

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

# 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 Battlemore. 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 introduced to Ella Lee. During the recital 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.—"WHO WAS JACK? THAT WAS THE QUESTION."

The sun had not reached a great height, nor had the grey mists quite gathered themselves off the smooth and heaving sea, when I drew up my blinds next morning, for we were early risers at Woodbine Cottage.

Yet early though it was I could hear Jocelyn bustling about in his room. He was singing to himself low and sweetly, a tender love ditty from some old opera, and I could tell he was happy.

And must it be mine to mar that happiness, I thought, by whispering in his ears words of suspicion against the girl he loved? Thought gave me great pain, and I have not yet made up my mind. One thing only I had determined upon—I would do my duty to Major Jocelyn Lloyd. I would prove to him, and to myself as well to him, that I was no friend in name only but in very deed. Friendship like this may hurt, may wound; it may seem harsh and terrible for the time. But to do the surgeon's knife.

My bedroom window was on the ground floor, and looked out into a beautiful well-kept garden, and presently at this window appeared the broad shoulders, the brown moustaches and handsome laughing face of the Major.

I opened the casement that I might shake hands and wish him good morning. Yes he did seem very happy, and in the intervals of talking could no more help trilling snatches of song than could the linnets out yonder on the thorn.

"Come," he cried, merrily; "you look careworn this morning, Gordon mine. That musty old story of yours is worrying you. Throw thought to the wind, my boy, and something over your shoulders, and come along with me to the Maiden's Pool. You can fetch your toilet after."

"Look," he added; "here come Cynthia and your Newfoundland Nero. Won't we all have a glorious dip, just!"

I dressed hurriedly and carelessly and speedily joined my friend on the lawn. The Maiden's Pool was a deep bay among black and needed rocks that lay about a quarter of a mile east of the cottage.

It was very deep and delightful, and the sand at the bottom was as white as snow. It would be difficult to say whether we two poor human beings, or that pair of happy dogs enjoyed the swim, the diving and the fun the more on this sweet summer morning. I am inclined to believe that the balance of pleasure ranged itself on the side of our canine friends. Dogs have neither care nor worry. Nothing annoys them long, they are philosophers, and optimists, and in their matrimonial relations are socialists of the most extreme type.

But today we dogs and men vied with each other in the pranks we played in that deep and splendid pond. We dived from the rocks, we swam under water, swan breast stroke and side stroke and on our backs, and over and over again both Jocelyn and I permitted ourselves to be taken on shore by the dogs, tying handkerchiefs round our arms and on purpose for the dogs to seize, and thus not injure us with their teeth. It was, indeed, a happy half hour, and during all that time I never thought even once of Ella Lee, or that suspicious telegram.

I must confess, however, that I was somewhat tactless during breakfast, and more than once rallied accordingly by friend Joss.

"Why, so very silent, my boy? Doesn't the plot of your story run smoothly? Have you got your hero or heroine into a scrape from which you have a difficulty in extrication? Come, pass the mackerel and explain."

I laughed and tried to pull myself together. The laugh, however, was stagey, and the attempt to rally a dismal failure. I excused myself soon after this, and hurried away to my room.

E—The place mentioned in the telegram, at which Jack was to meet Ella Lee, at the station, was a large and beautiful city, about twenty miles from Battlemore. Hardly knowing why, I now opened one of my travelling boxes and took out a Bradshaw. A glance at the index guided me to the page that gave the trains between Battlemore and E—

It was just as I suspected, there was no train returned from E—to Battlemore after eight o'clock in the evening.

I sat down now in my easy chair to think, lighted a cigar to still my restless nerves.

Who was Jack? That was the question which came uppermost in all my thoughts. But stay, I said to myself, almost half aloud. I probably wrong poor Ella. Jack may be a brother. I inwardly hoped and prayed that such indeed might be the case, but resolved nevertheless to find out as soon as possible if my surmise were correct.

Meanwhile, what was my duty to Jocelyn as his friend?

He was a man of most gentle nature, and sensitive in the extreme. His nerves were high-pitched and finely strung. Any harsh awakening from his dream of bliss, from the lethargy and languor of love into which he had fallen, might have consequences the most disastrous.

