

It may look to you," I said. "Nothing else will comfort and support me; and God knows I want comfort and support. Don't think me obstinate. I am ready to admit that there are serious difficulties in my way."

The Vicar resumed his ironical tone. "Oh?" he said. "You admit that, do you? Well, there is something gained at any rate!" "Many another woman before me," I went on, "has faced serious difficulties, and has conquered them—for the sake of the man she loved."

Doctor Starkweather rose slowly to his feet, with the air of a person whose capacity of toleration had reached its last limits.

"Am I to understand that you are still in love with Mr. Eustace Macallan?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"The hero of the great Poison Trial?" pursued my uncle. "The man who has deceived and deserted you? You love him?"

"I love him more dearly than ever."

"Mr. Benjamin," said the Vicar. "If she recovers her senses between this, and nine o'clock to-morrow morning, send her with her luggage to Loxley's Hotel, where I am now staying. Good night, Valeria. I shall consult with your aunt as to what is to be done next. I have no more to say."

"Give me a kiss, uncle, at parting."

"Oh, yes. I'll give you a kiss. Anything you like, Valeria. I shall be sixty-five next birthday; and I thought I knew something of women, at my time of life. It seems I know nothing. Loxley's Hotel is the address, Mr. Benjamin. Good night."

Benjamin looked grave when he returned to me, after accompanying Doctor Starkweather to the garden gate.

"Pray be advised, my dear," he said. "I don't ask you to consider my view of this matter as good for much. But your uncle's opinion is surely worth considering?"

I did not reply. It was useless to say any more. I made up my mind to be misunderstood and discouraged, and to bear it. "Good night, my dear old friend," was all I said to Benjamin. Then I turned away—I confess with tears in my eyes—and took refuge in my bedroom.

The window-blind was up; and the autumn moonlight shone brilliantly into the little room.

As I stood by the window, looking out, the memory came to me of another moonlight night, when Eustace and I were walking together in the Vicarage garden before our marriage. It was the night of which I have written many pages back, when there were obstacles to our union, and when Eustace had offered to release me from my engagement to him. I saw the dear face again, looking at me in the moonlight; I heard once more his words, and mine. "Forgive me" (he had said) "for having loved you—passionately, devotedly loved you. Forgive me, and let me go."

And I had answered, "Oh, Eustace, I am only a woman, don't madden me! I can't live without you. I must, and will, be your wife!" And now, after marriage had united us, we were parted! Parted, still loving each other as passionately as ever. And why? Because he had been accused of a crime that he had never committed, and because a Scotch jury had failed to see that he was an innocent man.

I looked at the lovely moonlight, pursuing these remembrances and these thoughts. A new ardour burnt in me. "No!" I said to myself. "Neither relations nor friends shall prevail on me to falter and fail in my husband's cause. The assertion of his innocence is the work of my life.—I will begin it to-night!"

I drew down the blind, and lit the candles. In the quiet night—alone and unaided—I took my first step on the toilsome and terrible journey that lay before me. From the title-page to the end, without stopping to rest and without missing a word, I read the trial of my husband for the murder of his wife.

PART II.—PARADISE REGAINED.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORY OF THE TRIAL. THE PRELIMINARIES

Let me confess another weakness, on my part, before I begin the story of the Trial. I cannot prevail upon myself to copy, for the second time, the horrible title-page which holds up to public ignominy my husband's name. I have copied it once in my tenth chapter. Let once be enough.

Turning to the second page of the Trial, I found a note assuring the reader of the absolute correctness of the report of the proceedings. The compiler described himself as having enjoyed certain special privileges. Thus the presiding judge had himself revised his charge to the jury. And, again, the chief lawyers for the prosecution and the defence, following the judge's example, had revised their speeches, for and against the prisoner. Lastly, particular care had been taken to secure a literally correct report of the evidence given by the various witnesses. It was some relief to me to discover this note, and to be satisfied at the outset that the story of the Trial was, in every particular, fully and truly told.

The next page interested me more nearly still. It enumerated the actors in the judicial drama—the men who held in their hands my husband's honour, and my husband's life. Here is the list:—

THE LORD JUSTICE CLERK, LORD DRUMFENNICK, LORD NOBLEKIRK,	Judges on the Bench.
THE LORD ADVOCATE (Mintlaw) DONALD DREW, Esq., (Advocate- Depute),	Counsel for the Crown.
MR. JAMES ARLISS, W.S., THE DEAN OF FACULTY (Farmichael)	Agent for the Crown. Counsel for the Panel,

ALEXANDER CROCHET, Esq., Advocate	} otherwise the prisoner
MR. THORNBANK, W.S.,	
MR. PLAYMORE, W.S.,	

The indictment against the Prisoner then followed. I shall not copy the uncouth language, full of needless repetitions, and, if I know anything of the subject, not guiltless of bad grammar as well, in which my innocent husband was solemnly and falsely accused of poisoning his first wife. The less there is of that false and hateful indictment on this page, the better and the truer the page will look, to my eyes.

