

BY MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON, AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCESS PASSES," "THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR," ETC.

"The Countess doesn't like Lady Hilary!" Elspeth said to herself. "She cares for Mr. Troubridge, and has the air of considering him her property. Now, he is a very nice fellow, but I don't think any one can see that—indeed, every one does so, it and talks about it, much to Lady Hilary's disgust, especially as her mother-in-law is so tremendously rich. I believe the Countess would be glad to have some harm come to Lady Hilary. She's a formidable person, and I believe, if it were to turn by her own ends or injure an enemy. Perhaps it is horrid of me to think that, but I can't help it. I don't like her, and such a fancy to me, yet I can't help feeling it's true about her. But even if she would like to harm that sweet girl, why should I care? I don't think I shall. Lady Hilary was going motoring with Mr. Kenneth? I suppose it must have been because she knew that now she'd be sure to get a shock. I don't think she suspected he had planned to be with Lady Hilary. That must be it. She must have known he had some idea of proposing an excuse to her. I don't think she would have thought perhaps be enough to account for the look on his face when he saw Lady Hilary in the car just now. And yet I don't think she would have been disappointed. It was actual horror. And then, the chauffeur's accident? Was that coincidence, or was it planned? I suppose it was. It all seems so queer. I don't know if it all mean? Or does it mean nothing, except that my imagination has grown morbid, and taken to conjuring up sensational things?"

Elspeth herself seemed to answer Elspeth's forebodings with a warning. A vague depression fell upon her. She thought of the Countess's society, and ought to say something, do something, while there was time to prevent a calamity. Still, she kept silent. Mr. Kenneth was not to be seen. She had only to say if she said: "Please stop the motor. Because Countess Drapolevski didn't want me to go with you, and she's got to go." Troubridge looked distressed at seeing Lady Hilary in the car. I have a presentiment, that something dreadful is going to happen to her. I have only to feel much the same when they are motoring for the first time," she told herself. "I have the idea that I should be glorious. I don't think I shall. I don't like her and Mr. Troubridge; but maybe I shouldn't. Maybe this is only part of the excitement."

Just at this instant Kenneth half turned his head for a second to ask: "How do you like it, Miss Dean? You're not bored?"

Then Elspeth felt that for not anything in the world would she have said "Yes." "I think it's glorious," she answered bravely. "I don't think I shall be bored. I expected 'Tell him to stop the car.' Tell him to stop the car."

Now they were coming to a descent, and Elspeth was glad that Kenneth's attention was needed for his driving. He spoke no more, and the girls were at liberty to be silent or talk together. "I'm very happy," Hilary said. "I believe you are terrified, after all. As for me, I don't think I should be bored. I don't think I shall be bored. I think of it, if Mr. Kenneth drove straight into that wall of rock just ahead."

"How can you say that?" exclaimed Elspeth. "I don't think I shall be bored. I'm young, and so much loved—you have everything of the best that life can give."

"How little you know!" answered Hilary. "I don't think I shall be bored. I'm young, and so much loved—you have everything of the best that life can give. For, of joy in the future? What good to be loved, if one can't hope to spend one's life with the person who loves one?"

"There's always hope," replied Elspeth. "until one is old."

"I feel odd, though. I'm not twenty yet."

"I don't know. I know I oughtn't to talk in this way to anyone, but I am so miserable, and if it were not for you, I should have said 'Tell him to stop the car.' I really be glad to die, unless—unless—"

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Elsbeth did not follow the bracelet. They darted to the exposed wrist, and when they must have seen there hers saw at the same time.

The hand of white kid, resembling that of a long glove from which the skin has been cut off, or another like it, stretched covered the arm tightly and smoothly; but the heavy band of gold which had masked the end above the writhing hand hid the sudden rugged edge of a curious scarred knuckle. Elspeth now saw that the flesh was inflamed and that just above the writhing hand was a deep red mark.

