

SILENT LIPS

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CHAPTER XVII. Flight.

The gray dawn had spread and brightened in the sky before Geoffrey threw himself at last upon his bed, and it was almost daylight before he succeeded at last in shutting his eyes to the pitiful whiteness of Hetty's face and forgetting her for a little while in sleep.

But she haunted his dreams. He could not get rid of her even in them. She came to him—torturing him—his poor little Hetty in her working clothes, with her terrible white face and her red hands.

He tossed to and fro, walking and sleeping spasmodically. Tomorrow he would force an explanation from her somehow or other, and meanwhile, if he did not sleep, he would not be fit for anything.

His dreams stopped at last, and he fell into a heavy sleep, only to be awakened sharply. Some one was bending over him, touching him. He opened his eyes and sprang up in bed.

"What is the matter?" he cried, and the next minute gave a short laugh of relief. It was only his valet at his side. "You startled me," he said. "I suppose it is late, is it?"

"No, sir—earlier than you asked me to call, sir, but the nurse in charge of the young lady wished to speak to you, sir, and couldn't make you hear."

Geoffrey sprang out of bed.

"Give me a dressing gown, and I'll go at once," he said—"is she—the young lady—all right?"

"The young lady has gone, sir. That was why the nurse wanted you," the valet replied.

"Gone?" Geoffrey stopped in the act of

man, he was rich, popular, a man of brain and power, and the King wished to recognize him, and his name was to be on the next Honors List!

He threw aside the indignation. Well, let them do as they liked. It did not seem to matter very much while this mystery absorbed him. He would first of all find Hetty and take steps that would prevent him from losing her again, and then Lord Renwick and the rest could do as they liked. He would be glad to serve his King. Yes—let them make him a baronet or what they liked. After they had done that he had work of his own to do. He meant to solve the mystery of the Oldcastle murder, clear Hetty, and then, afterward—well, there was plenty of work to be done out in the East for the King.

He rose, dictated his letters to the secretary, who waited for him, and then started to search the hospitals for Hetty. He would find her, make her well, then he would go back to Oldcastle and bet to work.

As he passed out of the hotel his doubts had been crushed once more. Once more his faith in the girl he loved had risen strong and true. Hetty guilty? Never! There was something behind it all—something he had to find out and get rid of, and do away with forever. But she was not guilty!

With his thoughts running on the ways and means he should adopt of getting at the truth, he sprang into a cab. He had no fear of not finding Hetty—no thought of failure, and at the Charing Cross Hospital the news that no such patient had been admitted gave him a shock. He could not believe it—he had been so sure, and it was only the repeated assurance that she was not there that persuaded



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huddling into the gown. "Gone!" he repeated harshly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that she was all right as nurse thought—she settled down to sleep and nurse did, too, but when she woke the young lady had gone, sir—dressed and gone without a word from her."

Geoffrey sprang up, and without a word rushed away in search of the nurse. He found it was all true enough. Hetty had gone—evidently and mysteriously, as suddenly as she had come—gone out of his life again, to be lost once more in the great whirlpool of London.

He stood, dazed and stupefied, and the nurse looked on him with reawakened interest as a romantic, eccentric gentleman, with a mystery in his life.

"She won't fit to walk from one room to the other, let alone dress and leave the hotel," she told Geoffrey, "and before I rounded you I sent downstairs to see if she had got farther than the entrance or the courtyard. I expected to find her fainting there, but she was nowhere to be seen."

"Then," Geoffrey stammered hoarsely, "then—she might fall ill in the street, and be taken to a hospital?"

"Yes, certainly," said the nurse. "It is almost sure to happen. She was dreadfully weak, she can't possibly go far, and even if she was strong enough, her shoes—"

She stopped. Something seemed to grip Geoffrey by the throat.

"What about her shoes?" he asked.

"The nurse made a gesture of horror."

"They were dreadful," she said. "It would have broken her mother's heart to see them, and—and they are enough to kill her on a day like this."

Geoffrey dropped to a chair and covered his face with his hands. His poor Hetty! "The only hope is that she has collapsed at once," the nurse added, "and been taken to a hospital. It would be the best thing that could happen to her."

Geoffrey started up again and looked at his watch.

"I'll go at once," he said. "Perhaps I might find her at Charing Cross—"

The nurse put her hand on his arm.

"Have your breakfast first," she said, "and go afterward. You will lose nothing by that. Give them time to attend to her and then go."

