

✻ A DAUGHTER OF JUDAS. ✻

By the Author of "Sir Lionel's Wife," "The Great Moreland Tragedy," Etc.

CONTINUED. CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WOMAN AT THE STATION.

John Morewood sat at his bachelor breakfast table, reading a newspaper, with a brow expressive of anxiety and doubt. The paper was a local one, and the particular part of it which he was reading so intently, was the report of the inquest on the body of Madge Rivers.

The verdict of the jury was, 'Willful murder against some person or persons unknown'; and, viewed in the light of the evidence at their command, it was, perhaps, as good a verdict as could be given. The evidence, however, was admittedly very meagre.

The dead woman had mingled so little with her neighbors, that no one had spoken to her for a day or two before her death; and her house on being entered, revealed nothing whatever to throw any light upon the crime.

The most mysterious feature in the case was, that a woman of her great age should be found so far away from her home.

Four miles is a long journey at four-score years, especially when, in all probability, the return journey of another four miles was meditated.

That suggestion, which had been so eagerly caught at by Sir Gerald as to it being possible that the crime had been committed nearer her own home, and that the poor old woman had dragged herself further into the wood in search of help, was, of course, suggested to the jury, and might have had great weight with them, but for the evidence of the doctor.

He, while admitting that the bullet wound had not been instantaneously fatal, was of opinion that it would have been quite impossible for a woman of Madge's age to walk or crawl more than a few yards after receiving such a wound.

It was supposed by not a few that the dastardly deed had been committed by someone who had rifled the poor old woman of her little store of money.

The fact that no money at all was found on her body, favored this latter theory. However, when every tittle of evidence had been collected there was little enough to warrant a definite verdict.

Suicide had been faintly mooted; but the absence of the weapon had brushed that theory aside.

Altogether, there was an element of mystery in this peculiarly dastardly crime.

Morewood finished his reading, and folded up the paper in a slow, thoughtful fashion, which showed his mind was ill at ease.

Suddenly he turned to the turtler, who waited at the sideboard, ready to administer to his master's wants.

'Bailey, is Upton Wood infested with tramps, or rascals of that sort, at all?'

'I should say no, sir. Of course here and there one may go through it, for the sake of the shade, in hot weather; but, as a rule, they keep to the main roads.'

'Yes, I should think so,' said Morewood, musingly.

After a moment or two, he unfolded the paper again, and sat with his eyes fixed on 'The Upton Wood Tragedy' all the time he was at breakfast.

During the day he went to the village of Upton, and found a concourse of people gathered in the churchyard.

They had come to witness the funeral of the murdered woman.

Morewood quietly took up his position among them.

The village-folk fell away from him respectfully, and he presently found himself standing alone in that secluded corner of the churchyard where stood the grey headstone which professed to mark the grave of Madeline Winter.

He moved away from it with a sudden instinctive feeling of repulsion.

That was the last spot in the world for him to stand upon, and watch a murdered woman's burial.

Presently the mournful cortege was seen approaching—it cortège it could be called, seeing that not a single mourner walked behind the coffin.

The coroner's jury, before giving their verdict, had been most searching in their inquiries as to whether Madge had had an enemy, or whether anyone could be said to have an interest in her death.

It had seemed abundantly proved that she had not an enemy in the world; but judging by the absence of mourners at her funeral, it appeared that neither had she a single friend—no friend near and dear enough to shed a tear above her grave.

It transpired that her modest income came to her from a London insurance office, where she had negotiated a life annuity for herself forty years ago.

But who she was, whence she had come, and whether she had any relative in the world, was wrapped in mystery.

The coffin, borne on four men's shoulders, was a handsome one of polished oak, with brass mountings.

It had been ordered by Sir Gerald, who, as the dead woman's landlady, generously defrayed all the expenses of the funeral.

The coffin was placed by the graveside; the first portion of the ceremony, solemnized inside the church the church, was over before Morewood came; and the white-haired old rector—he who had married Sir Gerald and Lilian—performed the last sad rites above the head, as Madge Rivers was laid away for ever from mortal eye.

Morewood, conscious of an almost painful fascination in every detail of this sad tragedy, stepped forward, and looked in to the open grave.

