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The Mystery of Rutledge Hall

"The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER XXVII.

At first an utter incredulity had seized her—it was a false wild notion born of misery in Frank's brain; but very soon this disbelief died away in her troubled mind, and doubt came with its attendant horrors.

She remembered that it was true that Stephen had left the hotel with Mrs. Rutledge. Had she herself not seen them together? Had he not come to her—Sidney—in mistake on the dimly lighted landing, and desired her to go with him, saying that the carriage was waiting? Had she—Sidney—seen the meeting between them in the little sitting-room? Had she not seen Sibly Rutledge run up to him and cling to him with both hands clasped upon his arm, uttering a little cry of joy and relief as she did so—and then they had gone away together, and a long time had elapsed before Stephen had returned to the ball-room.

She rose from the bed, and began pacing up and down the room like a caged animal infuriate either with wounds or confinement, struggling desperately against the horror which had seized her; fighting against her doubts, one moment passionately asserting her belief in Stephen's complete innocence, the next heart-broken and crushed with the thought of his guilt—new telling herself that he was incapable of such a deed, the next almost fainting with horror at the thought that her husband had committed not only the murder, but had been cowardly enough to screen himself from its punishment by allowing an innocent man to suffer for his crime.

She did not think of undressing, of the closeness of the hour, of the chance that Stephen might find her in such a condition of hysterics from Lambewold. She had forgotten Frank Greville and his sorrowful night-journey. She had no thought for his unhappy sister, no recollector for aught but her husband and the crime of which he was accused.

Suddenly another recollection came to her. What had she done? What had she done? She, his wife, had put the detectives upon Stephen Daunt's



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CHAPTER XXVIII.

The young mistress of Easthorpe did not put in an appearance at breakfast on the morning after Lady Eva's fancy-ball, and Stephen and his friend took the meal alone together. It was a very silent one for Stephen was absent and grave and depressed, and Lloyd Milner seemed preoccupied and self-absorbed; there was a light in his eyes, a nervous eagerness about his manner, which were very unusual in the calm, self-contained young barrister. He was leaving Easthorpe that day to return to London; and, before going, he had determined to put his fate to the touch, "and win or lose it all."

He knew that there was a certain amount of presumption in the thoughts of aspiring to the hand of John Daunt's only daughter, a girl to whom an earl was paying his addresses, and who had been accustomed from her babyhood to every luxury that wealth

could give. Lloyd Milner's own private means were very small; he was in a large degree dependent on his profession, one in which a large amount of work must be done, and to which many years of toil must be devoted, before fame or fortune can be attained. Therefore, beside Lord de la Poer, he had but little to offer the lady of his love—little in a pecuniary sense, of course; but he had laid at her feet a true and loyal heart, a love which would never fail her, a devotion without limit.

He had meant to keep the secret of his love to himself for some time to come—at least until his position was more secured, his income larger. But Dolly had looked so distractingly pretty on the previous evening in her dainty costume of paysanne coquette that he had cast prudence to the winds, and urged not only by his love, but his jealous anger at the young earl's marked attentions, he had told Dolly that he loved her, and had read in her sweet shy loving eyes the assurance that his love was returned.

It behooved him then as an honorable man to see her father without delay, and he was to drive over to Lambewold in the course of the morning, ostensibly for the purpose of saying farewell, ready to lay his case before Mr. Daunt. He had said nothing to Stephen, seeing that he had troubled of his own which took all his attention; but he felt that he should be glad to have Sidney on his side, knowing that she was a great favorite with her father-in-law, who rarely refused her anything for which she pleaded earnestly.

He was not, however, quite confident as to the result of his application to Sidney, whose manner had been strangely variable toward him during the latter part of his visit. Always courteous, it was not in her nature to be angry else to a guest in her own house. She had been sometimes so coldly polite that he could not ignore her mistrust, at others she had been timidly cordial, as if anxious to conciliate him; but she never lost her constraint of manner altogether—the remembrance of the interview in the dining-room always stood between them.

Angry as he had been at the deceit she was practicing, his pity for Stephen Daunt's young wife was very great. He could see how unhappy she was, that she was wretched to the verge of recklessness, that the unhappy division between herself and her husband widened every day, and that Stephen's unhappiness was scarcely less than her own. It was far too delicate a subject for any interference; even such an old friend as he was

could not touch upon the matter, and he could only hope that something would happen to lift the cloud from their lives and bring them together again.

"You will not drive in with me this morning, I suppose, Lloyd?" Stephen said, rising from the breakfast-table and gathering up his letters.

"Thank you—no, I want to see Mrs. Daunt before I go; and Lady Eva was good enough to ask me to lunch at Lambewold."

"Then I will meet you there," Stephen said, with a little nod of farewell as he left the room.

Milner followed him into the hall, and stood while he was putting on his fur-lined coat and preparing for his cold drive. It had ceased to snow, and there was a slight thaw, so that the grounds looked dreary and melancholy, and there was a monotonous drip, drip from the trees as the snow melted.

"A nasty day for travelling," Stephen said, buttoning up his coat, a sudden change passing over his grave handsome face at sound of a soft rustle on the oaken staircase; and Lloyd, looking up suddenly, saw Sidney standing there hesitatingly, clad in a short walking-dress of dark seal-brown velvet. She hesitated only a moment; then she came on slowly.

Stephen did not wait to speak to her. He went out on to the steps without a glance at his wife, got into the dog-cart, and drove away. Almost involuntarily Milner looked at Sidney. It was impossible that she should become paler than she was before; but her lip quivered a little, and her dark eyes, full of yearning and sorrow, looked after the dog-cart until it was lost in view by a bend in the drive. Then she turned away; and, recollecting herself, with a little start, she held out her hand.

"Good-morning, Mr. Milner," she said, smiling. "Are you very tired after your disputation?"

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United States Faces Religious Civil War

Rollin Lynde Hartt writing in The Forum says that two religions—so different that, if one is true, the other must be false—exist side by side within the confines of Protestantism. Had these two religions developed independently, no one would for a moment think of combining them. Yet there are excellent able men who, despite the radical difference between the Fundamentalist belief and the Liberal, and despite the bitter conflict now raging, seek to persuade themselves that the two religions will not separate. Protestantism, they contend, will inevitably remain intact, as if the history of Protestantism were not largely a record of "splits," and as if each of our two hundred and two Protestant denominations were the product of a split. What has happened more than two hundred times can happen again. The one now impending promises much. To be sure, it will be painful—something like a divorce, something like a civil war—but when it is over we shall have three great, splendid, united churches in America—the Papal Fundamentalist, the Non-Papal Fundamentalist, and the Liberal. The result will not consciously be striven for at first any more than a united America was consciously striven for when the thirteen colonies rebelled against tyranny. Indeed, it may at first appear that the

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