

SAVED BY A SLEUTH.

BY WILLIAM C. PATTEN.

The cumbersome mountain stage had come to a dead halt at the road-agent's command. The driver sat silent beneath the threatening muzzle of a never quivering rifle. The male passengers, three in number, had been compelled to step down from the coach and stand in line with upraised hands, not daring to move for fear of instant death at the hands of one of the five masked men. But within the coach, cowering fearfully in a corner, was a handsome young woman who had not been compelled to alight.

The chief of the road-agents, a tall, dashing-looking fellow, uttered an exclamation of amazement and joy as his eyes fell upon the fair passenger's face.

"Nona Ray!" he cried. "Is it possible? The woman sure did not reply. She still covered in the corner, staring fixedly at him, with eyes in the depths of which shone a look of mingled fear and defiance.

"Mrs. Ray, I am delighted to see you," declared the tall road-agent. "This meeting is as unexpected as it is pleasant."

Then the woman spoke, and her voice had a haughty, defiant ring. "I do not know you, sir," she said. "How dare you address me in this manner?"

The man uttered a soft whistle of amazement. "Do not know me, eh?" he laughed. "I think you will know me when you see my face."

Then, after glancing over his shoulder to make sure that his act was unobserved by the other passengers, he swiftly lifted his mask, revealing a dark, handsome, yet sinister face.

Uttering a gasping cry of "Obed Marks!" the woman swooned. When she recovered consciousness the stage was once more swaying and rumbling over the rocky trail. One of the three passengers, a small man who wore glasses, was bending over her, chafing her hands.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she murmured.

"You are on the stage bound for Sutton's Flat," was the quiet reply. "We were held up by robbers back in the canyon, and one of them frightened you into a swoon. They have relieved us of our loose change and allowed us to pass on."

"Yes, I remember," she said slowly. "He came to the door—Obed Marks!"

The small man started and gazed at her keenly through his glasses. "What did you say?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," she protested, a little wildly. "I have not yet recovered from the shock."

During the rest of the journey to Sutton's Flat she remained very taciturn, persistently evading the small man's attempts to draw her into conversation. In her eyes there seemed to lurk a scared, haunted look.

At the flat the woman stopped at the only hotel, and was at once shown to a room. Once within this private apartment, she threw herself upon the bed in a paroxysm of anguish, sobbing and moaning as if her heart would break.

For nearly an hour she wept and moaned, at times muttering brokenly:—"Fate is against me! Oh, why did I ever dream that happiness could again be mine? But I thought he was dead—I saw a notice of Obed Marks' death in an Eastern paper. Oh, this sad, sad world! I am doomed—doomed!"

Once or twice she whispered softly, "Henry," and with that name on her lips, fell asleep.

More than an hour later a soft knocking at the door aroused her. She sprang up, with her heart fluttering fearfully in her bosom.

"Who is there?" she called, chokingly.

"It is I, Obed Marks," was the cautious reply. "Open the door."

"No, I will not! Go away! For God's sake, don't come here to torture me!"

"Open this door, Nona Ray, or it will be the worse for you!" came sternly from beyond the portal.

She dared not disobey. Like a frightened child she crept forward and unlocked the door. The tall chief of the road-agents, now unmasked, stepped softly into the room, and bowed with mocking politeness to its fair occupant.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Ray," he said, in softly modulated tones. "I am delighted to see you, as I believe I informed you once before to-day."

"Why do you come here? What do you want?" she demanded, still remaining standing.

He closed the door carefully before replying. Then he said:—"I came to see you, of course, though necessity compels me to make my visit quite brief. You gave me the slip three years ago and I have been searching for you ever since. My surprise and delight were unbounded when I saw you on the stage to-day. You are looking remarkably well for a widow. How came you to find your way to this remote mining camp?"

"You have no right to question me," she flashed, with a touch of defiance.

"Oh, very well!" with a slight sneer. "Then I will tell you why you came. You came to meet Henry Graystone, the young superintendent of the True Lead Mine. You have been corresponding with him since he met you in Denver, a year ago. He has written asking you to be his wife. You have not promised, but he has written that you are a murderer!"