The inscription on the coffin was singularly brief.

It consisted of only her name and the date of her death.

Even her age was not accurately known. So taciturn had she been, so singularly uncommunicative about herself, that those who had lived around her for nearly forty years knew nothing of her but her name.

When the grave-diggers began to shovel in the earth, the people trooped slowly homewards, provided with food for gossip for the next nine days.

Morewood alone lingered.

The place had a fascination for him.

That grey headstone, inscribed with the name of Madeline Winter, seemed, to his imagination, to point with mockery towards that other new made grave.

The next day, Morewood was in Southampton.

Business had called him thither, and it detained him until the evening, when he stood on the platform of a railway station, waiting for the train which was to convey him home.

As he paced slowly up and down, his mind was full of the murder of Madge.

Ever since he had first heard of it, a black suspicion had haunted him; and, strive as he might, he could not cast it off—a suspicion that the old woman had met her death at the hands of Madeline Winter the murderess who was now sister-in-law to Sir Gerald.

Within his mind a strong chain of circumstantial evidence was already formed.

Madge, in some mysterious manner, had become acquainted with the fact that Madeline Winter still lived; that fact she had communicated to Sir Gerald, who, doubtless, in his turn, had made it known to Lilian.

Now, if the murderess was still in England—so reasoned—Morewood—what was more probable than that Lilian should warn her of the dangerous knowledge possessed by the old woman?

And, having assumed this, what, again, more likely than that she—Madeline—should resolve to rid herself, for ever, of one whose very existence might be perilous to her safety?

A woman who had committed one murder—and that of the blackest and foulest description—for the sake of mere gain, would be little likely to hesitate at another when her own life was at stake.

Morewood, it will be seen, by no other means shared Sir Gerald's belief in Lilian's sister's innocence.

By what means Madge had been decoyed so far into the wood, where she was little in the habit of walking, he did not profess to be able to explain.

He had no theory which exactly met the point; but he did not doubt that the mind of a woman, at once so clever and unscrupulous as Madeline Winter, would be more fertile in expedients than his own.

The question was, had she really started for Australia before her sister's marriage, as Sir Gerald had seemed to think?

If so, she must be held innocent of this second murder.

If not, Morewood could not divest his mind of that terrible suspicion, which, for Sir Gerald's sake, and, still more, perhaps, for Lilian's, he would gladly have seen disproved.

'When Vere comes back, I'll ask him, he said to himself. 'Surely the thought must have crossed his mind as well as mine. But if it hasn't, I won't spoil his happiness by so much as a hint. There will be trouble enough in store for them both if it is as I fear. Heavens! what a remarkable prophecy that old woman's was!'

At this moment his train steamed into the station.

He entered a first-class compartment and took his seat near the window.

In a minute or so the signal was given; the train moved on its way again.

By an impulse—for which, to the end of his life, he will be puzzled to account—Morewood put his head out of the window, and scanned the people on the platform.

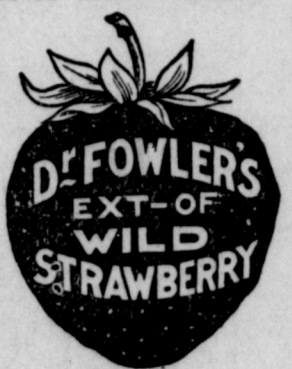
Travellers

Should always carry with them a bottle of Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry.

The change of food and water to which those who travel are subject, often produces an attack of Diarrhoea, which is as unpleasant and discomforting as it may be dangerous. A bottle of Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry in your grip is a guarantee of safety. On the first indication of Cramps, Colic, Diarrhoea or Dysentery, a few doses will promptly check further advance of these diseases.

It is an old, reliable remedy, with over forty years' of cures to its credit, whose merit is recognized everywhere and one that the doctors recommend in preference to all others.

Sold by medicine dealers everywhere at 35c. a bottle. Always insist on the genuine, as many of the imitations are highly dangerous.



A mysterious impulse, indeed, seeing what it was it led him to see.

Just as the train passed out of the station, a woman came down the steps which led from the bridge by which passengers crossed the line.

Her foot was on the lowest step as Morewood caught sight of her.

The glance was but momentary.

