

The DeBercy Affair

BY GORDON HOLMES
Author of "A Mysterious Disappearance,"
"By Force of Circumstances," etc.
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CHAPTER XI—(Continued)

Rosalind laughed a little, a laugh with a dangerous chuckle in it that might have carried a warning to one who knew her. "Do you not say in that letter? In it you tell him that since the night at the sundial, when you were brutal to him—"

"You know, then, my letter—by heart," said Rosalind, her eyes sparkling and cheeks aflame. "That is quite charming of you! You have been at the pains to read it?"

"No, of course, Mr. Osborne, wouldn't exactly show it to me, nor did I ask him. But I think you guess that I am in Mr. Osborne's confidence."

"Mr. Osborne, it would seem, has read it! He even thought the contents of sufficient importance to repeat them to his typist! Is that so?"

"Mr. Osborne repeats many things to me, Miss Marsh—by habit. You being a stranger to him, do not know him well yet, but I have been with him for some time, you see. As to his reading it, I know that you telegraphed him not to, and he received the telegram before the letter. I admit; but, the letter once in his hand, it became his private property of course. He had a right to read it."

A stone in Rosalind's bosom where her heart had been seared like a wound; yet her lips smiled—a hard smile.

"But then, having read, to be at the pains to seal it down again?" she said. "It seems superfluous, a contemptible subterfuge."

"Oh, well," answered Hylda, with a pointed laugh, "he is not George Washington—his harmless deception."

"But you cry out all his secrets!" "Why to me?"

"I save you from troubling your head about him. He is not so friendly as you have imagined."

"Happy man! And was it you who wrote me the anonymous information that he was not Glyn but Osborne?"

"No, that was someone else."

And now Rosalind, blighting her with her smile, said no inward fire could melt, said contemptuously:

"I am afraid you are not spending the truth. I shall tell Mr. Osborne to get rid of you."

The dart was well planted. The paid secretary's lips twitched and quivered.

"Try it! He'll laugh at you!" she retorted.

"No, I think he will do it—to please me!"

Sad to relate, our gracious Rosalind was deliberately adding oil to the fire of hate and rage that she saw devouring Hylda. From that day Hylda again spoke it was from a fiery soul that peered out of a shadow's face.

"Will he—do please you?" she said low, humbly, leaning forward. "He has a record in a diary of the girls he has kissed, and the number of days from the first sight to the first kiss. He only wanted to see in how many days he could secure you."

This vulgarly astonished his hearer. Rosalind shrunk a little; her smile forced and strained; she could only murmur:

"Oh, you needn't be so outrageous!" Hylda chuckled again maliciously.

"It's the mere truth."

"Still, I think I shall warn him against you, and have you dismissed?"—this with that feminine instinct of the dagger that plunged deepest, the lash that cut most bitterly.

"You try!" hissed Hylda sharply, as it were secretly, with a nod of menace. "I am not anybody! I am not some defenseless housemaid, the only rival you have experienced hitherto, perhaps. I am—at any rate, you try! You dare! Touch me, and I'll write your name."

"Drive on!" cried Rosalind almost in a scream.

"Wait!" shrieked Hylda—"you shall hear me!"

"Calman, please!"—cried Rosalind despairingly.

And now at last the cab was off, Hylda Prout running with it to the door, and then, when she saw it was gone, she remained there, unable to move, trembling from head to foot, watching the vehicle as it sped away from her.

When she re-entered the library, the first thing that she saw was the crumpled, cross-folded note to Osborne, and, still burning inwardly, she snatched it up, tore it open, and read:

"I will write again. Meantime, high hope! I have discovered that your purloined dagger has been in the possession of the lady's maid, Pauline. A small thing, but mine own. I am now taking it to Inspector Furneaux's."

Hylda dashed the paper to the ground, put her foot on it, then catching it up, hurried to her hands to stone which she threw into a waste-paper basket. Then she collapsed into a chair at her desk, her arms thrown heedlessly over some documents, and her face buried between them.

