

ON THE BRINK OF A CRIME.

CONCLUDED.
 "Bad luck darling! Of course not—, all superstition,—vulgar superstition! Why dearest, you are quite pale and are trembling! This mustn't be! Look up. I am your husband now, little one, and, remember, you have just promised to obey me. Here we are, by Jove!"—as the brougham drew up at a quiet hotel where luncheon had been ordered previous to catching the Continental express. "You are hungry and tired: a good luncheon and a glass of champagne will soon set you right, and bring back the roses to these white cheeks."

And so sweet Mavis Carolin took the first step along the new path, which seemed to her of roses, and, if Adrian's heart smote him sometimes, he made no sign, and life to her, who was by his side, appeared an earthly paradise.

"By Jove! Carolin, who would have thought of meeting you here? You of all people in the world, out of the season, too! How is it that you are not treading your native heather, stalking the deer, popping at the wily grouse—in fact, doing anything but stewing in 'Gay Paree,' which, by the way, isn't a bit gay just at present. Phew! how hot it is, quite an Indian summer!"

The speaker who thus addressed Adrian Carolin was a man some three years younger than the latter.

A handsome debonnaire-looking fellow, with a countenance frank and open as the day, blue eyes, truthful and honest as though they could not lie, a sunburnt, genial giant on whom to rely.

Both men and women liked and trusted Arthur Bertie and their trust would not be misplaced.

"What are you doing here?" he repeated as Adrian was silent, being indeed, utterly taken aback, and looking none too well pleased at the meeting.

"Nothing—that is—oh!—er—nothing. Awfully pleased to see you, old chap. I have—the truth—is I have—a lady with me. Ta-ta, see you again."

And Bertie, looking after him in much astonishment at his unusual embarrassment, saw his friend join a young and very beautiful girl, who at that moment emerged from one of the boxes at the Odeon Theatre.

CHAPTER VII.

It was Christmas-time—a veritable old-fashioned Christmas—sharp frost, white and sparkling like the icing on a wedding-cake, powdering the fields and count' lanes—glittering icicles pendant from branch and house-tops alike.

Christmas was being kept up in the good old style at Montjoy Park, and today being Christmas Eve, saw the house-party there assembled, and largely augmented by

contingents from neighbouring country farm houses, dispersing themselves to their hearts content upon the smooth, carefully swept surface of the ice.

The bright costumes of the ladies wrapped in velvet and furs, gliding hand-in-hand with their attendant cavaliers, formed a pretty picture, and so it evidently seemed to two, older and more sedate, who paused now and again to gaze and comment on the animated scene.

"How particularly well dear Celia is looking to-day, John. Don't you think so?—and so happy," remarked Lady Montjoy to her companion who was also her husband and the owner of Montjoy Park.

"She does indeed, my dear," replied Montjoy, thoughtfully. "Has it occurred to you Helen, that her cousin seems much struck with her?"

"It has most certainly, and I will own it has caused me some uneasiness. You know the dislike I have to the idea of first cousins marrying. Still if her affections are fixed upon him—and I confess it looks it—and Lady Montjoy cast a significant glance towards the lake—'why, then, I should be inclined to forego my opinion on the subject. He has changed greatly of late.'

"And for the better," put in her husband, with whom Adrian Carolin was a prime favorite. "That unfortunate affair of his youth thank Heaven, so providentially ended, was a sad and severe lesson for a young man. It has borne its fruit, however—his wild oats are sown, and Adrian will, I have little doubt, settle down into an excellent husband, to whom I shall have no hesitation in giving my child—always provided he asks for her."

"He will ask for her," said his wife smiling. "Trust a woman for being a true prophet in matters where the heart is concerned. Here they come. What a handsome couple they make!" exclaimed Lady Montjoy, involuntarily.

Both tall, and with that air of perfect health which makes even the plainest attractive.

Adrian in the prime of his manhood, she his junior by seven years—tall also, and fair—not with the delicate, rose-tinted fairness of her unknown rival; but a regal blonde—auburn haired, with velvety-brown eyes, that could flash with sudden anger, as well as droop beneath the passion of a lover's glance.

High-bred, haughty features: a delicious mouth, which, at this moment, was smiling, parting to disclose two rows of even white teeth.

In very truth, Lady Celia had earned deservedly her title as "Beauty of the County."

And she was clever, too—well-read, and an admirable musician, with a voice of great purity and power.