At first he was only conscious of a tall, black-robed figure, of singular grace and stateliness; then his eye rested on the face, and, as it did so, a thrill of horror shot through all his veins.

Those dark magnetic eyes, which, for a single second, looked full into his own—eyes so thrillingly like those of Sir Gerald's wife—to whom could they belong if not to Madeline Winter?

Another moment, and the train had carried him past her.

But, in his heart, he was convinced that it was none other than the escaped murderess he had looked upon.

His question of a minute ago was answered.

Madeline Winter was in England—and in Hampshire?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. TIPTAFT'S PLAN.

We must now turn back for a few days, in order to follow the fortunes of other personages in this story, notably those of that reverend and worthy gentleman, the rector of Little Ceeve.

On the afternoon of the day of Sir Gerald's marriage, Mr. Tiptaft walked past the Court with feelings that were strangely out of place in the breast of a successor of the Apostles.

Hugely indignant was he against 'that swaggering Irishman'—for it was thus he secretly termed Sir Patrick—whom Vivian Court still harboured.

Never now did Mr. Tiptaft enjoy the privilege of walking through leafy glades with Miss Muggleton.

Sir Patrick was all in all to her; in his company her walks were taken.

She seemed to have forgotten the very existence of her other admirer; she had even ceased to visit among the poor.

No wonder his bosom swelled beneath his black waistcoat, and that he cast irate glances at the house which harboured that vile disturber of his peace.

It was not to harbor him for long; but then, Mr. Tiptaft did not know this. He believed 'the fellow' had quite impudence enough to stay till Sir Gerald and his bride returned.

The truth was however, that Sir Patrick had only stayed to see his friend married and intended leaving Hampshire immediately.

Mr. Tiptaft passed the Court gates, looked malevolently up the avenue and was stalking on in virtuous wrath, when, who should step across the road from a by-lane, but Sir Patrick Donovan himself.

'Ah, Tiptaft! The top of the morning to you!' he called out blithely.

He didn't like the Reverend Augustus; but it was in his nature to be genial to everyone with whom he was not absolutely on fighting terms.

And, besides, he was in a particularly lighthearted mood this morning.

Perhaps his friends' wedding had called up pleasant thoughts within his honest breast.

'Good morning, Sir Patrick!' said the rector, with a stiff and formal bow, and a slightly scandalized look.

He wished this mad-headed Irish baronet to understand that such irreverent greetings were unfitted to the dignity of 'the cloth.'

'Any message for Gowan?' went on Sir Patrick, not a whit abashed. 'I shall see him to-morrow most likely.'

'To-morrow!'

'Yes; I'm off to Ireland in the morning—early. I leave here by the midnight mail.'

'You are going back to Ireland?' said Mr. Tiptaft, in breathless incredulity.

A sudden delicious hope made his bosom swell; his light grey eye sparkled with eagerness.

'You don't mean it?' he said.

'Ah, but I do. A trifle of business has called me back unexpectedly. I didn't know of till this morning.'

'Are you coming back here again?'

Mr. Tiptaft voice trembled with eagerness as he asked the question.

'Well, that depends,' said Sir Patrick.

And Mr. Tiptaft was certain by the slight flush which immediately mounted to his sun-rowned face, that it depended on Miss Muggleton.

'He hasn't spoken to her yet!' he decided.

The two men stood for a moment or two looking at each other.

Donovan, although the least censorious, and certainly the least conceited of beings was thinking what a poor specimen of a man this sleek, pink-and-white well-led parson was.

And the Reverend Augustus, on his side, was comparing Sir Patrick's spare, muscular figure with his own sleek and portly one, very much to the disparagement of the former.

He was looking at the baronet's brown skin, too, and wondering how many women of taste—be she Marie Muggleton or any other—could possibly prefer it to the fresh-color and rosy smoothness of his own.

Sir Patrick was the first to break silence.

'Well, have you any message for Gowan?' he asked.

'My love?' said the reverend gentleman, in softly unctuous voice, and with a digrity which seemed to say, he considered his love as equal to a fortune.

'All right! He shall have it!' said Sir Patrick, with a heartiness which surely meant he would keep none of that precious consignments for himself.

