

heard of them," persisted the Colonel. "That is true, but there was her character, and you can't pass by what her maid said; she was positive that Miss Chase had no lovers, and she was likely to know."

"With the ordinary run of mistresses, that might and probably would have been the case, but Sylvia Chase was not an ordinary mistress," said Colonel Willoughby. "You see, it's like this—" Willoughby hesitated, and then resumed. "Let's be frank. It seems to me that if Sylvia had a rich lover, you can account for her income—for the flat, the clothes, the furs, and the jewellery of which you spoke, Max; is it not so?" he asked, turning to Hollander.

"I agree with you entirely," said Hollander.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Peggy, in a voice that quivered with indignant feeling.

"I don't believe it, either," said Mrs. Willoughby earnestly.

"Yet the Colonel's supposition of there being, or of there having been, a rich lover in the case appears, as he suggested, to explain part of the mystery," said Hollander, in a grave judicial tone. "That is what I meant when I said to Max a minute ago that I was not so sure that the mystery had become greater; though he thought it had. If the detectives can discover this man, this rich lover, the mystery, I feel certain, will soon be solved."

COLONEL WILLOUGHBY nodded approval, but his wife shook her head dissentingly. Peggy sat up very straight, and her colour had risen a little; it was she who now spoke.

"I think you are quite mistaken, Captain Hollander," she said, and her voice was very firm; there was indignation in it still, but something that was more like angry resentment, for she was greatly vexed and moved. "I do not believe that Sylvia had a lover at all. The idea that she had a rich lover who gave her all these luxuries is absurd, besides being very cruel and very unjust—I, for one, can never believe it!"

"Nor I," echoed Mrs. Willoughby. "It was merely a supposition," professed the Colonel, "which we were discussing." He thought it "quite nice" that his womenfolk should stand up for Sylvia, but as a man of the world he thought he knew better than they what the world was. "We were trying to fill up the gaps in the case."

"What other theory can there be?" asked Hollander, looking with open admiration at Peggy, whose heightened colour was vastly becoming.

"I have none," said Peggy, "but I shall never accept yours." She was speaking to Hollander not to her father.

"Yet there is a good deal to commend it," Hollander answered. "We have just to think of a secret love affair—Oh, I grant you it was very well kept below the surface, so that even Miss Chase's maid knew nothing about it whatever, and then, that, after lasting a long time in all probability, for Miss Chase's prosperity was not a think of yesterday but had continued for some years, there was some violent quarrel, followed by the violent act—the murder in the train. It is perhaps melodrama, but it is not impossible! Life is really full of melodrama—of happenings every whit as sensational. You must remember,"—he was addressing Peggy—"that after all you know very little really of Miss Chase's life."

He spoke in the same grave judicial tone as before. The Colonel thought Hollander had spoken very sensibly; Mrs. Willoughby began to have a half-fear that there was something in what he said, but Peggy was simply enraged, and she disliked him as she had never done before.

"I knew her at school," retorted Peggy, warmly, "and what a girl is at school, so she is in after life. What was said of her at the inquest was true—she was a cold proud girl, and she was a cold proud woman. I shall never believe that your theory is the right one, Captain Hollander, never!"

Hollander shrugged his shoulders slightly, but the look in his eyes expressed a certain admiring amusement—admiration of Peggy as a pretty woman, and amusement at her simplicity.

Max had been sitting listening to the conversation; he thought Peggy was splendid in her defence of the dead girl, and his whole heart went out to her—perhaps it was shining in his eyes, eloquent of his love for her, for when she turned from Hollander and looked at him, her face suddenly took on a still deeper colour—she was blushing like a red, red rose!

"What do you think, Max?" she asked. "You are saying nothing!" There was a faint note of reproach in her accents.

"I think just as you do," he replied at once, to her great delight. "I don't think this is a love affair at all—Miss Chase came by her income in some other way; what it was I don't know—and her brother did not know, but I suppose the whole truth will be brought into the light before long."

"By the detectives?" asked Hollander, with a sneering smile. Observant always, he had seen the little play that had taken place between Max and Peggy, and it was gall and wormwood to him; he also had seen that the line he had taken up had been in the nature of a false move, so far as she was concerned, but there had been other reasons for it. Besides, he had been annoyed that Max had come in that evening.

"Perhaps," said Max, tranquilly.

"Oh, Max," Peggy broke in excitedly; "couldn't you help? Couldn't you do something? It almost looks as if you ought to! Just think how you came into her story—and from this house too! Cannot you make it your business to find out the truth? Oh, if I were you, I should!"

Max gazed into her eyes—were they not saying to him, "Will you not do this for me?"

Her father laughed at his daughter's outburst, and said, "Max, dear Peg, has his work to do."

"Yes," said Max, smiling, happily, albeit the monosyllable seemed enigmatical, but Peggy seemed to understand.

What next took place filled the rest with wonder—one of them with a divine joy, and another with blackest rage.

For acting on an impulse she could not withstand, and it may be had no wish to withstand, Peggy rose from her chair, walked across to Max Hamilton, put her hands on his shoulders, kissed him, and then went swiftly out of the room.

"Well, I declare!" said the Colonel, and laughed aloud; he added, playfully, to Max, "You've received your commission, my boy."

"Yes," said Max, and could say no more!

(To be Continued).

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Why aren't you in khaki?
An old excuse won't do.
"For I want five million men," says Kitchener,

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Why aren't you in khaki?
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