

would carry no weight—that the dying babble of a man who had been by turns unconscious and delirious for several weeks would be brushed aside, as not worth a minute's consideration. How should she know that even if Nathan Craze had been in full possession of his faculties there would have been the fatal flaw that all she had to offer was, technically, "hearsay evidence," and therefore inadmissible. She did not know, and she rose presently to put her purpose into execution.

From the very first her path was hedged with difficulties. Mrs. Penalva came in to help, and in that good woman's vernacular, made the grim body on the bed look "so pritty as a slumberin' infant." But the process took a considerable time, and Marigold, with no adequate explanation that she could bring herself to offer, could not leave till it was finished. And when at last the two women left the silent figure to itself and crept down the stairs there was still the explanation to be made—why she must lack up the cottage and go away for the rest of the day.

She got over it the best way she could by vague references to the purchase of mourning, and Mrs. Penalva, interested in details, only set her free after much garrulous questioning. Then she had to have some food and dress for the journey. It was eleven o'clock before she turned the key in the cottage door and mounted the pebble ridge to the road that skirted the cove.

She had to walk seven miles to Falmouth, and when she got there the train had just left. There were two hours to wait for the next, and then the dreary pilgrimage had only begun. There was the change and wait for the main line train at Truro, and the change and wait at Bodmin Road for the train on the branch. It was past six in the evening when she reached the county town, tired out and in desperate fear that she was too late.

But when she timidly asked a porter at the station if there was any news of the trial she was reassured by his answer. The result was not yet known, and it would have been "all over the place" five minutes after the verdict. But it wouldn't be long now. A man who had been in court and had had to catch a train had brought word half an hour ago that the judge was summing up.

Thanking her informant and obtaining from him directions to the County Hall, where the Assizes were being held, Marigold hurried from the station up the long High Street. There was at least a chance that she might be in time to turn the scales in the prisoner's favour, she told herself, if she could tell her story before sentence was pronounced. With her hazy notions of criminal procedure she believed that once the words of doom were spoken they were irrevocable, no matter what fresh light be shed.

So it was that, breathless and distraught, she neared the building where for two days the battle between life and death had been fought out, and, behold! a great throng of people came surging out of the doors, chattering like monkeys, and spreading from the pavement into the roadway, nearly knocking the girl down. She was as a frail craft in danger of swamping by a tumultuous sea, but she still frantically struggled on, hoping against hope that this was not the end.

But suddenly, at the very foot of the steps leading to the portals of justice, she looked in despair towards her goal, and there, in the broad doorway, which was now vomiting the last of the sight-seers, she saw a face which she had thought to be cold in death—a face which with grave eyes was contemplating the retreating crowd.

Marigold clutched at her bosom, staggered and fell in a swoon on the cold stone. For good or ill her voice was not to be raised in favour of Lance Pengarvan, but as her senses left her her last thought was not of the man she had put forth all her strength to save.

(To be Continued.)



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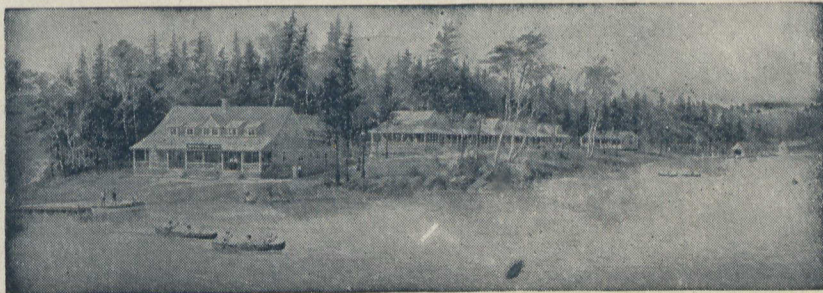
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