He hesitated, and then decided to follow her advice. But his breakfast was tasteless, the coffee choked him, and he waded through his letters, only half realizing their contents.

He seemed to rouse with a start at last to find an official announcement in his hand. It bore the King's arms and seal. He stared at it for a moment and then laughed. So they proposed to make him a baronet now! He was doing great work for the empire, they said he was a coming

Among the latter were the Earl of Oldcastle and Lord Fanshawe.

The paragraph ran: "Owing to private affairs, Sir Geoffrey Waring has cancelled all engagements for the present and left London. The date of his return is uncertain."

And no one, not even the earl and his son, dreamt that this paragraph had anything to do with another which appeared in the "Argus Column" of the same paper. No one suspected that the two were connected.

"Hetty! Let me know where you are. Whatever happened in the past, for heaven's sake because I love you, trust me. Nothing can make me happy or at ease until I know where and how you are—GEOFFREY."

CHAPTER XVIII. In Search of the Truth.

Oldcastle again! The tramp jingling up the hill, the machinery throbbing behind the grimy, red-bricked walls of the factories, the fire racing in the funnels and the great black barges floating about the sullen river, the same noise and life, the same work and toll, the same sounds as iron beat iron and the machinery spun in the mills.

Geoffrey walked slowly. It was still there, early for the factories to empty, and he was waiting for Ted Sealey, intending to meet him and go home with him as he had done before. He had walked along the old familiar streets—Liverpool road, Sheffield street, Preston Row, along the High street, past Pridemore's chemical works and Hutton's factory, and then, as he had done before, turned his steps towards the castle. This time he did not mount the hill, but turned aside, following the river with its rows of factories throwing out quivering lights across the water, with its boats and barges sending out bright colors—red and green and white—as the darkness set in.

He stopped by a low wall, and leaning against it looked down into the water and across at the lights of the blast furnaces that were beginning to flame out against the sky. They shone on every side, leaping fires, like nothing that he had seen in any other part of the world. As the night deepened they grew bolder, flaring out against the night sky in all

You'd be the first lawyer in Oldcastle. You'd be a done a big thing if you found out after all those years that it was by murder and nothing else that Mr. Lancaster came to his death, and if you got all the proofs as I want you to, and could point to who did it, why you could start in practice for yourself and make a fortune, and you know you could, Fred Barker."

He turned away, and Geoffrey saw his face, pallid and curiously disturbed, in the pale light of the barge lamp.

Suddenly he turned to Bessie again. "Yes—yes, maybe," he said in an unsteady voice, "but I don't know how I can. There are things in the way—difficulties—perhaps dangers. And I tell you, Bessie, I've got an easier way to a fortune than that—less risky, too. Just look here."

He put his hand in his pocket, looking round uneasily as he did so, as if he might encounter watching eyes in the growing darkness. His face looked pale and frightened.

"I tell you I don't take up the Lancaster Business," he added abruptly. "There's something behind it that you don't know of—something—something—I can't explain it. It's too dangerous. But this—here's no risk about this, Bessie."

He drew out his hand as he spoke, and clasped it in Geoffrey's saw a piece of paper. Barker unfolded it carefully and held it up for Bessie to see. Geoffrey saw, but he did not forward. He heard her give a cry.

"Why, that? What good is that? You can't get a fortune out of a dead man. And that's what it is."

He stopped her.

"He isn't dead," he said. "He isn't dead or gone. He's in London at this very moment, and he is rich—as rich as Sir Arthur Walter himself, and the name he goes by is Sir Geoffrey Waring."

CHAPTER XIX. Who?

Geoffrey clutched sharply at the wall. Bessie had fallen back, and was staring at him stupidly into Barker's face. "You're crazy," she said at last. "You're right down crazy. Geoffrey Clavering died in Australia, where they sent him eight years ago."

"He didn't do anything of the sort!" cried Barker almost fiercely. "He didn't die, but he left Australia and went to India, and he has not only made a fortune, but a name as well. He was turned into a baronet the other day. His name was on the Honors List—Geoffrey Waring, of India. And I tell you I am making no mistake, for I have seen him—I have seen him here in Oldcastle, and I tell you this bit of paper, this confession he made eight years ago, is worth thousands of pounds."

Bessie drew a deep, sharp breath.

"How?" she asked.

"How?" He bent his cunning face close to hers, and now in the pale light that came from the river Geoffrey could see that the frightened look had gone from it and that only cunning remained in the pale eyes.

