

# SWEET IS REVENGE.

By J. Fitzgerald Molloy.

Author of "How Came He Dead?" "That Villain Romeo." "A Modern Magician," &c

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.—FELTON'S VISIT.

In less than a minute Felton and his companion were in the street, following Capt. Fothergille's wife from opposite sides of the thoroughfares. Her erratic movements tried their patience; occasionally she hesitated and looked round her, as if conscious of being watched; she paused before shop windows without noticing their contents, lost in thought; she retraced her steps with an air of being unaware of where she went. She took almost an hour to reach her lodging in the quiet street near Hanover-square, when, letting herself in with a latch-key, she disappeared from the detective's gaze. Without removing his eyes from the house, Felton joined his companion, and despatched him for a warrant. Meanwhile he walked up and down, considering how he should best proceed. Twenty minutes later, armed with the warrant, he boldly knocked at Mrs. Simmons's door. His summons brought forth the portly landlady in person, who eyed him with complacency, beholding in him a probable lodger for the back par, second floor, then unluckily.

"Are you the landlady?" Felton asked, in his blandest tones.

"Yes, sir," she replied, her first hopes quickly fading; the person now before her was evidently a tax collector, or a solicitor of subscriptions for foreign missions, and was accordingly to be dealt with severely.

"May I have a few words of private conversation with you," he said.

"If it's collections is your business, I'm so worried with them—"

"It is not," he quickly interrupted, "it's something which concerns your house; a few minutes will explain what I have to say."

"Stand one side, please," she said with dignity, "and let my lady pass," forgetting for the moment that Ethel wished to be known only as Miss Fyne.

Felton turned and saw the tall little figure of Lady Fothergille enter the hall from the street, and Mrs. Simmons, who had been turned to her, and she had not recognized him.

"I'll bring you up some tea presently, my lady," Mrs. Simmons said, anxious to impress the stranger with a sense of the importance of her lodgers and of the dignity of her house. "Now, sir," she added in a severe and haughty tone, "if you will please to step in here, I'm at your service."

She opened the door of the dining-room, and motioned him to take a horse-hair chair. The appearance of Lady Fothergille surprised Felton, and threw, as he thought, a new light upon the robbery. "What, if after all, her ladyship had stolen her own jewels; a complicated case lay before him which it would be his pride and pleasure to unravel.

"Allow me to ask if Lady Fothergille is staying in this house?" he said.

"Why, bless my soul, how do you know her ladyship?" replied the landlady, taken by surprise.

"It is part of my duty to know people. You haven't answered my question."

"She is staying here," it was I who nursed and reared her, and proud I am of her now," replied Mrs. Simmons.

"You have reason to be, I'm sure," said the detective, conciliatingly. "How long has she been here?"

"For more than a week. Is it about her you come to make enquiries?" asked Mrs. Simmons, thinking he might be sent by Sir Danvers.

"Not exactly. There is another lady staying in your house about whom I want to ask a few questions."

"Are you her husband?"

"No," replied Felton.

"Then why do you want to ask about her?" she said wonderingly.

"I am an officer from Scotland Yard," a detective exclaimed Mrs. Simmons in a loud key, sitting bolt upright in her chair and staring at him as if he were a new specimen of humanity.

"Yes," he answered, quietly, slightly amused by her surprise, which was not unamused with horror.

"Well, I never thought as I should live to see the day when a detective entered my house. But we none of us knows what we're born to," she remarked, philosophically.

"True," he said, with a smile; and then added in a serious and business-like manner: "You have probably heard of the jewel robbery at Fothergille Abbey."

"That I have; her ladyship's tiara and necklace, value for ever so much, there never was, from all I hear, a fonder husband, and to think he should turn on her so sudden like, it's past my understanding; but high folks are queer in their ways as I always heard tell of."

"No trace of the missing diamonds has been discovered until to-day. This afternoon the lady who entered this house about half an hour before I rapped, offered for sale a diamond which I believe originally belonged to the stolen necklace."

"Bless my soul, you don't mean Mrs. Freeman."

"I mean a tall lady dressed in shabby black, with a veil over her face and slippers on her feet."

"It's the same, but it can't be she that stole 'em, she's the most harmless creature that ever lived," said the landlady breathless from excitement and not displeased at the prospect of sensation.

"I don't say she did, but she has a jewel in her possession that has evidently been stolen. Will you please tell me all you know about her in as few words as possible?"

"I wouldn't bring her to grief for all the world," replied the landlady, wiping her forehead and cheeks with her apron.

"I'm sure she never did nobody wrong, and my lady has made such friends with her, they might have known each other all their lives, they're so intimate."

"Has she been here long," he inquired.

