

# Shadowed for Life,

A SOLDIER'S STORY.

BY GORDON STABLES, M. D., R. N.

Author of "The Rose of Allendale," "For Money or For Love," "The Cruise of the Land Yacht 'Wanderer,'" "Our Friend the Dog," etc., etc.

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## SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

CHAPTERS I & II.—Major Jocelyn Lloyd is a kind hearted soldier who wins the Victoria Cross in the Afghan War. He meets the author while on a tour to Scotland, and they become fast friends. Major Lloyd proposes they go to a seaside place called Battlecombe. While there he meets Ella Lee, and learns to love her. One evening he invites his friend Gordon to accompany him to his organ practice and he introduces to Ella Lee. During this, Ella Lee drops a telegram. Gordon sees this, picks it up, and puts it in his pocket. When he opens the message it is from a person named "Jack." Gordon wonders if "Jack" is a lover, and if his friend has given his love in vain.

CHAPTER III.—Ella Lee, who is a girl of fifteen, is a lover. She resolves to ask Ella Lee the meaning of the telegram, and who was the sender. He was unconsciously forewarned of her object, so she explains that "Jack" is her sister Nellie. She tells Gordon that Ella Lee has accepted him as her future husband. Later, Gordon is introduced to Nellie, who he finds quite unlike her sister's influence.

CHAPTERS IV & V.—Jocelyn, in one of his meetings with Ella Lee, tells her of his former loves, Molly Morrison and Cynthia Singleton. He afterwards repeats those love tales to Gordon.

## CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

About a month after I had dispatched this letter, to which I had received no reply, I got an invitation from Mrs. Lloyd herself to dine at the Raven's Nest next evening.

The Lloyds had returned then, and perhaps Jocelyn had some very good reason for not writing. Anyhow, the invitation came all the better from her.

I dressed with extra care on this particular evening, as much in honour of Mrs. Lloyd and Jocelyn, as owing to the fact that no one knew whom one may meet at a dinner party.

I drove to the Nest in my private hansom my gardener, who is also my coachman, being in his best navy-blue livery, with cockade and buttons, on which were both crown and anchor. I think he and I, and the mare with her bells, to say nothing of the hansom with the pneumatic tyres, all looked exceedingly smart.

A crowd of school urchins around the gate seemed to think so too, and treated me to Berkshire salams, and even got up a little cheer on my account as we drove off.

The Raven's Nest lies about five miles from my home, and through a bit of pretty country as any one could wish to see at this season of the year. The leaves were fluttering downwards in showers in the setting sunlight, and as we giddied gently, save for the jingling bells, through the wooded lanes, the leaves that lay inches deep on our path rustled among my good mare's feet.

Here and there through the grand old trees I could catch glimpses of the blue-green valley of the Thames, and more than once of silvery patches of the river itself.

But the Raven's Nest stood high amidst its terraced gardens; a bonnie old house though of no great dimensions, and around it wave many a tall brown-stemmed pine tree. In the dark masses of foliage and silhouetted against the blue of the evening sky, I could see the nests of a whole colony of rooks. In ancient times a raven may have dwelt here and given to the house its quaint name.

Poor Jocelyn came running out to hail me, and was as happy as a school boy. But tears actually filled the foolish fellow's eyes, as he squeezed my hands, and muttered sotto voce.

"The horizon is clear once more, and all is joy and peace."

Mrs. Lloyd came forward with smiles to greet me, and her sister Nellie was here too.

I could not help telling Ella how well she looked. I have a strange and sometimes awkward habit of blurting out whatever is uppermost in my mind.

"Mrs. Lloyd," I said, before I dropped her hand, "you are not only looking well after your tour, but radiantly beautiful!"

She did not blush. I cannot at this moment call to my mind that Ella ever blushed. But my words pleased her.

Mrs. Lloyd dining and drawing-rooms were most tastefully furnished. Artistically I should rather say. A master's mind had evidently ruled it all.

And here was a new organ, at which during the evening Lloyd was more than once played, and it is not too much to say that the music thrilled, while it enthralled his audience.

But I have something strange to notify here, and it is this: while pretending to be fond of music neither Ella nor her sister knew one note from another. This is all the more curious in that Italian blood coursed through their veins. I have heard men who called themselves scientists say that a man or woman who knew nothing at all of music could never love deeply, but might make a dangerous foe.