"How?" Why, by selling it back to him, of course; or, better still, by threatening him with it. He's rich, a big man—by Jove! I should think he'd pay me well to hush this up. I know; yes, and pay handsomely. He has come back under another name, and you think he will like the idea of being shown up as the Geoffrey Clavering who committed forgery and stole £5000 eight years ago? Not likely! No fear! He'll pay, and pay through his nose, too, for this bit of paper, I can tell you, Bessie. He broke off, chuckling, and folding the paper again, placed it in his breast pocket. Geoffrey, feeling like a man in a dream, stood rigid. Exposure! Ruin! This was what it meant for him, that the burden of another man's sin was upon him still.

For a moment Bessie faced Barker in silence. Then "But how did you get it?" she asked.

He hesitated an instant, looking round again with uncertain eyes.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I stole it," he replied. "Got it out of the earl's desk. It was mixed up with a lot of dirty rubbish and forgotten. It will never be asked for, and if it is—why, I shall say it went into the fire with other worthless papers. I had carte blanche to throw away what I thought no good, and I'll run the risk of this. It's worth it."

He laughed again. Bessie stood still, watching him with steady eyes. She seemed to be thinking, waiting, and for a moment Geoffrey had a queer feeling of being looked at and scorned and even disliked in her attitude. But that was impossible, and the next instant the thought had vanished.

"Don't you be silly," she said. "Don't you go doing anything so senseless as blackmailing. It's dirty work, and will do no good. And don't you try to count your chickens, money, haven't I only three over Ted Sealey because you promised. You didn't say anything about this being dangerous. Why is it dangerous?"

She broke off breathlessly. Barker still stood with his head turned away.

"The reason why Lord Fanshawe has never married, and that the earl knows it, and that he'd give something to know that Hetty was out of the way for good—let me say he's like to her of her death, for, all said and done, Lord Fanshawe was fonder of her than he has ever been of any other girl, for all he has flirted so and flayed fast and loose, and if she ever turned up again, if it was proved that she was innocent after all, why—the earl wouldn't like it, you may be sure. And I'm not going to offend the earl."

She bent forward, and Geoffrey saw her small hands go out and cling to his arm. He saw him turn, saw his face change and soften at the touch, saw the cunning fade from his face, and the pale eyes glow with sudden happy passion. Whatever Fred Barker was, warm and erect though he might be, he was deperately and passionately in love with Bessie Merrill.

"Tell me," she said. "Did you think that Hetty did it—really?"

He bent forward, close to her. He slipped one arm around her.

"I know who did it," he said in a whisper.

"She clung to him suddenly, sharply, with both hands.

"Tell me, Fred; do tell me!" she cried.

"Whisper it!"

He tightened his hold about her shoulder, and with one hand stroked away the thick dark hair from about her ear and put his lips to it.

"When Bessie heard what he whispered she started up with a sharp cry.

"I don't believe it!" she said. "It's a

lie—it can't be true—you are only teasing me! It can't be true!"

He shook his head.

"I could prove it if I wanted to," he said.

She gave a harsh, unsteady laugh, and turned to go.

"Oh—I—I can't believe it," she stammered.

She shivered suddenly, and turned her face toward the river.

"Oh, let's get away," she added abruptly. "It's grown cold, and look at the fog. Let's get away."

She moved, she spoke, and began hurrying away into the darkness. The fog swallowed them up.

Geoffrey stood quite still as they disappeared, shivering himself as the thick mist drifted over the water and along into his heart, too.

Exposure? Ruin? The words had ceased to echo in his ear now.

Who besides Hetty had kept silent lips these eight years?

CHAPTER XX. Safe—and Loved.

The fog had drifted. It lay thick along the High street now, shutting out the great buildings, smothering the great factories in the Liverpool road, and shrouding Pridemore's Chemical Works



"He was roused suddenly by voices coming in his direction. It was a man and a woman, and something familiar in the woman's voice made him turn his head sharply."

and Fulton's Iron Foundries in a dull black mass.

It was no use looking for Ted in this, and at the corner of Preston road Geoffrey jumped on a tram that was going to Oldham.

He fell back in his seat, with his arms folded and his head bent, frowning down at the floor of the tram, trying to think. The thought of his own possible ruin had gone from him. It might be necessary to bribe Barker for a while until he had got the necessary proofs of Hetty's innocence. But he could not consider what was to happen after that now. He had to get from Barker the proof he said he had of the murder of Mr. Lancaster, and he had to get from him somehow or other the name he had whispered to Bessie Merrill by the old wall of the river.