"About three months; she came from Australia and was recommended to me by a lady on board the ship; at first she was pretty flush with cash, but latterly I have reasons for knowing she has been hard up."

"And she has stayed here all the time?"

"Yes, with the exception of a day and a night, when she went to Hayton."

Felton's dark eyes twinkled. "Hayton is the little village near Fothergille Abbey," he said.

Mentally he concluded she had received the diamond either from Lady Fothergille, or from some person at present staying at the abbey who was in possession of the jewels. He wondered if the gem he had seen was the first of which she disposed, and presently asked: "Are you sure she has been hard up?"

"That I am. I haven't seen the color of her money for over a month, and I couldn't afford to keep her if her board and lodging wasn't paid for."

"I must ask you pays you?"

"Her husband's servant. His master is in France, he says, and sends the money weekly until he returns."

The detective looked mystified; after all the woman was probably one of a gang of thieves, and her poverty was simulated the better to baffle the pursuit of justice.

"Must search her and her belongings," he said.

"Bless my soul. To think of the likes happening to one in my house quite shocks me up, and her ladyship staying under my roof at the time; but, worse than all that, will my neighbors say. There's Mrs. Johnson's house facing us, and the bills are one down than another is up, for no longer stays on account of the dirt and the bad cooking; she'll be glad to see me for the people next door, as keeps a music teacher that thumps the piano all day and all night, they'll be proud, too, for I've had to complain of them as a public nuisance. To think of a search warrant entering my house, and a lodger being followed by a detective—I've been too proud and now is the day of my humiliation," Mrs. Simmons said, fanning herself with her apron as she spoke.

"I'm very sorry," said Felton, good-naturedly, "but such things will happen in the best of regulated houses. Bless you, I could tell you of things that take place in the highest families that would make your hair stand on end."

"That may be, but they can afford to stand the shame of it, and I can't; it will ruin my house."

"Not at all, it will be forgotten in a month," he replied, comfortingly. "And now," he continued as he rose, "I must see the lady, Mrs. Freeman, without further delay, take me to her."

"I am this shaken by this news you might knock me down with a breath," said Mrs. Simmons rising from her low-seated chair with an effort. "Stay here and I'll see where she is. She has no sitting room of her own, perhaps she's in the drawing room. If it was for that lady Mrs. Johnson and her fine airs I could have borne it better—she'll be glad of my downfall. Remain here if you please and I'll go in search of the cause of my grief."

She went slowly upstairs, murmuring to herself, and entered the drawing room, where she found Mrs. Fothergille seated in a chair looking drearily out of the window. Her pale and worn face, prematurely grey hair, and sad dark eyes, spoke of the trials she had known, and pleaded for her with her outraged landlady.

"Poor dear," thought Mrs. Simmons, "perhaps it's all a mistake and she can't help bringing the trouble on me. She's only the instrument sent to punish my pride." Aloud she said, "There's a young man below, m'am, that wants to see you on business, very particular business."

She added with emphasis by way of preparing her, "Would you like to see him here?"

"If you please," answered Mrs. Fothergille, who started visibly and colored as she spoke.

In another minute the detective entered the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.—SIR DANVERS IS SURPRISED.

Mrs. Fothergille rose, her limbs trembling and her heart beating. On recognizing Felton she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"You have brought the money, you wish to have the diamond today," she said, it never occurring to her there was anything strange in this man having discovered where she lived.

"No," he replied, closing the door when Mrs. Simmons had made a lingering and mournful exit. "But I have come to make some enquiries which I hope for your sake and mine, you will answer straightforwardly."

"Answer enquiries," she repeated, "I don't understand you."

"Then I must begin by explaining myself. I am an officer from Scotland Yard," he said, watching the effect of his words.

"An officer—a policeman—a detective," she whispered to herself as she drew back from him and dropped helplessly into her chair. "What do you want of me, you will not take me, they let me go saying I was cured, my dream had passed away."

"I will do you no harm," he said, not understanding the purport of the words she muttered to herself, "but I must ask you some questions which I hope you will answer. Where or from whom did you get the diamond you offered for sale to-day?"

"From my ——" she began, and she paused as she remembered the instruction the captain had given her not to mention his name no matter what happened.

"From who—you had better mention the party?"

"I cannot. It was given me for sale. Surely, surely," she added in a timid voice, "you don't suspect me of taking it from anyone—of stealing it?"

"Then it is yours?" he asked. Her gentle manner and face appealing to him; he began to pity her, and to believe in her innocence.

"No, not mine; it was entrusted to me to sell, I can tell you no more."

"Will you not mention the name of the person who gave it you?"

"I would not think of making soup from Raw Vegetables," is the verdict all ladies who have used Kerr's Evaporated Soup Vegetables.

Willmot, April, 1890.

