

# The Last Stroke.

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"The Diamond Coterie," "Against Odds," Etc.

## CONTRIBUTED

Past the shops, the five new church, the two hotels, one new and one old. Past the little park and around it to the street, terraced and tree-planted, where the more pretentious dwellings and several moush new houses, built for the summer boarder, stood. It was a balmy night. Every star seemed out, and there was a moon, bright, but on the wane.

Ferrars walked slowly upon the soft turf, avoiding the boards and stones of the walks and street crossings. Now and then he paused to look at some fair garden, lovely in the moonlight, or up at the stars, and once, at least, at a window, open to the breezes of night and revealing that which sent Ferrars homeward presently with a question on his lips. He paced the length of the terraced street, and passed by the cottage where Hilda Grant waked and wept perchance, and as he entered his room silently and shadow-like, he said to himself:

"Is it fate, or Providence that prompts us to these reasonless acts? I may be wrong. I may be mistaken. But I could almost believe that I have found my first clue."

And yet he had heard nothing, and yet all he had seen was a woman's shadow, reflected fitfully by the waning moon, as she paced her room to and fro, to and fro, like some restless or tormented animal, and now and then lifted her arms aloft in despair? In malice? In triumph? In entreaty?—which?

In spite of his brief rest, if rest it was, Ferrars was astir before sunrise, but, even so, he found the doctor awake before him, and his horse in waiting at the side gate.

They drove swiftly and were soon in sight of the Indian Mound.

"Show me first the place where the body was found," Ferrars had said to his guide, as they set out, and when the two stood at this spot, which some one had marked with two small stakes, and the doctor had answered some brief questions regarding the road through the fringe of wood, the mound, and the formation of the lake shore further south or away from the town, the detective announced his wish to be left alone to pursue his work in his lone way.

"Your guest will be astir early if I am not much mistaken," he said. "And you have Miss Grant to look after and may be wanted for a dozen reasons before I return. I can easily walk back, and think you will see me at the breakfast hour which you must on no account delay."

Two hours later and just as the doctor's man had announced breakfast the detective returned and at once joined the two in the dining room.

He said nothing of his morning excursion, but the doctor's quick eye noted his look of gravity, and a certain preoccupation of manner which Ferrars did not attempt to hide. Before the meal was ended, doctor Barnes was convinced that something was puzzling the detective, and troubling him not a little.

After breakfast, and while Brierly was for the moment absent from the porch where they had seated themselves with their cigars, Ferrars asked:

"Where does the lady live who drove Mr. Doran's black pony yesterday? Is it at an hotel?"

"It is at the Glenville, an aristocratic family, hotel on the terrace. She is a Mrs. Jamieson."

"Do you know her?"

"She sent for me once to prescribe for some small ailment not long ago."

"Has she been summoned?"

"If there be."

"If there was anyone in the woods or approaching the mound by the road from the south, she should have seen them, or him; even a boat might have been seen through the trees for some distance southward, could it not?"

"Yes. For two miles from the town, the lake is visible from the wood road. Ah! here comes Doran and our constable."

For half an hour the doctor was busy with Doran, the constable and a number of other men who had or wished to have some small part to play in this second act of the tragedy, the end of which no one could foresee. Then, having despatched them on their various missions, the doctor set out to inquire after the welfare of Hilda Grant; and Robert Brierly, who could not endure his suspense and sorrow in complete inaction, asked permission to accompany him, thus leaving the detective who was quite in the mood for a little solitude just then, in possession of the porch, three wicker chairs and his cigar.

But not for long. Before he had smoked and wrinkled his brows, as was his habit when things were not developed to his liking, and pondered ten minutes alone, he heard the click of the front gate, and turned in his chair to see a lady, petite, graceful and dressed in mourning, coming toward him with quick, light steps. She was looking straight at him, as she came, but as he rose at her approach she stopped short, and standing a few steps from the porch said crisply:

"Your pardon. I have made a mistake. I am looking for Doctor

"He has gone out for a short time only. Will you be seated, madam, and wait?"

She advanced a step and stopped irresolute.

"I suppose I must, unless," coming close to the lower step, "unless you can tell me, sir, what I wish to know."

"If it is a question of medicine, madam, I fear—"

"It is not," she broke in, her voice dropping to a lower note. "It is about the—the inquiry or examination into the death of the poor young man who—but you know, of course."

"I have heard. The inquest is held at one o'clock."

"Ah! And do you know if—the witnesses have been notified as yet?"