"I have gone too far, too far, too far!" Now that her passion had burnt to ashes this was her thought. A crisis, it was clear, had come, and something had to be done, to be decided, now—that very day. Rosalind would surely tell Osborne what she, Hylda, had said, how she had acted, and then all would be up with Hylda, no hope left, her whole house in ruins about her, not one stone left standing on another. Either she must find Osborne irrevocably to her at once, or her brain must devise some means of keeping Osborne and Rosalind from meeting—or both. But how achieve that, she asked herself, and if that was impossible? Osborne, she knew, was at that moment at Rosalind's residence, and if Rosalind was now going home, as she had boasted to Rosalind that she was not a whimpering housemaid, but of a better texture, and if that was a true statement, the present moment must prove it. Yet she sat there with a buried head, weakly weeping.

Suddenly she thought of the words in Rosalind's note to Osborne, which she had thrown into the fire. "I have discovered that your purloined dagger has been in the possession of the lady's maid, Pauline. A small thing, but mine own. I am now taking it to Inspector Furneaux's."

That, then, was the person who had the dagger which had been sought and speculated about—Pauline Dessau!

And at the recollection of the name, Hylda's racked brain, driven to invent, invented like lightning. Up she sprang, caught at her hat, and rushed away, pinning it on to her magnificent red hair. In her flight, her eyes staring with haste. In the street she leapt into a motor-cab—to Soho.

She was soon there. As if pursued by furies she pelted up two foul staircases, and at a top back room, rapped presiding, fiercely, with the clenched knuckles of both hands upon the panels. As a man in his shirt-sleeves, his braces dropped, smoking a cigarette, opened the door to her, she almost fell in on him, and the burning words burst from her tongue's tip:

"Antonio!—it's all up with Pauline—the dagger she did it with—has been found by a woman—the same woman from Tor mouth whom you and I tracked to Peckham Gardens—Pauline is in her control, probably—tell Janice—he has wife—he may do something before it is too late—the woman has the dagger—in a motor-cab—in a long narrow box—she is this instant taking it to Inspector Furneaux's house—if she lives, Pauline hangs—tell Janice that, Antonio—don't stare—tell Janice—it is she—Pauline—let him choose—"

"Grand Dieu!"

"Don't stare—don't stand—I'm gone."

She ran out, and almost as she was down the stair Antonio had thrown on a coat and was flying down behind her.

(To be continued.)

DYSPEPSIA-PROOF

How Any Meal Can Be Thoroughly Enjoyed by Any Stomach

Costs You Nothing to Try Stewart's Dyspepsia Tablets

Man, as a rule, are first discovered by their enemies. Their antagonists turn on the searchlight, and the proof of merit will lie in being able to stand the flash. It was only in this way that Mr. White ever knew that dyspepsia was one of Mr. Black's worst enemies. Sitting face to face at a two-by-four table, he handed his afflicted friend the bill of fare.

Oyster Cocktail. Stuffed Olives. Boston Clam Chowder. Strained Gumbo. Sliced Steak with Mushrooms. Roast Beef Hash. Boiled Ox Tongue with Sauerkraut. Lobster a la Newburg. Baked Pork and Beans. Combination Crab Salad. Hot Mince Pie.

Philosophy Dictates. Mr. White ordered a "little of each." Mr. Black ordered a "big breakfast."

Mr. Black's breakfast was a big breakfast. It was just as big as condition as yours at one time. But now I can eat anything, at any time. For instance, this chicken, this steak, or even the lobster, were just as welcome to my stomach as your crackers and milk. You don't realize how this dyspepsia business is a real enemy to your health.

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TEAM WORK THAT COUNTS

Suggestion of Montreal Union For Betterment of City Government

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Clinton Woodruff Addresses City Associations—Good Government He Declares, Not a Liability But a Valuable Asset

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