

Mystery of Jack's Wife

Twice in my life have those remarkably sharp lawyers, Messrs. Wiper and Filey, been clients of mine. I remember the first time they instructed me I was very hopeful that their case would bring me a good deal of fame. It was an action for breach of promise, and the defendant was none other than that exemplary nobleman, Lord Lampetter. He had written to my client a series of letters which certainly would have startled and shocked the Nonconformist conscience an article which was much respected by Lord Lampetter and his political friends. My client was Miss Mabel Lamont. She was as pretty a woman as it has ever been my luck to see.

I shall never forget how beautiful she looked as she sat in my chambers one day telling me, in that sweet, low voice of hers, some very awkward facts in her life which the other side would be sure to bring out in cross-examination. I must say I was much the more embarrassed at the interview. And when I assured her that the awkward facts would not prevent her recovering damages she was quite ready to face cross-examination. Bold though she was, one day after the action was put down for trial, Mr. Filey came to my chambers and told me that she, as he put it, "had chucked up the sponge."

"The fact is," he said, "they seem to have found out something about her which has frightened her out of court. I don't know what it was, but judging from what she was prepared to face, it must have been something very tall."

I thought so, too. I heard nothing more of Wiper & Filey until one day when they retained me to go to Northchester Sessions. When old Filey came on me I must say that I was rather surprised, and I told him that unfortunately, I did not belong to that circuit or to those sessions.

"That be blowed," he answered. "I send you there special," and he mentioned a fee which I thought to be highly satisfactory.

Now, it happened that I had intended to run down to Penzance to my brother Jack's wedding, and that brief would alter my plans. But ever since my call I had determined that nothing should stand in the way of business, so I went to Northchester instead of going to see Jack married.

I must admit that I did not distinguish myself at Northchester. It was a mystery to me why my client, John Bludgett, wanted my services. He was accused of housebreaking, and had been caught redhanded.

I think that the members of the sessions were quite right in the opinion, which they did not conceal, that local talent could have done all that could have been done for the prisoner, which was really nothing at all.

The bar seemed to think that it was very queer that I should have been retained, and I agreed with them. I never got any more briefs from Messrs. Wiper & Filey. If I had known that nothing would have come of the case in the way of future briefs I don't think the fee would have tempted me to desert Jack on the day of his wedding. He was not at all hurt, however, and when he returned from the continent he was very anxious that I should come and stay with them at the old home in which I was born.

I knew nothing about Jack's wife—he had met her abroad, and married at Penzance, but I felt very well disposed to her, as it was clear from his letters that she had made Jack very happy.

Jack was out when I arrived, and my sister-in-law was in the drawing-room alone. I noticed how the room was altered. All the familiar bits of furniture which Jack liked from old associations were there, but they were tastefully arranged.

I never knew before what a pretty room it was, opening out into the old-fashioned garden and well-wooded park. Then suddenly I knew that I had seen my sister-in-law before. There were no two women so alike, I felt sure. That tall, slender figure and well-cut features, and even the long, thin white hand she held out, belonged to my client Mabel Lamont. I thought her the loveliest woman I had ever seen, and then, as I looked into her sweet face and watched those wonderful eyes, I remembered the awful letters of good Lord Lampetter's, and our last interview at my chambers in the Temple, when she, with so much coolness, prepared me for the astounding admissions which she would have to make.

"Of course you know me, Gilbert," she said, calling me by my Christian name, as if she wished to emphasize our relationship. "Wait and see how happy Jack is before you make up your mind to tell him anything. If you drive me away I shall take all Jack's happiness with me. How many

men hide their past from the women they marry? Why should a woman's past matter so much and a man's so little?"

My discovery was too late. If I had found her out before the wedding it would have been different. I thought of that wretched case which had taken me to Northchester Sessions, and then a suspicion crossed my mind which hardened me against her. "It was a trick of yours that prevented our meeting before the wedding," I said angrily.