"I cannot. It was given to me by one of the best and noblest of men."

"Are you aware that a short time ago some diamonds were stolen from Fothergille Abbey?" he asked watching her face closely.

"No," she answered, fixing her eyes on him wonderingly; "but what if they were?" she added, as if struck by an after-thought.

"I suspect someone who stayed at the abbey at the time of taking them," he said, watching the color come into her face.

"No, no," she replied, "you must be wrong."

"I think not. The diamond you possess is part of the stolen necklace, and the person who gave you the jewel is the thief."

"She uttered a cry of pain and surprise. 'Impossible!' she exclaimed. 'You must not dare not say that.' Her cheeks flushed scarlet, her dark eyes glared with indignation, her limbs trembled with excitement. To the quick eye of the detective she appeared as one whose reason was disturbed. He waited a minute or two until her emotion had time to subside, and then he said—

"If you don't believe him to be the thief, why are you afraid to give his name?"

"I'm not afraid; but he didn't wish me to mention it, and I shall obey his requests," she replied, firmly.

"Very well, we will find out presently. I shall have to search your belongings and take you with me to the police station," the detective said.

"Take me—oh, no, no, you surely won't do that," she cried, a wild, frightened look coming into her eyes.

"I must; you're the receiver of stolen property. Here's my warrant." He laid one hand gently on her arm, but no sooner did she feel the touch than she wrenched herself from his grasp, and with a scream, rushed towards the corner furthest from the door. Before he had time to move, the woman seethed Ethel than she ran towards her, and flinging herself on her knees, cried out in an excited voice, "Oh, save me, save me! He threatens to take me away; don't let him! I have done no harm to anyone. I am well again; it was only that horrible dream that made me ill, and it has gone forever."

"What is the matter?" Lady Fothergille asked, her face pale from fright at the scene she witnessed.

"This lady has offered for sale one of the diamonds which I believe have been stolen from Fothergille Abbey, and I have come to arrest her," Felton answered, wondering if Lady Fothergille was concerned in the robbery.

"There must be some mistake," said Ethel, a bewildered look on her face, as she glanced at the crouching figure at her feet.

"I think not. She refuses to say who gave her the jewel."

Ethel bent down and raised the kneeling woman.

"Will you not tell me?" she asked, in a gentle voice, as if she were addressing a child.

"I cannot, I must not," Mrs. Fothergille answered.

"You must come with me," Felton said to her. "No harm will be done you, and no violence used unless you resist."

"You surely don't mean to take her," exclaimed Ethel, grief-stricken and terror-stricken at the thought. "I am sure she is innocent."

"It is my duty," replied the detective.

"You must not; you don't know that she is the wife of Capt. Fothergille, my husband's cousin," said Ethel, thinking this statement would prevent him from carrying out his intentions.

The detective's countenance fell, a new light was in upon his brain.

"She has been down to the abbey to see him?" he asked.

"She has," answered Ethel.

"Then it is from him she received the diamond?" he said.

"No, no," answered the faithful wife; "he is a just and honorable man, incapable of such an act."

"That he will have to prove," remarked Felton. "And now Mrs. Fothergille, will you please come with me when his innocence is proved," she said, giving him the jewel.

"If his innocence is proved," answered Felton. Then handing it to Ethel, he said: "Do you think this is one of the stones from your ladyship's necklace?"

"The look came into her face, and without hesitation she said: "It is the clasp."

"I thought so," replied the detective as he secured it; "and I shall probably find its companions where this came from. Now Mrs. Fothergille," he added, "I must search your belongings without further delay. Will you please give me your keys?"

"Do dear," Ethel said. She was unshaken in her faith in this suffering woman, and anxious to make the present ordeal as little painful as possible.

Mrs. Fothergille handed the key of her trunk, and conducted him without a word to her small bedroom, in the upper story of the house, the examination of which lasted very few minutes, and revealed nothing which in any way incriminated her. Beyond the few articles of clothing her box contained, there was little else save a bundle of letters written to her by Capt. Fothergille before they were married, and a book, between the pages of which lay a bunch of faded violets, the poor present he had given her in the days of their courtship. The detective glanced at the addresses and dates of these letters, hoping he might find amongst them one which contained reference to the robbery, or to the disposal of the jewels. But no such letter was there; if this woman had received such, she had evidently destroyed them before now. He wavered in his decision as to whether she was innocent or guilty; her apparent poverty and her visible simplicity led him at times to conclude she had not been in this crime; but then again her refusal to give Capt. Fothergille's name, and her avowed belief in his honor staggered Felton's faith in her.

She was wholly unlike any woman with whom previous experience had brought her in contact; the gentleness of her manner mixed with a certain wildness of expression, puzzled and interested him, whilst at the same time leading him to expect some difficulty in dealing with her.

