"A GOLD LADEN DERELICT"

OR

The Impecunious Adventuress.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN EXTRAORDINARY TRIAL.

"You are pursuing a somewhat extraordinary course, Mr. Markham," said the judge, "and I must ask you for your reasons for what you have said."

"Simply, my lord," said Markham, "that the lady is at this present moment under the influence of morphine. I ask, in the interests of justice, that the learned expert, the last witness, shall at once examine her."

"Have you any objection to that being done, Mr. Jarvis?" asked the judge.

Kenneth had put his opponent into a very tight corner, and Nevil Jarvis knew it. To refuse was to cast a grave suspicion on one of his best witnesses; to consent was to destroy her testimony altogether.

After a few moments' deep reflection, during which he realized that the battle was already half lost, he rose and said, in his dryest tones:

"Your lordship has already stated that the course proposed by my learned friend is a most unusual one. In view, however, of the grave issues depending largely upon this lady's evidence, I feel that it is my duty to consent."

"I think you have taken a most honorable course, Mr. Jarvis," said the judge, and the learned counsel sat down, well satisfied that the story of his generosity would very soon come to the knowledge of Merida Reynold.

Then Miss Holroyd, already shedding hysterical tears, was led out of court, to the judge's private room, followed by the expert, whose verdict would be almost as important as that of the jury itself.

Nevil Jarvis now played his last card. He rose again and said:

"I will now call Emma Meeson, the nurse who attended Sir Arthur Eversley during his last illness in Doctor Mathews' house, at Hampstead."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNEXPECTED TRAGEDY.

When Nurse Meeson took her place on the witness stand, every one in court felt that the last scene in the tragedy of life or death was about to be played. Every one expected to

hear sensational testimony from this woman of about forty, with hard, blue eyes, and regular, not unpleasing, features. In her nurse's costume she looked the very incarnation of respectability, but there was no certainty either of her character or of the part she had played in this case.

The opening of her examination by Nevil Jarvis was purely formal, and need not be reproduced. The interest of the audience revived when he asked her:

"During the time that you were in attendance on Sir Arthur Eversley, had you ever any reason to believe that he obtained larger supplies of spirits than Doctor Mathews permitted him to have?"

"I noticed that on three occasions, during the week before his death, that he was under the influence of liquor. That could not have happened if he had only taken the regular allowance, which was only three tablespoonfuls a day. On the evening before his death I found an empty bottle behind a chest of drawers in his room."

"Have you any idea as to how that bottle came into Sir Arthur's room?"

"My lord, I really must object to that question," said Kenneth, rising. "My learned friend is quite at liberty to ask the witness if she knows how the bottle came into the room."

"I think, Mr. Jarvis," said the judge, with an approving nod, "that it would be better if you put the question in that form."

"As your lordship pleases," Jarvis replied, with well-concealed chagrin. "Do you know how the brandy reached Sir Arthur?"

"I don't know for certain," replied the witness, "but it can only have been——"

"Stop!" said the judge; "you may not make conjectures. You must only speak as to what you actually know. Proceed, Mr. Jarvis."

"Was Sir Arthur drunk the night before he died?"

"He was certainly suffering from delirium tremens."

A rustle and a murmur of excitement ran through the court at this ominous statement, and every eye was turned upon the prisoners. Doctor Mathews, leaning on the rail, continued to look straight in front of him; Lilias, who had been given a seat, sat with hands folded and eyes half closed, apparently quite unconcerned.

"When Doctor Mathews was called what did he do?"

"He administered a hypodermic injection after we had placed Sir Arthur in bed."

"Can you tell us whether or not it was a normal dose, under the circumstances?"

"It was a normal dose. I dissolved the tabloids for him. Sir Arthur then quieted down and fell asleep in about half an hour."

"Do you know what became of the tabloids and the syringe after that?"

"Yes. I put them into one of the little side drawers of the dressing table, where they were usually kept."

"Do you remember about how many tabloids there were left in the tube when you put it away?"

"Yes; I always counted them after a dose. There were eight."

"Did you examine the tube on the morning Sir Arthur died?"

"Yes. It was empty."

Again the murmur of excitement broke out among the now intensely

listening audience, but it was at once suppressed.

"Would such a quantity of the drug, if administered in one dose, be likely to prove fatal?"

"Certainly; especially after the dose which Doctor Mathews had given."

"When you went off duty, who took your place in Sir Arthur's room?"

"Mrs. Ashley."

"And she remained in the room alone with the patient until the time that she came out and roused you, saying that she had fallen asleep, and awakened to find Sir Arthur dead?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. That is all."

