

THE LADY OF THE TOWER

A Continued Story of Romantic Adventure

CHAPTER XXV.

By HEADON HILL

Judgment.

WITH a sinking tremor at his heart, such as he had never felt in the wildest weather at sea, Lance Pengarvan from the dock faced the benevolent-looking old gentleman in the scarlet robes. Every sentence that dropped in hushed yet clearly audible tones seemed to be shaping into a component part of the last dread sentence which that cultured voice would presently have to pronounce. For the judge was summing up, and summing up dead against him. So black was the case being made against him that Lance wondered how his mother and Hilda could still believe in his innocence. If he had not known that he was not the slayer of Wilson Polgleaze, or of Jacob either, he would almost have thought himself guilty.

The telegram sent to St. Runan's at the close of the first day had given a correct idea of the way the trial was going. The worst was certainly to be expected. The letter found on the dead man's body, and the evidence of Mr. Simon Trehawke as to the prisoner's call at his office, were weapons which the counsel for the Crown wielded with crushing effect. As that eminent K.C. remarked as he sat down after his opening speech, he should prove both motive and opportunity.

From the mouth of his witnesses he proceeded to do so in masterly fashion, marshalling the data of Superintendent Grylls into an unanswerable indictment compared to which the police court allegations had been but as water unto wine.

Lance's counsel, a leading barrister on the Western Circuit, did his best to counteract the obvious effect on the jury by a scathing cross-examination of Simon Trehawke. It had plainly been inspired by his client and was intended, by discrediting the deformed attorney's story of the prisoner's call at his office, to show that Lance had not gone out to St. Runan's in order to waylay the deceased, but to see his mother and his fiancée after his long voyage. But Mr. Simon Trehawke refused to be shaken. He met the subtle questions with equal subtlety, sticking to his assertion that Captain Pengarvan had called upon him to learn the whereabouts of Wilson Polgleaze, and that to the best of his ability he had informed him.

The only point that counsel for the defence was able to score was that supposing the accused had been aware that the deceased had gone to St. Runan's he could not possibly have known that his intended victim had stopped at the inn, and that he was ahead of him when, as the prosecution alleged, he lay in wait for him at the road-side. The Crown prosecutor promptly neutralized the argument by calling a witness to prove that there was a long plate glass front to the bar at the inn, through which persons standing at the counter were plainly visible to passers-by.

After this it was generally expected that the prisoner himself would be called to rebut Trehawke's evidence, and possibly to deny that he had ever seen the incriminating letter from Polgleaze, senior. But counsel did not put him in the box, and the inference that he would not submit himself to cross-examination on that point, as well as on the secret shipment of arms, created the worst impression. The clever barrister made an impassioned appeal, but it was plain that he was fighting with his hands tied. The prisoner's refusal to defend himself had robbed his eloquence of its fire and reduced it to the dull embers of artifice.

And now those gentle words, at once soft as silk and sharp as dagger thrusts, in clear Saxon English, suited

to the twelve good men and true in the jury box, were dropping from the affable old man under the Royal Arms. Lance found himself staring at the unicorn in the stately emblem, idly wondering if it had ever had a prototype in real life, and if so if it really had only one horn. Yes, certainly that silver-tongued septuagenarian was going to hang him, and from watching the unicorn he turned to watching the judge with a horrible fascination, as a lamb might watch a boa constrictor about to swallow it. So terribly damning, and yet so ridiculously untrue were the things being said about him that he kept his eyes averted from that part of the gallery where his mother and Hilda were sitting. A sight of their anguish would have been the thing too much.

Suddenly his attention was diverted. One of the ushers sidled along the barrister's seats and handed a folded paper to the defending counsel. The latter read the communication with a bewildered frown quickly changing to alert comprehension. He was on his feet in an instant, treading softly in the wake of the usher to the baize-curtained doorway, through which he disappeared. What could have happened? The learned gentleman, having lost interest in him, was summoned to consult over another brief, Lance thought bitterly.

BUT no. Two minutes passed, during which the tinkling stream from the bench flowed steadily on, and then the counsel slipped back into his place. But he did not sit down. Fingering the lapels of his gown, he drew the judge's attention by a respectful cough.

"What is it, Mr. Bellamy?" asked the judge. "Even at the eleventh hour I will hear any point you may wish to raise in the prisoner's favour—of you think it worth while."