To be brief then, Eustace Macallan was "indicted and accused, at the instance of David Mintlaw, Esq., Her Majesty's Advocate, for Her Majesty's interest," of the murder of his wife by poison, at his residence called Gleninch, in the county of Mid-Lothian. The poison was alleged to have been wickedly and feloniously given by the prisoner to his wife Sarah on two occasions, in the form of arsenic, administered in tea, medicine, "or other article or articles of food or drink, to the prosecutor unknown." It was further declared that the prisoner's wife had died of the poison thus administered by her husband, on one or other, or both, of the stated occasions; and that she was thus murdered by her husband. The next paragraph asserted that the said Eustace Macallan, taken before John Daviot, Esq., advocate, sheriff-substitute of Mid-Lothian, did in his presence at Edinburgh, on a given date, viz.: the 29th of October, subscribe a declaration stating his innocence of the alleged crime, this declaration being reserved in the indictment, together with certain documents, papers, and articles, enumerated in an inventory, to be used in evidence against the prisoner. The indictment concluded by declaring that, in the event of the offence charged against the prisoner being found proven by the verdict, he, the said Eustace Macallan, "ought to be punished with the pains of the law, to deter others from committing the like crimes in all time coming."

So much for the indictment! I have done with it—and I am rejoiced to be done with it.

An inventory of papers, documents, and articles followed at great length on the three next pages. This, in its turn, was succeeded by the list of the witnesses, and by the names of the jurors (fifteen in number) balloted for, to try the case. And then, at last, the report of the trial began. It resolved itself, to my mind, into three great questions. As it appeared to me at the time, so let me present it here.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRST QUESTION—DID THE WOMAN DIE POISONED?

The proceedings began at ten o'clock. The prisoner was placed at the bar, before the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh. He bowed respectfully to the Bench, and pleaded Not Guilty, in a low voice.

It was observed by every one present, that the prisoner's face betrayed the traces of acute mental suffering. He was deadly pale. His eyes never once wandered to the crowd in the court. When certain witnesses appeared against him, he looked at them with a momentary attention. At other times he kept his eyes on the ground. When the evidence touched on his wife's illness and death, he was deeply affected, and covered his face with his hands. It was a subject of general remark and general surprise, that the prisoner, in this case, although a man, showed far less self-possession than the last prisoner tried in that court for murder, a woman, who had been convicted on overwhelming evidence. There were persons present (a small minority only) who considered this want of composure on the part of the prisoner to be a sign in his favour. Self-possession, in this dreadful position, signified to their minds, the stark insensibility of a heartless and shameless criminal, and afforded in itself a presumption, not of innocence, but of guilt.

The first witness called was John Daviot, Esq., Sheriff-Substitute of Mid-Lothian. He was examined by the Lord Advocate (as counsel for the prosecution) and said:

"The prisoner was brought before me on the present charge. He made and subscribed a Declaration on the 29th of October. It was freely and voluntarily made, the prisoner having been first duly warned and admonished."

Having identified the Declaration, the Sheriff-Substitute, being cross-examined by the Dean of Faculty (as counsel for the defence) continued his evidence in these words:

"The charge against the prisoner was Murder. This was communicated to him before he made the Declaration. The questions addressed to the prisoner were put partly by me, partly by another officer, the procurator-fiscal. The answers were given distinctly, and, so far as I could judge, without reserve. The statements put forward in the Declaration were all made in answer to questions asked by the procurator-fiscal or by myself."

A clerk in the Sheriff-Clerk's office then officially produced the Declaration and corroborated the evidence of the witness who had preceded him.

The appearance of the next witness created a marked sensation in the court. This was no less a person than the nurse who had attended Mrs. Macallan in her last illness—by name Christina Ormsay.

After the first formal answers, the nurse, examined by the Lord Advocate, proceeded to say:—

"I was first sent for, to attend the deceased lady, on the 7th of October. She was then suffering from a severe cold, accompanied by a rheumatic affection of the left knee joint. Previous to this I understood that her health had been fairly good. She was not a very difficult

person to nurse when you got used to her and understood how to manage her. The main difficulty was caused by her temper. She was not a sullen person; she was headstrong and violent, easily excited to fly into a passion, and quite reckless in her fits of anger as to what she said or did. At such times I really hardly think she knew what she was about. My own idea is that her temper was made still more irritable by unhappiness in her married life. She was far from being a reserved person. Indeed, she was disposed, as I thought, to be a little too communicative, about herself and her troubles, with persons, like me, who were beneath her in station. She did not scruple, for instance, to tell me, when we had been long enough together to get used to each other, that she was very unhappy, and fretted a good deal about her husband. One night, when she was wakeful and restless, she said to me—"

The Dean of Faculty here interposed; speaking on the prisoner's behalf. He appealed to the Judges to say whether such loose and unreliable evidence as this was evidence which could be received by the court?

