

THE GREY FEATHER.

"Next, please."

The ticket clerk's impatience was extreme. Eric Stowleigh woke out of his reverie.

"Second return to Church Hough."

He scarcely glanced at his change. His eyes were following a woman's figure dressed in black, except for the grey feather in her hat. He lost her in the crowd on the down platform, and he was more than relieved. Scenes were a nuisance, and he had feared that he must cause one.

The crowd returned. At the last minute the carriage door opened.

"That was the wrong side altogether, miss," said the guard; "lucky you've time. There's room here."

The "Thank you" was lost in the bang. The girl's veil was three-parts down before, and she pulled it lower as Eric Stowleigh looked up from his newspaper. It struck him as a gleam of the old coquetry, that was absurdly out of place. The mood was the more likely to pass because the only other travellers in the compartment were an elderly lady and two children. Why not forestall the inevitable? In his pocket was a letter hastily written, and not yet directed, and its terms left no loophole for misunderstanding. He drew it out.

"I beg to give you this. It is my final answer," he said.

It was taken reluctantly, and with a stiff little bow.

"An affection of artless surprise—like her exactly!" he said inwardly, and his lip curled. With a furtive anxiety he watched the reading of his letter. Tame acquiescence was the last thing he anticipated.

But the girl sat rigid in her corner, and he was baffled. At the next station she left the carriage. It seemed as if she accepted the verdict.

Ease of mind and pressure of care were to alternate. At Church Hough Station he took a cab, and instructed the driver to Woodlands, and as the rickety old vehicle deposited him he could have sworn that he caught a glimpse of Caroline Dennis crossing the avenue into the garden. She had only changed carriages! What did it all mean? If her object was revenge, and if she had access to credulous ears, his dearest hopes might suffer shipwreck.

"Glad to see you, Eric. And, if I know my daughter, Ida will be glad too. But why did you not write us? We'd have had Porter down at the station to meet you, that's all."

"I was uncertain about getting away an hour before I started. And to confess the whole truth, Mr. Bryant, I didn't think of it. But I knew I might come to you when I could. And I want a day or two away from the bulls and the bears to clear the fog out of my brain."

"Ah! I suppose things have been uncommonly harassing of late. If your clients sell out of stocks that are shaky, they don't know what to buy into that is safe; and it's ticklish business to advise nowadays."

"Very."

"I have a sister who will act according to her own light, and the result is she has lost heavily. We are afraid its unliking her mind. She has gone up to a son's house today, and Frank will have a handful."

The proprietor of Woodlands sighed, but the next instant he put gloomy thoughts in the back ground. The door opened and a fair young girl entered. She smiled at her father, and crossed the room to his guest.

"Welcome to Woodlands, Mr. Stowleigh," she said, simply.

The greeting had a touch of constraint. It was an eager, passionate look that the visitor poured into her eyes. A month before, in a west end conservatory, he had offered Ida Bryant the royal love of his heart. He had called her out of a vague, girlish dreamland into womanhood. But uncertain of self she had bidden him wait till the new year came in. Time had run on, and he was there to learn his fate. Now, as he sought for his answer, it still eluded him.

"Do you know what has become of Hood, papa?"

"Hood? I don't remember to have seen him since I came back from Fidey. That was only half an hour ago, but he should be busy enough now."

"Yes, of course; but I can't find him. Cook doesn't know anything, nor Saunders. What's odd again is that my maid is missing too, and that I hear that Saunders and Cook were locked into the store-room for two mortal hours this afternoon. The key was turned on them by some accident, they supposed. It was only when the gardener came round to weed the east path that they managed to attract his attention. He let them out of duress."

Howard Bryant and the young stockbroker exchanged glances.

"Queer," said one.

"Villainy," growled the elder.

With a dark face and a frowning brow he went at once to his library. His worst fears were verified.

There was no outward sign of disturbance—nothing to give alarm. But he touched a spring, and sliding doors opened. A safe with the panel cut through wrung a sharp cry of dismay from his lips.

"Robbed! ruined!" he gasped. "My sister loses one way, I another. I had bonds for twenty thousand there. All gone!"

"But if they are not negotiable—" He groaned again.

"What sort of a man was Hood—in personal appearance?"

"The butler? A red-haired, large-fellow, smooth-shaven, medium height, has a dent in the lower lip."

"Ah!" It was an involuntary ejaculation.

"What do you know of him, Stowleigh? He had only been here seven weeks or so. His testimonials were first-class; all forged, I dare say."

