

A SHORT-LIVED MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

W HERE is your mistress? I think she is in the drawing-room, sir.

George Douglas hurried up-stairs. That morning he and his wife had had a quarrel—not the first misunderstanding that had taken place during their ten years of married life, but by far the most serious. Mr. Douglas had ended it by going, as usual, to his office for the day. After an hour or two had elapsed, and he had had time to cool down, his natural sense of justice showed him that he had been in the wrong—not wholly, but partly so.

His first impulse was to make some excuse to return home; but, just then, someone came in on important business to which he felt himself obliged to attend. After that other things prevented the accomplishment of his purpose; and, at last, he decided to wait until his usual hour for leaving the office. Perhaps he left a little earlier than usual—he was of a generous temper and anxious to make peace with his wife he so dearly loved. As he walked quickly homewards he repeated to himself again and again the words with which he would explain what he had been in the wrong. He had no doubt of her eager desire for reconciliation; he knew her so well.

Therefore he hurried upstairs in search of her: at the drawing-room was empty, so was her bedroom, so were the other rooms he entered in the hope that she might be in one of them. Then he went downstairs again guided by the schoolroom piano, which told him that his little daughter was receiving instruction in music from the governess—Dorothy Archer. After a moment's hesitation he decided to interrupt the lesson on the chance of his wife having for once taken it into her head to be present at it—though both Mr. and Mrs. Douglas made it a practice not to interfere with the governess in any way.

Pardon my interrupting you a moment, Miss Archer, said Mr. Douglas, when a quick glance around the room had told him his wife was not there; have you seen Mrs. Douglas within the past hour? Sarah told me she was at home; but I think she must have been mistaken.

She came in here about an hour ago, Mr. Douglas. She appeared to be in a great hurry, and said she was going to London; but had no time to explain; you would tell us all there was to tell.

If I know nothing about it! He spoke and felt like a man mystified.

Mrs. Wyndham was going to drive her to the station, papa, said nine-year-old Mary.

Mrs. Wyndham had called—Miss Archer was saying when there was a knock at the door.

Mr. Douglas himself opened the door. Sarah, the housemaid, was outside.

Please, sir, I made a mistake. Misses is out. I'd been on an errand, and don't know. Cook says that missis and Mrs. Wynham left the house together so quick, that when cook got upstairs to open the front door, Mrs. Wyndham's carriage was some way down the road.

Very good! said Mr. Douglas; but the words did not express his thoughts.

Could his wife have been so imprudent as to tell Mrs. Wyndham of the quarrel that had taken place? And had that rather severe-minded old lady persuaded Edith Douglas that it was her duty to leave her home? Hardly. Yet the poor man felt very uneasy.

I will just step round and see what Mrs. Wyndham has to say about it, he remarked. It would

be as well—he hesitated; then went on boldly—it would be as well to encourage no remarks from the servants until I return, Miss Archer.

Dorothy raised her head, and looked at him. She had heard something of the quarrel, and she knew what he was thinking of. For a moment her heart sank; but she quickly rallied, and replied, confidently:

Mrs. Wyndham will be able to tell you all about it.

I hope so!

Then he went away, and Miss Archer continued the lesson. She counted systematically, and corrected every fault; nothing escaped her disciplined attention, but her thoughts were not on the music.

She had been the little fair-haired Mary's governess for two years. From the first day of her arrival Mr. and Mrs. Douglas had made her feel that her position as paid dependant was changed when she left the schoolroom for that of friend and equal.

Subsequent months of close companionship showed the employers that their child's governess was deserving of perfect trust; and no one could help liking the high-spirited, merry girl. She, on her part, fresh from a situation differing in every respect to the one she now filled, set her pupils handsome parents on a pedestal in her romantic young mind and felt there were few things she would not do for them. Therefore, her heart was heavy, now, at the thought of the trouble that might be at hand.

Mr. Douglas was so wrapped in his own anxious thought that he did not notice the gloomy appearance of Mrs. Wyndham's house as he approached it. Every blind was down though it was still the broad daylight of a midsummer evening, and there was no sign of life anywhere.