"Instinctively she turned her eyes, then," wrote Browbridge "but he was aware of his discovery. She felt that he glanced quickly at her to see whether his secret—whatever it might be—was at her mercy; by her face betrayed nothing." As he was in the act of lifting Kenrith's shoulders from the ground, he could not pull them through cuff and coat sleeve which had been pushed back; but he turned in such a way that if Elspeth had not already seen the scarred hand, she would be unable to catch sight of it. His change of position must have exposed the scar to the Countess Radepolska's gaze, but Browbridge either did not care or considered her knowledge of his secret a lesser evil. Half lifting, half dragging Kenrith toward the electric car lent by Lady Ardlife, he had almost reached it when the unconscious man showed signs of coming to himself.

He sighed, opened his eyes, and met those of Elspeth, who had risen and watched before Elspeth could speak. "No!" said Kenrith. "No"—as he staggered up, seemed to have remembered all that had happened, for looking straight at her, he, h. r., said, "Thank Heaven you're safe! And Lady Hilary."

"Doesn't seem to be much hurt, though she has fainted," Browbridge answered before Elspeth could speak. "Don't worry. We hope you are going to be all right, too."



Something tied

Better not try and help yourself, fear as you may have a bone broken or a sprain somewhere. I'll lift you into this car."

"There's nothing the matter with me. Give me a hand and I'll get to my feet," said Kenrith. "No"—as he staggered up, supported by Browbridge. "I'm all right. No bones broken evidently." He passed his hand over his forehead, where a few drops of blood trickled down over his eyes. "Just a cut on the head. It's nothing at all. You're sure you're not hurt, Miss Dean, or Lady Hilary?"

"She was up and bending over you when we came," said the Countess, somewhat sharply. "It was only when she saw us that she fainted. There's, she's coming to herself now. One might almost say she heard us speaking about her."

"There was nothing actually offensive in the words, yet they gave the impression that Lady Hilary had feigned unconsciousness to draw attention to herself, or for some other reason. Elspeth felt an impulse of anger, and would have defended the girl but it was scarcely a moment for argument. Besides, the color was coming back to Lady Hilary's face and the long dark lashes were quivering. A moment later she was looking up into Kenrith's anxious eyes.

"How stupid of me!" she murmured, trying to sit up and sinking back on the shoulders of Elspeth, who had bent down again to help her. "I'm not a bit hurt all scared, I think. At first I was looking for Miss Dean and trying to find out if Mr. Kenrith was alive; but then, suddenly, my heart seemed to stop beating. I suppose it must have been the shock and then the reaction. When did you come Countess—and Mr. Browbridge?"

"I thought you saw us arrive in Lady Ardlife's electric car," said the Countess, with an odd expression. "You appeared to be before—you fainted."

"No," didn't see you—consciously," Elsie replied.

"I called after you all, as you drove past me in the avenue," Browbridge remarked.

where the heavy band of gold had been visible at the side of the road, its pearls and turquoise gleaming out among the grass. Would he leave it lying there? He wondered. But already it was gone.

It could not have been he who had claimed it, for he had not once moved away or stooped down since Kenneth had stood aside while Trowbridge helped the Countess Radeopskoi out of the automobile or two Elspeth had lost sight of the Countess Radeopskoi's movements, and now she quite decidedly thought, while she stood aside watching Trowbridge help the Countess Radeopskoi into the car. It was the Countess's turn to take her seat, and Trowbridge's assistance was given to her as she stepped into the car. The Countess's defiant looks which had passed between them a short time ago. "Now, Miss Dan," said Trowbridge, when the Countess was seated beside Lady Hilary in the large tonneau. But he did not come forward to help her. He let Kenneth give her a hand, as she mounted the step, turning his back for a second or two. Then, when Kenneth was also in the tonneau, Trowbridge closed the door; and Elspeth heard a fleeting glimpse of gold and turquoise under his cuff as he did so.

