

The Lord St. Simon marriage and its curious termination have long ceased to be a subject of interest in those circles in which the unfortunate bridegroom moves. Fresh scandals have eclipsed it, and their more piquant details have drawn the gossip away from this forty-year-old drama. As I have no doubt, however, that the full facts have never been revealed to the general public, and as my friend Sherlock Holmes had a considerable share in clearing the matter up, I feel that no memoir of him would be complete without some little sketch of this remarkable episode.

It was a few days before my own marriage, during the days when I was still sharing rooms with Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street, that he came home from an afternoon stroll to find a letter on the table waiting for him. I had remained indoors all day, for the weather had taken a sudden turn to rain, with high autumnal winds, and the jazzi bullet which I had brought back in one of my limbs as a relic of my fight with the throbbed with dull persistence. With my body in one easy-chair and my legs upon another, I had surrounded myself with a cloud of newspapers, until at last, saturated with the news of the day, I tossed them all aside and lay listless, watching the huge clock and its movement upon the wall, and the table, and wondering idly why my friend's noble correspondent could be so late.

"Here is a very fashionable epistle," I remarked, as he entered. "Your morning letters, if I remember right, were from a fish-monger and a tide-waiter."

"Yes, my correspondence has certainly the charm of variety," he answered, smiling. "And the humor of it is usually the more interesting. The light-headedness of those unwelcome social chaperones, which still upon a man either to be bored or to be bored, is a most interesting study."

He broke the seal and glanced over the contents.

"Oh, come, it may prove to be something of interest, after all," I said.

"Not social, then?"

"No, distinctly non-social."

"And from an aristocrat?"

"One of the highest in England."

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you."

"I assure you, I was not in the least affected, that the status of my client is a matter of less moment to me than the interest of his case. It is just possible, however, that that also may not be wanting in this new investigation. You have been reading the papers diligently of late, have you not?"

"It looks like it," said I, ruefully, pointing to a huge bundle in the corner. "I have had nothing else to do."

"It is fortunate, for you will perhaps be able to post me up. I read nothing except the criminal news and the agony column. The latter is always instructive. But if you have followed recent events so closely you must have read about Lord St. Simon and his wedding."

"Oh, yes, with the deepest interest."

"That is well. The letter which I hold in my hand is from Lord St. Simon. I will read it to you, and in return you must turn over those papers and let me have whatever bears upon the matter. This is what he says:—

"My Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,—Lord Backwater tells me that I may place implicit reliance upon your judgment and discretion. I have determined, therefore, to call upon you, and to consult you in reference to the very painful event which has occurred in connection with my wedding. Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, is acting already in the matter, but he assures me that he sees no objection to your co-operation, and that he even thinks that it might be of some assistance. I will call at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and should you have any other engagement at that time, I will wait until you are free. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, ST. SIMON."

"It is dated from Grosvenor Mansions, written with a quill pen, and the noble lord has had the misfortune to get the smearer of ink upon the outer side of his right little finger," remarked Holmes, as he folded up the epistle.

"He says four o'clock. It is three now. He will be here in an hour."

"Then I have just time, with your assistance, to get clear upon the subject. Turn over those papers, and arrange the extracts in their order of time, while I take a glance as to what our client is."

He picked a red-covered volume from a line of books of reference beside the mantelpiece. "Here he is," said he, "sitting down and flattening it out upon his knee. Lord Robert Walsingham de Vere St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral—Hum! Army, Army, there are troops in chief over a fessible. Born in 1846. He's forty-one years of age, which is mature for marriage. Was under-secretary for foreign affairs. They inherit Plantagenet blood by direct descent, and Tudor on the distaff side. Ha! Well, there is nothing very instructive in all this. I think that I must turn to you, Watson, for something more solid."

"I have very little difficulty in finding what I want," said I. "For the facts are quite recent, and the matter struck me as remarkable. I feared to refer to you, however, as I knew that you had an inquiry on hand, and that you disliked the intrusion of other matters."

"Oh, you mean the little problem of the Grosvenor Square furniture van? That is quite cleared up now—though, indeed, it was obvious from the first. Pray give the results of your newspaper selections."