"I wouldn't interrupt your lordship if I didn't think so," was the quick rejoinder. "I have two new witnesses, who only to-day reached England from abroad. They have hurried from Plymouth to tender their evidence. It puts an entirely fresh complexion on the case, and will entitle me to ask for the prisoner's instant acquittal. I assure your lordship that this is most important."

"Very well," the judge assented. "We will hear these witnesses, and I hope that they will not waste our time."

Like one in a dream Lance watched the doorway, and the warders at his side had to spring to his assistance when through the folds of the red curtain there emerged into view Antonio Diaz and Billy Craze. The South American gave him a friendly nod, while his ex-cabin-boy greeted his former captain with a sheepish grin. Lance recovered himself in a moment. Above all other considerations the joyful fact stood out that dear old Tony had not fallen in battle after all. For the first time he let his gaze stray to the gallery. Hilda and his mother were waving their hands to him, their strained eyes were shining.

"I call Antonio Diaz," said Mr. Bellamy with curt confidence.

The Senor stepped into the box, and in a few minutes made hash of the letter purporting to be signed by Jacob Polgleaze, and to dismiss the captain of "The Lodestar." The letter was on the face of it a forgery, for the simple reason that the shipment of guns from St. Runan's Tower had been arranged with the full knowledge and approval of the head of the firm of Polgleaze and Son for the benefit of the firm.

"The old man did not trust his junior partner, so the affair was managed entirely between us three—Mr.

Jacob Polgleaze, Captain Pengarvan and myself. Here are the documents to prove it," added Antonio, producing a sheaf of correspondence, which was passed to counsel, and thence to the jury.

The Crown counsel put a few questions, but they elicited only that the witness was the son of a former President of the Republic of Guyaca, and that he had been engaged in a revolution which had cost his father his life.

"I am sorry to break the laws of a country that I love, but if you make such good guns what was there to do?" Senor Diaz protested with charming naivety. "And after all they did no harm. The guns are at the bottom of the sea. The navy of Guyaca saw to that."

"This is irrelevant; let us have the other witness," said the judge, and there was a gleam behind his spectacles belying the sternness of his tone.

Billy Craze scrambled into the box, and by his first answer electrified the court.

"You saw Mr. Jacob Polgleaze murdered, I believe?" was the question put to him.

"I did, sir."

"Who was the murderer?"

"The old governor's son, Wilson," replied the boy promptly.

"How did you come to be present?" counsel inquired when the sensation that stirred the court had subsided.

"I had come ashore with the captain, and I wanted to speak to him about one of the errands I was to do. I knew where he was, so I went through the shop and upstairs to the office. Outside the door I stopped, because there was no sound, and I didn't want to show up if the captain had gone. There was a screen across the door, and to make sure I peeped round it. Wilson was just sticking a knife into the old man's back. It turned me that sick I didn't rightly know what I was doing for a bit, and when I got down to the quay 'The Lodestar' was gone."

"And why did you not accuse Wilson Polgleaze—inform the police?"

"I was frightened, sir. You'd have been frightened of that cruel devil yourself if you'd seen what I saw," replied Billy. Then, waxing conversational, he went on: "'Twas like this, sir, I'd missed the ship, and Captain Pengarvan had gone in her. There wasn't anyone to back me up and protect me. I'm only a little chap, and I was afraid of what Mr. Wilson might do if I got talking. So I says to myself I'll lay low and keep my mouth shut till the captain is home again. Then he'll see me safe."

COUNSEL for the defence sat down, and the Crown prosecutor rose.

He knew that his case was lost, and, perhaps, being a good fellow, he was not sorry that it should be so. But professional instinct could not be resisted. He thought he had found a flaw in the witness's armour.

"If your story is true," he said, "I can understand that you would shrink from an unsupported conflict with Mr. Wilson Polgleaze till you had your captain's protection. But Captain Pengarvan has been home for some weeks, and Wilson having been killed on the day of his return there has been no question of the fear you mention. Yet you have allowed your captain to come perilously near the gallows without tendering this information. How do you account for that?"

Billy's eyes twinkled. "Because Wilson Polgleaze and his lawyer—a game-legged swab called Trehawke—had me shanghaied and put aboard another of his ships that was sunk in mid-ocean," he replied. "Black Sambo, the nigger that helped to kidnap me, is outside, and will swear that I'm telling you true."

The learned K. C. seated himself



Quickly
Removes
Grease
from
Horn
Ivory
Bone and
Wooden
Handles

Without Soaking



Chases
Dirt

MADE IN CANADA.