"She has given it to him—quite quietly and stealthily," the girl thought. "The she must have known all along why he wears it; there could have been no secret about it for her, or she would have said something. Now I'm certain that there is an understanding of some sort between them. She's funny with the man, on a point of Lady Hilary. He knows that she's defying her; and for some reason or other she dared not fail him when he needed her help, in spite of all."





and up in a little lace handkerchief

Elspeth felt that she was surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery. Something very strange was going on around her—something so intricate, so many-sided, that she could as yet lay her hand on no clew to the puzzle, though she could dimly see her way toward more than one, as half bewildered, wholly frightened, she groped in darkness toward the light.

There was a great sensation at the Lochrain Castle Hydro, when it was known that there had been an accident to Mr. Kenneth's magnificent automobile.

Fortunately for the victims of the disaster, there were few people about when they arrived at the hotel in Lady Ardcliffe's electric car. Dusty and disordered, they were able to escape to their own quarters without being seen by more than three or four persons; but the story of the accident spread through the house like wildfire. Groups assembled in the great hall to talk it over. Those who could say that they had seen the electric car come suddenly found themselves extraordinarily popular with all their acquaintances, and were besieged for details. How had Lady Hilary looked? Was it true that Mr. Kenneth's head was terribly cut? And had they really had that pretty little typewriter person in the car with them?

Countess Radeopskoi kept her room, and Mr. Trowbridge also hid himself, therefore Lady Ardcliffe was overwhelmed with callers in her private sitting room, when Mrs. Kennerly had gone to the rescue, therefore it was thought that she must have more information to impart than any one else.

On the contrary, however, she had very little. All she knew with certainty was that she had been on the point of taking Countess Radeopskoi out for a spin in her car, when Mrs. Trowbridge had rushed up to ask if he might borrow it in a great hurry. He had said something was wrong with Mr. Kenneth's car, and he

Miss Dean to tell her everything exact as it had happened. The young person seemed, was slightly shaken and bruised by her fall from the car, and was changed to dusty things. She might not be well enough to act as secretary for a day or two, as she had wrenched her arm, but she would be able to come to Lady Alcliff's room and tell the story of the accident.

As a matter of fact, poor Elspeth's assistance after reaching home was scarcely conducive to the restoration of shattered nerves. Pitying Lady Hilary's weakness, she had gone with the girl to her room, as a poverty-compelled Lady Lambert and her daughter to travel without a maid, and Hilary, utterly broken as she inclined to be hysterical, was in need help.

"I'll stay with you, dear Lady Hilary! till the doctor comes, unless Lady Lambert has returned from the walk you said she'd gone out to take," said Elspeth.

"I don't want a doctor. I'm perfectly well," replied Hilary. "I'm only trembling, shattered. I can't help trembling, but I'll lie down and be perfectly fit again in fifteen minutes."

"You must let me help you undress and please Elspeth."

"You need help yourself," Hilary said.

"I am as pale as marble."

But Elspeth only laughed and insisted that she had not even a headache. She made Lady Hilary sit down, quickly removed her hat, which was crushed into shapelessness, and began to open her dress. She had unfastened several buttons, when something tied up in a little lace handkerchief dropped from Lady Hilary's bodice and fell to the floor.

Elspeth would have stooped to pick it up, but with a low cry and a burning blush, Hilary slipped from the chair.

Her knees, grovelled for a second searching for the thing she had lost and, having reclaimed it, grasped the knotted handkerchief tightly in her hand, as if determined that Elspeth should have no chance to guess at its contents.

The other had no wish to pry into Lady Hilary's secrets and was conscious of no curiosity; but she could not help thinking that the thing tied up in the lace handkerchief had looked like a piece of jewelry—or perhaps more than one. The caubric was so delicate that a glint of gold had shone through; but Elspeth did not even wish to know what Lady Hilary desired to hide, or why there should be a necessity for hiding it.

Neither of the girls spoke of the little incident, and Elspeth continued to help Lady Hilary. She had taken out the dress which was torn as well as dusty, and put her beautiful friend into a dressing gown when Lady Lambert came hurriedly into the room.

