

CHAPTER XIII. AN EVIDENCE.



As Pierre Turrian had, like one spellbound, reading the slip of paper which Beryl had put into his hand...

Then he reread every word and every of his memory to recall what had passed between them at the time of their first interview...

"How do you say you got this, Miss Lyle?" he asked, looking at the paper toward her and speaking with a mien on his lip.

"The question is not how I got it, but what it means," returned Beryl coolly.

"On the contrary, it has everything to do with it. It is the most ordinary coincidence I have ever heard of."

"Is that your answer?" And Beryl looked more stern than before, every feature speaking her disbelief.

"There is nothing to answer in such a thing as this. If you had asked me all I can say is that either those who gave you this have imposed upon you in the most monstrous fashion in the world, or for some purpose which I do not pretend to know you are trying to impose on me."

"You are recovering from your first surprise, and in your effort to find time in which to invent some sort of explanation you make it a kind of implied charge against me that I have been prying into your secrets."

"I have said nothing about your being a villain, Mr. Turrian. I have said you only that that entry in the St. Sulpio book means. That is all."

"And in what connection do you mean the honor to catch me? On whose behalf do you act? In what interest?"

"There is no necessity to answer that question. You are not compelled to answer what I have said, unless you please."

to drop, to fall, and I set out on my travels in search of her who had deserted me. In the course of time I tracked her to England, and—well, you know the rest."

He stopped and waved his hand as though he had finished, said Beryl. "Go on—the end, said Beryl."

"The end! My God, the end is not yet! You gave me the news that my wife had done what I hoped she would, and you helped me to find her. I thank you. I found her, saw her, showed her what my power was and how she must do what I wished or be dragged in the dirt of scandal and calumny."

"Beryl looked at him with the deepest loathing and could scarce restrain the words of scorn that rose to her lips. He had looked at her with a smile, and she had looked at him with a smile."

"I see what you would say," he exclaimed, with his usual movement of the shoulders as if to scorn her opinion. "For the moment it is an ugly looking part that I play, but Lola can well spare the little allowance which I require for my few wants, she can't live without money. I am no Enoch Arden."

He glanced at her vindictively as she was saying the last words, and he felt that he would give half his life if he could have seen that cold, hard, mercenary face lying dead before him at that instant.

"That thought started another and a grimmer one, so grim that involuntarily he glanced about him, as if the mere harboring of it might be dangerous, while his lips felt suddenly so parched that he moistened them with his tongue."

"The idea grew on him like the germ of a noxious plague, and instinctively his cunning prompted him to shape his story as to make Lola appear to be whether any one else knew of this secret."

Now that his eyes had been so rudely opened to the real cleverness of the girl who had thus faced him with his wife had been quickened to read her, so as to know how best to deal with her."

For that new plan of his he must have time. "I accept your conditions, Miss Lyle," he said when she finished. "I admit—for now it is useless to deny—that what you have found out is true in every detail."

"The suddenness of his change of manner and of the confession startled the girl more than anything that had yet occurred in the whole of her life."

"I have learned much of the truth," he said, "because you have revealed the foundation fact of this most sad and terrible matter. Sir Jaffray and I are both married, and the woman who is known as his wife, but by law and right she is my wife."

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