His loud peal and knock were answered by the coachman, who, when in the house, acted as butler, footman, and general factotum.

Is Mrs. Wyndham at home? asked Mr. Douglas, with all the carelessness he could assume.

Haven't you heard, sir! said the man, in a low tone. There was an accident this afternoon, and my poor mistress was killed!

Killed! Good heavens! Is Mrs. Douglas here still?

Horried as he felt at the news he had just heard, he, with a strong sense of relief, caught at the conviction that his wife had accompanied Mrs. Wyndham home, in the hope of being of use.

Mrs. Douglas has not been here, sir; we dropped her at the railway station.

Try as he would to control his features, the anxious husband turned very white.

At the railway station? he repeated, vaguely; then, remembering that the runaway must be shielded at all costs, he continued: I shall find a note awaiting me at home no doubt. I was told Mrs. Douglas had gone for a drive with Mrs. Wyndham, so just called on the chance of finding her still here.

How did this terrible affair happen? Please to step in, sir, and I'll tell you how it was.

Mr. Douglas followed him into a front room, but refused to sit down. He stood fidgeting restlessly while the man Walters told his story.

I feel just awful about it, sir; not that I was to blame, as everyone agreed, and there was plenty to see it; but still, I was driving, and for my poor mistress to be killed like that, and all so sudden! I don't feel as if I could get over it. I think the horse had been troubled a bit by the heat, sir; though, when I had seen my mistress safe inside your house, I drove on a bit to the gardens. I suppose I had waited about half-an-hour, when I saw

Mrs. Douglas beckoning to me. I drove back quick; both ladies got into the carriage, and my poor mistress says, Drive to the station.

We just caught it, sir. Mrs. Douglas, I may say, flew into the station; she had only a small travelling bag and no other luggage. I heard her ask the porter who opened the carriage door, to get her a ticket for Paddington. Mrs. Wyndham waited to see that the train didn't go without her and then she said, Mr. Douglas's office, Walters; but you needn't drive so quick now.

I think the horse had thought he was going home, for I had trouble to make him turn to the right. We hadn't gone far when we met some cattle being driven towards the station. They were restive, and at the sight of them of 'em the horse grew restive too, and began to kick all ways. The cattle rushed by, and that made him worse. I did what I could to quiet him, but 'twas no use. He first plunged forward, then he reared, then he backed on to the pavement. I heard someone call out, Sit still, ma'am; and I managed to glance round a minute, and saw my poor mistress just going to jump out. I, too, shouted then, but she wouldn't take no heed. The horse stood still for an instant, and she jumped. Of course she fell—that was to be expected—and no one could pick her up before the horse began his tantrums again. I don't rightly know how 'twas done, sir; but my mistress was killed as dead as could be.

Another man had to drive the brute to the stable; I turned sick when I knew what he'd done. As we was so near home they brought the body here at once; and that is all I can tell you, sir.

Did it happen in the street, or in the road leading from the station? In the road, sir, just afore we got to the street. I half hoped the horse would try to climb the hedge and cool him himself with some of that thorny shrub stuff. It have shook me awful, Mr. Douglas.

Of course it has. It is a very terrible affair, Walters. I am exceedingly shocked at poor Mrs. Wyndham's fate. You have sent for her relatives?

She only has one sir, that ever I heard of; and that was her nephew—Mr. Arthur Hastings. Dr. Short telegraphed for him at once.

There will be an inquest of course. At three o'clock to-morrow, Mr. Hastings will be here by then, he only has to come from London.

I should like to be present at the inquest. Mr. Douglas felt bound to say as much having been intimately acquainted with the late Mrs. Wyndham; but all the time Walters has been telling his short story the distracted husband has been saying to himself over and over again: Why did Edith go to London?

At three o'clock, sir, to-morrow, repeated Walters.

If I can be of any use you know where to send; there must be much to be done; said Mr. Douglas, with further sense of what might be expected of him. But why had Edith gone to London?

Thank you, sir. We are at a stand-still until Mr. Hastings arrives. I'll tell him what you say, sir.