The subject, too, was altogether a delicate one to touch or to handle, and to tell the truth, had my friendship for Major Lloyd been less I should have washed my

hands off it entirely, and allowed things to drift along with the tide of fortune.

I sat there thinking for fully an hour, and at the end of that time I had gotten no nearer to a satisfactory conclusion, now that I had finished my fifth cigar, than I had been five minutes after I began my first.

I had made up my mind, however, to see Ella Lee. I should meet her as if by accident, and it would go hard with me, but what I should find out a little of the truth.

Rat-tat-tat at my study door. N. B.: My study at Woodbine Cottage was simply my bedroom, with my books in it.

Inbouded Jocelyn.

"Are you anywhere there?" he cried.

"Yes," I replied, "are you inside?"

The fact is the room was so completely filled with smoke that neither of us could very easily see the other.

"Gordon, come out of that. Do you know you're either the deepest or most hard-working student that ever spoiled paper, or an ardent humbug?"

"Jocelyn, I've been thinking."

"I should say you had been, from your honouring me with all the syllables of my name instead of the abbreviated and jolly little Joss. But I'm not going to have it. There, I fling open your ports, that your clouds may find exit. And now do you know what day of the week this is?"

"Saturday."

"True, and I had forgotten. This is dear love's half-holiday you know."

Jocelyn made use of strong expressions sometimes.

"So it is."

"Yes, and I say I had forgotten. Well, I'm going to spend it with her in a boat, away out on the briny ocean. See?"

"Certainly."

"Well, Gordon, I want you to meet dear love, and say I will be at the cottage of her mother, to take her out at precisely two."

"Tell her that it is no lack of devotion that prevents my coming earlier, but the cruel fact that I must rub in a bit of my battle-piece before I am two hours older."

"Ah! Joss," I said, laughing, "I know you are a headstrong nervous soldier chap; but don't you go pepping the question to-day, while on the briny deep, as you term that mackerel pond. One should know a lady at least two months, Jocelyn Lloyd, before he ventures on the subject matrimonial. She might refuse you. She—"

Joss's soft white hand was placed on my lips, and I could say no more.

"Hush! Gordon. Hush! It would kill me."

"Poor Joss!" I said, taking away his hand and grasping it tightly in mine. "Poor friend, I did not know it had gone so far."

The tears stood in his eyes, and he drew his hand hurriedly away, turning towards the window to hide the emotion he seemed ashamed of.

"I'll deliver your message, Joss," I said, cheerfully in order to change the tenor of his thoughts.

"All right, I'll go and paint, right away."

"By the way, Joss," I cried, as he was leaving the room. "I suppose I'm quite late in meeting Miss Lee?"

He turned sharply round.

"What mean you?"

"Well, you know," I answered laughing, "Miss Lee's big brother saw me talking confidentially with his sister, he might mistake my good intentions and go for me as the bull went for the 'packman.'"

It was Jocelyn's turn to laugh now.

"My dear boy," he said, "keep your mind easy. Dear love hasn't got a brother, old or young." He closed the door, and I lay back with a sigh and lit another cigar.

I had merely been throwing out a feeler. But my last hope was gone. Jack wasn't a brother.

Jack must be a lover.

I thought that forenoon would never wear away, but it did at last, and the little clock on the mantel-piece chimed the hour of twelve. I sat out now taking both dogs with me, and after sauntering for half an hour along the cliff, I saw a young lady's figure in the distance coming slowly in my direction. Had I had any doubts as to being Ella, the behaviour of Cynthia would have set them at rest.

With one glance in the lady's direction, and one fond cry, she went dashing off at a mad gallop to meet her, and the welcome she accorded Ella Lee, if a rough one, was undoubtedly most sincere. Meanwhile I do not mind frankly confessing that my heart was going pit-a-pit.

Says the poet:

"Our hearts, like the muffled drums are beating,  
Furiously marches to the grave."

But there was no muffled drum of my heart's drum just then. No, I could almost hear it. Nor any funeral march either. On the contrary, it was a call to arms.

## CHAPTER IV.—THE TELL-TALE TELEGRAM.

Sailors are proverbially polite, though it probably becomes me not—a sailor myself—to say so.