"Here is the first notice which I can find:—It is in the personal column of the Morning Post, and dates, as you see, some weeks back. 'A marriage has been arranged,' it says, 'and will be solemnized very shortly at Grosvenor Square, between Lord Robert St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral, and Miss Hatty Doran, Esq., of San Francisco, Cal., U. S. A.' That is all."

"Here and to the point," remarked Holmes, stretching his legs and legs towards the fire.

"There was a paragraph amplifying this in one of the society papers of the same week. It had been in the marriage market, for the present free-trade

principle appears to sell heavily against our home product. One by one the matings of the noble houses of Great Britain is passing into the hands of our fair cousins from across the Atlantic. An important factor in the marriage market of the last week to the list of the prizes which have been borne away by these charming invaders. Lord St. Simon, who has shown himself for twenty years proof against the little girls' armies, has now definitely announced his approaching marriage with Miss Hatty Doran, the fascinating daughter of a California millionaire. Miss Doran, whose graceful figure and striking face attracted much attention at the Westbury House festivities, is an only child, and is currently seen with her dowry still run to considerably over the six figures with expectations for the future. As it is an open secret that the Duke of Balmoral has been compelled to sell his pictures within the last few years, and as Lord St. Simon has no property of his own, save the small estate of Birmorch, it is obvious that the California heiress is not the only game in the market which will enable her to make the easy and common transition from a republican lady to a British peeress."

"Anything else?" asked Holmes, yawning.

"Oh, yes; plenty. There is another notice in the Morning Post to say that the marriage would be an absolutely quiet one, that it would be at St. George's Hanover Square, that only a few of the noblest friends would be invited, and that the party would return to the furnished house at Lancaster Gate which had been taken by Mr. Aloysius Doran. Two days later—that is, on Wednesday last—there is a curt announcement that the wedding had taken place, and that the honeymoon would be passed at Lord Backwater's place, near Petersfield. Those are all the notices which appeared before the disappearance of the bride."

"Before the what?" asked Holmes, with a start.

"The vanishing of the lady."

"When did she vanish, then?"

"At the wedding breakfast."

"Indeed. This is more interesting than it promised to be, quite dramatic, in fact."

"Yes; it struck me as being a little out of the common."

"You can't finish before the ceremony, and occasionally during the honeymoon; but I cannot call to mind anything quite so prompt as this. Pray let me have the details."

"I wanted you that they are very incomplete."

"Perhaps we may make them less so."

"Such as they are, they are set forth in a single article of a morning paper of yesterday, which I will read to you. It is headed, 'Singular Occurrence at a Fashionable Wedding.'

"The family of Lord Robert St. Simon has been thrown into the greatest consternation by the strange and painful episode which have taken place in connection with his wedding. The ceremony, as is shortly announced in the papers of yesterday, occurred on the previous morning; but it is only now that it has been possible to confirm the strange rumors which have been so persistently floating about. In spite of the attempts of the friends to hush the matter up, so much public attention has now been drawn to it that no good purpose can be served by affecting to disregard what is a common subject for conversation."

"The ceremony, which was performed at St. George's, Hanover Square, was a very quiet one, no one being present save the father of the bride, Mr. Aloysius Doran, the Duchess of Balmoral, Lord Backwater, Lord Eustace and Lady Clara St. Simon (the younger brother and sister of the bridegroom), and Lady Alicia Whittington. The whole party proceeded afterward to the house of Mr. Aloysius Doran, at Lancaster Gate, where breakfast had been prepared. It appears that some little trouble was caused by a woman, whose name has not been ascertained, who endeavored to force her way into the house after the bridal party, alleging that she had some claim upon Lord St. Simon. It was only after a painful and prolonged scene that she was ejected by the butler and the footman. The bride, who had fortunately entered the house before this unpleasant interruption, had sat down to a breakfast with the rest, when she complained of a sudden indisposition and retired to her room. Her prolonged absence having caused some comment, her father followed her, but learned from her maid that she had only come up to her chamber for an instant to change her ulster and bonnet, and hurried down to the passage. One of the footmen declared that he had seen a lady leave the house thus apparelled, believing her to be with the company. On ascertaining that his daughter had disappeared, Mr. Aloysius Doran, in conjunction with the bridegroom, instantly put themselves in communication with the police, and very energetic inquiries are being made, which will probably result in a speedy clearing up of this very singular business. Up to a late hour last night, however, nothing had transpired as to the whereabouts of the missing lady. There are rumors of foul play in the matter, and that she had been arrested, and that the arrest of the woman who had caused the original disturbance, in the belief that, from jealousy or some other motive, she may have been concerned in the strange disappearance of the bride."