Mr. Douglas returned home with a heavy heart.

The cook was listening most anxiously for his coming. Dinner was ready, the fear lest all should be overdone, kept her mind from dwelling on her mistress's prolonged absence. But Sarah's mind was free to dwell where it would; the result being that she was very curious to know if Mrs. Douglas was likely to be back for dinner. She took care to be in the hall when her master arrived; and she ventured to inform him that dinner was ready to be served.

Serve it, then! commanded Mr. Douglas.

But my mistress is not in, sir. Mrs. Douglas has gone to London. She may not return to-night.

Sarah's curiosity was baffled. It would have taken keener eyes and ears than hers to detect anything amiss in George Douglas's face and voice. He looked tired; that was all.

Directly dinner was served the master of the house was free to say what he wished to Miss Archer. He never would have a servant

lingering about the room—presumably waiting at table—during meals; so that Sarah had no excuse to loiter when she had removed the covers. Her duty then was to go to the schoolroom and amuse Miss Mary until that young lady's bedtime.

Mr. Douglas had chosen to tell, while Sarah was present, of the sad calamity that had taken place; concluding with:

I can only feel too thankful that Mrs. Douglas was not also in the carriage. Her summons to town has perhaps saved her life.

But no sooner had the sound of Sarah's footsteps died away in the distance, than the unhappy man laid down his knife and fork, and looked across at Dorothy Archer with a haggard face.

I know no more than that she has gone to London; Mrs. Wyndham's coachman told me that she caught the express.

Why has she gone? It is not like her to take such a revenge. Dorothy knew he was thinking of the quarrel.

It is not at all like her, Mr. Douglas. Depend upon it there is a mistake somewhere. I feel certain poor Mrs. Wyndham could have explained it all. You see she was going in search of you when the accident happened.

But—you don't understand, Miss Archer. Edith and I quarrelled this morning; I was in the wrong, and I came home early to make it up.

I understand perfectly, Mr. Douglas. I knew there was something wrong. You have trusted me with your confidence, so I shall presume to tell you just what I think. I am quite sure Mrs. Douglas bore no malice. She was talking of you at lunch quite as usual. If she had thought of running away she would have gone earlier in the day.

I don't know that. Something Mrs. Wyndham said influenced her to do as she has done—that is my idea. No doubt Mrs. Wyndham saw I had been in the wrong—I am taking it for granted Edith told her all—and advised her to punish me by going away for a time; and after seeing her off, the poor old lady was, evidently, on her way to my office to give me a bit of her mind. I decided, as I walked home just now, to make the servants think I know all about it. I cannot have idle tongues busy themselves about my wife. Will you help me to keep up the fiction, Miss Archer? To-morrow, perhaps we shall hear from her.

You know that I will help you in anyway I can, Mr. Douglas. No doubt we shall, as you say, here to-morrow, and find that you have alarmed yourself for nothing.

Yes, of course, he assented, eagerly; and tried to hope continuously, but waiting for the morning was weary—very weary.

CHAPTER II.

P. C. LLOYD'S beat took in the station road. He had heard of the accident, but was not on duty at the time. An hour later he started, he naturally paused near the scene of the tragedy to look about him. All the loiterers—brought to the spot by the curiosity common to human nature on such occasions—had gone. No trains were passing through just then, and the road was deserted. P. C. Lloyd was quite alone. He felt a peculiar interest in what was taking place. His wife was ill; and Mrs. Wyndham—knowing her to be a worthy subject for benevolence—had been exceedingly kind to her. That very afternoon on her way to the Douglas's, had the poor lady stopped her carriage at Mrs. Lloyd's little dwelling to enquire as to her progress, and to promise that a bottle of port wine should be sent her—the doctor having said that all she required to bring back her strength was just what the Lloyds could not honestly obtain.

And now the sick woman would have to go without the wine, because her benefactress was dead. Dead! it seemed incredible. As P. C. Lloyd set himself to grasp the fact he found it necessary to rub the back of his hand across his eyes, and, even then, his eyelashes were quite wet. He looked about him blinking, trying to get rid of the mist that would gather in those troublesome eyes.

