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The Mystery of Rutledge Hall

— OR —
"The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER VII.

"Miss Sidney—Miss Sidney dear!" Sidney opened her heavy eyes languidly.

"What is it, Bessie?"

"It seems a pity to wake you, Miss Sidney dear; but, if you want to go by the ten o'clock train, you must get up. It is gone nine now; I have brought you some tea."

Sidney raised herself wearily from her pillows, wondering why her head ached so, and why it required such an effort to rouse herself, until looking rather stupidly round the room, she saw the dress she had worn on the night before thrown upon a chair, the flowers faded and withered upon her table, the little satin shoes upon the floor. She remembered then how long she had lain tossing in her pretty white bed before she had slept, how often she had got up and looked out into the street, where the snow was falling, and how toward dawn, she had fallen asleep from sheer fatigue and weariness.

"Is it snowing still, Bessie?" she asked, as she sat up and took the cup of tea from the hands of the kindly old woman who had been her mother's nurse, and had come to Ashford with Mrs. Arnold, a comely middle-aged woman, who the fair young bride loved and trusted and depended upon, and

to whose care she had left her little child.

"Yes, my dear, but not so heavily as it snowed early this morning," Bessie answered. "I am afraid you are very tired, Miss Sidney? Was it a nice ball, dearie?"

"Yes, I think so," Sidney said, drinking her tea thirstily, for her lips were dry and parched.

Bessie glanced at her for a moment as she busied herself about the room, folding the pretty crushed ball-skirts and putting away the little shoes. Usually Sidney awoke after a ball fresh and unweary and full of merry chatter and pleasant descriptions of the entertainment; but this morning she looked pale and haggard and weary.

"Perhaps you had better rest to-day, Miss Sidney," she suggested, "and not go to Lindhurst until to-morrow?"

"No, Miss Bessie, I will be expecting me," Sidney answered, slowly. "Will you take the cup, Bessie, and get my bath ready?"

"Your hand is very hot, Miss Sidney," the woman said, gently, as she obeyed. "Are you sure your are well?"

"Quite well, Bessie. Is papa at home?"

"No, Miss Sidney."

"Gone out already?" the young girl

exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment.

"Yes, quite an hour ago."

"Where to, Bessie? Do you know?" Mrs. Sandys hesitated a little.

"I think there was an accident, my dear," she said, keeping her face turned away from the bed. "A man on horseback came, and the doctor went off at once. Will you have a cold bath this morning, Miss Sidney? It is very cold."

"Never mind, the cold water will freshen me up."

Sidney's toilet was usually a very expeditious business; but this morning her movements were so languid and inert that Mrs. Sandys could not help again asking if she was quite well; and the girl herself was almost startled by the white face reflected in her looking-glass.

"You have packed, I suppose, Bessie?"

"Yes, dearie; all is ready for you. Try to make a good breakfast, my dear; it will be so cold traveling."

"Yes," Sidney answered, shivering a little as she stood for a moment at the window looking out into the street, so pure and white, for it had been snowing heavily, and as yet there had not been much movement or many passers by.

"You must not linger, Miss Sidney," Bessie said, hastily. "You have no time to spare."

"Don't fidget, Bessie! If I do not go at ten, there is a train at twelve thirty."

"I think the doctor wished you to go early, Miss Sidney."

Sidney turned quickly.

"Why?"

"I—I—I don't know, dearie; but it soon grows dark now," Mrs. Sandys answered, stammering a little.

"It is only a two hours' journey," Sidney said, laughing. "But I will hurry, Bessie; still I cannot go without seeing papa."

"I am quite sure the doctor would not like you to miss your train on that account, Miss Sidney," the old woman remarked, hurriedly.

"Are you? Well, I am sure papa would not like me to go without saying good-bye to him," Sidney declared. "What are you thinking of, Bessie?"

"I don't want you to be traveling after dark, dearie," the old woman

said, gently. "You are not very strong, and you have your mother's delicate chest, you know."

"You think I have, you dear fussy old thing!" Sidney answered, smiling and shaking her head as she left the room; but, as the door closed upon her, the smile faded, and her face wore a sad and anxious expression as she passed along the long old-fashioned corridor and went down-stairs, a pretty graceful figure in her close-fitting dress of fine dark blue serge.

The fire was blazing up cheerily in the dining-room, and a servant hurried up with hot coffee and eggs; but Sidney did not feel inclined to fulfill Bessie's injunction, and, instead of applying herself to her breakfast, she sat down by the table and glanced round the room.

"Is Dr. Elliot out also?" she asked, as the old man-servant put the dishes near her and took off the covers.

"Yes, Miss Sidney."

"Do you know where he has gone, Benson?"

"He followed the master immediately," Benson said quietly, and, perhaps to avoid further questioning, left the room.

Sidney glanced round her anxiously; something was wrong, she thought, and the servants did not care to tell her even what they knew. What was the mystery? Her father had evidently departed in hot haste, for a pile of letters, some of them unopened, lay beside his plate, the envelope of one partly opened, then evidently dropped in haste. Had there been an accident somewhere? Had anything happened last night? She put down her untasted coffee and rose. She could not be still in this state of anxiety and alarm, and she went from the table to the window and from the window back to the table restlessly, endeavoring to put aside her fears, but vainly.

Pushing back her hair from her forehead, she tried to recall the events of the past night. She remembered the angry eager voices in the little sitting-room, the quick, almost imperative words Stephen Daunt had spoken to her when he mistook her for Mrs. Rutledge, the beautiful frightened face which had been raised to his, and his long absence from the hall-room. Sidney's early departure, and Frank's disappearance. What was the meaning of it all?