On consideration he thought it best to treat her in a calm but firm manner, and therefore when he had concluded his search, he said:

"I must now ask you to come with me as quietly as possible."

She shrank back from him with a terror-stricken look.

"You have found nothing, why should I go with you?" she received stolen goods. I will take you in a cab to the police station, you will have nothing to fear, and no doubt your friends will bail you out in a day or two."

"I have no friends," she replied, tears starting to her eyes, "no one in the world to care for me save him—my husband."

The detective turned away a second. "Please put on your bonnet and follow me," he said, leaving the room. "I shall wait for you below. Remember, you must come."

A few minutes later she entered the dining-room where he patiently waited, answering the anxious questions put to him by Lady Fothergille and Mrs. Simmons. Coming into the apartment she walked up to Ethel in her timid, faltering voice:

"I am going with him, but my husband will soon set it right and I shall return in a day or two."

"I hope so," Ethel replied, looking fully at the pale, worn face, where traces of much suffering lay. "Remember, no matter what may happen, I am your friend."

Mrs. Fothergille pressed her hand.

"Thank you," she answered, "thank you a thousand times; one who is so lonely and so friendless as I am, is not likely to forget you. God bless you always."

Mrs. Simmons stood by, indignation and sympathy struggling for mastery in her breast, her face expressive of varying emotions. Mrs. Fothergille looked at her timidly, and at that glance her resentment.

Holding out her hand to her lodger, she said:

"This is a thing as has never happened to me before, but it's not your fault I do believe, and if it's not, you may come back to me here whenever you please."

A minute later Mrs. Fothergille was driving with Detective Felton to the Marlborough street station.

It was on the evening of the day succeeding that on which this event happened, that Sir Danvers received the letter from his wife which filled him with happiness.

He entered the dining-room with Meg, where they were joined a few seconds later by the poor relation and the captain. At the sight of the latter Sir Danvers remembered the prominent part he had played in causing the breach which had driven Ethel from her home, and it was with some difficulty he smothered his indignation. Looking at Meg the captain at once saw something had occurred to cause her relief and satisfaction, but what it was he dared not ask—much as he desired to know.

"Have you been down to the rectory this afternoon?" he asked, wondering if anything had happened there to cause the sudden change in her manner.

"No, but father has," she replied.

"Maynays is better, I trust," he said, addressing the baronet.

"No—yes, I mean there is little change in him since morning," Sir Danvers answered absently.

The captain felt more puzzled than before; it was not usual for his cousin to seem indifferent regarding Lord Hector's condition; some fresh interest evidently absorbed his mind.

"I have been speaking to the police this afternoon," Fothergille remarked. "They are still quite in the dark as to the scoundrel who attempted the murder. I hope they are not going to let the fellow escape."

"I hope not," said the poor relation, on which the captain stared at her with vicious eyes.

Sir Danvers, believing that his cousin had, when warning him of Lord Hector's attentions to Ethel, and when subsequently showing him the photograph, been actuated by a desire to save the family honor, was now anxious to let him know the truth, and at the same time to have it spread through the servants' hall, where he felt sure comments must have been passed on his wife, injurious to her fair name. Therefore he said, in as calm a manner as he could assume—"I have every reason to believe that the scoundrel, if he is not only the thief, but also of his wife—Lady Fothergille's sister—who arrived this afternoon."

The captain lay back in his chair, a look of bewilderment in his face, whilst a footman, who was offering a dish to Meg, held it suspended in mid-air, electrified by the intelligence.

"She did not wait for Ethel," added Meg, seeing her father's motives and anxious to further them, "who comes home tomorrow or next day. Father has just had a letter from her."

The attending footman thought the minutes following this announcement passed as slowly as hours; until he had an opportunity of leaving the dining-room and hurrying to the servants' hall with the intelligence that there was no scandal after all about his mistress, who had written to Sir Danvers, and was coming back in a day or two, instead of figuring in the divorce court, as was generally expected, and looked forward to with interest by the household.

The captain was speechless with amazement, for with his quick mind he at once grasped the situation, and saw how the error had arisen by mistaking one sister for another. Here was disappointment and defeat where he had least expected them; he had done all in his power to part Sir Danvers and his wife, and his efforts had been unavailing. Some fate was opposing him, against which he could not measure his strength or use his skill. Lord Hector whom he thought he had killed, would probably recover; the wife whom he trusted was for ever buried in the living grave of a lunatic asylum had been liberated and sought him out. There was nothing for him but escape from the old world, where exposure and shame awaited him, to some spot in the new hemisphere, where, his antecedents unknown, he might begin life anew on the spoil he had stolen from his next-of-kin.

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