Poor soul! 'Tis a bad job to be took off sudden like that, though if I had the orderin' of it she'd go to 'eaven straight. What's to become of Ruth now? Doctor Pertieler said best port; and that don't come no'ow within my power with so many mouths to feed; but Ruth brought em all into the world; and it don't seem fair that they

should be the reason of her dyin'. Such thoughts did not help to get rid of the mist. P. C. Lloyd decided to turn his back on the spot and try not to look at it when he next had to pass that way.

He resumed his resolute tramp and a few more steps would have taken him to the end of the road. But he had only taken three when he thought he saw something glistening in the hedge. He stepped across, and found it was the steel clasp of a tiny plush bag, which he recognised at once at having belonged to the deceased lady. She must have had it in her hand as she jumped from the carriage. (Lloyd knew she had opened the door furthest from the foot-path) and it had fallen into the dusty hedge; perhaps she had, unconsciously, flung it from her in her terror. At any rate, there it was in the policeman's great brown hand. It looked like a little toy to him, and, with no particular reason for doing so, he opened it and looked inside. Mrs. Wyndham's purse was there. He took it out, and—still for no particular reason—he opened that also. He saw ten sovereigns in gold and four bank notes. Now, if the sovereigns were his—aye, only one of them—Ruth's life might be saved.

(To be continued.)

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Mr. Taylor says: "Some years ago while on a hunting trip in Northern Canada, I contracted a severe cold that settled in my head and finally affected my throat. It rapidly developed into catarrh and caused a miserable throat weakness. My head would become clogged during the night and there was a catarrhal dripping from the nose into the throat. Many days I had been unable to breathe other than through my mouth, and the constant hawking and spitting was almost unbearable. I had been treated by the best throat specialists here and in New York, but nothing benefited my condition. I obtained Hyomei at T. J. Durick's and soon found relief, the throat dripping ceased and my head began to clear. I continued with Hyomei for six weeks and after that time I was well in every detail. There has been no return of the trouble since, and I feel grateful in speaking well of Hyomei, as it cured me when all else failed."

UPPER BLACKVILLE.

Harvesting in this section is pretty well finished. Mr. James Duncan is busy threshing.

Miss Mary Danphy, Mrs. Jane Dunphy and Mrs. Chas. Donald spent Thursday at the Fredericton Exhibition.

Mrs. Martha Donald accompanied by Mrs. B. A. Donald of Quartz, Mont., are spending a few days in Blissfield.

Mrs. Wm. Donald returned from Blackville on Wednesday morning. Mrs. Elijah Donald spent Tuesday in Fredericton.

Miss Nellie M. Coughlan is visiting friends in Blackville.

Miss Katie Menzies of Whitneyville returned on Monday.

Mr. Chas. Coughlan has returned from Fredericton where he has been working for some time.

Miss Mabel Donald spent Saturday in Fredericton.

J. Ananias writes as follows: In reference to Dr. Cook's discovery of the North Pole, beg to state I found it two years ago. If you don't believe me, go up and see where I cut my name on it with a penknife.

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Restores vitality.
Taken after any illness it
restores a return to health.
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I.R.C. TIME TABLE

The I.R.C. change of time table will go into effect next Sunday, June 27th. The departure of trains from Newcastle will be as follows:

DEPARTURE—NORTH	
Night freight, No. 39,	4.05
Maritime, No. 33,	24.00
Ocean Limited, No. 190,	16.25
Fast freight, No. 75,	18.20
Local express, No. 35,	14.10
Way freight, No. 37,	12.00

DEPARTURE—SOUTH	
Maritime, No. 34,	5.10
Way freight, No. 38,	14.40
Fast freight, No. 76,	11.45
Local express, No. 36,	10.45
Ocean Limited, No. 200,	12.45
Night freight, No. 40,	2.10

INDIAN TOWN BRANCH	
Leave Indian town,	8.55
Arrive at Newcastle,	10.20
Leave Newcastle,	16.35
Arrive at Indian town,	17.55

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