It was a peremptory order. Time was passing, and the police were not yet summoned. Everything might depend on haste.

Eric Stowleigh's pause was not due to his taking umbrage. He had turned half round to where Ida stood behind. She was white, frightened, confounded and had no words. Yet even in this moment of confusion she read and understood the appeal in her lover's eyes. He did not guess how well she understood. The light

of a resolution, that in the sequel might cost him dear, was kindling on his face.

"There is something I must get at first, if I can," he said. "Immediately before I rang the bell and was admitted—I presume by Saunders—I saw a girl dressed in black, with a grey feather in her hat, go towards—as I should suppose—the back of the house. Did she come in, and do you know anything about her?"

He was watching Ida, and he wondered that her eyes drooped as she answered—

"Yes, she came in. We do know about her."

"Then the way is clear. I can say what has become necessary. Do not be hard on me, I beg."

Several years ago now I was a foolish, raw youth, and totally alone in London, a city of temptations to young men. I made some associates of my own sex, who were not of the best type. What they really were was carefully hidden from me then. There was one man, who had a sister. Dennis was the name. We were thrown a lot together, the girl and I, and it developed into a wild sort of flirtation—nothing more. On my honor that was all.

"Does this concern the loss of my bonds?" interposed Howard Bryant, fuming at what he thought useless prolixity.

"That remains to be seen. I may say at once that the sketch you have given me of Hood, your missing butler, corresponds very closely indeed with Luke Dennis, as I remember him. These are matters that are not pleasant to me to recall here. I do not know what the result may be."

There was a quiver in his voice which Ida noticed, though she stood a motionless listener.

"Very well, I beg your pardon, Stowleigh. It's the upset that's made me odd—not quite myself. Continue if you please."

"Certain facts were brought to my knowledge by a series of accidents, I need not stay to explain how. But they astounded me. Luke Dennis was not merely a gambler but a thorough sharper, a companion of some of the cleverest rogues in town, and a receiver of stolen goods. There was no doubt about it. The evidence was overwhelming, and I have reason to believe that Caroline Dennis was a direct shaver in the guilt of her companions, and obeyed their orders implicitly. She was, in short, a decoy. Of course I broke with such a precious nest of rascals and of rascality instantly, and have loathed myself ever since for my folly and blindness. I heard no more of them until a month ago. Then I was followed in a public street by Miss Dennis—if that too, is not an alias. Twice she did me the honour of a visit, and she insisted, though she knew it was a lie, that we were once engaged. In a weak moment I gave her money to get rid of her. That made it worse. Only this morning I received a letter, the purport of which is an insolent demand for more cash, with the threat of exposure if I refuse. She has my response now. I will not pay blackmail. Let her do her worst. B.L.E."

"But I could not see why the present was the season selected for the barefaced attempt. A reason exists, if she is known in this house. If my Luke Dennis is the very double of Hood as you describe him, Mr. Bryant, it is equally true that the girl in black whom you say you know—"

"I stated that," Ida interposed.

Eric bowed.

"It is the same thing, surely?" he said.

"Well, the girl with the grey feather is Caroline Dennis."

"That would be your maid Nixon, then, Ida. Linked hands for my bonds! A neat scheme, and smartly put together. I see, I see."

The rugged features were shadowed by despair.

"No chance," he added.

"Yes! Let Porter drive me back to the station, and I shall catch the up express. They will not have counted on my interference. If the old burrow is resorted to I may close on their trail."

"But you have not dined. I cannot permit it."

"My dear sir, it will be my meat and drink to checkmate this vile plot, if that is possible. And you may be sure I shall not starve. It is detective work, and I shall get help by a wire to Scotland Yard."

The Woodlands coachman drove his best, and put Eric at the station entrance two minutes before the train came up. The same good fortune accompanied him through the whole chase. The clue was a good one, and the young stockbroker's first hand knowledge of his quarry led to a brilliant success. Two crestfallen individuals passed into police hands in a splendidly-furnished apartment of a Piccadilly flat. They were completely puzzled at the swiftness of Nemesis.

"Husband and wife," said the sergeant who made the arrest, significantly; and we've wanted them both a long while. It's a lifer for the man."

And so it proved. Eric Stowleigh had the pleasure to restore the lost parcel of bonds intact. And in his turn he was surprised.