Elspeth had just stepped to a wardrobe which was in an alcove, and though she heard the door flung hastily open the new comer could not see her.

"Hilary!" exclaimed Lady Lambert, who entered with an open letter in her hand "to-morrow that man tomorrow will consent to marry that child. Tomorrow some awful person is coming to serve a summons upon me, and"—

"Hush, mother, we're not alone," said the girl in a distressed voice. "There's been no accident. I'm not hurt, but a little upset, and Miss Dean, who went out with Mr. Kerrieth and me for a spin in his car, has very kindly offered to help me to get rid of my dusty things."

At this Elspeth moved forward, pushed down the slippers she had just brought for Lady Hilary, and walked to the door.

"I'll leave you now," she said. "I think I've done everything I can do."

With a slight bow acknowledging Lady Lambert's presence, she would have disappeared, but the latter woman started.

[illegible]

"What do you mean?" exclaimed I rith.

"I mean that he would consider it likely that he would be the first to see."

"That is nonsense," Kenrich said, angrily. "A man who saw you, and made such a suggestion as that, would be a very foolish man indeed."

"Thank you," Elsiepp answered, laughing. "After all, perhaps a clever detective would know that such a suggestion would be made after such a crime as that in open day, but I should have the right to do it. But, and I should have no will to be offended and I should be in a sort of danger of a detective's head."

"If you say such things I shall not do for me, but will let the jewels go."

"I would be too cowardly to do it. I feel terrible if you don't do everything you can to get them back. I wish I could tell you. I shall think and think with all my heart, and I shall be sure to have an inspiration."

"You are clever enough to have an inspiration," said Kenrich, "if you put your mind to it. Of course, all I can do is to tell you my loss known and discussed in the matter. I'm sure I don't really need to say any."

"No, I would not think of speaking any more," replied Elsiepp. "And I am sure," very hard for that inspiration, though I'm sure I don't know what it is, but for a really helpful one will go now. If you have any other questions to ask me, I shall be glad to answer them, but you come to her room, and I'll keep her waiting."

"I hope I haven't worried you," Kenrich said, "but I have a very good idea that so do that. Naturally, I should like to solve the mystery of their disappearance, and still more to get them back, if I could. I am sure I shall be able to do so, seriously, and it certainly must not stress you. Remember I took you out to afternoon by way of trying to bring her back. I am sure I shall be able to do so, and you good I threw you out on the road, and near killing you, shook you up terribly and bruised you a good deal, and I am sure I shall be able to do so, and to complain. So you see, I've done very seriously already. If you are going worry about a comparatively small missing thing, I'm sure I shall be able to do so, and I won't worry to me. I will wait for a lot worse!"

"I'm worried now," smiled Elsiepp. "I'll save myself up for the inspiration. But my mind is not so good as yours, and about your chauffeur? Do you trust him entirely?"

"Kenrich looked surprised. "I've always trusted him," he said. "He is a very fine mechanic," he replied. "I've been in my car in my employer ever since I took to it, for nearly two years ago. I've never had any trouble with him, and I am sure I shall be able to do so."

"But what about that wheel? Couldn't he have known there was something wrong with it?"

"I'm willing for a day or two to wait with his eyes. He told me, and I sent word at what time I wanted it, and he said that he would hardly trust his eyes. I am sure I shall be able to do so. Of course I was willing—indeed, I generally do, and put him in my car. I must say that the wheel and everything else seemed to be in the right before we started. I looked the over myself, but I see now it must have been superficially. I am sure I shall be able to do so. I ought to have made a more thorough examination, so I fear I have myself blame, rather than the chauffeur."

"Is the Frenchman?" asked Elsiepp, "A Boy?"

"Well, I must go," said the girl, sadly, "I'd better suggest that the chauffeur go. I am sure I shall be able to do so. I excuse to absent himself when he knew that an accident was sure to happen, and the man were innocent, if he were caught in his master's breast. If he were caught of connivance in some horrible plot, let the detective Mr. Kenrich be gone. I am sure I shall be able to do so. At the time, there was no further danger of harm that he could do, as the car was badly broken and could not be used."