She had been trained by the first teachers, both in England and abroad, and were it not for her rank and position, would have made her fortune upon the operatic stage.

And well, indeed, did they become the rich beauty of the girl who wore them, and all eyes were turned upon the couple, who sat side by side, seemingly engrossed with each other.

"Is the engagement about to be announced?" whispered Captain Braye to his partner.

"I should think so," answered the lady; "and a most suitable match, too. Lord and Lady Montjoy have set their hearts upon it, I believe."

The two thus discussed appeared blissfully unconscious of such like remarks. They gazed into each other's eyes, and what they read there was all-sufficient.

After dinner, Celia sang. She chose an Italian love-song.

Her voice was a pure, true soprano, clear as a bird's, and as the liquid notes rose and fell, Carolin's fickle heart went out to the singer, and he resolved upon a great crime.

He saw Celia Montjoy through a haze of passion.

The scent from the waves of her glorious hair intoxicated his senses; he seemed in a dream.

"Sing something, Adrian."

His aunt's voice roused him to the present.

He bent nearer to the girl, whose head was drooped, so that he could not see her face, but he knew that the spell was upon her also.

She trembled, and her white jewelled hands fell nerveless upon the keys of the piano.

"This!" and he placed a song before her.

"What shall I sing to thee, heart of my heart? How can I prove thee my passion and pain? How shall I tell thee that now we must part? Seeing I never shall see thee again."

And o all went merrily as a marriage bell.

Lord Carolin was written to, and returned from from his beloved Riviera to bestow his blessing on the betrothed.

There were public interviews, and private consultations, and at last everything was satisfactorily arranged.

Adrian went to town, and returned with a magnificent present of jewels for his beautiful fiancée.

He brought, too, an engagement-ring, and, as he placed the glittering circlet on Celia's finger, he whispered words of tenderest love into the small pink ear.

As he did so, the memory of another face—another and a plainer ring—rose before him.

His hand shook, his face paled; the costly ring fell to the ground.

"Surely this is not an ill omen," said Celia, but she smiled as she said it.

Almost the identical words from other lips!

Small wonder that the betrayer trembled, and that his heart sank; but for all that his determination wavered not one jot.

Presents and congratulations were the order of the day.

When the bells rang in the New Year, the engagement of Lord Montjoy's heiress was made public.

There was feasting for the tenantry on the adjoining estates, and great rejoicings were held, only to be rivalled, it was said, when the wedding should be an accomplished fact.

This date of this was fixed for Easter week, which, this year, fell in April.

Must go, you must; but, how I shall miss you!" Celia answered.

"Shall you, my own? God bless you, Celia! Promise me, sweetest, that you will never believe any word against me, unless I tell it you with my own lips; no scandal, nothing—"

"Of course not, Adrian; no one would dare, to me!" she said proudly. My husband to me is beyond reproach," she added.

Then, indeed, did Adrian Carolin feel what in truth he was—a black-hearted villain!

A small, but well-furnished room, bright lamps, rose-shaded, casting a subdued light on the pretty chintz-covered furniture.

Evidences of refinement and comfort everywhere, it not of extravagance or wealth.

The room contained one occupant—a woman—and in her we recognise Mavis Carolin, changed, indeed, by weeks—nay, months—of weary waiting and watching; but still Mavis, fair and sweet as on that summer day when she hearkened to the fatal words and promises that fell from the lips of the man who, even now, would betray her stillly further.

He was expected.

All was in readiness.

The excitement of anticipation had given to the pale cheeks a rose tint that rivalled the carnation blooms upon the table.

Mavis had prepared everything with her own hands, and now she sat awaiting her lord and master in a state of mind almost hysterical.

"It is getting late, and he has not come, Martha," she said, piteously, to the kind-looking elderly woman whom Adrian had provided as her sole servant and companion in the days when the girl was his idol and his love.

And then had become attached to each other, these two—so dissimilar in age, and in all else.

Martha had been a wife herself. She knew the world well—too well. In her youth she had married a soldier. He had deserted her years ago, and whether he was living or not she never knew nor cared. She pitied Mavis from her heart. She could read the ending of her happy dream.

Youthful Recklessness.



The natural exuberance of youth often leads to recklessness. Young people don't take care of themselves, get over-heated, catch cold, and allow it to settle on the kidneys. They don't realize the significance of backache—think it will soon pass away—but it doesn't. Urinary Troubles come, then Diabetes, Bright's Disease and shattered health.

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