At Ella's "at home" to-night were many of the resident gentry, country squire, and a retired soldier or sailor or two. But Ella was queen above all.

I could not help thinking that my friend Lloyd must at this time have possessed wonderful confidence in his wife, without one spark of jealousy, for the gallant's son of some of the younger men towards her, backed up by her not unwilling and certainly not discouraging reception of them, appeared to me to be dangerously akin to downright flirtation.

After what I had heard and seen in the course of the evening, I was not surprised at over-hearing a scrap of conversation between Lloyd and Captain Ballure, a dashing young Guardsman, down for a winter's hunting.

The Captain. I must say, was slightly flushed with wine at the time.

"By the way, Lloyd," he said, as he gave my friend his hand, "I'm coming to-morrow forenoon to take your wife for a drive. Bracing air, falling leaves, autumn tints, and all that sort of thing. Do her good. Ain't jealous, are you old man?"

Lloyd laughed, and it was not a ready-made laugh either.

"Ha, ha, ha, jealous! No, my boy. Come by all means. Good night."

"A thousand good nights."

And the lipping Guardsman, whom I felt inclined to kick out, took his departure.

Did Mrs. Lloyd, I wondered now, wish to raise the demon jealousy in her husband's breast?

CHAPTER XI.—A LITTLE JUDICIOUS DECEIT. I was early at the Raven's Nest next forenoon to spend the day with my friend, by his own special request.

Captain Ballure was punctual also with his well-appointed landau, and Mrs. Lloyd was dressed to receive him.

"No, Lloyd," cried Ballure, in answer to a question from my friend, "I don't think you need expect us back to luncheon. We shall have quite a long drive, and if we do strike that beautiful riverside hotel, the Riviera, don't you know, we'll table-d'hôte it."

And away they drove laughing merrily. I thought there was a slight air of sadness about Lloyd, as he glanced after the landau, but next moment it was gone, and we lit our cigars.

We did not much to talk about, but the subject came above all.

I must confess that I longed to tell Jocelyn all I knew about this telegram and about that mysterious stranger I had seen in the church and whom I determined, if possible, I should yet learn more about.

But I do not know how far I was justified in doing so, or what good or evil might accrue from it. In a matter of this sort one errs in being too rash. It is better, nay, it is best to think it out in all its bearings, and at different times of the day, especially on awakening in the morning, when one is, or ought to be, freshest, and the intellect clear and unclouded.

No, I would wait a little. Still I rather wanted to tell Jocelyn faintly that I did not have the same excessive faith in his wife that he himself possessed.

So almost the first remark I made to him today was:

"Of course, Joss, you love and trust your wife very much."

"Yes," he repeated, "I love and trust my wife very much."

Then he glanced at me, and his look said: "Why? plain enough."

"Oh, I know you do," I said, answering his glance as it were "else—"

I paused.

"Else what?"

I laughed now. "Else," I replied, "you would hardly care to let her go driving all alone with so good looking a young fellow as that Ballure."

"Gordon," he answered, "if I were to mistrust poor Ella, I would not have the courage to tell her so. I should blush to mention it, and I should feel infinitely mean and small. I want her to have all the joy and all the happiness she can in life. Besides, is it not those very things which are withheld from us that we long the most to obtain? Ella shall ever have perfect freedom to do as she pleases—to go where she likes. Her own mental and moral vision, will, I have no doubt, prevent her from over-stepping the mark."

"Devil thank anyone," he added, "devil thank any lady who is keeping virtually under lock and key, from being pure and good. Such virtue as that is not worth the name. But every praise and honor to those women who can walk in the midst of temptation and even of vice, all unspotted and unstained. This is my idea, Gordon, my friend, of a good wife, and of the good wife Solomon himself had in view when he wrote the lines:

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband." And in my opinion, Gordon, a wife who cannot be trusted in every way is not worth worrying over."

"And yet," I said, "were Ella to prove in any way false to you, you would worry over it?"

"I should break my heart. If I did not speedily find my way into a mad-house, I should be quickly borne to my long home in the green churchyard."