But I must even add that had Ella Lee been a princess—and she certainly was prettier far than many—I could not have been more respectful to her. Was she not my friend's dear love, and might she not soon become his wife? Yet, with all the respect I showed her there was no nervous servility. I had never lowered my flag to any lady, and I determined not to furl it to Ella Lee. Besides I felt I had a duty to perform to poor Joss.

She had come on briskly when she saw Cynthia, but perceiving it was "only me," her pace lagged again, and there was some degree of disappointment visible on her face as she drew nigh. I thought the sadness only served to intensify her beauty. Yet I hastened to relieve it and delivered Jocelyn's message as prettily as I knew how to.

There was no 'bus at this time of the day, and so I begged permission to walk home with her, along the cliff brow. She willingly assented, and was soon chatting

to me as merrily, and laughing as gaily, as if there had never been any Major Lloyd in the world.

Just half-way to her mother's cottage there was a wooden bench.

"Shall you be late for luncheon, Miss Lee?" I said; "it is but a few minutes, to look at the sea?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "I should like it of all things; besides you may be tired. I had forgotten you are an invalid."

I laughed.

"An invalid merely in name, Miss Lee, I fear."

Like most people who have something of great importance to say, and who defer it for a short time, I now make several stupid remarks. I think I told her twice at least that the sea was very bright and blue to-day, also that the day was delightfully warm.

Once she looked round at me with a smile on her face. I think she must have known even then, that I had something of more important than the weather to speak of.

I did not keep her long in doubt.

Figuratively speaking, I drew my sword and prepared for the combat. She was only a woman. Why need my heart go pit-a-pat so? It did, nevertheless.

I faced half round.

"Miss Lee," I began, "Jocelyn himself has told you of the friendship that exists between himself and me?"

"O, yes, he has often spoken of you."

"I would not," I continued, "be wrong in asserting that we love each other almost as brothers. Better far than many brothers love. And all his interests are mine. Anything that concerns his well-being concerns me. You must be aware, Miss Lee, what his feelings are towards you. He—"

A gleam such as I had not seen in Ella's eyes before came into them now.

"You must forgive me, sir, for interrupting you, but there is nothing I should hate or despise more than love at second hand. If Major Lloyd cares for me in the least, and I believe he does, he is less courteous than ever I considered him, and more shy, if he needs to depute a friend—even so true a friend as you—to do his wooing."

"O, pardon me, Miss Lee, you quite mistake my meaning. I have already given all and whole—the only message Jocelyn charged me with. I was going to talk on quite another subject, and though it concerns his interests present, and probably future, it is one of which he as yet knows nothing."

Ella Lee was becoming very much engrossed indeed now. She leant her chin upon her upturned hand, and there was something of wonder and expectancy in the dark eyes she fixed upon my face.

To be brief and candid then, Miss Lee, last evening in the church, probably when pulling out your handkerchief, you must have dropped a telegram—"

At that very word a change came over the girl's face that almost transformed her. Cheeks and brow turned the deepest crimson, and she bit her lips till I wondered the blood did not trickle over her chin. Then she became suddenly pale. In Jocelyn's interest I determined to be unsparring, unmerciful. I went on:

"The morsel of brown crumpled paper I merely picked up as a pipe light, not knowing where it came from at the time." (This was not strictly true, as the reader knows. I hope I may be forgiven.) "But in the evening, before lighting a cigar with it, my eyes inadvertently read its contents. The telegram familiarly claimed an assignation with you, and was signed 'Jack.'"

Her color was rapidly coming and going.

"You have shown it to Joss—I mean to Major Lloyd?"

"No, I have not. Nor have I spoken a word about it. Were my friendship for Joss not what it is I would pooh pooh the whole affair. As it is I have to ask you plainly 'Who is Jack?'"

Now a cleverer man than myself, or a solicitor used in court of law, would have put that question at first. It would have fallen like a red-hot shot, and in her confusion she might have answered differently, perhaps more truthfully.

But I had given my red hot shot time to cool and it did not have the same enervating effect. Ella Lee, while I had been talking, had had time to think.