A smile came into her face and her eyes laughed unpleasantly. "Surely you do not think the worse of me because I played my cards well? I will tell you how I managed. I have known those lawyers for some time, and I know they have as little scruple as any of their kind. They could trust me to pay for their services, and I could trust them to earn their money. When Jack came to me with your telegram—he was so sorry that you couldn't come and thought it unlucky—I knew they had managed it all right." So that was the explanation of my being specially retained.

"I wish I had been here to welcome you," said Jack, as he came in, "but by this time you two have made friends. I often thought how well you would get on with each other. I have never known two people more happy together than they were. She seemed to understand Jack thoroughly. There was not a cloud in his happiness. She seemed to have forgotten all about the past and the danger of her position. Looking at her I sometimes found myself wondering whether conduct, after all, matters as much as we think it does."

I began half to forget all I knew. It was glorious summer weather, and we three would spend long days on the river, as Jack and I used to years before, sailing out to the sea or up to the little village ten miles away over the marshes. She had been brought up by the sea and it was pretty to see her in a boat—she was so clever and handy in managing it. One morning Jack told me that he expected a visitor.

"He's a relation of Mabel's," he said, "one of the few she has in the world."

I asked a few questions about him and heard that his name was Gordon, and that he had lived a good deal of his life abroad, and had no regular profession. They had come across him in Switzerland during their honeymoon. My sister-in-law did not seem in very good spirits at the notion of her relation's visit. I could see a worn look in her face, and Jack for the first time, looked a little troubled. He told me that his wife was not well. It seemed to me that there was a storm in the air, and that matters might, after all, come to a crisis.

I must say that at first I was rather favorably impressed with Gordon's appearance. He was a tall, spare, light-haired man of about forty. He seemed a gentleman by birth, and had good manners. But the good impression he made soon began to wear off. When he talked to Mabel I could detect in tone and manner a suppressed brutality and a sense that he had her in his power. The troubled look in her eyes seemed to me to grow, and I believed that she was breaking under the worry of having this man in the house. One day, by mistake, I overheard a few words of conversation between them which confirmed my suspicions.

Jack had gone to sit on the bench of magistrates, and I was in the garden, near the open window of the drawing-room. Mabel and Gordon came into the room without seeing me.

"You had better come out sailing with me, and then, once and for all, we can have this talk out," she said, looking straight into his face.

"You know I hate the water," he answered.

"Well, for once you must get over your dislike, and come out with me," she answered.

He grumbled for a minute or two, but she had her way, and I saw them walk across the fields in the direction of the river. Their talk, I thought, must have taken some time, for they did not return to luncheon, and when Jack came home he did not find his wife at the tea-table waiting for him, as she generally was. He said nothing, but I could see that he was nervous and restless, and, after an hour, he could stand it no longer, but started off down to the shore. I went with him. The news he heard was not reassuring. Mabel and Gordon had gone out in the little center-board boat, without taking a boatman with them, and they had been last seen rounding the point of the river into the open sea.

Jack wondered how his wife could have been so reckless, and began to feel more and more frightened for her.

After waiting for some time Jack and I and a boatman set off rowing down the river, hoping to hear tidings of them, and feeling that we could not stay there doing nothing.

I can see it all now as I write. The boatman and I were rowing, and Jack was in the stern, now familiar the scene was to me. The river slowly flowing through the far-spreading marshes to the sea, and the sun setting over the old church, half hidden by trees, in the distance. I had never before thought the scene so gray and desolate. It was full of memories of my boyish holidays, when I would fish all day long for roach in the deep dykes that cut up the marshes; but now it will always recall that day and Jack's sorrow-stricken face, as he sat in the stern and stared along the river out to the sea.

After about half an hour we met a yawl sailing up the river with wind and tide in her favor. She was towing something, and as she came near we made it out as the center-board boat. We did not speak to each other but we shouted to the men in the yawl, and even now I seem to hear their voices as they shouted back to us that they found her out at sea, floating bottom upwards. Then there was no more to be done, and we turned back. Even after that I believe Jack still had some sort of half-insane hope, but two days afterward the bodies were washed up.

Days afterward, when he was able to talk about his trouble, he told me something that set me thinking.

