

bracelet on her wrist, she exclaimed, "You have only seven minutes, and I never can do it much under twelve." "I must have a try for it," he said. They shook hands, and Peggy saw him out at the door.

HE began to run at once for the station. The night was cold and frosty, the pavement slippery, and he had to use some caution. The immediate approach to the station is a gangway inclined at a somewhat steep angle from the street, on either side of the line, and Max had just reached it on the near side up which he had to go when he heard his train steam in and stop. With an effort he managed to rush up the gangway and gain the platform as the train was moving slowly out. Hurling himself at the door of a compartment, he succeeded in opening it and getting in; closing the door, he sat down quite spent and out of breath.

It was a first-class compartment, and contained but one other passenger, a lady, who was veiled and much muffled up in handsome furs, so that Max could not see her face. He looked at her once or twice, but she made no sign that she was aware of his presence, and he was immediately absorbed in his own thoughts which had their centre in Peggy Willoughby.

"She is as far off from me as ever," he told himself. He wondered if there was no way by which he might win her love; he was more than confident that it was worth all the world to win it, but how?

The train ran on to Uxbridge Road where it halted for a moment or two. No one got into the compartment; the lady in the furs did not move—she sat so very still that Max fancied she must be asleep. Addison Road station came next, and there the train stopped for a couple of minutes; there was the sound of opening and shutting of doors but Max's compartment remained uninvaded and silent. As the train moved on again, he shot a glance at the lady—she sat as still, as motionless as before. Max smiled a little, but he did not really think much about her, for his mind dwelt on Peggy. "How soundly she sleeps," he said to himself of the fur-wrapped lady, and then thought no more of her.

Earl's Court station is the western terminus of the North London line, and as the train drew up to the platform Max heard the porters shouting: "All change; all change here!"

The door of the compartment was opened by one of these men, and Max was about to step out when he observed that the lady in the furs was sitting still and silent. "Her sleep must indeed be profound," he thought.

"All change; all change here," cried the porter who stood at the door.

"Madam," said Max to the silent figure, "this is Earl's Court."

"All change; all change here," cried the porter again.

The lady made no response; there was no faintest indication that she had heard a word.

"Such deep sleep seems strange, unnatural," thought Max, and he repeated his remark in a louder voice, but with the same result.

After a moment's hesitation, he touched her on the shoulder gently, then with some force, but in vain. Next he looked from the lady to the porter at the door, as if to call on him to witness what he was about to do.

"What's the matter with her?" asked the man.

Max, now anxious and suspicious, turned again to the lady in the furs, and pulled at her arm—when suddenly her head fell backward with a queer, mechanical jerk, and the light fell on her face so that he saw it with some clearness in spite of her veil—saw how white it was, and how wide and staring and dreadful was the expression of her eyes.

Shocked and alarmed, he started back a pace, letting her arm drop by her side.

"Sylvia Chase!" he ejaculated.

"Dead!"

## CHAPTER II.

### Through the Heart.

"DEAD!" echoed the porter stupidly, and his jaw dropped. He gazed at the white face above the furs, and then turned to

Max blankly, repeating dully, "Dead!"

But was she dead?

Max, quickly recovering himself, took her arm in his left hand and with his right searched for her pulse; it did not beat, but her wrist was not cold.

"Perhaps she has fainted, or she's been overtaken by some sort of seizure," he said to the porter; "please run and fetch a doctor at once." As an afterthought he added, "You might tell the station-master or some one in authority to come here immediately."

"Yes, sir," said the porter obediently, and he moved away from the door of the compartment. But meanwhile two or three more railway men had gathered about the door, and stood staring in; the porter said something to one of them who accompanied him off the platform and up the steps—he had suggested to the other to call a policeman, "as there might be trouble."

The station-master appeared almost at once, and his subordinates stood away from the door as he came forward. He took in the situation at a glance. He saw a man, who evidently was a gentleman, bending over the form of a woman, who as evidently was a lady, and he noted the deathly whiteness of her face.

"What's wrong, sir?" he asked Max, but more for the sake of saying something; it was plain there was something very wrong. As Max faced about, he said, "I am the station-master," and the way in which he spoke asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Maxwell Hamilton of 'The Day,'" Max replied to the implied question, "and I am glad you have come. This poor lady, I am afraid, is—"

"Dead?" asked the station-master, as Max paused.

"I fear she is, but I don't know; the body is still warm. I told a porter to fetch a doctor."

THE station-master looked at the pallid face above the furs, and shook his head gravely.

"Not much hope, I should think," he said. "A doctor has been telephoned for, and will be here very soon." He stopped speaking, and then stepped into the compartment; he gazed more closely at the lady, and shook his head again. "Dead," he said, simply and decidedly. "Was she with you, sir?" he inquired of Max.

"I was not acting as her escort," said Max. "I got into this compartment at St. Anton's Park station, and she was in it then."

"I see, sir."

"Here is my ticket," said Max, producing the return-half of a first-class ticket issued at Earl's Court station to St. Anton's Park and back.

"You don't know who she is, I suppose?" asked the station-master, taking Max's ticket.

"Yes, as it happens, I do know who she is," answered Max. "I know her slightly; she is Miss Sylvia Chase, and the strange thing is that I left her brother, whom I know very well—Captain Villiers Chase of the War Office—at a friend's house in St. Anton's Avenue only a few minutes before I got into the train."

"Indeed, sir!" exclaimed the station-master, surprised. "Did you speak to her? When did this happen?" he asked, with a bewildered air.

"No," said Max, realizing that his position might be one of considerable difficulty, "I did not speak to her. She wore a veil, as you see, and her furs otherwise concealed her face which was not tilted back under the light as it is now. I had no idea who she was. I merely noticed that she sat very still, and I fancied she was asleep—even when the train got here, I thought she slept, though uncommonly soundly, and I tried to wake her. I spoke to her first, and then I touched her shoulder; finally I pulled at her arm, and her head fell back—exactly as you see it—and I saw who she was."

"How—how extraordinary!" said the station-master, looking more and more bewildered.

"That I should know her," said Max, "is perhaps a coincidence, though I should hardly call it that. She might have been a perfect stranger to me, and the same thing have happened."

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