"It is odd that your maid was in London that day at that hour," he said to Ida Bryant. "She must have left after the robbery, and come back almost immediately. The object, I suppose was to set up an alibi, it suspicion fell on her."

"You did not see Dennis at all," was the gentle answer. "It was the mistress, not the maid. We are of the same height and build, and I borrowed the dress, hat, and veil, and went up in the morning to see that aunt reached her destination safely. She would not consent to be accompanied, but she did not know my new maid. So I was in disguise."

"And I gave you my letter! Then, Ida, were you angry?"

"I was—but I am not now."

And Ida's smile was a promise.—Cassell's Journal.

THE FOUR PINS.

The Count Bielski, a nobleman of Poland was a very ambitious man. His public utterances had displeased the government. He was arrested, condemned to imprisonment for life and confined in a dungeon far under ground. He had no light and never could tell when it was day or night. He had no one to speak to, for no one was allowed to see him except the keeper of the prison, and he was not permitted to speak to his prisoner. He had nothing to do. Days, weeks, months passed on and he was still in his dungeon. He was never brought to trial and the unfortunate man was most miserable. He thought he would lose his senses, for his reason began to give way.

Feeling all over his blouse one day he found four pins and he actually wept for joy. Yet what could they be to him? He took them from his blouse and threw them on the floor of his dungeon and then he went down on his hands and knees and felt all over the floor until he had found them.

This he continued to do day after day, week after week, month after month, until the months rolled into years. But they were no longer weary years. He had now an object in life. He would defeat the purpose of his jailers, who fondly hoped to make him insane. He would live now until he became an aged man, cheered by the companionship of his four pins. And then, when he had become too old to move about his narrow dungeon, he would be content to lie down with his four silent friends and die.

In his dreams these pins would often assume familiar shapes. Their heads would take the likeness of his friends and his relation. They would talk and laugh with him. How happy were those dream moments to the condemned. There was his dear old mother's face. How she beamed upon him! And there were his beloved wife and his two rosy cheeked children—they kissed their chubby hands to their father! His heart seemed bursting with joy.

One night he had a fearful dream. He dreamed he had lost his pins! Oh, horror of horrors! The perspiration broke out in great drops upon his face, his arms, his breast. Thus he found himself when, with a hoarse cry, he awoke. He realized quickly that it was only a dream. His beloved companions were found in their accustomed place. What a sense of relief now filled his heart as he again betook himself to slumber.

Ten years had passed, and the prisoner and his pins were still inseparable. His keeper, who never yet had spoken to him, was now regarded with a new interest. He feared that this man—hated as one of his oppressors—had discovered his occupation, and that he would endeavor to deprive him of this solace. Carefully now he guarded his pins.

One day he lost all his pins! He had scattered them, he thought, as before, but now they eluded his grasp. He carefully felt over every inch of the floor of his dungeon. Again and again he repeated his search until he grew weary of the task, but not one pin could he find.

As he lay angry and despairing on the stone floor he was aroused by the noise of the keeper removing the chains and bolts from the door. Presently he entered, bearing with him the prisoner's scanty supply of bread and water. By the dim light of the torch which he carried the prisoner fancied he could discern a mocking smile upon his face. This, then, was the cause. He had stolen his pins! He was now rejoicing at his discomfiture! He must have discovered them while the prisoner slept. Hate now filled the soul of the condemned. His occupation had been stolen from him; but a new thought at once engaged his mind, diffusing through him a kind of mad joy. He would devise a means to torture, to kill his keeper. He knew that this man—the satellite of an offensive government—despised him. He would be revenged.

For a long time he gloated over his contemplated plan. How long he knew not. When suddenly a light shone before him. It came from the torch borne by the keeper, who had returned. Placing his torch in a crevice in the wall he walked to the opposite corner of the dungeon from that in which the prisoner crouched, and turning his back toward him, began to fasten a chain to the wall. Ha! he was then to be chained to the wall. His blood boiled at this new indignity. He wished to attack the keeper at once, but he had no weapon. His eyes fell upon his hands. They were long and sinewy. He had once been a strong man, but long confinement and lack of nourishment had weakened him. The keeper was undoubtedly a strong man. All this while he remained with his back to the prisoner. It was plain he regarded him with contempt and did not fear an attack. He even hummed a fragment of an insulting song.