He was not a sarcastic man; but Mr. Tiptaft would have put sarcasm into a saint. With a brief handshake they parted; Sir Patrick entering the Court gates, the clergyman walking on in the direction of The Towers.

'He has not been there,' the latter thought; 'he was coming from quite the opposite direction, and nothing is settled yet, or he wouldn't have spoken as he did.'

'That depends,' he said. Depends on what? Why, on the answer Marie gives to the question he means to put to her before he goes. What a shame that a fire-eating Irishman, like him should marry a girl with a million of money; while I—'

Mr. Tiptaft paused quite overcome by the contemplation of his own shining virtues—which Fate had rewarded so ill.

'It is too late! Would it be possible to prevent it even now,' he ruminated.

'There could be some way if only I could think of it!'

He walked on, with his head bent in thought, for several minutes; then an idea occurred to him.

'I believe that would do,' he murmured.

'I verily believe it would.'

And so charmed was he with his scheme, that he determined to put it into execution straightway.

Now, this scheme of Mr. Tiptaft's like many other truly sublime inventions, was most astonishingly simple.

Indeed, in its simplicity lay its cleverness and its chief chances and of success.

'If only,' he meditated. 'Miss Muggleton could be induced to believe that Sir Patrick is already engaged to some one else she'd very soon change her manner towards him; and he'd go off to Ireland without making her an offer. I think I know him well enough for that.'

As had been said before, the Reverend Augustus was, in his way, a clever man.

He showed his cleverness now by noting the stubborn pride which was, perhaps, Sir Patrick's chief characteristic, and basing his plans upon it.

To himself he reasoned thus—

'If he were to tell Sir Patrick Miss Muggleton was engaged, he might not be believed; the baronet not being prejudiced in his favor, and probably not placing unbounded faith in his veracity.'

Miss Muggleton, on the other hand, had that faith.

She regarded him with very friendly feelings, and he did not doubt he could easily obtain her private ear.

To be sure, there was the chance of the misrepresentation being discovered; but, even if it were, the consequences would not be so very dreadful. He would simply have to regret he had been misinformed, that was all.

Even to himself he would not allow he was about to perpetrate a falsehood. What he intended to hint to Miss Muggleton might be true—very likely was true—certainly was true, for anything he knew to the contrary.

Wild Irishmen, like Donovan, were perpetually having 'entanglements.' They made love to women, as a matter of course, wherever they went.

'If the girl believes what I tell her, she'll be distant to him when he goes to say, "Good-bye,"' ruminated Mr. Tiptaft. He's so outrageously proud that, ten to one, he'll ask no explanation, and, of course, will make no offer. He'll go back to Ireland, and from there straight to that Johannesburg he talks so much about; and Miss Maria will be well rid of him.'

The more he reflected on this latter clause, the more seriously he became convinced of its truth.

'An improvident adventurer!' he muttered in a burst of virtuous indignation.

'Why, not to mention anything else he's scarred on the face, and lame in a foot. A man who can't take better care of himself than to get knocked about like that isn't the man to take care of a wife's fortune. A million pounds isn't to be trusted in such hands as his. The poor girl will have a merciful escape if she gets rid of him. Really I begin to think it quite providential that I chanced to meet him this afternoon.'

He had not yet reached the end of his good luck, for, as he turned into the grounds of The Towers, the very first person he saw was Miss Marie herself, enjoying the pleasant afternoon sunshine—and quite alone.

Again Mr. Tiptaft congratulated himself on being the special darling of Providence.

'Good afternoon, Miss Marie!' he said with one of his impressive bows. You are enjoying this glorious day. I know you are a lover of nature—like myself!' he concluded, with a slyly sentimental smile.

'It is a lovely day, isn't it, Mr. Tiptaft?'

Miss Muggleton spoke with frank ease and cheerfulness.

She didn't want to be sentimental—at any rate, not with him.

He, rightly deeming the opportunity too good a one to be lost, dashed immediately into the subject which filled his thoughts.

'Well, we have lost—for a time, at any rate—our pleasant neighbor, Sir Gerald. I am afraid we shall miss him.'

'I am sure we shall.'

'Sir Patrick, too, is going to leave us, he tells me.'

'Sir Patrick?'