Geoffrey could not understand it. Why had the mention of the name startled and shocked her? And why, since she had behaved so heartlessly to Ted and seemed so callous and ambitious, could he be so roused and indignant at the thought of stooping to blackmail? He had not expected a girl like that to object to a thing because it happened to be dirty and underhanded. A girl who could behave as Bessie Merrill was doing, could he could deliberately throw over an honest man for a dishonest one, could not surely be expected to have any feelings of dishonesty herself. But women were puzzling things. Ted had said, and, apparently, Bessie was as big a problem as the rest of her sex. Anyhow, for some reason or other she seemed reluctant for Barker to make money by blackmail, and was determined that he should make fame and fortune by more honest work.

But what was the name he had whispered to her as they stood by the old wall? What was the name of the murderer of Mr. Lancaster?

The buzz of conversation and laughter in the tram grew dull to Geoffrey as he sat. He forgot his surroundings, and roused with a start at last as the car stopped.

"Oldham street," the conductor said in reply to his question. "Just passed it. We're in Bolton road now. You'll have to walk back a step."

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bright, as spruce as it had done in the old days when Mrs. Merrill had been alive to keep it nice, and it might have been her hands still that arranged the white curtains in the windows and the geraniums in front of them. But it was Bessie who looked after it now, or course.

Geoffrey drew a deep breath and fixed his eyes on the old attic window. A light was burning behind the drawn blind and a shadow moved across it as he looked. A lodger, evidently, was occupying his old room—perhaps even working in the same mill and earning the same wages.

(To be continued.)

ONTARIO YOUNG WOMAN ENDS TROUBLES IN RIVER

Sarnia, Ont., July 16.—(Special)—The body of a woman found in the St. Clair River at Port Huron a week ago was identified positively yesterday, by her parents, as that of a former Sarnia young lady, Miss Ethel Eddy, who last summer married Frank Scarlata, a young Italian. Miss Eddy was only 18 years old when married and the union was a surprise to

O'BRIEN THE GRIT WON IN HANTS

Defeated His Conservative Clansman by 150 Majority

Halifax, N. S., July 17.—The election in Hants county today to fill the vacancy in the local legislature caused by the appointment of Hon. Arthur Dymally to the supreme court, resulted in the election of James O'Brien, ex-sheriff of the county, with a majority of 158 as compared with 134 which was Drysdale's majority over Everett O'Brien in the general election last year.

The Conservative candidate lost 40 in Windsor, which was Sheriff O'Brien's home. Everett O'Brien came from Noel in East Hants, where he also lost as compared with the general election. Prohibition was a leading issue, that policy being advertised by the opposition as against the government's temperance legislation, which was defended by the Liberals as advanced. The voting shows that prohibition had practically no effect for the vote polled was in the main on strictly party lines. The changes were immaterial, but so far as known it can at least be said that none occurred because of prohibition. Both sides had a large number of speakers in the county and the campaign was lively and interesting.

ORANGE GRAND CHAPLAIN SCORES R. L. BORDEN

Winnipeg, July 17.—(Special)—Rev. W. Walsh, grand chaplain of the Orange order and rector of Christ church, Brampton, Ont., is in the city from Vancouver where he attended the annual meeting of the supreme grand lodge of the order. Mr. Walsh was reported as having made a severe attack during the meeting against the government's temperance legislation, which was defended by the Liberals as advanced. The voting shows that prohibition had practically no effect for the vote polled was in the main on strictly party lines. The changes were immaterial, but so far as known it can at least be said that none occurred because of prohibition. Both sides had a large number of speakers in the county and the campaign was lively and interesting.

Lowell Woman Shot.

Lowell, Mass., July 16.—Mrs. Mary McBride, aged 28, proprietor of a millinery establishment, in this city, was shot and critically wounded today while alone in her store. John K. Kelly, aged 27, was later arrested and locked up in the police station charged with the shooting. A bullet from a revolver entered Mrs. McBride's forehead just above the left eye, and narrowly missing the brain lodged behind her right ear. She has been in the St. Johns Hospital where she was reported in a critical condition. No reason is known for the shooting.

Fred W. Stockton Left \$22,000.

Hampton, July 16.—In the Probate Court of Kings county last Thursday, Judge J. M. McIntyre issued a citation returnable October 23rd, on petition of Harriet A. Stockton, widow, sole executrix under the will of the late Fred W. Stockton, of Sussex, deceased, whose estate was sworn at \$22,000. Joseph Porter, executor.



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