"And is that all?"

"Only one little item in another of the morning papers, but it is a suggestive one."

"And it is—"

"That Miss Flora Miller, the lady who had caused the disturbance, has actually been arrested for instant arrest, and has been committed to the 'Allegro,' and that she has known the bridegroom for some years. There are no further particulars, and the whole matter in your hands now—so far as it has been set forth in the public press."

"And an exceedingly interesting case it appears to be. I would not have missed it for worlds. But there is a ring at the bell, Watson, and as the clock makes it a few minutes after 4, I have no doubt that this will prove to be our noble client. He will draw up his chair, and I will give him the results of my investigation."

"There was a moment's delay, but the

gentleman in the pew handed it up to her again, and it did not appear to be the worse for the fall. Yet when I spoke to her of the matter she answered me abruptly, and in the carriage, on our way home, she seemed absurdly agitated over this trifling cause."

"Indeed, you say that there was a gentleman in the pew. Some of the general public were present, then?"

"Oh, yes. It is impossible to exclude them when the church is open."

"This gentleman was not one of your wife's friends?"

"No, no. I call him a gentleman by courtesy, but he was quite a common-looking person. I hardly notice his appearance. But really I think that we are wandering rather far from the point."

"Lady St. Simon, then, returned from the wedding in a less cheerful frame of mind than she had gone to it. What did she do on re-entering her father's house?"

"I saw her in conversation with her maid."

"And who is her maid?"

"Alice is her name. She is an American, and came from California with her."

"A confidential servant?"

"A little too much so. It seemed to me that her mistress allowed her to take great liberties. Still, of course, in America they look upon these things in a different way."

"How long did she speak to this Alice?"

"Oh, a few minutes. I had something else to think of."

"Oh, a few minutes. I had something else to think of."

"You did not overhear what they said?"

"Lady St. Simon said something about 'jumping a claim.' She was accustomed to use slang of the kind. I have no idea what she meant."

"American slang is very expressive

ing her; but I had foreseen the possibility of something of the sort, and I had two police fellows there in private clothes, who soon pushed her out again. She was quiet when she saw that there was no good in making a row."

"Did your wife hear all this?"

"No, thank goodness, she did not."

"And she was seen walking with this very woman afterward?"

"Yes. That is what Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, looks upon as so serious. It is thought that Flora, deceived by my wife and told some terrible trap for her."

"Well, it is a possible supposition."

"You think so, too?"

"I did not say a probable one. But you do not yourself look upon this as likely?"

"I do not think Flora would hurt a fly."

"Still, jealousy is a strange transformer of character. Pray what is your own theory as to what took place?"

"Well, really, I came to seek a theory, not to propound one. I have given you all the facts. Since you ask me, however, I may say that it has occurred to me as possible that the excitement of this affair, the consciousness that she had made so immense a social stride, had the effect of causing some little nervous disturbance in my wife."

"In short, that she had become suddenly deranged?"

"Well, really, when I consider that she has turned her back—I will not say upon me, but upon so much that many have aspired to without success—I can hardly explain it in any other fashion."

"Well, certainly that is also a conceivable hypothesis," said Holmes, smiling. And now, Lord St. Simon, I think that I have nearly all my data. May I ask



BUT THIS MAID ALICE, AS I UNDERSTAND, DEPOSES THAT SHE WENT TO HER ROOM, COVERED HER BRIDE'S DRESS WITH A LARGE ULSTER, PUT ON A BONNET AND WENT OUT.

sometimes. And what did your wife do when she entered speaking to her maid?"

"She walked into the breakfast room."

"On your arm?"