Miss Muggleton tried hard to speak as though she were not greatly startled, but scarcely succeeded as well as she could have wished.

'Yes; he is going back to Ireland—leaves here to-night!' said Mr. Tiptaft, tranquilly, and as though he didn't suspect, for a moment, that his news could be specially interesting to Miss Muggleton.

'Who told you so, Mr. Tiptaft?'

'Who told me? Oh, Sir Patrick himself!' said the reverend gentleman, feigning to emerge from a fit of abstraction, as though he had quite forgotten the subject.

'I met him half-an-hour ago, and he asked me if I had any message for my uncle—Lord Gowan, you know, Miss Muggleton,' he added, trying to look as though he wasn't proud of the relationship.

'And he is really going away to night?'

'To tell you the truth, Miss Marie, I fancy the business that calls him is of a rather tender nature. Through my uncle, the earl, I get a hint about Donovan now and again; and it wouldn't surprise me in the very least if we were to hear of a Lady Donovan before long.'

'Do you mean that Sir Patrick is engaged to be married?'

In the sharpness of her pain and disappointment, Miss Muggleton asked the question outright.

Her reverend friend, paltering with what he called his conscience, ten minutes ago had said he would not utter a single falsehood; but this plain question led him further than he intended.

'Well, yes, I think I may say he is!' he replied, unblushingly. 'It is, in a sense, a secret, and I don't know that I ought to make free to mention the lady's name. She is of very high family, however. Of very high family!' he repeated, seeing—by the oppression of his companion's lips—the effect that this announcement had upon her. 'Sir Patrick is so absurdly attached to all that sort of thing. But there is a little money, too, so it may be said to be an unsuitable match. The lady is in every way fitted for him, and I believe he is genuinely attached to her.'

'I am sure I wish them every happiness and blessing!' concluded the reverend gentleman, in his very best rectorial manner. Sir Patrick is, in his way, a worthy man, although perhaps, a shade too light in manner. I wish him well with all my heart.'

How could poor Marie Muggleton suspect that this elaborately told story was a piece of fiction from beginning to end?

If it had proceeded from anyone but Mr. Tiptaft, she might have doubted—as, perhaps that astute gentlemen knew; but to doubt him, when he spoke with such confidence and certainty, with such apparent knowledge of the subject, was, of course impossible.

To make assurance doubly sure, she asked a further question or two concerning the lady whom Sir Patrick was to marry; and they were answered with an ease and fluency which might have convinced a far more suspicious mind than poor Marie Muggleton's.

Having once cast aside his professional prejudice against a falsehood, and settled it with his conscience that a few were absolutely necessary, and really almost virtuous in the present case, it must be admitted that the reverend gentleman did the business handsomely and well.

His lies were good round ones, with nothing of an uncertain flavour about them.

When he, at length, quitted Miss Marie, he had effectually wrecked her peace of mind.

It was his benevolent intention, however, to him if pour balm into her wounds, if only the objectionable Sir Patrick would take himself away without first making Miss Muggleton an offer of his hand.

To be continued.

"WILL DIE BEFORE DAYLIGHT."

Would Have Been Her Answer to Your Query—When?—But Dr. Agnew's Cure For the Heart Snapped the Death Strings.

Mrs. B., 186 Queen Street W., Toronto gives this unsolicited testimony:

'For a number of years I had been a great sufferer from heart troubles, had smothering sensations, palpitation, neuralgia and thumping; was very easily fatigued. I was induced to try Dr. Agnew's Cure for the Heart when I had despaired living through the night. The benefit was instantaneous. I have taken five bottles and have no hesitation in heartily recommending it, and will be glad to communicate with anyone desiring it.'

The Way Wars Begin.

Tommy was reading the war news. When he finished he came over to his mother and said—

'Mamma, how do wars begin?'

'Well suppose the English hauled down the American flag, and that the Americans—'

Here Tommy's father intervened.

'My dear,' he said, 'the English would not—'

Mother: 'Excuse me, they would—'

'Now, dear, who ever heard of such a thing?'

'Pray do not interrupt!'

'But you are giving Tommy a wrong idea?'

'I'm not sir!'

'You are madam!'

'Don't call me madam! I won't allow you!'

'I'll call you what I choose!'