Cautiously, slowly, like a cat approaching a mouse, the condemned moves upon his victim. Rage lends him strength. With one bound he is on the keeper's shoulders. His long, bony hands meet like a vise upon his throat. Then a terrible struggle begins. The keeper tries to shake him off. He is a strong man, but he feels he has met his match. Then the keeper beats him fiercely upon the head and face with a bolt of iron. The blood flows down his face and blinds his eyes, but he does not relax his hold. They roll upon the ground, the condemned uppermost. The keeper has managed to secure his dagger. He stabs the prisoner once in the breast. Then the dagger falls from his hand, his eyes and tongue protrude in a frightful manner, his face is a mixture of purple and red, blood trickles from his nostrils. He is dead.

With a maniacal cry of delight the prisoner staggers to his feet, blood streaming from his breast and head. He attempts to reach the door, but his strength fails him. He is mortally hurt. With a scream he falls lifeless across the threshold, striking his head upon the hard stone floor.

But what of the pins? The prisoner had been in the habit before lying down to sleep of fastening the four pins in the left cuff of his blouse. The fear of detection so operated upon his mind that one night, in a fit of somnambulism, he had put the pins side by side in the edge of the garment, and there they were afterward found and commented upon by the authorities of the prison.—J. H. Kirwin in the Philadelphia Times.

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1 do do.....	2.50	1 Silk Handkerchief.....	1.00	1 Tie.....	0.50
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1 Man's Light Overcoat.....	8.50	1 pair Suspenders.....	0.75	1 do do.....	0.35
1 Youth's Suit.....	8.50	1 do do.....	0.50	1 do do.....	0.25
1 Boy's Knicker Suit (3 pieces).....	6.00	1 half dozen Collars.....	1.00	1 do do.....	0.25
1 do do do do do do.....	5.00	1 Hat.....	2.00	1 do do.....	0.25
1 Child's Suit do do do.....	3.50	1 Cap.....	0.50	1 Tam O'Shanter, (Girls).....	0.40
1 do Sailor do do do.....	2.50	1 pair Gloves.....	1.25	1 do do do.....	0.40
1 Silk Umbrella.....	3.00	1 do do.....	0.40	1 School Bag.....	0.35
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He was going home to his wife and family. It was growing dark. His road from the station was a lonely one, and he was getting along as fast as he could, when he suddenly suspected that a man behind was following him purposely. The faster he went the faster the man went, until they came to a churchyard.

"Now," he said to himself, "I'll find out if he's after me;" and he entered the churchyard.

The man followed him. Vague visions of revolvers and garrotes grew upon him. He made a detour of a splendid mausoleum. Still the man was after him round and round.

At last he turned and faced the fellow, and asked—

"What the dickens do you want? What are you following me for?"

"Well, sir, do you always go home like this? I am going up to Mr. Fitzlamont's house with a parcel, and the porter at the station told me that if I'd follow you I should find the place, as you lived next door. Are you going home at all tonight?"

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Dated at the City of St. John, the 9th day of February, A. D., 1893.

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On and after Monday, the 17th day of Oct., 1892, the Trains of this Railway will run daily—Sunday excepted—as follows:

TRAINS WILL LEAVE ST. JOHN:

Express for Campbellton, Piquash, Pictou and Halifax.....	7.00
Express for Halifax.....	13.30
Express for Sussex.....	16.30
Through Express for Point du Chene, Quebec, Montreal and Chicago.....	16.55

A Parlor Car runs each way on Express trains leaving St. John at 7.00 o'clock and Halifax at 7.00 o'clock.

Passengers from St. John for Quebec and Montreal take through Sleeping Cars at Moncton, at 10.40 o'clock.

TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN:

Express from Sussex.....	8.25
Express from Chicago, Montreal, Quebec (Monday excepted).....	20.25
Express from Point du Chene and Moncton.....	10.25
Express from Halifax, Pictou and Campbellton.....	19.00
Express from Halifax and Sydney.....	22.30

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On and after Thursday, Jan. 5th, 1893, trains will run daily (Sunday excepted) as follows:

LEAVE YARMOUTH.—Express daily at 8.10 a.

12.10 p. m.; Passengers and Freight Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 12.00 noon; arrive at Annapolis at 5.25 p. m.

LEAVE ANNAPOLIS.—Express daily at 12.25 p.

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way. At Digby with City of Monticello for St. John every Wednesday and Saturday. At Yarmouth with steamers of Yarmouth Steamship Co. for Boston every Wednesday and Saturday evenings; and from Boston every Wednesday and Saturday mornings. With Stage daily (Sunday excepted) to and from Barrington, Shelburne, and Liverpool.

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