The Lord Advocate, speaking on behalf of the Crown, claimed it as his right to produce the evidence. It was of the utmost importance, in this case, to show, on the testimony of an unprejudiced witness, on what terms the husband and wife were living. The witness was a most respectable woman. She had won and deserved the confidence of the unhappy lady whom she attended on her death-bed.

After briefly consulting together, the Judges unanimously decided that the evidence could not be admitted. What the witness had herself seen and observed of the relations between the husband and wife was the only evidence that they could receive.

The Lord Advocate thereupon continued his examination of the witness. Christina Ormsay resumed her evidence as follows:—

"My position as nurse led necessarily to my seeing more of Mrs. Macallan than any other person in the house. I am able to speak, from experience, of many things not known to others who were only in her room at intervals.

"For instance, I had more than one opportunity of personally observing that Mr. and Mrs. Macallan did not live very happily. I can give you an example of this, not drawn from what others told me, but from what I noticed myself.

"Towards the latter part of my attendance on Mrs. Macallan, a young widow lady named Mrs. Beaulieu—a cousin of Mr. Macallan's—came to stay at Gleninch. Mrs. Macallan was jealous of this lady, and she showed it, in my presence, only the day before her death, when Mr. Macallan came into her room to enquire how she had passed the night. 'Oh,' she said, 'never mind how I have slept. What do you care whether I sleep well or ill? How has Mrs. Beaulieu passed the night? Is she more beautiful than ever this morning? Go back to her—pray go back to her! Don't waste your time with me.' Beginning in that manner, she worked herself into one of her furious rages. I was brushing her hair at the time, and feeling that my presence was an impropriety under the circumstances, I attempted to leave the room. She forbade me to go. Mr. Macallan felt, as I did, that my duty was to withdraw, and he said so in plain words. Mrs. Macallan insisted on my staying, in language so insolent to her husband that he said, 'If you cannot control yourself, either the nurse leaves the room or I do.' She refused to yield even then. 'A good excuse,' she said, 'for getting back to Mrs. Beaulieu. Go!' He took her at her word, and walked out of the room. He had barely closed the door before she began reviling him to me in the most shocking manner. She declared, among other things she said of him, that the news of all others which he would be most glad to hear would be the news of her death. I ventured, quite respectfully, on remonstrating with her. She took up the hairbrush and threw it at me, and then and there, dismissed me from my attendance on her. I left her, and waited below until her fit of passion had worn itself out. Then I returned to my place at the bedside, and, for a while, things went on again as usual.

"It may not be amiss to add a word which may help to explain Mrs. Macallan's jealousy of her husband's cousin. Mrs. Macallan was a very plain woman. She had a cast in one of her eyes, and, if I may use the expression, one of the most muddy, blotchy complexions it was ever my misfortune to see in a person's face. Mrs. Beaulieu, on the other hand, was a most attractive lady. Her eyes were universally admired, and she had a most beautifully clear and delicate colour. Poor Mrs. Macallan said of her, most untruly, that she painted.

"No, the defects of the complexion of the deceased lady were not in any way attributable to her illness. I should call them born and bred defects in herself.

"Her illness, if I am asked to describe, I should say was troublesome—nothing more. Until the last day there were no symptoms in the least degree serious about the malady that had taken her. Her rheumatic knee was painful, of course, acutely painful, if you like, when she moved it, and the confinement to bed was irksome enough, no doubt. But otherwise there was nothing in the lady's condition, before the fatal attack came, to alarm her or anybody about her. She had her books, and her writing materials, on an invalid table which worked on a pivot, and could be arranged in any position most agreeable to her. At times she read and wrote a great deal. At other times she lay quiet, thinking her own thoughts, or talking to me and with one or two lady friends in the neighbourhood who came regularly to see her.

"Her writing, so far as I knew, was almost entirely of the poetical sort. She was a great hand at composing poetry. On one occasion only she showed me some of her poems. I am no judge of such things. Her poetry was of the dismal kind, despairing about herself, and wondering why she had ever been born, and non-

sense like that Her husband came in more than once for some hard hits at his cruel heart and ignorance of his wife's merits. In short, she vented her discontent with her pen as well as with her tongue. There were times—and pretty often, too—when an angel from heaven would have failed to have satisfied Mrs. Macallan.