"They are being summoned now. As the doctor's guest I have but lately heard him sending out the papers."

"Oh, indeed!" The lady put a tiny foot upon the step as if to mount, and then withdrew it. "I think, if I may leave a message with you, sir," she said, "I will not wait."

"Most certainly," he replied.

"I chanced to be driving through the wood yesterday when the body was discovered near the Indian Mound, and am told that I shall be wanted as a witness. I do not understand why."

"Possibly a mere form which is nevertheless essential."

"I had engaged to go out with a yachting party," she went on, "and before I withdrew from the excursion I wish to be sure that I shall really be required. My name is Mrs. Jamieson, and—"

"Then I can assure you, Mrs. Jamieson, that you are, or will be, wanted, at least. My friend has sent a summons to a Mrs. Jamieson of the Glenville House."

"That is myself," the lady said, and turned to go. "Of course then I must be at hand."

She nodded slightly and went away, going with a less appearance of haste down the street and so from his sight.

When she was no longer visible the detective resumed his seat, and re-lighted his cigar, making, as he did so, this very unprofessional comment:

"I hate to lose sight of a pretty woman, until I am sure of the color of her eyes."

And yet Francis Ferrars had never been called in any sense a "ladies' man."

## CHAPTER VII.

Ferrars had predicted that nothing would be gained by the inquest, and the result proved him a prophet.

Peter Kramer, the poor half-wit who had given the first clue to the whereabouts of the murdered man, was found and his confidence won by much coaxing, and more sweets and shining pennies, the only coin which Peter would ever recognize as such. But the result was small. Asked had he seen the teacher, the reply was "Skip." Asked where, "Most by In-shin-hill." Asked what doing, "Settin' down."

"Had he heard the pistol fired?" asked the doctor.

"Unt' I'd heard naughtin."

"And whom did you see, Peter, besides the teacher?"

Again the look of fright, in the dull eyes, the air lifted as in self-protection, and the only word they could coax from his lips was:

## Bad Symptoms.

The woman who has periodical headaches, backache, sea-sickness, dark spots or specks floating or dancing before her eyes, has gnawing distress or heavy full feeling in stomach, faint spells, dragging-down feeling in lower abdominal or pelvic region, easily startled or excited, irregular or painful periods, with or without pelvic catarrh, is suffering from weakness and derangements that should have early attention. Not all of above symptoms are likely to be present in any case at one time.

Neglected or badly treated and such cases often run into maladies which demand the surgeon's knife if they do not result fatally.

No medicine extant has such a long and numerous record of cures in such cases as Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. No medicine has such a strong professional endorsement of each of its ingredients—worth more than any number of ordinary non-professional testimonials. The very best ingredients known to medical science for the cure of woman's peculiar ailments enter into its composition. No alcohol, harmful, or habit-forming drug is to be found in the list of its ingredients printed on each bottle-wrapper and attested under oath.

In any condition of the female system, Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription can do only good—never harm. Its whole effect is to strengthen, invigorate and regulate the whole female system and especially the pelvic organs. When these are deranged in function or affected by disease, the stomach and other organs of digestion become sympathetically deranged, the nerves are weakened, and a long list of bad, unpleasant symptoms follow. Too much must not be expected of this "Favorite Prescription." It will not perform miracles; will not cure tumors—no medicine will. It will often prevent them, if taken in time, and thus the operating table and the surgeon's knife may be avoided.

Women suffering from diseases of long standing are invited to consult Doctor Pierce by letter, free. All correspondence is held as strictly private and sacredly confidential. Address Dr. R. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y.

Dr. Pierce's Medical Adviser (1000 pages) is sent free on receipt of 31 one-cent stamps for paper-covered, or 50 stamps for cloth-bound copy. Address as above.

"Ghost!" uttered in evident fear and trembling.

"And this was repeated at the inquest. This, and no more, from Peter."

Mrs. Fry, Charles Brierly's landlady, told how the dead man had appeared at breakfast, and her testimony did not accord with the statement of her little daughter.

"Miss Grant has told me of my little girl's mistake," she said. "Mr. Brierly was down-stairs unusually early that morning, and he did not look quite as well as usual. He looked worried, in fact, and ate little. He was always a small eater, and I said something about his eating even less than usual. I can't recall the exact words. Nellie, of course, did not observe his worried look, I did, and quoted me wrong."

Mr. Brierly left the house at once after leaving the table. I did not think of it at first, but it came to me this morning that as he did not carry any books with him, he must

of course have meant to come back for them."

