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"No!" came from trembling lips. Mr. Selby paused. He knew that he was going to reveal a story of sin and shame, but he could not help himself; his client's life was at stake, and the truth must be extracted from her.

"You were not rich enough to own a house: who took it for you?"

She covered her face with her hands and drooped in the box as if weighed down with shame.

"Oh, I need not answer, I need not tell!" she moaned.

"You must answer," he said, rather sternly. "You lived in this house at St. John's Wood as the mistress; who was the—master?"

There was a profound silence, broken only by the breathing of the excited crowd.

"Come," said Mr. Selby, "tell us quickly. The sooner you answer the sooner you will be allowed to go. Wait! If their worship will permit you shall write the name of the gentleman who took the house for you."

The magistrates conferred a moment, then Lord Saintsbury said: "We think that will be sufficient."

The clerk took a piece of paper to the box and put a pen in the shaking hand, and Fanny, after a glance towards that end of the bench where Mr. Talbot Denby sat, wrote a name. The clerk took the paper from her and handed it to Mr. Selby.

He did not start as he read the name, did not look up for a moment, but his eyes glinted as they had done when Fanny mentioned "St. John's Wood," and his lips tightened. He stood for quite a minute, his eyes fixed on the paper, then he handed it up to the bench. The magistrates' heads drew together over the paper, they exchanged glances, and their eyes were directed, as if by one impulse, to Mr. Talbot Denby. Not a word was spoken for a moment or two, then Mr. Selby said in a grave voice:

"You swear that this is the name of the gentleman?"

Fanny inclined her head. "Why did you leave St. John's Wood?" asked Mr. Selby.

Her face worked and her voice was broken by sobs.

"We—we quarrelled. He—he told me he was tired of me, and—and I went. He offered me money, but I wouldn't take it. I had some, and I—took a room in the coffee house where they found me. Oh, I've told you all! Let me go, please, please let me go! Mr. Talbot knows it's the truth!"

(To be Continued.)

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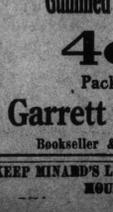
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CHAPTER XXIX.

Presently Ralph came in with a couple of constables by his side. He was pale, but perfectly self-possessed, and he looked round the crowded place with composure until his eyes rested on the figure in the chair below the bench; then, for a moment, his calm broke up, a look of tenderness and pity shone in his eyes, and his lips quivered. It was for a moment only; the next, he was calm and self-possessed again, and he stood with folded arms and head erect with an air of patient attention.

"Yes! He's like the earl!" ran round the packed crowd. "He holds himself like his lordship; and look at his eyes and mouth, they're the very same exactly, and no one can deny it!"

Talbot, from his seat beside the earl, heard the various murmurs, and his sallow face grew still more sallow.

The usual formal evidence was pro-

duced, then Inspector Grey said:

"I will now call the witness who saw the prisoner on the night of the murder. Fanny Mason!"

Talbot started slightly, but controlled his emotion, and forced his face into an expression of grave interest only.

"Fanny Mason!" echoed the usher. There was a stir in the Court, then an intense silence, as Fanny was conducted by a policeman to the witness-box.

CHAPTER XXX.

A murmur ran round the Court as Fanny, with bent head, stepped into the box. What happened to the girl? The crowd asked one another, mutely. She was not only pale—that was only to be expected—but was thin and worn and haggard, and she was shabbily dressed, she who had always been so neat and spruce! And why did she hang her head after the one shamed glance around?

In that glance her eyes had met Talbot Denby's, but though there had been a half-pleading, assuring expression in his, hers remained sullen and woe-begone. A spasm of apprehension ran through Talbot, but he told himself that he had nothing to fear: for her own sake she would keep silent as to her connection with him. And he would see her after the examination, give her money, bribe her to remain silent.

She answered the questions put to her by the prosecuting counsel in a low voice and with a piteous glance at Ralph's stern face, as if she wished him to know that she was giving her evidence reluctantly. She told the Court how she had seen him and the deceased together on the night of the murder and had heard them quarrelling, and turned to leave the box, when Mr. Selby rose and stopped her with a gesture.

"One moment," he said in quite a kindly manner. "I want to ask you a few questions. Take your time and answer carefully. You know that this gentleman—he inclined his head towards Ralph—is charged with wilful murder, that a coroner's inquest has found him guilty, that he may be committed for trial, and that—but no, I do not think he will be found guilty; but what I want you to realise is that your evidence is of the greatest moment, and that, therefore, you will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"I—I have spoken the truth," she said, almost inaudibly.

"I know you have," he said, quite quietly; "and I ask you, I charge you, to continue doing so. Now—pray be calm; I will not distress you more than I can help"—for Fanny trembled so much that everyone could see her shaking as she held the edge of the box—"now, the detective who was sent to find you found you staying at a coffee house. You were not in a situation?"

"No, sir."

Talbot, who had listened with an unmoved face, stirred in his seat to attract her attention and shot a warning glance at her.

"Why did you leave your situation—the one you went up from here to fill?"

"I—I was not happy; I did not like it," she answered in a low voice.

"Try to speak a little louder," said Mr. Selby, encouragingly. "You have nothing to fear—while you speak the truth, the whole truth, you know. Where was that situation?"

"In—in St. John's Wood," came the reply, still audibly.

Mr. Selby's eyes glinted, and he scanned her keenly.

"St. John's Wood," he said, very softly and soothingly. "What was the address and the name of your mistress?"

Fanny's lips twitched and she raised her eyes appealingly to the bench. "Am I obliged—must I answer?" she asked, piteously. "I've told all I know, and sorry I am to have to tell it. I—I wouldn't do Mr. Ralph an injury, he knows I wouldn't! He was always kind to me—oh, I wish I'd never gone! Must I answer?"

"You must answer," said Lord Saintsbury, gravely.

"Yes; why should you be afraid?" said Mr. Selby, gently.

She gave him the name of the house, then faltered and paused.

"The name of the mistress?" asked Mr. Selby, gravely.

"There—there was none," she said at last. "I—I—it was my own house—it was not a situation."

There was a stir in the court, and the people looked from one to the other in surprise and dawning suspicion. Talbot glanced towards the magistrates' entrance as if the idea of escape had flashed across his mind, but he checked it and sat motionless, his sallow face set in an impassive calm.

"So you did not go to a situation. Did you tell your people that you were going to a house of your own?"

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