He nodded assent, and was about to say something more when there was a rattle of a dress behind him, and with a quick start, and a sharp pain at the heart, I saw Madeline standing in the room. The sight of her was almost more than I could bear; I shook like a reed, and my eyes filled with tears.

The next moment she stepped forward with an eager cry of recognition, and both hands outstretched. Then, seeing that I was handcuffed, she uttered another cry—of grief and pain.

"Madeline!" cried her cousin, warningly; but she paid no attention. I had turned my head away, too ashamed to meet her gaze, but I felt, rather than saw, that she was gazing tenderly into my face.

When she spoke, her voice was broken and tearful.

"Mr. Trelawney! may I speak to you? May I tell you how my heart aches and bleeds for you, in your great trouble? May I assure you how deeply I believe—as all who know you must believe—in your innocence of such a crime?"

I turned my head and looked at her; my head swam, and the tears no blinded me that I could not see her.

"God bless you for saying that!" I murmured; and as I spoke, she lifted my two bound hands, and held them gently in her own.

"I could not believe that any one would think it possible," she said. "I would have come before, but waited, expecting to see you set at liberty. But now I hear you are to be put up for trial! Ah, do not fear! Have courage! Your innocence will be proved, and you will soon be a free man."

"Perhaps," I answered; "but, whether or not, it is something to know that my innocence is believed in by you!"

How could I doubt it? Dear Mr. Trelawney, I know you better even than you know yourself. No proof, however, terrible, could shake my faith in one whom I know to be the bravest and best of men; one who is incapable of any baseness; one to whom, remember, I owe my life."

She turned to Redruth, who was looking on, I thought, rather uneasily.

"And my cousin is equally certain that you are falsely accused. George, speak to him; tell him!"

I looked at George Redruth; his brow was clouded, and his expression far less cordial than it had previously been.

"I have already told Trelawney what I think on the subject. Nevertheless, the evidence is ugly, as he is aware."

"But you know he is innocent!" cried Madeline.

"I hope so. Whoever took poor Johnson's life was a miserable and ruffianly coward, well deserving the gallows; and I can't fancy that Tre-

lawney, in spite of his violent temper, is anything of the kind."

There was something in his manner, now, which aroused all the angry blood within me. His old superciliousness had returned, and the compassion in his eyes had changed to hard dislike and suspicion. I could not trust myself to answer him, but, turning to the police officers, who sat by, I cried:

"How long am I to remain here? Take me away! Take me away!"

"All right," replied one of them. "The trap's at the door."

I rose to my feet, and then, setting my lips firm to conquer my agitation, I turned again to Madeline.

"Don't mind me, Miss Graham. I shall come through this trouble right enough, perhaps; and, whatever happens, I shan't forget your goodness. I cared for no one's good opinion but yours. I'm not the first innocent man, by many, who has had to face an unjust accusation, and answer it with his life; and what you have said to me will give me courage, perhaps, to bear the sorrow that's to come!"

Before I realised what she was doing, she had taken my hands again, had raised them to her lips, and kissed them!

"Don't! don't!" I cried, half sobbing. "I can't bear it! Here, ladies, take me away!"

"Use him kindly," she cried, weeping, and addressing the officers. "Remember, he is a gentleman, and falsely accused."

"Don't be afraid, my lady," said the man who had previously spoken. "We'll look after him."

"And Mr. Trelawney—dear friend—do not think that, though we part now, I shall be idle. I am rich, remember, and whatever money can do for your defence shall be done by me. It is a poor return, indeed, for the life you gave me! Keep a good heart! Think that you have friends working for you, praying for you! Think that the happy time will soon come when you will be free again to return to those you love, who love you, and who will love you the better for a trouble bravely borne!"

In the rapture of that moment, I should have caught her in my arms, but I was helpless, and perhaps it was better so. Gently, but firmly, the officers led me from the room, and along the passage to the door, where the dog-cart was waiting. There was a crowd about the doorsteps, and when I appeared there was a sympathetic murmur.

The officers pushed me through the groups, and I mounted to my seat in the trap. Then I heard a wild cry, and saw my aunt, who rushed forward reaching up her hands to touch mine.

"Hugh, my poor Hugh!" she sobbed. "Don't cry, aunt," I said, forcing a smile. "They don't hang innocent men in England. I shall soon come back home!"

At that there was a faint hurrah, led by John Rudd. Several rough fellows from the mine rushed forward, reaching out their horny hands in honest sympathy.

"Cheer up, Measter Hugh! None o' us believes you killed 'un! Cheer up! We'll ha' you back in St. Gurloot's soon."

"Is that we will!" echoed John Rudd.

The officer had now mounted beside me; and his companion, who was seated by the driver, cried in a loud voice:

"Clear the way there! Let go her head!"

The horse, freshened by rest and a feed, bounded off, and I left the group of sympathisers behind—my poor aunt, half fainting, supported by John Rudd. But on the doorstep under the porch stood two figures, on which my eyes were riveted till the last—George Redruth and Madeline Graham.

Madeline waved a white handkerchief. I could make no sign in return, but I watched her with streaming eyes till we entered the avenue, and the boughs of the leafless trees blotted her from my view.

Of that sad day's business, only one more vivid memory remains to me. Slight and trivial as the circumstance seemed at the time, I remembered it afterwards with a wondering thrill.