She seemed to become cool and collected all at once, and even smiled as she made reply.

"Jack? You wish to know who Jack is? Well, sir, Jack is someone I love very much indeed. Someone I have known and loved for a very long time."

"Then it is as I expected, Jocelyn has in this Jack a very formidable rival?"

"He has undoubtedly."

"One whom you are, pardon me, in the habit of meeting no late in the evening that it is impossible for you to return till next day?"

"It is all true what you say. And yet were Major Lloyd really a declared lover of mine, he could have no reason to be jealous of this formidable rival, Jack."

"Explain, if you can, and will."

"I can do so easily. Jack is my young sister, Nellie!"

It was my turn now to feel confused, and I believe I got a little red at the same time. I had crossed swords with a woman. I had been beaten and foiled; beaten back, so to speak, behind my own trenches.

Jack was a sister called Nellie!

Now in my heart of hearts I could not for a moment believe it. But if Jack and Nellie were one and the same, how was I to account for Ella's extreme confusion when the telegram was mentioned. One thing I felt certain of however. Jack might not be Nellie, but in future Nellie would be Jack!

One thing I was fully convinced of before I bade Ella Lee good-bye that day, near her mother's cottage door, I had succeeded in making her my bitterest enemy. And now what could, would, or should my next move be? This is the question I tried to answer as I walked slowly back to Woodbine Cottage.

But I failed to answer it.

Jocelyn was in great glee and wanted to hear all about my interview with Ella Lee, asking me a hundred questions, that only a man very much in love indeed would have considered otherwise than paltry, stupid, and trivial.

"I say," he concluded, "you're sure you haven't fallen in love with her yourself?"

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"That's all right," he answered, laughing merrily, almost a little hysterically, I thought. "That is all right, because, you are so much better looking and cleverer you know, and would make me a most formidable rival. I suppose I have only to go in and win."

"I fear that is all."

He looked at me curiously for a moment.

"You fear? Eh? But, ha, ha, for the moment I had forgotten you were a Scot, and that expanse is the custom of the country to which you belong, and 'gang warily' is his motto."

For a second or two I had it on the tip of my tongue to describe my whole interview with Ella and our conversation on the wooden bench.

Would to God I had done so. Had I told him my suspicion, even though had half-broken his heart, this story which is almost a tragedy, need never have been written.

Jocelyn went away after luncheon to meet Ella, and Cynthia went with him. Strangely enough this girl, with her magical eyes, seemed to exert as great an influence over the day as ever her master. As Jocelyn closed the door, and went past the window, singing some happy lilt to himself, a cold hand appeared to clutch my heart, and something to hiss in my ear, "You have failed in your duty towards your friend! You ought to have told him!"

I sprang up from my chair. I rushed to the door. I attempted to call him back, but my voice sounded like the voice of one in a nightmare.

Next moment, so quickly did he walk, he and Cynthia were round the corner and out of sight.

I believe I did then just what any other sailor would have done. I went back into the parlour which now looked drear and desolate, and lit a cigar.

Idly alone that evening, I and Nero. Jocelyn did not return.

I had written no part of my new story that day. Nor could I settle to it now. But when I had finished my coffee I walked out on to the cliff-brow, and threw myself among the scattered wild thyme.

The sun went down, and moon and stars shone over the sea.

It was indeed a heavenly night. A night surely made for lovers.

I think I must have gone to sleep, and lain there for hours—considering the portion of the moon when I again became sensible.

But now I heard Jocelyn's manly voice calling me:

"Gord, Gord. Why wherever are you, Gord?"

"Here, hear!" I shouted in reply.

Before I could stir Cynthia was licking my ear, and Joss had lain down near me among the wild thyme.

He sighed, but it was no sigh of sadness.

"Oh, Gord, my boy," he cried, "what a happy, happy day we've spent. Surely bliss like mine is too great for mortal man. It is almost more than I can bear. If there be a heaven, Gord—and the church tells us, nay, our very thoughts assure us there is—I desire no greater happiness, no greater contentment nor calm than that which I have experienced to-day."

I have often remarked that good swordsmen have usually small hands. Jocelyn's were particularly small and well-formed.