"Well, now, Jocelyn, I am a practical sort of a fellow, and you know how strong is the friendship I bear for you. So let me tell you of one thing that will add materially to your happiness."

"And this is?"

"Work. And mark me, I am your physician as well as your friend. If I find you one day idle without my permission or sanction—dread! my severe displeasure. You haven't forgotten the story of the Pilgrims of the Rhine?"

"No, nor poor Lily either."

"Not that grief is often the parent of fame?"

"That is so, Gordon."

"Well, here are your orders. Resume your big picture to-morrow, and go on with it steadily and honestly. Mind you, your household expenses will now be increased, and every picture you paint will sell, and when sold will help to keep the wolf away from the hall door. Besides work keeps the mind on one even keel. The man who works seldom worries, and he never has a diseased mind from dwelling over real or fancied grievances."

"You speak like a book, Gordon."

"Glad you appreciate it."

"But," I added, "talking about Lily; at what conclusion have you arrived concerning that unhappy lady?"

"I think I will be guided by you in what I should do. You are a sailor, as I am a soldier, and both of us know the sacred meaning of the word 'duty.' Also what the value of a promise is, especially such a promise as I made to poor Lily. I am her brother, Gordon."

"You are, and I am glad to hear you say you will be guided by me. Oh, and you, Jocelyn, I am not like the Pope of Rome—infallible; but I believe I have a little more knowledge of the world than you possess, and perhaps I am neither so honest nor so honorable as you are."

"Well, Joss, I may advise you, and still in the end all my plans, although meant for the best, may turn out wrong. You remember what Burns says:

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men, Gang aft agley, And leave us naught but grief and pain, For promised joys."

But in the matter of your adopted sister, Lily Foster, nee Lily Andrew, she will need a helping hand, believe me."

"Gordon," said my friend, "I have promised to assist her, and that promise I mean to keep at all hazards."

"Bravo! And now don't be surprised when I tell you that your relations with Lily, though pure as the noon-day sun, shine that falls from an Italian sky, might be liable to misconception by anyone as jealous of you as Mrs. Lloyd, for instance. You follow me?"

"I do, and you counsel, what?"

"A little judicious deceit. In salt-defence, mind you."

Major Lloyd threw his cigar into the fire, then he started to his feet, and paced the floor rapidly to and fro.

I permitted him. He was blowing steam off as from a safety-valve.

Presently he lit another cigar and threw himself into his rocker.

"I'd rather suffer," he said doggedly.

"Ah! my friend that is not all. It is not you alone which your over-frankness in this matter—egregious folly, I call it—would cause to suffer, but your wife also, and Lily also and Lily's poor wee girl. Think of that, Jocelyn."

"Gordon, you are a veritable Mephistopheles."

"No, I'm nothing of the sort. Now leave it to me. I shall take all the deceit or deceiving on my own shoulders. You have merely to be passive. But of one thing I am determined—your wife shall never know, must never know, that you are assisting or succoring your adopted sister, Lily Andrew."

"If she does Joss, take my word for it you will repent it while you live. Your place was to tell Mrs. Lloyd as soon as Lily's ship arrived that as her sworn brother you must meet her; you must take rooms for her and her child; must find her work, and never leave off your brotherly kindness till you had placed her far above poverty and want. Was that not the folly you had planned?"

Jocelyn laughed.

"Something very like it," he replied.

"And the married man with all a married man's expenses and expenditure; but a married man without a wife."

"What am I to do? My mind is a chaos I—I—O, Gordon, what is a fellow to do, I ask you?"

"What are you to do? I'll tell you in a word—nothing. Do nothing, absolutely nothing, till I make my next move."

"You are a long-headed man, Gordon, though not exactly a——"

He hesitated.

"Out with it, Joss, my boy."

"Not exactly a saint."

I laughed.

"And now, Jocelyn," I said, joyously stretching out my hand to shake his, "let us forget everything but the present. Here we are, hand in hand again, and nothing it going to part us for many and many a day. That is so, isn't it?"

"That is so."

"Now a little music, Joss. Some impromptu of your own suited to the occasion. Nothing sad or maudlin."

Jocelyn dashed off to the piano as gleefully as a schoolboy, and was soon playing that melody which never palls, and with his own variations, "Auld Lang Syne."

By-and-by the servant came to announce dinner.