The woman shrank back as if she had received a blow in the face. She put up her hands in helpless appeal, but the man seemed to regard her agony with heartless triumph written on his handsome face. He continued:—"Have you ever told him that three years ago, in an eastern city, you poisoned your husband, Belmont Ray? Have you told him that you only escaped justice by flight, being aided by one Obed Marks, Belmont Ray's former friend, but then desperately in love with you, murderers though you were? Have you never told him these things? Think you his love would not turn to

abhorrence did he know the truth? 'As God is my judge, I did not murder Belmont Ray,' gasped the tortured woman.

"Can you prove that to the world's satisfaction?" asked her tormentor. "It was well known that your parents forced you to marry him against your wishes. It is also well known that he abused you shamefully. He died suddenly under suspicious circumstances. An autopsy disclosed the startling fact he had been poisoned. Suspicion pointed to you, and your flight followed, quite satisfying everyone as to the guilty party. You may thank your friends of money and influence that you have not been hunted down and brought to punishment ere this."

The woman recoiled and would have fallen had he not caught and assisted her to a chair.

"Your nerves are wonderfully weak just now, Nona," he said, softly; "but you need not be alarmed. All the officers in the country cannot take you so long as I am here to protect you. I aided you to escape before, and you gave me the slip. For three years I have searched diligently for you, and have found you at last. My darling, I love you and you must become my wife!"

"Never!" she cried, starting up. "Leave this room, Obed Marks, or I will call for help and denounce you as the robber chief!"

"The moment you do you will put your own neck in a noose," was the calm reply. "As she sank back in the chair, he spoke smoothly and rapidly: 'You must listen to sense, Nona. Give up this Henry Graystone; forget that you ever met him. Become my wife, and we will go far away from here, and from the past. I love you madly, and will do everything in my power to make you happy. The future will be full of joy.'

"I must leave you now," he continued; "but to-morrow I will come for your answer. Look carefully on both sides. One shows shame, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death; the other peace, happiness, love, and life. Take your choice."

"Here I am known as Justin Munson, not Obed Marks. Be careful not to speak the latter name to anyone. And now I will go. Adieu, my darling."

Bowing low he left the room. Behind him he left a desperate, despairing woman. Springing up, she paced the room in a very frenzy of agony, wringing her hands wildly, but uttering no sound. Finally her nerves became quieter, and she sat down by the window to gaze blankly out upon the collection of huts which composed the mining camp. Her lips moved slowly and she whispered:—"I must escape! I will go away from here. It was a sin for me to think of marrying again. I am guiltless before God, yet it was wicked of me to think of linking my life with his. Oh, Henry! I have lost you forever, and you are the only one whom I ever loved!"

She was gazing out upon the camp with dull, heavy eyes which saw nothing. She did not perceive the comely young man who paced beneath the window, uttering a cry of amazement and joy. She was aroused by a sharp rap upon the door. With throbbing heart and brain she approached and opened the door.

In a moment a strong, manly fellow was in the room, and had caught her hands in his, attempting to draw her toward him. She saw his face, and, uttering one cry, sprang away to stand panting and trembling before him.

"Ida, my darling!" he cried, "What does this mean? What has happened? How came you here?"

"I am not Ida Kingdon!" she replied in a hoarse, strained voice. "I have deceived you. I am unworthy of a look or a word from you. I am false! false!"

The man was amazed. He stared at her as if doubting the evidence of his own ears.

"What do you say?" he asked. "Are you demented?"

"No!" she sobbed; again wringing her hands in anguish! "Would to God I were!"

"She swayed unsteadily and he sprang forward to catch her, but suddenly recovering, she waved him back. A stony calmness seemed to come over her."

"Mr. Graystone," she said, slowly, "you must listen to what I have to tell you. I must reveal my terrible secret, though it kills me to do so. I have given up all hopes of anything in this life, and desire to be released from my sufferings."

A knock sounded on the door, and a voice from beyond called:—"Will you permit me to come in? I have news for Mrs. Ray—joyful news!"

Nona's heart gave a great throb. Joyful news! What could bring joy to her!

"Come in!" she cried, feeling unable to open the door.

In a moment the little man who wore the glasses and who had been a passenger on the stage, entered the room.

"Mrs. Ray," he exclaimed, "I am a detective!"

The woman staggered back with a cry of despair.

"You have come to arrest me!" she gasped.

