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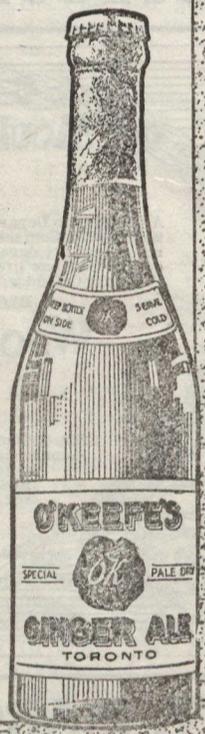
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proceedings were little more than formal, the police asking for an adjournment to enable them to complete inquiries. Superintendent Grylls, however, tendered one piece of evidence to the Coroner which excited some remark. A careful examination of the scene of the crime had been made, and on the grass at the roadside distinct signs of a struggle had been found. This did not in the least shake the testimony of the doctor, who held that the deceased had been pulled from his car and then murderously assaulted. It only suggested that the murdered man had put up a more or less vigorous defence before finally succumbing to his assailant.

After the brave show they made during the performance of the Superintendent's uncongenial task there came the inevitable reaction, and Hilda and Mrs. Pengarvan wept in each other's arms. But the blow had been tempered to them by the vague suspense of the past few weeks, and, the first outburst of grief being spent, they bore themselves with outward resignation, seeking solace in forecasts of their loved one's speedy release.

TO the mother, firm in her belief in her son's innocence, there was real comfort in these valiant prophecies. To the girl, equally firm in the same belief, there was no such assurance. For Hilda knew of the incriminating letter which, though not yet made public, would have been found on the dead man's body. If it would have helped her lover she would have told Mrs. Pengarvan of her correspondence with Wilson Polgleaze in respect of it. But so long as there was the merest chance that the letter had not after all been found by the police the secret should remain her own.

And, apart from the anguish she would have caused by imparting this crushing evidence to her companion in sorrow, maidenly shame kept her silent. How could she tell Lance's mother that she had surrendered at the last moment to the threats of the vile wretch who was gone? It would have looked like doubt of Lance's innocence.

To add to Hilda's heavier burden was the knowledge that her act of self-sacrifice had been the direct cause of her persecutor's murder and of her lover's arrest. If she had not telegraphed to Wilson Polgleaze to come to her with the letter he would not have been at the spot where death overtook him. For the same reason the letter, to which alone she attributed the swift action of the police, would not have been found on the body.

They were dark days for Hilda Carlyon, and in a lesser degree for the mother of their loved one.

Fortunately there was a distraction, which to unselfish women came as a welcome though unrecognized relief from their own cares. Marigold Craze did not recover so quickly as they had expected from the shock of hearing that Antonio Diaz was dead. The girl drooped and pined, though insisting that there was nothing the matter with her. Hilda, who had long ago suspected the gallant Tony's infatuation for the fisherman's beautiful daughter, but had no idea that the feeling was reciprocated, guessed the reason, and wisely abstained from mentioning the South American, trusting to time to heal the wound.

And then, by a strange chance, she was herself made the instrument of plunging Marigold into fresh grief. One morning, half way through the week of Lance's remand, she was sitting in the hall alone, when Timothy Pascoe came in, contrary to his usual custom, without knocking.

"Begging your pardon, Miss," he said breathlessly, "but that dirty little lame lawyer, what was here with Wilson Polgleaze a while back, has just gone down to the beach with another man. They came in a fly that's waiting for them at the back of the cove. They've turned along under the cliffs towards Devil's Hole. I happened to sight 'em as I was mowing at cliff edge, and thought you ought

to know. 'Tis no good they're after—that I'll lay."

"Thank you, Timothy," said Hilda rising. "I will go down at once if they are trespassing into the cave. For a week or two longer it is my property, and Mr. Trehawke shall not take possession till he is legally entitled to it."

"Best let me come along, Miss," pleaded the faithful servant. "The other chap looked ugly. We don't want any more inquests hereabouts."

"Very well," Hilda assented with a wan smile. "Though I expect Mr. Trehawke's companion is only a kind of walking stick. He can't get about by himself, you know."

When they got down to the beach there were no signs of the intruders, and it was evident that Pascoe's surmise had been correct. They had disappeared into the mouth of the great cave, or rather network of many caves, that ate into the sheer wall of cliff under The Tower.

"What is to do, Miss?" asked Timothy. "Will you bide here while I go in and rout 'em out and ask their business?"

"That is the programme exactly, except that I am coming with you," rejoined Hilda.

But before the trusty bodyguard could voice the objection clouding his honest, stolid face, the thin, squeaky tones of the attorney told them that the two men were returning. A few moments later they came blinking out into the daylight. Trehawke leaning on the arm of his burly companion. Hilda stepped up to them fearlessly.

"Are you aware that you have been trespassing—are trespassing now for that matter, since the foreshore as well as the cave is my property?" she said quietly.

Mr. Simon Trehawke executed the facial contortion which with him did duty for an ingratiating smile.

"Technically, perhaps, we have been guilty of a trespass, Miss Carlyon," he replied. "For that I must tender an apology. But a young lady of your sense and discernment will not wish to split straws like that with a creditor who desires to make your surrender of the property as easy as possible, and who will raise no objections if you stay a day or two over the date of foreclosure. I was only looking over the little asset I was weak enough to accept in return for the solid cash advanced to my late lamented client, Mr. Wilson Polgleaze."

Hilda laughed—her first genuine laugh for many a day. "You have been prospecting for your future mineral rights, I suppose," she said. "You think that there is copper in the cliff. So many people have held that delusion without finding the copper. But, Mr. Trehawke, you must defer your search for unearned increment till you are legally in possession. I shall treat any further preliminary skirmishes of this sort as trespass, and shall prosecute you with the utmost rigour of your own weapon—the law, to wit."

A SPASM of apelike rage twisted the attorney's horrible features, and he dropped all pretence of civility.

"All right, my lady," he sneered. "If I were you I shouldn't say too much about the law till after next Bodmin jail delivery. There are worse crimes than walking on someone else's land, as you'll find when the judge puts on the black cap and talks straight to that lover of yours."

It was on the tip of Hilda's tongue to retort that, though it might not be so severely punishable as murder, the deception of an innocent maid by performing a bogus marriage was morally as bad, but she restrained herself in time. That was Marigold's secret, and there was no reason now why it should ever be made public—certainly not for the purpose of scoring off such a creature as Mr. Simon Trehawke. She turned with a shrug to Timothy Pascoe.

"We will wait here till these persons have left the beach," she said in the grand manner which, later, Timothy described to his wife as "every inch a Carlyon."

The attorney, declining further