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"A GOLD LADEN DERELICT"

OR
The Impecunious Adventuress.

CHAPTER XXIII.
AN EXTRAORDINARY TRIAL.

When the judge, in his red and black robes, came in through the door on the right of the judgment seat, he held in his white-gloved hand something black.

Lillias saw it, and, self-possessed as she was, and confident in the strength and skill of the man who was going to fight for her life, a shudder thrilled through her nerves.

Her fellow prisoner turned a shade paler and closed his eyes. He had neither the nerve nor the faith that she had, but with her he recognized the little square of black velvet, the pall of death which is known to newspaper readers as the black cap.

The judge took his seat amid a rustle of excited expectancy, and the clerk of arraigns rose and went through the usual formula, ending with the fateful questions:

"Herbert Matthews, do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charges now laid against you?"

"Not guilty," he replied, in a low, almost inaudible tone.

"Lillias Ashley, do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charges laid against you?"

"Not guilty," she said, with a clear and distinct emphasis on the not, which reached every ear in the crowded court.

Then Nevil Jarvis, who was leading for the prosecution, supported by a couple of bright juniors, rose to open the case for the crown.

Kenneth Markham was the only counsel for the defense. He had taken the honor or the dishonor of the task in his own hands, and he had determined that none other than he should fight for the life of the woman he loved.

The opening speech of Jarvis was eminently moderate in tone. It contained no insinuations against the accused. The only personal allusion in it was one most delicately worded with reference to Mrs. Lillias Ashley, and all the rest was simply an absolutely impersonal recapitulation of the facts which had by this time become public property, through the newspaper reports of the police-court proceedings. It was a model of good-

manly accusation in its most merciless shape, and no one in court, sitting perhaps the judge, recognized its admirable skill and judgment more than Kenneth Markham himself did.

That speech of his rival, that masterly accusation, was quiet, cold, and deadly; and when Nevil Jarvis sat down, those who had heard the trial in the probate court felt that they were going to be compensated for their disappointment, and those who had not heard it agreed with the rest in thinking that unless something like a legal miracle happened, the lovely woman and the sleekly groomed doctor who stood beside her would before a month was over feel the silken coil of the hangman's rope around their necks.

The first witness for the prosecution was an official from the home office, who gave merely formal evidence as to the consent of the home secretary for the opening of the grave and the exhumation of the body. Kenneth had no question to ask him, and he stood down.

The next was an eminent analyst in the employment of the government. His evidence was to the effect that Sir Arthur had died of an overdose of atropine and morphine, probably injected by means of a hypodermic syringe. He had found several punctures in the skin of the arms and thighs, which denoted such injections. An analysis of the blood had shown that the salts of the blood had been changed by repeated injections. The contents of the stomach also showed that the alkaloid of opium had also been taken in large quantities through the mouth. It also appeared to him that another drug, counteracting the immediate effect of alcohol, had been administered by the mouth. What the nature of this drug was he was not able to say, but he had no doubt that the patient had died in consequence of a large overdose of alcohol, as was proved by the contraction of the heart, followed by an injection in excessive quantity of atropine and morphine.

"Thank you, doctor," said Mr. Nevil Jarvis, as the witness passed. Kenneth rose in an intense hush of expectancy.

"Suppose that the patient had been under your care, doctor, what is the treatment that you would have prescribed?"

"Absolute prohibition of alcohol, complete rest, and as much nourishment as the patient can take."

"But in the case of acute alcoholism, as we may take this to have been, would you prohibit alcohol at once, or diminish it by degrees?"

The specialist paused for a moment, then said:

"That is a matter of constitution, and the history—that is to say, the precious life of the patient."

"Then I may take it that there are cases in which a sudden stoppage of the supply of alcohol might possibly be not only dangerous but perhaps fatal?"

"In certain advanced cases, where the patient is suffering from other diseases, and was not well nourished by natural means, it would be dangerous, but very rarely fatal."