"And, of course, the coroner, he must have had his pistol upon his person when he came down to breakfast? Is that your meaning?"

"Yes, sir."

The weapon, found near the dead man's hand as it had doubtless fallen from it, was there in evidence, as it had been picked up with two of the chambers empty.

That it was not a case of murder plunder was proven, or so they thought, by the fact that the dead man's watch was found upon his person; his pockets, containing a small sum of money, pencils, knives, note book, a small picture case, closed with a spring, and containing Hilda Grant's picture, and a letter from his brother.

Hilda Grant's brief testimony did not agree with that of Mrs. Fry.

She saw her lover, alive, for the last time on the evening before his death. "He was in good spirits and if there was anything troubling him he gave no sign of it. He was by nature quiet and rather reserved," she said.

Yes, she knew his habit of sometimes going to the lake shore beyond the town to practice at target-shooting, but when he did not appear at his post at nine o'clock she never thought to send to the lake shore at first, because he usually returned from his morning exercise before nine o'clock, and so her first thought had been to send to Mrs. Fry's.

When the doctor and Robert were about to leave the scene of the murder, among other instructions given to Doran had been this:

"Don't say anything in town about Mr. Brierly's arrival; you know how curious our people are, and we would have a lot of our curiosity-lovers hovering around my place to see and hear and ask questions. Just caution the others, will you?"

Doran held an acknowledged leadership over the men with whom he consorted, and the group willingly preserved silence. Later when Dr. Barnes explained to Ferrars how he had kept the curious away from his door, and from Brierly, he thought the detective's gratification because of this, rather strange, just at first, and in excess of the cause.

"You couldn't have done a better thing," Ferrars had declared. "It's more than I had ventured to hope. Keep Brierly's identity as close as possible until the inquest is called, and then hold it back, and do not put him on the stand until the last."

After Mrs. Fry, the boy Peter and Hilda Grant had been questioned, Samuel Doran took the witness chair telling of his summons from Miss Grant, of the separation of the group at the Indian Mound, of his meeting with Mrs. Jamieson, of the discovery made by his two companions and of all that followed. And then Mrs. Jamieson was called.

She had entered the place accompanied by an acquaintance from Glenville and they had taken, from choice, as it seemed to them, seats in the rear of the jury, and somewhat aloof from the place where Hilda Grant, Mrs. Marcy and Mrs. Fry sat. Robert Brierly would have taken the place beside Hilda, but the detective interposed.

"Owing to the precautions of the doctor and Mr. Doran, the fact of your relationship has not leaked out. It appears that Mrs. Fry was not informed of your coming until the evening before, or Thursday evening, and she seems to be a very devoted woman. After the inquest you will be free to devote yourself to Miss Grant. Until then, it is my whim, if you like, to keep you in company."

Of course Brierly acquiesced, but more than once he found himself wondering why this should seem to Ferrars needful.

Mrs. Jamieson came quietly to the witness' chair, and took her place. There was a little stir as she came forward, for, while she had been for some weeks in Glenville, and had driven much about its pretty country roads and lanes, she had gone for the most part, more or less, closely veiled in fleecy gauzes of black or white. About she was seldom seen beyond the grounds about the family hotel.

To-day, however, the lady had chosen to wear a Parisian looking gown of dull black silk and a tiny capote of the same material rested upon her blonde and abundant hair, while only the faintest of white illusion veiled, but did not hide, the pretty face from which the blue eyes looked out and about her, gravely but with perfect self-possession.

She told of her morning drive, and while so doing, Ferrars, sitting a little in the rear of the coroner, slipped into his palm a small card closely written upon both sides. Upon one side was written, "Use these as random shots."

And when she spoke of the man whom she had seen going into the wood near the mound, the doctor interposed his first question.

"Can you describe the person at all? His dress, his bearing?"

"Not distinctly," she replied. "He was going from me and his face, of

course, I could not see. In fact, as I have before stated, my pony was fresh, and required my attention. Besides, there was really no reason why I should look a second time at the back of a strange person whom I passed at some little distance. As I seem to recall the figure now, it was that of a rather tall, fair-haired man. I can say no more."

"And at what hour was this?"

"It must have been nearing eight o'clock, I fancy, although being out for pleasure I took little notice of the hour."

No further interruptions were made until she had finished the story of the morning's experience, of her meeting with Doran and the others, of the drive to the village, and of her message to Miss Grant.

"Did you know Miss Grant?"