Bah! How foolish she was. What could have happened? No doubt Mrs. Rutledge had left early, in obedience to her husband's wishes, and Frank, finding the ball tedious after her departure, had left also. And Stephen was always to be beguiled away from the ball-room by the temptation of a cigar. She was getting foolish and imaginative, nervous and fanciful. She would eat her breakfast and start for Lindhurst, where a favorite school-fellow, the daughter of the rector, was looking forward to her visit, and the change would put her all right again.

She drank some coffee, and half mechanically, helped herself to an egg; but there her breakfast ended; although she sat at the table for a few minutes longer. Then, once more rising hastily, she went over to the window, as it oppressed by some intolerable anxiety. It had begun to snow again, although not heavily, and a horseman who was pulling in his horse just outside at the gate of the Gray House was lightly covered with the white flakes. He lifted his hat to Sidney and smiled, and the girl's heart almost ceased to beat in the sudden relief to her over-powering anxiety. The next minute she had turned from the window and put her hand in Stephen Daunt's.

"Well, how are you?" he said cheerily. "I hardly expected to find you down after your dissipation."

"I am going to Lindhurst this morning," Sidney answered, raising her shining eyes to his face, which was calm and serene, as usual, but very pale.

"Yes, so Dr. Arnold told me. I am the bearer of a note to you, Sidney."

"Thank you," Sidney said, slowly, taking it from him. "Are you going to the works, Stephen? Have you breakfast?"

"Thank you, yes."

He sauntered across the room while Sidney opened her note. It contained a few lines from her father.

"Do not wait to see me and so miss your train, dear Sidney," wrote the doctor. "I shall probably be detained for some time. Good-bye, little daughter; have a pleasant time, and bring me back some fresh roses."

(to be continued.)

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London Police and Crime Records

The strength of the London police force on December 31, 1924 was 18,356 according to an official report of the commissioner of police, data from which have just been made available through the Foreign Information of Bankers Trust Company of New York. At the close of the year the force was 1,025 below the authorized maximum. This shortage is attributed to the need for strict economy in the expenditure of public funds. The number of constables, or as we would call them in New York, policemen, available for beats, fixed points, and patrol beats in the metropolis, after providing for the men assigned to traffic duties, station reserves, etcetera, was 9,196, out of a total of 15,350. The commissioner of police states that owing to the reduced strength at his disposal great difficulty had been experienced in carrying on the multifarious duties with which the force is charged, particularly in the suburban areas. He therefore urges the necessity of an increase in the number of men enrolled.

The report states that satisfactory discipline has been maintained and that infractions have, for the great part, been of a minor nature. It is stated that the offenses of drunkenness, or drinking on duty, formerly too prevalent, has been almost entirely eradicated; that the policemen found on duty, or the worse for drink, is invariably severely punished.

The commissioner notes the improvement which has taken place in recent years in the social status of the policemen, which he attributes, among other things, to the better rate of remuneration now given for their services. Another contributory cause to the higher grading of the police officer is attributed to the care now taken to provide him with ample facilities for joining in healthy recreation. Improved training and education have also played a very prominent part, and a great deal has been achieved in recent years in the way of arranging sports, pastimes and entertainments to be more fully participated in by the police. Numerous successes in open sports competitions have been secured, and the sectional and inter-divisional competitions have tended to create healthy rivalry.

There are now 50 women police on the London force; namely, 2 inspectors, 5 sergeants and 43 constables.

As to the work of the police, the commissioner observes that there has been a slight increase in the number of crimes committed during 1924, there having been 15,438 indictable offenses during 1924 against 15,333 in 1923. Burglaries and house-breakings show very little variation; there was a noticeable increase in the number of cases of larceny by servants and embezzlement. Taking all classes of larceny together, and including embezzlement, an increase of 70 cases is shown over the figures for last year. Cases of obtaining goods by false pretenses show a substantial decrease. A decrease is also shown in cases of receiving stolen property. There was a decrease in crimes of violence during 1924; 16 cases of murder of persons above one year of age and 12 cases of murder of infants are recorded, as against 27 and 15 respectively in 1923. There was an increase of 10 in the number of cases of manslaughter, but wounding and assault show a decrease of 25 cases.

There were 309 motor vehicles stolen in 1924 and 199 recovered. The number of sets of fingerprints received for search in 1924 was 36,006, of which 15,750 sets were identified as those of persons who had been previously convicted since the introduction of the fingerprint system in 1901. 217, 948 identifications have been effected.

Cases under the Dangerous Drugs Acts show a remarkable decrease; in

1923 there were 103 cases, and the number of persons proceeded against was 72, while in 1924 the figures were 26 and 19 respectively. This decrease is attributed without doubt to the deterrent effect of the heavy sentences, some of penal servitude, imposed in several cases during 1924.

The report contains a table showing the number of traffic fatalities in 1924 as compared with the two preceding years. There were 844 fatalities in 1924, 590 to pedestrians, and 194 to cyclists, as compared with a total of 668 in 1923, of which 485 were to pedestrians, and 116 to cyclists. The main cause of fatalities is attributed to pedestrians crossing the road especially in passing between or behind stationary vehicles, and children playing in the roadway.

26,416 umbrellas and sticks, and 96,298 miscellaneous articles, making a total of 153,314 articles found in public carriages were deposited with the police department during the year. Of this number 64,279 were restored to the owners and the amount of rewards paid to drivers and conductors was £2,429.

The Westward Flow

Vancouver hopes to ship 100,000,000 bushels of this year's crop. This would about double the city's previous record in grain shipments. Six years ago Vancouver was not shipping a bushel of grain.

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