

mindful individual, never attempted to solve the tragedy of his life—for tragedy I was sure there had been—and never interfered with his “deep thinks.”

Often we have taken long walks together in the country lanes and by the river side (we were stationed then in a quiet little village in Blankshire) when we haven’t exchanged half a dozen words. It wasn’t very interesting, truly, but I saw the poor beggar appreciated it, and when we got back to barracks, he would often say,

“Thanks, old chap, you’re awfully good to me.”

For some months previous to this all London had been singing the praises of a new actress, called Marie Leroyd. I had seen her, when up on leave, at one of the theatres given over to the sacred lamp of burlesque. She was of French extraction and had all the tricks and manners of her vivacious race. That she was surpassingly lovely there was no denying. That her physical beauty was accompanied by a corresponding beauty of mind, I very much doubted.

Rumor said not, but, then, rumor isn’t always correct. Rumor said she was married; rumor also said she was not, but ought to be. But then, dame rumor is often a lying jade.

One day Lewis proposed that we should go for a walk on the river bank. Instead of the cavalryman’s ordinary light wip, Lewis would sometimes carry a shorter one, with a loaded handle. I noticed he had it on this occasion. Would to God that he had not. There was very little boating on the river as a general rule, though occasionally we would see a few boating men or a pair of “spoony” lovers. The latter *genus* was the only thing that ever really roused Lewis. Why, he knew best. When we arrived at the river we only noticed one boat, which was gently floating up stream, about a mile ahead of us. As the devil’s luck would have it, our steps turned in the direction of the boat, which was almost covered with a large awning. After idly watching it for about a quarter of a mile, we noticed someone paddling towards the bank (again, as the devil’s luck would have it, on our side of the river), and the boat disappeared behind some bushes which grew to the waters edge.

We continued our walk, slowly, slowly, unconsciously approaching a tragedy.

And that tragedy came without one minute’s warning to any of the actors in it.

Suddenly turning a slight bend in the river, we saw lying on the grass a man and a woman. They were so engrossed in their talk that they had not heard our approach.

The man was Capt. Harris, the woman I recognized in an instant as Marie Leroyd, the actress. A vice-like grip on my arm made me give an exclamation of pain, and as I did so I glanced at Lewis’ face. To my dying day, never shall I forget the demoniacal expression I saw there.

I then knew I had solved the tragedy of John Lewis’ life.

My exclamation of pain had attracted the attention of the other two actors in this scene. Harris jumped to his feet, scowling with rage.

“What the devil do you two men mean, spying on me like this?” he exclaimed.

“That woman you are with is my wife, Capt. Harris, and”——

“You lie, you hound,” hissed Harris.

It was the work of an instant; with a cry more resembling that of a wild beast than a human being, Lewis sprang at Capt. Harris, and with a terrible crash, the loaded handle of his whip fell on Capt. Harris’ unprotected head.

Without one moan, without one cry, he fell dead.

As in a dream, without a look at the dead man, or the living, beautiful woman, we turned and retraced our steps towards the barracks. On reaching them he grasped my hand for a second, and turned away. Still in a dream, I seated myself on a bench. How long I sat there, I know not, but suddenly a pistol shot was heard, and I saw men rushing towards the room from whence the report came. I did not stir; I knew that another tragedy had marred that fair day.

Lewis was found, face downward on the floor, shot through the head.

One fair, false woman had that day caused the death of a scoundrel, and sent her husband to a suicide’s grave.



ANNA MATILDA (who has just made a purchase)—If it likes sugar-stick an’ smells it in my pocket, I am lost!