The girl supposed that Lady Arcliffe wanted her, to talk over some new plot about to be begun, therefore she was sitting room, a number of people were sitting room.

"We want you to tell us all about the accident," Lady Arcliffe said. "Begin at the beginning, from the time you were out."

There was no reason why Elsiepp should not obey, still she was reluctant to spend time on a matter which she considered of little use could she have thought of one. She was very weary, and not as fertile as she was, and her vitality had not been so good as it once was. She had told her the automobile had started, but Mr. Troubridge had tried to stop it, and all that had happened afterward. Lady Arcliffe was so interested in the details, that presently she relaxed into an ease, looking so pale and angry that Elsiepp wondered if inadvertently she had not been too far.

The change in Lady Arcliffe's manner was felt by every one in the room, and when Elsiepp had told her the story, she looked so pale and angry that Elsiepp gladly gave her a glass of water. She then laid a hand upon her arm. "Well," she said, "I wanted to speak with you about the accident, and I am sure I shall be able to do so. I meant to get rid of them all. Now, to me, how did Mr. Troubridge act when he was on the spot where the motor had stopped? I am sure I shall be able to do so. I was sure from something you inadvertently told me that you had been there. I only let drop just now that he did. I am sure I shall be able to do so. I made up your mind to say nothing, Mr. Dean. He did show that he was desperately anxious about the matter, and I am sure I shall be able to do so. I was sure from something you inadvertently told me that you had been there. I only let drop just now that he did. I am sure I shall be able to do so. I made up your mind to say nothing, Mr. Dean. 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"Is this death? Have I died, and solved the great mystery? Am I on the threshold of a new life?" Slowly, falteringly, the words formed themselves in Elspeth's brain.

She was conscious of no suffering; she scarcely remembered what she had passed through, yet the impression of some tremendous experience just undergone, floated dimly in her mind. Either her eyes were open, and she saw nothing but a soft green and golden light changing and

As his sleeve was pushed back, exposing the arm.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE MYSTERIES.

Before Trowbridge was aware of the thing that had happened, the bracelet had fallen from his arm to the ground, which it struck with a delicate metallic sound, then rolled away into the bracken by the roadside. Elsneth saw him start, but his

"I saw one of the driving wheels was out of shape, and followed as quickly as I could, with Lady Ardliff's car, in which the Countess was just going out with her. She thought that she might be needed to give some assistance; but fortunately you are all able to help yourselves. Even your car has apparently escaped any very serious damage, Mr. Kenneth; and now, if you feel up to the effort, I can get you all back to the hotel."

Involuntarily Elspeth glanced at the place where the bracelet had fallen, and

drive, he had preferred not to take the chauffeur, but the Countess had insisted on going. As for herself, she had been so upset by the fear of some terrible accident that she had been obliged to come back to her room and lie down, with her maid to fan her constantly, and hold her smelling salts, or she should certainly have fainted. Neither the Countess nor Mr. Trowbridge had visited her since bringing her to the others home, though she had expected them to do so, and she had now sent for

"It is an impertinence your having come into this room; you helping my daughter is a mere pretence. You have worked upon Mr. Kenrith's good nature until he has allowed you absurd liberties; but I advise you not to fancy for a moment that he respects you the more for having taken advantage of his kindness. When I tell him, as I intend to do, that you have accepted bribes from Captain O'Connell to help that person to command

"I suppose so," he answered. "But no one told me you saw no one near; and Lady Hilary did not lose consciousness first, she must have known if anybody had approached me. I must confess that the mystery seems beyond the skill of any detective less clever than we read in impossible novels."

"I think," said Elspeth quietly, "the detective would turn his attention to me."

(To be continued.)

THE UNDER DOG.

My bonnie lies under the auto.
My bonnie lies under the car.
Please send to the garage for someone,
For it's lone-ome up here where I am.

air
fr.
ry
y