He stretched it towards me now, and I took it. I knew what was coming.

"You wish me to congratulate you?" I said. I leant there was a slighting of sadness in my voice.

"Gord, my boy. I do. Sweet Ella Lee is to be my bride. Oh, think of it!"

After supper we sat up talking quite a long time.

"O, by the way, Gord," he said, laughing, "don't let me forget to write to Ella's sister, Nellie, to-morrow. Not that I am likely to. And—I have to address her as 'Dear Jack.' Ella always does. You see there is a little humour in dear love. Good night."

I threw my necktie on the chair almost spitefully, as I began to undress.

"Humour!" I cried half-aloud. "Yes, and so the devil may have. But the die is cast! Foiled and beaten by a woman."

CHAPTER V.—"WHITHER I WONDER, WILL THIS FEARFUL HAPPINESS LEAD ME?"

I had no occasion next day to remind my friend Major Lloyd to write to Nellie or dear Jack, as now she would be to him. In my own mind, by the way, I had no doubt that Nellie had been warned by wire or post that she would be so addressed.

A rattling, rollicking, humorous letter Joss's was, for when one is really happy one can afford to be funny. It was withal brotherly too, and it was signed, "Yours fraternally, 'Jocelyn Lloyd.'"

I fear that, for a time, now, the Major's battle-piece experienced some neglect, for Ella Lee went no longer to her work. The consequence was that I saw much less of my friend, and she considerably more. But there were times when Joss insisted on my going with them, and then I had to meet his dear love. I thought that on the first day we met after our interview upon the cliff-top, her eyes scintillated with concealed triumph, and I must confess that I felt a trifle small in her presence. Well, she had won the game, and I had thrown down the cards.

A few days after this, Nellie came on a visit to Battlemore, and we all went on a cruise or picnic to a far-off glen, in which at some period or another of Britain's history something or other had occurred, but I am sure I do not know what—perhaps a

battle with the Romans, a royal stag hunt, or the burning of a few protestants. It is all one now.

Nellie was a modest and pretty girl of sweet seventeen, four years younger than her sister. She was not so startlingly beautiful as Ella, but I liked her very much better. She was more natural and unassuming. I did not let myself out to please but I am vain enough to think I did so, for all that.

Just one remark I made, however, that appeared to cause this lassie some discomfort, and I took care not to repeat it.

"I'm going to call you Nellie," I said, if I may.

"Oh, yes, do."

"And not Jack?"

"No, not that."

Then came my disagreeable observation.

"By the way," I said, meaningly, "how long have you been called Jack?"

She looked at me quickly, and as quickly withdrew her eyes, while a pinker hue overspread her cheeks.

I felt sorry, and darted off up hill after a beautiful wildflower. I pretended to want some specimens of it. When I returned all her embarrassment had worn away, and I did not renew the subject.

But a few days convinced me that Ella Lee exercised a considerable influence and power over her sister Nellie. It was a case of soul commanding, or over-riding soul. I am no believer in either spiritualism or thought reading, and yet I have known many a case in which one mind, or rather I should say the mind in one individual, was capable of ruling that in another. In such cases, however, the two persons must be acquaintances, friends or relations. I have known this power exist in brother over sister or vice-versa. One of the parties—this is a "sine qua non"—must be of a somewhat nervous temperament, not necessarily timid, and the other, on the contrary, strong in nerve, and probably not over-scrupulous in forming opinions of others, whether these opinions be true or the reverse. But as a medical man, and a student of psychology, I have no intention of being hard on such people, as they deceive themselves quite as often as they deceive others. Take, for instance, the case in point, that of these two sisters. Ella really believed that she could read Nellie's thoughts, merely by looking into her face. By this it may be seen, Nellie told under that glance that she could keep no thought hidden from her sister, and had she been guilty even of crime—what the poor girl was, I believe, incapable of—something would have urged her on to make a clean breast of it to Ella.

And so I know well that anything that passed between Nellie and myself in the way of conversation, would soon be duly reported to her sister.

The remark I had made in the glen, therefore about Nellie's new sobriquet 'Jack' would soon have reached Ella's ears, and must have tended to add considerably to the grudge she already bore me.

(To be continued.)

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