Our way back, like our way coming, lay past the old cottage. Quitting the gates of the great house, and leaving



the dark avenue behind us, we rattled swiftly along the country road. The horse, being homeward bound, whirled us along at full speed; indeed, as the poet has it—

We seemed in running to devour the way.

As we approached the dear old cottage, I craned my neck round to look at it; the next moment we dashed past it; but in that moment I caught the glimpse of a ghastly white face looking out of one of the lower windows.

It was the face of my uncle, John Pendragon! As we passed, he seemed to give a wild start of recognition.

Then, looking back, I saw, before we were fifty yards away, a figure, wild and half-dressed, running out across the garden to the gate, and looking after us. It was my uncle. He seemed dazed and stupefied. As we disappeared round a turning of the road, I fancied I caught the sound of a sharp cry, and simultaneously I saw him throw his two arms wildly up into the air!

### CHAPTER XXIII.

It was not my intention to trouble the reader with chapters full of appeals to *misericordiam*, or to pile up the agony in the manner of the expert manufacturer of sensational fiction; though, if I chose to do so, there is plenty of material ready to my hand. I have my doubts, perhaps, whether I am personally interesting enough to sway the sympathy of the tender-hearted, in the character of a man unjustly accused of the most horrible of human crimes. But the mere fact that I survive to write these lines is proof positive of one thing—that I was not hanged! So, on that score at least, the reader may be perfectly easy in his mind.

The Assizes came on some six weeks after the date of the inquest, and in the interim I found that my darling did not fail to keep her word. A firm of solicitors, instructed by her, undertook my defence; and though I at first, out of motives of pride, declined their good offices, I was finally persuaded to accept them. Through their managing clerk, I more than once received kindly messages from Madeline, but not once did she appear upon the scene personally until the day of the trial came, when, on entering the dock, I saw her sitting by George Redruth's side in the crowded court.

My aunt and uncle were there, too—the latter so worn and changed that I should scarcely have recognized him; so was honest John Rudd, together with other old friends and acquaintances. But before the trial began, all those who were called as witnesses withdrew, George Redruth among the number. My darling remained in her place, close to my counsel and solicitors, in the well-behaved judge's seat; and more than once, in the course of the proceedings, I saw her whisper words of instruction and suggestion to my defenders.

Thinking it all over again now, in the quiet of these after-years, I am sure still, as I was sure then, that her face helped to save me. Its pathetic beauty and sympathy, I believe, touched the heart of the jury, and wrought wonders in my behalf. Even the judge, who had what is known as a "hanging" reputation, looked down upon her with eyes of favor.

Early in the course of the proceedings, I heard whispers among the crowd surrounding me. They were looking at Madeline, and someone was asking who she might be. A voice replied (how well I remember it, and how my pale face went red with proud surprise) that she was "the prisoner's sweetheart." Far away as I knew that idea to be from the simple truth, I looked at my darling with new feelings of love and gratitude, and almost forgot for a moment the great and impassable barrier between us.

After the speech for the prosecution, in which I was painted in vivid colors as a young man of violent habits, having a homicidal hatred to the murdered man, the first witness deposed to the fading of the body and to the marks of violence upon it. Then George Redruth described my last quarrel with Johnson, and my dismissal from the overseership of the mine. On this occasion, I fear, Redruth rather exaggerated than underestimated the extent of my hostility; and when asked if he personally thought that the deceased had any reason to fear my violence, hesitated and answered that he "was afraid he had."

I saw Madeline start and look appealingly at the witness, while a low murmur ran through the court. On the whole, Redruth's evidence, though given with a certain reluctance, was very hostile. I could not help feeling that it was none the less so because Madeline was seated there with my defenders, and working so zealously on my behalf.

My aunt next described my deings on the night of my departure from St. Gurloot's, and again admitted, as at the inquest, that I had been at a late hour in the neighborhood of the mine. Then my uncle entered the box. Ghastly and woe-begone, clad in his Sabbath clothes of black, he stood like a man dazed; not once turning his eyes in my direction. His evidence only corroborated that of my aunt; but unimportant as it was, he gave it with extreme reluctance.

After the prosecuting counsel was done with him, he was questioned by my own counsel as follows:

"On the night of the murder, you were at home with the prisoner?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see him go out?"

"I disremember. I took saw note o't; and my memory's falling me."

"Ah; you have been ill for some time?"

"Nawt just myself like, sir."

"Had you any reason to imagine that the prisoner bore any animosity to deceased? Did he ever in your hearing utter any threats against him?"

"Never, sir, nawt one ward."

"So far as you know, he had no cause to dislike deceased, beyond the fact that he had taken his place as overseer?"

I saw my uncle trembling violently; but his answer came clear and firm.

"Nawt as I know o, sir; and I know this, he ne'er meant to harm 'us."

"On the night in question, did the prisoner show any agitation?"

"Naw, Sir; the' he wete a bit put out at gawing awa' fro' home."

"Did he show on his person any signs of violence, as of a struggle?"

"Naw, sir; nawt he."

### CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Beware of False and Deceptive Promises Made by Manufacturers of Inferior and Imitation Dyes.

Beware of dyes prepared for some use that promise to wash and dye goods at one operation. The soap in such dyes may do a trifle of cleansing, but the coloring work will be a flat and decided failure.

Beware of dyes that claim to do all wool and cotton goods with contents of one package. This is a chemical impossibility. The operator will of course get a color—something muddy, clouded and streaked that will arouse indignation and anger because of disappointment and loss of materials.

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