"It seems to me," he said, "that poor Mabel must have had some sort of presentiment of her fate. I never believed in that sort of thing before, but that last day she was talking to me very strangely. She was saying that if she died first she hoped I would marry again, and she went on to say that I ought to marry someone whose people I knew all about. I didn't like her talking that way, and told her so, and thought no more about it at the time, and now it comes back to me."

I did not answer, but the thought came to me that I could, if I chose, have explained that presentiment.

Gordon and Mabel were buried in our churchyard. Of the former we heard very little more. He appeared to have no relations or belongings. For my part, I doubted the relation-

ship between him and Mabel, and fancied that he was someone who was mixed up in her past and had her in his power.

Jack's grief was terrible for a time but I fancy he will get over it, as men do get over great sorrows. Though saddened, he is not the sour, miserable man he would have been if I had told him all I knew of the woman who was his wife and my client.

—Household Words.

England's Explanation.

London, Feb. 14.—The parliamentary secretary of the foreign office, Lord Cranborne, replying in the House of Commons today to a question of Henry Norman (Liberal) on the subject of the action of the British ambassador at Washington, Lord Pauncefoot, April 14, 1898, said:

"The meeting which occurred April 14, 1898, was convened by Lord Pauncefoot, as dean of the ambassadors, at the verbal suggestion of some of his colleagues. Whatever opinions were expressed by Lord Pauncefoot during the discussion which was of an informal character, were personal to himself and not pursuant to instructions from Her Majesty's government. The discussion resulted in an agreement to forward an identical telegram to their respective governments suggesting a further communication to the United States government."

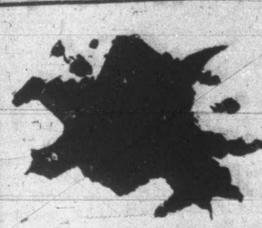
"On receipt of this message the British government immediately replied by objecting to the terms of the communication as injudicious. Two days later Lord Pauncefoot was informed that Her Majesty's government had decided to take no action. We, at that time, had no information of the attitude of the German government."

—Household Words.

Caught Red-Handed.

Vancouver, Feb. 14.—Ed. Burns, a Tacoma crook, came from Tacoma the other day and put up at the Klondike Hotel. He located a valise with \$500 worth of jewelry and nuggets under J. Babzolia's bed and between the hours of 7 and 10 last night he sneaked it out and cached it. Babzolia notified the city detectives at 10:15 of his loss. Policemen in plain clothes shadowed the hotel premises all night. At 7 o'clock this morning a man was seen sneaking in to the lane from the hotel back yard with a grip in his hand. It was Ed. Burns. He is in jail.

Job printing at Nugget office.



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Speaking of Printer's Ink, we have barrels of it, all colors; also the most complete line of Job Stock ever brought to Dawson.

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If you need anything in the Printing Line give us a call, we can supply you with anything from a calling card to a blank book.

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The Nugget Printer

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Lone Star Stock Is the Best Investment Ever Offered to the Public.

We claim we have the mother lode. Can you deny these facts. The mines are situated at the head of the two richest creeks on earth—Eldorado and Bonanza. Gold is found on every claim on Bonanza creek, and up Victoria Gulch to the quartz mines. If it did not come from this ledge, where did it come from?

The gold found in the creek is the same as that found in the ledge.

The gold is found in slide matter on Seven pup. Where did it come from?

The best pay found in Gay Gulch is at the head of the gulch, below the quartz mines. There are eight gulches heading at the Lone Star mines. They all carry gold. Where did it come from?

Lone Star stock is the best investment ever offered to the public. Buy now. The books will soon be closed and you will be too late. Don't let the man who knows it all tell you that there is no quartz in this country. The fools who make that statement have no bank account, which is the proof of their wisdom.

Every placer camp in the world turned into a quartz camp.

Cripple Creek was a placer camp. The men who knew it all were there. They made the same statement. A carpenter found the quartz after the wise men had left.

Have you ever visited the Lone Star mines? If not, you have no right to even think. Go up and satisfy yourself. Yours for business and a quartz camp, LEW CRADEN.

LONE STAR MINING AND MILLING CO.

LEW CRADEN, Acting Manager.