Well, we drank but very little wine, and yet we were as happy as children round a Christmas tree.

We never missed Madams. And when just as gloaming was merging into night the crunching sound of wheels on the gravel announced the arrival of the landau.

We both got up languidly from our rockers and stretched ourselves, throwing the ends of our cigars into the grate.

"I don't remember ever spending a quieter, calmer, pleasanter afternoon," said Jocelyn.

"Nor I, my friend, nor I."

CHAPTER XII.—THE BATTLE WAS ONLY BEGINNING.

A whole month passed away. A very uneventful one as far as our little coterie was concerned.

I believe that Mrs. Lloyd had really only patronised Captain Ballure in order to excite a modicum of jealousy in her husband's breast. But seeing that this was quite impossible she threw the ill-placed young fellow overboard, as coolly as one throws away a cocoa-nut shell at sea.

"I think," I said to her one evening after this, "that you have well-nigh broken Ballure's heart."

"He was amusing for a bit," she said, "but one tires of babes and sucklings after a time."

A whole month passed by. A month and a week, and then something did occur that one might call strange. Most good friends in Berkshire have the "Daily Scream-Owl" left by Smith's boy every morning. My friend was no exception.

Now ladies are sure to turn to the Births, deaths and Marriages almost as soon as they open the paper.

Ella always did.

This is the announcement then that her eye alighted on one day after breakfast.

Strange Fatality.—On board the S. S. Swahili, on her voyage home to England, Mrs. Lily Foster, nee Andrew, and her little daughter were both found dead one morning under circumstances that lead one to believe their deaths were something more than a strange fatality, though we are content to word it so. The lady had parted on unfriendly terms with her husband, and as a bottle of chloroform was found in the cabin and a sponge that had been saturated with this fluid on the floor, the general opinion was that the death, as far as the mother was concerned, was self-inflicted. We make no further comment on the sad case. They are gone, and nothing can bring back the past.

I dropped in as usual that forenoon. After saying good morning to Mrs. Lloyd, who, I could not help noticing was singularly elated, I sauntered carelessly into Jocelyn's study.

He shook a finger tinnily at me, smiling as he did, with his head a little on one side.

"O, Gordon, Gordon," he said, and pointed to the newspaper on a side table.

"I happened to go into the garden for a short time," he continued, "and when I returned the 'Daily Scream Owl' was lying there, and that terrible paragraph marked

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in blue. My wife had sent the servant in with it doubtless."

"Then she has swallowed the bait?"

"Certainly. But my dear Gordon, it will be contradicted in the next paper."

"Impossible."

"How? and why not?"

"Because this copy is the only one that contains the paragraph."

"And how on earth did you manage it?"

"Bribery and corruption," I replied, laughing.

"But now, Joss, you've got to have a headache."

"Must I?"

"Yes, and you must not come down either to luncheon or dinner."

"My head does happen to ache a little anyhow," he said, pressing one hand across his brow.

"Go and lie down at once."

Jocelyn did as he was told. I wetted a handkerchief with water and toilet vinegar, and placing it over his forehead, told him he must try to sleep.

Then I went sauntering back into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Lloyd was in a rocker by the fire, reading the last fashionable novel. "I know you are dying for a smoke. O, no, I'd rather you did."

"So I lit up. I smoked for a few minutes thoughtfully, then I said abruptly:

"Mrs. Lloyd, had Jocelyn anything last night that would have been likely to disagree with him? Soldiers are just like babies, you know."

"No, she replied, half raising herself. Then, in well-feigned alarm, 'I trust, Doctor, my dear husband is not ill?'"

"Nothing to be alarmed at, I assure you, Mrs. Lloyd. Been working rather hard of late, I think. Must finish that painting by a certain day, it seems. But as he complained of a headache I thought it best to make him lie down, and if he should not appear at dinner even, I believe it will be all for the best."

Mrs. Lloyd sighed, then sank back once more in her rocker, and was soon re-absorbed in her novel.

I took my leave soon after, promising to return at tea time. I did not return home, however, preferring to make some call in Jocelyn's immediate neighbourhood, so that I was back once more at the Raven's Nest punctually at five o'clock.

Mrs. Lloyd was presiding at the tea-table and she bade me welcome more pleasantly than she had done for many a day.