"Only as I had seen her at church, and upon the street or in the school yard. We had never met, prior to that morning."

"And Charles Brierly? Did you know him?"

"Only by sight. I know few people in Glenville outside of my home of the Glenville House."

Both the doctor and Ferrars noticed the unfinished word broken off at the first syllable. To the one it was a riddle, to the other it told something which he might find useful later on.

Mrs. Jamieson resumed the coroner, after consulting the detective's card. "How far did you drive yesterday before you turned about upon the wood road?"

For a moment the lady seemed to be questioning her memory. Then she replied:

"The distance in miles or fractions of miles, I could not give. I turned the pony about, I remember, at the place where the road curves toward the lake, at the old mill, near the opening of the wood."

"Ah, then you could see, of course, for some distance up and down the lake shore?"

"I could!"

There was hint of surprise in her coldly courteous reply.

"And at that point did you see anything, anyone in the wood, or along the lake?"

"I certainly saw no person. But—yes, I do remember that there was a boat at the water's edge, not far from the place where I turned homeward. It was a little beyond or north of me."

"Did you observe whether there were oars in the boat?"

"I saw none. I am quite sure," the lady replied, and this ended her part in the inquiry.

But now there was some youthful, eager and valuable new witness, and their combined testimony amounted to this:

When the body of their beloved teacher had been brought home and the first hour of excitement had passed, three boys, who had been among Charles Brierly's brightest and most mischievous and adventurous pupils, had set out, a full hour in advance of the elder exploring party, and had followed the lake shore and the wood road, one closely skirting the lake shore, another running through the sparse timber and undergrowth about half way up the shallow slope and the third trotting down the road beyond the three keeping pretty nearly parallel, until the discovery, by the lad upon the shore, of the boat drawn out of the water, and in the shade of a tree.

This had brought the others down to the lake and then caused them to go hastily back. Meeting the party of men, who were not far behind them, the boys had turned back with them and now there was a crowd of witnesses to corroborate the story of the boat.

It stood, they all affirmed, in the shade of a spreading tree, so as that no sun rays had fallen upon it, and its sides were still damp from recent contact with the water, while it stood entirely upon the land. Two oars, also showing signs of contact with the lake, were in the little boat, blade ends down, and it was evident that its late occupant had disembarked in haste, for, while the stake by which the boat had been secured, stood scarcely three feet away, and the chain and padlock lay over the edge of the little craft, there had been no effort to secure it, and the oars had the look of having been hastily shipped and left thus without further care.

When the matter of the boat had been fully investigated, the coroner and Ferrars conferred together for some minutes during these moments Mrs. Jamieson and her companion exchanged some whispered words.

Through some mistake it would seem, these two had been given places which, while aloof from the strange men, and almost in the rear of the jurors, brought them facing the open door of the inner room, where, in full view, the shrouded body of the murdered man lay, and from the first the eyes of the two seemed held and fascinated by the sight of the long, still figure outlined under the white covering.

## TO BE CONTINUED

## Rival Magazine Offers

"You'd better subscribe for Mince's Weekly, madam," said the agent as he slipped his toe inside the door so "madam" could not close it. "Costs you only 50 cents per year; and every new subscriber gets a life insurance policy, a Merry Widow hat, a bottle of Pruna and a copy of 'What President Roosevelt and Jack London Think of Each Other.'"

"Not me," said the madam. "I've just subscribed for McSquirt's Monthly and they gave me a 'God Bless Our Home' motto, a kitchen range, some fly-paper, a rainy-day skirt, an ice-pick, a picture of Edward Bok crossing the Delaware in a gift frame, and send me to the next exposition thrown in."

# WITH OUR YOUNG FOLKS

## A Column of Interest to the Little Folks in the Home

### The Secret of Success

One day, in huckleberry-time, when little Johnny Wales

And half-a-dozen other boys were starting with their pails

To gather berries, Johnny's pa, in talking with him, said

That he could tell him how to pick so he'd come out ahead.

"First find your bush," said Johnny's pa, "and then stick to it till

You've picked it clean. Let those go chasing all about who will

In search of better bushes, but its picking tells, my son;

To look at fifty bushes doesn't count like picking one."

And Johnny did as he was told, and, sure enough, he found

By sticking to his bush while all the others chased around

In search of better picking, it was as his father said

For while the others looked, he worked, and thus came out ahead,

And Johnny recollected this when he became a man

And first of all he laid him out a well-determined plan:

So, while the brilliant triflers failed with all their brains and push,

Wise, steady-going Johnny won by "sticking to the bush."