"Far from it," was the quick reply. "I have come to tell you of the arrest of your worst foe, and the murderer of your husband—Obed Marks! For more than a year I have been seeking for you and Obed Marks. Nearly a year ago, while under the influence of liquor he made a confession to a friend which cleared you of every vestige of guilt. He acknowledged that he himself had poisoned Belmont Ray, his friend, at whose house he was then stopping. His object was to obtain possession of yourself. When suspicion turned upon you he aided you to fly thinking that in some distant part of the country he could join you and force you to marry him through fear of exposure."

"Horrible by the magnitude of the crime, the man to whom he made the confession betrayed him, but when the officers came to search for the criminal it was found that he had vanished. I was sent out to hunt him down, and at the same time was employed to find you if possible. I have accomplished both things, having Obed Marks in iron bonds."

"Thus were the dark clouds which had hung over a spotless young life swept away, leaving the full flood of the sunlight of joy and love to fall over and around her."

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WINTER

Arrangement.

On and after WEDNESDAY, NOV. 28th, until further notice, trains will run on the above Railway, daily, as follows:—

CHATHAM TO FREDERICTON.				FREDERICTON TO CHATHAM.			
LEAVE	ARRIVE	LEAVE	ARRIVE	LEAVE	ARRIVE	LEAVE	ARRIVE
Chatham	8.00 a.m.	Fred. Junction	7.10 a.m.	Chatham	7.10 a.m.	Fred. Junction	8.00 a.m.
Blackville	8.40 "	Blackville	7.35 "	Blackville	7.35 "	Blackville	8.40 "
Dartmouth (arrive 11.15)	11.35 "	Dartmouth	7.55 "	Dartmouth	7.55 "	Dartmouth	11.35 "
Chatham	12.00 p.m.	Chatham	8.30 "	Chatham	8.30 "	Chatham	12.00 p.m.
Cross Creek	12.30 "	Cross Creek	9.00 "	Cross Creek	9.00 "	Cross Creek	12.30 "
Gibson (arrive)	1.40 "	Gibson	9.30 "	Gibson	9.30 "	Gibson	1.40 "
Fred. Junction	3.45 "	Fred. Junction	10.00 "	Fred. Junction	10.00 "	Fred. Junction	3.45 "

The above trains will also stop when signalled at the following flag stations:—Nelson, Derby, Siding, Upper Nelson, Chatham, Upper Blackville, Blackville, Stewart's, Littleton, Astle Crossing, Clearwater, Portage Road, Forbes' Siding, Upper Cross Creek, Covered Bridge, Zionsville, Durham, Sackville, Monks' Siding, Pennington.

CONNECTIONS. RAILWAY for all points east and west, and at Chatham with the N.B. RAILWAY system for St. John and all Western points; also at Cross Creek with Stage for Stanley.

CHATHAM RAILWAY.

WINTER 1888-9.

On and after MONDAY, NOV. 26th, Trains will run on this Railway in connection with the Intercolonial Railway, daily, (Sunday nights excepted) as follows:—

GOING NORTH.				THROUGH TIME TABLE.			
LOCAL TIME TABLE.	EXPRESS, No. 1 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 2 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 3 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 4 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 5 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 6 ACCOMMODATION.	EXPRESS, No. 7 ACCOMMODATION.
Chatham	12.10 a.m.	12.10 a.m.	12.10 a.m.	Chatham	12.10 a.m.	12.10 a.m.	12.10 a.m.
Blackville	12.40 "	12.40 "	12.40 "	Blackville	12.40 "	12.40 "	12.40 "
Chatham	1.10 "	1.10 "	1.10 "	Chatham	1.10 "	1.10 "	1.10 "
Blackville	1.40 "	1.40 "	1.40 "	Blackville	1.40 "	1.40 "	1.40 "
Chatham	1.40 "	1.40 "	1.40 "	Chatham	1.40 "	1.40 "	1.40 "

Trains leave Chatham on Saturday night to connect with Express going South, which runs through to St. John, and Halifax with the Express going North which runs over at Campbellton. Close connections are made with all passenger Trains both DAY and NIGHT on the Intercolonial.

Full Pullman Sleeping Cars run through to St. John on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and to Halifax on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and from St. John, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and from Halifax, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The above Table is made up on I. C. Railway standard time, which is 70th meridian time. All the local Trains stop at Nelson Station, both going and returning. It signalled.

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