As Nevil Jarvis sat down, every one seemed to see the death cloud looming darkly over the dock. Doctor Mathews changed his attitude, and his eyes wandered somewhat anxiously around the court. Lilias rose from her chair and came to the front of the dock as Kenneth got up to begin his cross-examination, and for a moment their eyes met.

"You have, I believe, had very considerable experience in the nursing of persons suffering from alcoholism and the drug habit?"

"I have nursed such cases for the last ten years or so."

"Did you see anything different in the treatment of Sir Arthur's case from the treatment of other similar cases that you have attended?"

"There was no difference in the medical treatment as far as I could see."

"Have you any positive knowledge that that treatment was in any way supplemental or interfered with?"

"No; except that Sir Arthur, somehow, had brandy conveyed to him."

"I was just coming to that. I understand that Sir Arthur kept considerable sums of cash in his room. Now, is it not the fact that persons suffering from Sir Arthur's complaint will, when the craving for drink comes upon them, resort to any subterfuge, or pay any amount of money if they have it, to procure alcohol?"

"Yes; that is one of the symptoms of the disease."

"Is it within your knowledge that, three days before Sir Arthur's death, about a hundred pounds in notes and gold were missing from the drawer in which he kept his money, and that the came day a housemaid named Lucy Harrison disappeared from the house, leaving her trunk and all her belongings behind her, and has never been heard of since?"

"Yes."

"Is it not possible that Sir Arthur may have bribed this girl to obtain drink for him and smuggle it into his room?"

"It might have been possible, but very improbable."

"Is it the fact that on the sixteenth of last month you went in a cab to number 18A Othello Mansions, and took Miss Gertrude Holroyd to your own residence, against the wish of her niece?"

"Miss Holroyd asked me to take her away and look after her, and as she was not happy, and had something on her mind, which she afterward to'd me was——"

"Never mind what she told you," interrupted Kenneth quickly. "We can't have hearsay. Miss Holroyd will perhaps tell us that herself. Was she under your charge from then until to-day?"

"Yes."

At this moment the expert returned to the court, and Kenneth turned to the judge.

"My lord, I have no further questions to ask this witness," he quietly declared, "I now beg that Doctor Hamilton be recalled."

The judge assented, and Kenneth leaned over to Nevil Jarvis and whispered:

"He's your witness. Will you examine him?"

Jarvis instantly saw the trap that had been so adroitly laid for him. He shook his head, and said, with a not very pleasant laugh:

"Suppose you resume your cross-examination?"

The expert was resworn, and Kenneth promptly opened fire upon him, levelling all the force of legal artillery seemingly against him, although really in defense of the doctor's testimony.

"You have made an examination of Miss Holroyd's mental condition, I presume, Doctor Hamilton? Will you be good enough to give us the result of it?"

"I find that she has been more or less under the influence of morphia

and kindred drugs almost continuously for, I should judge, about three months. She is now suffering from acute hysteria, and ought to be placed under proper treatment at once, or the consequences may be serious."

"Do you consider that when she came to court to-day she was in a fit condition to give reliable evidence or to duly understand the obligation of her oath?"

"Certainly not. She would say anything that was suggested to her. Her statements would be wholly unreliable."

"Thank you. I will not trouble you any further."

For the last few minutes notes had been passing from hand to hand in the jury box, and as the expert stepped down, the foreman arose and said:

"If you please, my lord——"

"One moment, I beg," exclaimed Nevil Jarvis, jumping to his feet. "I have consulted with my learned colleagues, and we have come to the conclusion that we are not in a position to continue the case after the evidence which Doctor Hamilton has just given. I need hardly tell your lordship and the gentlemen of the jury that, had we known that a drugged witness was to be brought into court, we should never have undertaken this unhappy, and, I am now pleased to admit, most unjust prosecution. I beg to tender our heartfelt sympathies to the accused, in a position in which we now feel that they should never have been placed. We resign our briefs."

A hum of admiration ran through the court, and was almost swelling into applause, when the uplifted pen of the judge instantly hushed it to silence.

(To be continued.)

Fads and Fashions.

Navy tricotine suits are heavily embroidered in black and gold.

Embroidered overblouses are worn with accordeon-pleated skirts.

A pretty new skirt features shirring across the front and back.

Many of the new spring frocks show the short jacket or the coatee.

Black Chantilly flowing sleeves are delightful on black satin dresses.

A canary-colored sweater has a collar and deep cuffs of brown angora wool.

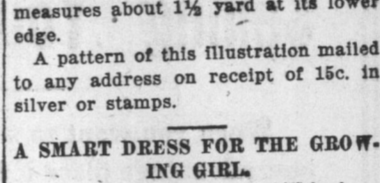## Fashion Plates.

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