"Throughout the period of her illness the deceased lady occupied the same room—a large bedroom situated, like all the best bedrooms, on the first floor of the house.

"Yes, the plan of the room now shown to me is quite accurately taken, according to my remembrance of it. One door led into the great passage or corridor, on which all the doors opened. A second door, at one side (marked B on the plan), led into Mr. Macallan's sleeping-room. A third door, on the opposite side (marked C on the plan), communicated with a little study or book-room, used, as I was told, by Mr. Macallan's mother when she was staying at Gleninch, but seldom or never entered by any one else. Mr. Macallan's mother was not at Gleninch while I was there. The door between the bedroom and this study was locked, and the key was taken out. I don't know who had the key, or whether there were more keys than one in existence. The door was never opened to my knowledge. I only got into the study to look at it with the house-keeper, by entering through a second door that opened on to the corridor.

"I beg to say that I can speak, from my own knowledge, positively about Mrs. Macallan's illness, and about the sudden change which ended in her death. By the doctor's advice I made notes, at the time, of dates and hours and such like. I looked at my notes before coming here.

"From the seventh of October, when I was called in to nurse her, to the twentieth of the same month, she slowly but steadily improved in health. Her knee was still painful, no doubt, but the inflammatory look of it was disappearing. As to the other symptoms, except weakness from lying in bed and irritability of temper, there was really nothing the matter with her. She slept badly, I ought perhaps to add. But we remedied this by means of composing draughts, prescribed for that purpose by the doctor.

"On the morning of the twenty-first, at a few minutes past six, I got my first alarm that something was going wrong with Mrs. Macallan.

"I was woken at the time I have mentioned by the ringing of the hand-bell which she kept on her bed-table. Let me say for myself that I had only fallen asleep on the sofa in the bedroom at past two in the morning from sheer fatigue. Mrs. Macallan was then awake. She was in one of her bad humours with me. I had tried to prevail on her to let me remove her dressing-case from her bed-table, after she had used it in making her toilet for the night. It took up a great deal of room, and she could not possibly want it again before the morning. But no, she insisted on my letting it be. There was a glass inside the case, and, plain as she was, she never wearied of looking at herself in that glass. I saw that she was in a bad state of temper, so I gave her her way and let the dressing-case be. Finding that she was too sullen to speak to me after that, and too obstinate to take her composing draught from me when I offered it, I laid me down on the sofa at her bed-foot, and fell asleep, as I have said.

"The moment her bell rang I was up and at the bedside, ready to make myself useful.

"I asked what was the matter with her. She complained of faintness and depression, and said she felt sick. I enquired if she had taken anything in the way of physic or food while I had been asleep. She answered that her husband had come in about an hour since, and, finding her still sleepless, had himself administered the sleeping draught. Mr. Macallan, (sleeping in the next room) joined us while she was speaking. He, too, had been aroused by the bell. He heard what Mrs. Macallan said to me about the composing draught, and made no remark upon it. It seemed to me that he was alarmed at his wife's faintness. I suggested that she should take a little wine or brandy and water. She answered that she could swallow nothing so strong as wine or brandy, having a burning pain in her stomach already. I put my hand on her stomach, quite lightly. She screamed when I touched her.

"This symptom alarmed us. We sent to the village for the medical man who had attended Mrs. Macallan during her illness, one Mr. Gale. "The doctor seemed no better able to account for the change for the worse in his patient than we were. Hearing her complain of thirst, he gave her some milk. Not long after taking it, she was sick. The sickness appeared to relieve her. She soon grew drowsy and slumbered. Mr. Gale left us, with strict injunctions to send for him instantly if she was taken ill again.

"Nothing of the sort happened; no change took place for the next three hours or more. She roused up towards half-past nine, and inquired about her husband. I informed her that he had returned to his own room, and asked if I should send for him. She said, No, I asked next, if she would like anything to eat or drink. She said, No, again, in rather a vacant stupefied way—and then told me to go downstairs and get my breakfast. On my way down, I met the housekeeper. She invited me to breakfast with her in her room, instead of in the servants' hall as usual. I remained with the housekeeper but a short time: certainly not more than half an hour.

"Going upstairs again, I met the under-housemaid, sweeping, on one of the landings. "The girl informed me that Mrs. Macallan had taken a cup of tea, during my absence in the housekeeper's room. Mr. Macallan's valet had ordered the tea for his mistress, by his master's directions. The under-housemaid made it, and took it upstairs herself to Mrs. Macallan's room. Her master (she said) opened the door