She probably felt happy. That paragraph in the "Daily Scream-Owl" had done good work therefore. O, the pity of it that one should sometimes in this wicked world have to do evil that good may come.

"What is your patient to have, Doctor?"

"Well, Mrs. Lloyd, a cup or two of your delicious tea will do good I think."

"Then I'll send it up."

"Ah! thanks," I said, "and tea for two, Mrs. Lloyd, if you'll excuse me leaving you."

"Most certainly."

Next minute I was clothed with my patient.

"How is the headache?"

"Gone. Gone entirely. I think I shall get up, and come down to dinner."

"Then you certainly shall not."

Jocelyn laughed.

"I hate to dissemble, Gordon. I fear I am but a poor hand at playing the humbug."

"But, dear Jocelyn—well Joss, then, you and I are playing a game, and there are more in it. It may be a game of life and death. We must not show our hands. No, Joss, you cannot come down tonight. And even tomorrow you must wear a chastened and subdued sort of air, like that of one who has just had bad financial news, or has lost a dear friend. You promised faithfully to be guided by me; that promise you will keep."

"I will."

"And now," he added, "how about Lily?"

The servant entered at this moment with the tea, but as soon as she had gone I answered my friend's question.

"I have written to her in town; I must be the medium of inter-communication, Joss, between the 'dead' and you. You believe in spiritualism, I suppose?"

"In a case of this kind I dare say I must."

So Jocelyn and I had our tea very cozily together, and it was ten o'clock that night before my hansom was rolling silently homeward through the moonlight.

Yes, moonlight can beautify anything, and now throw a glamour over the silent landscape, and over the leafless trees, so that one hardly seemed to miss the foliage watch in spring or in early summer makes every green lane in bonnie Berkshire look like a scene in Elysium.

But my thoughts were not with the landscape at present, but with Lily and her strange story, and my friend and his new life.

might have said the same, but when one embarks on a brief career of duplicity or deception—I don't like the look of either word on paper—one must be prepared to carry it fully out. Nevertheless, as I bolted my friend's door before giving him the letter, I felt like a guilty thing.

Joss sat down. Cynthia, who always slept in the room, laid her great head on his knee as if she knew all about it, and thus he slowly read the letter.

Then he handed it to me.

Lily wrote right cheerfully. She had been on a short visit to her uncle's house, to see her sisters and him, but she dearly loved her independence, and so had gone right on to London. It would have killed her, she said to live in the city itself, and so in the classical regions of St. John's Wood she had some hunting for rooms, and had been more than successful. She had discovered a sweet little cottage in the midst of quite a jungle of a garden, and in it a sweet little old lady, who inhabited this dove's nest, with one slavery. The rooms were not expensive, the drawing-room where she would paint all day was well lighted, and the old lady was passionately fond of children. Jocelyn already called her grandma, and was allowed to nurse her cat. Could anything be more auspicious?

"Well," Lily's letter run on, "as soon as I got fairly settled I paid a visit to the great grimy city itself. I felt very shy. I can assure you, and walked four or five times past one very big shop before I ventured in. I do believe I never would have summoned up courage to enter had I not seen a huge elephant approaching slowly, in the guise of a metropolitan policeman."

"But the old man in the print shop looked at the water-colours very critically but pleasantly. He had a huge pair of horn-rimmed spectacles on his nose, and a reading-glass in his hand, and then eyed me over the horn rims."

"I told him that, on the contrary, I was very old—twenty-one last birthday, and again he grunted."

"Want to sell, I suppose?"

"I said that it was my intention."

"And how much each, my dear? They are fresh and possess originality, but lack finish."

"I said I preferred that he should put a price on them. He did so, but oh, brother Jocelyn, how all my hopes fell! I took away the pictures, although he offered more. Then I tried other shops, but if I can do no better I must try to add to a starvation income by teaching French. Heigho, brother mine, the world is a weary one."

"Mind," said a postscript, "I and my wee angel Jocelyn are at home every forenoon."

Having read the letter a second time Jocelyn folded it up, and was putting it in his pocket when I held out my hand with a smile.

"I'll take charge," I said. "My pocket is the portus salutis."

My patient came down to luncheon, looking beautifully dejected.