—NIXON WATERMAN.

### Shadow Pictures

Shadow pictures can be arranged with little trouble in a large room,

across the centre of which a sheet is stretched; or, better still, in two parlors, suspending the sheet across the opening between the two rooms. The sheet should be damp, but not wet enough to allow the water to drip on the carpet. The performance takes place behind the sheet; the audience sits in the other room, in front of the sheet.

The room in which the audience is seated should be in semi-darkness, while behind the sheet there should be a strong light from a lamp placed on the floor. The actors come in front of the lamp, and their shadows are thus thrown vividly on the sheet, their bulk increasing and decreasing according to distance. When they jump over the lamp from behind, their shadows appear to descend from the roof; and when they jump back again—their shadows vanish in the sky. The actors may be dressed in various fantastic ways.

For instance an old man may be represented by a boy in his father's overcoat, tottering along by the aid of a stick; an old woman, by little Kate or Jennie in grandmother's bonnet and shawl, and the baby may be made to appear as a miniature clown by means of a paper cap and a large pair of knickerbockers with the legs stuffed. In this way many very amusing scenes may be performed. The more activity the actors display, the greater will be the fun. Tables chairs and other things may be introduced, and much merriment is caused by one boy jumping over the back of another and vanishing at each jump.

### All in An Hour

"Eight o'clock. Why, it's almost school-time!"

And Ted looked up at the sup.

"There's really no use in beginning. When you can't get anything done! So he wasted a whole long hour.

Tick! tick! it went slowly by. What wonders he might have accomplished.

Had he only the pluck to try!

"An hour! Why, that's sixty minutes!"

Cried Dick, with his face aglow.

"I've time to read over my lessons. And run on an errand or so!"

He blacked his father's boots in addition

Combed Brother Bob's curly brown hair,

Mailed some letters, and brought in the eggs—

And then had three minutes to spare!

—Youth's Companion.

### The Honesty of Newsboys

Many people might think newsboys could not be trusted, but as a rule they are as reliable and as scrupulous in money matters as any established business man. The Journal of Education cites this authentic illustration:

A boy on a Boston street car, while going through it on a jump, was handed a two-and-a-half-dollar gold piece.

Not until later did he discover that it was not a penny. He took it to John E. Gunkel at the newsboys' headquarters for him to find an owner if he could. A few minutes after the boy was gone, the cashier of a bank called up Mr. Gunkel to say that he had long carried in his pocket a coin of rare date and large value, but chiefly prized as a gift from his mother long ago. When he was through explaining, Mr. Gunkel said: "It is on my desk now."

Of course the joy of the cashier knew no bounds. He sent for the boy, insisted upon his taking \$5, went to his home interested himself in the entire family, and ever since has been doing for the children.

### The Spelling Match

Ten little children, standing in a line, "F-u-l-l-y, fully," then there were nine.

Nine puzzled faces, fearful of their fate, "C-i-l-l-y, silly," then there were eight.

Eight pairs of blue eyes, bright as stars in heaven, "B-u-s-s-y, busy," then there were seven.

Seven grave heads, shaking in an awful fix, "L-a-i-d-y, lady," then there were six.

Six eager darlings, determined each to strive, "D-u-t-y, duty," then there were five.

Five hearts so anxious, beating more and more, "S-c-o-l-l-a-r, scholar," then there were four.

Four mouths like rosebuds on a redrose tree, "M-e-r-r-y, merry," then there were but three.

Three pairs of pink ears, listening keen and true, "O-n-e-l-y, only," then there were two.

Two sturdy laddies, ready both to run, "T-u-r-k-y, turkey," then there was one.

One head of yellow hair, bright in the sun, "H-e-r-o, hero," the spelling match was won.

### Common Sense Treatment

It is very noticeable how, in some families, parents expect from the children what is not forthcoming from the older people. For instance, the children are cautioned and expected always to be polite, always to be pleasant, always to be good-natured, never to get into a temper, never to do this, and never to do that. Again and again do we hear parents scoldingly admonishing their children and complaining most fretfully to each other that the children behave so badly. Perhaps their parents wonder at it; other people, however, do not.

Not being of the family group, others can look on with unbiassed eyes and see wherein the trouble lies. Too frequently parents are careless as regards their own personal habits; they fail to keep up the little courtesies of life between themselves and children; they scold continually.

### An Intelligent Pet Gander