"No, alone. She was very independent in little matters like that. Then, after we had sat down for ten minutes or so, she rose hurriedly, muttered some words of apology, and left the room. She never came back."

"But this maid, Alice, as I understand, deposes that she went to her room, covered her bride's dress with a long ulster, put on a bonnet, and went out."

"Quite so. And she was afterward seen walking into Hyde Park in company with Flora Miller, a woman who is now in custody, and who had already made a disturbance at Mr. Doran's house that morning."

"Ah, yes. I should like a few particulars as to this young lady and your relations to her."

Lord St. Simon shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows. "We have been on a friendly footing for some years—I may say on a very friendly footing. She is used to be at the 'Allegro.' I have not treated her ungenerously, and she has no just cause of complaint against me, but you know what women are, Mr. Holmes. Flora was a dear little thing, but exceedingly hot-headed, and devotedly attached to me. She wrote me dreadful letters when she heard that I was about to be married; and to tell the truth, the reason why I had the marriage celebrated so quietly was that I feared lest there might be a scandal in the church. She came to Mr. Doran's door just after we returned, and she endeavored to push her way in, uttering very abusive expressions toward my wife, and even threaten-

well. There was a parallel instance in Aberdeen some years back, and something on very much the same lines at Munich the year after the Franco-Prussian war. It is one of these cases—both, here is Lestrade! Good afternoon, Lestrade! You will find an extra tumbler on the sideboard, and there are cigars in the box."

The official detective was attired in a pea-jacket and cravat, which gave him a decidedly nautical appearance, and he carried a black canvas bag in his hand. With a short greeting he seated himself on to the door a wedding dress of watered silk, a pair of white satin shoes and a bride's wreath and veil, all discolored and soaked in water. "There," said he, putting a new wedding ring upon the top of the pile. "There is a little nut for you to crack, Master Holmes."

"Oh, indeed," said my friend, blowing blue rings into the air. "You dragged them from the Serpentine?"

"No. They were found floating near the margin by a park-keeper. They have been identified as her clothes, and it seemed to me that if the clothes were there the body would not be far off."

"By the same brilliant reasoning, every man's body is to be found in the neighborhood of his wardrobe. And pray where do you hope to arrive at through this?"

"At some evidence implicating Flora Miller in the disappearance."

"I am afraid that you will find it difficult."

"Are you, indeed, now?" cried Lestrade, with some bitterness. "I am afraid, Holmes, that you are not very practical with your deductions and your inferences. You have made two blunders in as many minutes. This dress does implicate Miss Flora Miller."

"And how?"

"In the dress is a pocket. In the pocket is a card-case. In the card-case is a note. And here is the very note." He slapped it down upon the table in front of him. "Listen to this: 'You will see me when all is ready. Come at once. F. H. M.' Now my theory is that along has been that Lady St. Simon was decoyed away by Flora Miller, and that she, with confederates, no doubt, was responsible for her disappearance. Here, signed with her initials, is the very note which was no doubt quietly slipped into her hand at the door and which lured her within their reach."

"Very good, Lestrade," said Holmes, laughing. "You really are very fine indeed. Let me see it." He took up the paper in a listless way, but his attention was instantly attracted, and he gave a little cry of satisfaction. "This is indeed important," said he.

"Hut, you find it so?"

"Extremely so. I congratulate you warmly."

Lestrade rose in his triumph and bent his head to look. "Why," he shrieked, "you're looking at the wrong side!"

"On the contrary, this is the right side."

"The right side? You're mad! Here is the note written in pencil over here."

"And over here is what appears to be the fragment of a hotel bill, which interests me deeply."

"There's nothing in it. I looked at it before," said Lestrade. "Oct. 4, rooms 2s. breakfast 2s. 6d., cocktail 1s., lunch 2s. 6d., glass sherry, 8d. I see nothing in that."

"Very likely not. It is most important, all the same. As to the note, it is important also, or at least the initials are, so I congratulate you again."

"I've wasted time enough," said Lestrade, rising. "I believe in hard work and not in sitting by the fire spinning fine theories. Good-day, Mr. Holmes, and we shall see which gets to the bottom of the matter first." He gathered up the garments, thrust them into the bag and made for the door.