"And in such a case as that of the late Sir Arthur Eversley, in which it has been admitted by my learned friend that the nervous system was utterly disorganized through the effects of tropical fever and sunstroke, which led in their turn to alcoholism and the drug habit, what would you prescribe for the relief of the nervous system?"

"There are two treatments," said the expert, whom Kenneth had now got on his favorite hobby, and intended to make him ride it for all it was worth. "For internal treatment I should prescribe—"

"My lord," said Nevil Jarvis, rising, "I must protest against this course of cross-examination. This is a court of justice, it is not a medical school."

Instantly Kenneth was on his feet, interposing a quiet answer to this objection:

"With all submission, my lord, I would suggest that everything, even perhaps the lives of the accused, may depend upon the medical evidence which I desire to put before the court."

"Mr. Jarvis, I am afraid I cannot allow your objection," said the judge. "In the present stage of the proceedings, there seems to be medicine rather than law before the court."

"Then I will ask you, doctor," said Kenneth, rising again, "whether, granted that your internal treatment, however excellent it would doubtless be, would not in such a case have to be supplemented by hypodermic treatment?"

"Undoubtedly it would," said the expert, who was getting somewhat offended by the interruption of what he intended to be a medical lecture. "And now will you tell us what you would prescribe for that treatment?"

"I would rather not do that publicly," said the expert, "because it is not safe to give to everybody the names of these drugs, as you would give the name of a patent medicine. Perhaps your lordship would allow me to write the prescription, not in doctor's Latin, but in plain English?"

"I suppose you have no objection to that, Mr. Jarvis?" said the judge.

"None whatever, my lord; but I hope your lordship will allow my learned friend and myself to see it."

"There cannot be the slightest objection to that," said the judge; and then, amid a silence unbroken, even by the rustle of a silken skirt, the great authority on poisons wrote with a pencil on a sheet of blue foolscap, which was handed to him by the usher of the court, the formula which might, according to the circumstances of the hour or the minute, mean life or death.

The judge read it and passed it down to Nevil Jarvis, and he passed it on to the counsel representing Doctor Matthews. It was then passed up to Doctor Matthews in the dock. He smiled and nodded and gave it back to the usher, and so it returned by the same route to the judgment seat.

"My lord," said Kenneth, rising again, "I have no further questions to ask the witness. That prescription is identical with the one prescribed by Doctor Matthews, and which I hope my learned friend will produce."

"With your lordship's permission, I should like to ask the witness one or two more questions," said Nevil Jarvis.

His lordship nodded approval, and the witness remained on the stand.

"It is true, I believe, that in such a case as the one we are considering,

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punctures made by the hypodermic syringe very rarely heal. They are covered by a rough sort of skin, and they rot."

"Yes, that is so. In fact, at advanced stages, they never heal at all."

"But you could tell the difference between an old wound made by a puncture and a new one?"

"Certainly. There would be a redness, an inflammation, about the new one."

"And were the indications of such a wound found on the left arm of Sir Arthur Eversley?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Thank you."

Kenneth rose once more.

"I should like to ask," said he, whether it is not possible and ever probable, that such a wound might have been inflicted by the patient himself?"

"Undoubtedly. Granted that the patient possessed a syringe and had access to the drugs."

"Thank you."

The next witness for the prosecution was, as Kenneth expected, Miss Gertrude Holroyd; and Nevil Jarvis, feeling that Kenneth, by asking the smallest number of questions possible, had somewhat nullified the evidence of his best witness, exerted his skill upon her.

However, the result was not at all satisfactory. She had evidently been coached to give a coherent narrative of what had happened during the period between Sir Arthur's arrival at Doctor Matthews' house at Hampstead and his death. The questions were admirably calculated to bring out the whole story, but the answers were halting, fragmentary and sometimes almost foolish; and before Nevil Jarvis had finished his examination, Kenneth got up and electrified the whole court by saying:

"My lord, with all respect, I submit that this witness is not in a condition to give reliable evidence."

(To be Continued.)

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