"Just one hint to you, Lestrade," drawled Holmes, before his rival vanished. "I will tell you the true solution of the matter. Lady St. Simon is a myth. There is not, and there never has been, any such person."

Lestrade looked sadly at my companion. Then he turned to me, tapped his forehead three times, shook his head solemnly, and hurried away.

He had hardly shut the door behind him when Holmes rose and put on his overcoat. "There is something in what the fellow says about outdoor work," he remarked, "so I think, Watson, that I must leave you to your papers for a little."

"I have notes of several similar cases, though none, as I remarked before, were quite as prompt. My whole examination served to turn my conjecture into a certainty. Circumstantial evidence is occasionally very convincing, as when you find a trout in the milk, to quote Thoreau's example."

"But I have heard all that you have heard."

"Without, however, the knowledge of pre-existing cases which serves me so

him, and presently, to my very great astonishment, a quiet epicurean little old fellow began to be laid out upon our humble lodging-house mahogany. There were a couple of brace of cold woodcock, a pheasant, a note de foie gras, and a group of ancient and cold-water vegetables. Having laid out all these luxuries my two visitors vanished away, like the genii of the Arabian Nights, with no explanation save that the things had been paid for and were ordered to this address."

Just before 9 o'clock Sherlock Holmes stepped briskly into the room. His features were gravely set, but there was a light in his eye which made me think that he had not been disappointed in his conclusions.

"They have laid the super, then," he said, rubbing his hands.

"You seem to expect company. They have laid for five."

"Yes, I fancy we may have some company dropping in," said he. "I am surprised that Lord St. Simon has not already arrived. Ha! I fancy that I hear his step now upon the stairs."

It was indeed our visitor of the morning who came bustling in, dashing his glasses more vigorously than ever, and with a very perturbed expression upon his aristocratic features.

"The messenger reached you, then?" asked Holmes.

"Yes, and I confess that the contents startled me beyond measure. Have you got any authority for what you say?"

"The best possible."

Lord St. Simon sank into a chair and passed his hand over his forehead.

"What was the Duke say?" he murmured, when he heard that one of the family has been subjected to such humiliation?"

"It is the purest accident. I cannot allow that there is any humiliation."

"Ah, you look on these things from another standpoint."

"I fail to see that any one is to blame. I can hardly see how the lady could have acted otherwise, though her abrupt method of doing it was undoubtedly to be regretted. Having no mother, she had no one to advise her at such a crisis."

"It was a slight, sir, a public slight," said Lord St. Simon, tapping his fingers upon the table.

"You must make allowance for this poor girl, placed in so unprecedented a position."

"I will make no allowance. I am very angry, indeed, and I have been shamefully hurt."

"I think that I heard a ring," said Holmes. "Yes, there are steps on the landing. If I cannot persuade you to take a lenient view of the matter, Lord St. Simon, I have brought an advocate here who may be more successful. He has opened the door and ushered in a lady and gentleman. 'Lord St. Simon,' said he, 'allow me to introduce you to Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who has already met the lady. I think you have already met.'"

"At the sight of these newcomers our client had sprung from his seat and stood very erect, with his eyes cast down and his hand thrust into the breast of his frock coat, a picture of offended dignity. The lady had taken a quick step forward and had held out her hand to him, but he still refused to raise his eyes. It was as well for his resolution, perhaps, for his pleading face was one, which it was hard to resist."

"You're angry, Robert," said she. "Well, I guess you have every cause to be."

"Pray make no apology to me," said Lord St. Simon, bitterly.

"Oh, yes, I know that I have treated you badly, and that I should have spoken to you before I went; but I was kind of rattled, and from the time when I saw Frank here again I just didn't know what I was doing or saying. I only wanted to see you, and to get a faint right there before the altar."

"Perhaps, Mrs. Montton, you would like my friend and me to leave the room while you explain this matter to me?"

"If I may give an opinion," remarked the strange gentleman, "we've had just a little too much secrecy over this matter already. For my part, I should like all Europe to know the reason for this, and I'd faint right there before the altar."

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