

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)
said, impulsively; 'but he came back last night.'

Miss Greyling looked at her friend enquiringly.
'We don't want it talked about,' Lydia went on, in a confidential tone; 'but I know you can keep a secret. And you will be interested, too, because you've known him nearly as long as I have, though of course, you haven't seen half as much of him.'

Miss Greyling stopped suddenly, muttering something about 'that tiresome shoe-lace,' and stooping re-fastened the lace in question with great precision.

'Who are you talking of, Lydia?' she asked, and if her voice was somewhat unsteady, why that was easily accounted for by her stooping position.

'Signor Delmonti,' said Lydia promptly, and then having broken the ice, she launched out into a description of the Italian's devotion to her.

Mabel drew herself erect and walked on rapidly, looking straight before her, with eyes filled with horror and dismay.

'Surely you must be mistaken,' she said in a strained voice, when Lydia having talked herself out of breath, paused for a reply. 'I have seen you together often enough, but it never struck me he was in love with you.'

'Ah you would think differently if you saw him when we are tete-a-tete,' and the remembering that there had been a time when she looked on Mabel as a possible rival, Lydia determined to show her own supremacy once for all.

'Look here, Mab,' she said, suddenly slipping her hand into her pocket, and drawing out a letter-case, from which she extracted a sheet of notepaper, covered with the Italian's well known calligraphy, 'if you think I have been exaggerating his feelings, read that.'

As she read the letter—the counterpart of so many which she had treasured among her dearest possessions, Mabel's disillusion was complete.

Summoning all her pride to her aid, she folded the missive, in leisurely fashion, and gave it back to her friend with a steady hand.

'You certainly have good reason for believing he cares for you,' she said, with an inscrutable smile; 'but take my advice, Lydia; have nothing more to do with Signor Delmonti unless he goes openly to your father.'

'All in good time,' returned Lydia, with a toss of her head. 'At present we have our own reasons for keeping the matter a secret. Oh, with a sigh of relief, for she began to realize she had said more than was prudent, 'there's your maid. I think I must turn back now, or I shall be late for dinner.'

Mabel was thankful to see her depart. Her one desire was to be alone.

Once safely inside the garden, she made her way to an old, disused summer-house, where she had promised to meet the Italian at half past twelve.

She knew that the object of his stay in London had been to obtain a special license for that marriage which she felt could never take place.

Her one anxiety now, was to get back the letters which she had written to him, so that no one might ever know of her infatuation.

CHAPTER VII.

MURDER!

Mrs. Wilmer and the children were out and Bessie, re-joining in her freedom from interruption, was busily engaged in marking a pile of white work with those initials which were to be hers immediately after Easter.

She was so absorbed in her task that she never heard the advent of a visitor, and looked up with a surprise when Miss Greyling was shown into the room.

'I am lucky to find you alone,' Mabel said, cordially, and then, as the door behind her was gently closed, her expression changed, and she looked at Bessie appealingly.

'I am in the most dreadful trouble, Bess; I don't know what to do,' she whispered in an excited tone. 'You are the only person in the world who can help me. You will, won't you—for the sake of our old school days?'

'What is it you want me to do?' asked Bessie, in a bewildered tone.

'I will tell you everything,' Mabel said hurriedly. 'I have been so silly. I-I promised to marry a man whom I am sure my mother would not approve of. I agreed to run away with him, and now I have found out that all time he has been pre-

tending to be in love with me he has been writing to—to another girl, as if it were whom he loved.'

'Then surely you will have no more to do with him.'

'I don't want to, but he is got a lot of my letters—such silly letters, Bess; but indeed, I did love him, and I thought he would be my husband, you know, and if I don't get them back I shall never know a day's happiness. I should be always thinking he had sent one or two to father.'

'If I were you Mabel, I would go straight to Sir Joseph, and tell him every thing.'

'I don't want to do that if I can possibly help it,' replied Mabel. I would give anything that he and mother should never know how I have deceived them. But I threatened, this morning, that I would tell them, and then he said, if I would meet him this evening, he would give them back to me.'

'Then it will be all right?'

'Yes; if he keeps his word. Only—oh! Bess! I don't know why it is, but I feel afraid to meet him again. That is why I've come to you. Will you go for me? I believe directly he knows I've told anyone, he will see I'm in earnest and give up the letters. And it isn't as if he were quite a stranger to you—'

'Who is he?' interrupted Bessie.
'Signor Delmonti.'

'What! Lydia's friend?'

'Yes; Lydia's friend,' repeated Mabel, with bitter emphasis.

There was a minute's silence, then Mabel flung herself on her knees beside her friend, and caught her hand imploringly.

'You will do this for me, dear?' she whispered. 'It is quite simple. Come back with me now, and after tea, when you leave, instead of coming straight home, just run back to the copple and get the letters.'

At last, very reluctantly, Bessie yielded. Leaving word that she had gone to tea with Miss Greyling, and would be back before seven, she accompanied Mabel to the pretty white house that overlooked the common.

'There, said Mabel, as they paused for a moment at the gate and looked towards the copple, 'you see that willow at the further end? Well, he is to meet me there. It is most sheltered, and—'

She stopped abruptly, a movement on the other side of the hedge reached her ears, and turning quickly, she saw Lydia Strong just inside the garden.

'How you startled me, Lydia,' she said, irritably. 'I—I had no idea anyone was there.'

'I have just come from the house,' remarked Lydia, in a constrained tone. 'I brought over that book we were speaking of. I thought you might like to see it.'

'Awfully good of you,' replied Mabel, as gracefully as she could. 'You will come in to tea?'

'No, thanks; 'two's company'—you know the rest,' and, with merely a nod to the two girls, she hurried off.

When Mr. Armitage left his office that evening, his first intention was to go straight home, but a sudden irresistible desire to see his fiancée seized him, and he turned in at his partner's gate as the town clock struck half past six.

'Gone to Miss Delane's?' he said, in a surprised tone; 'well, I will go and meet her. It is a straight road, so there's no chance of our missing each other.'

He walked briskly till he came in sight of Miss Delane's house, then he slackened his pace, hoping that Bessie would speedily make her appearance.

He stopped to light a cigarette, taking his time about it, and was in the act of throwing the match away, when he caught the sound of softly running footsteps, and, a second later, Bessie was clinging to him.

'My dearest! Why, you are quite out of breath!'

'I ran,' panted the girl. 'I—I was frightened.'

'Surely you were not going home alone?' he said, sharply. 'What was your hostess thinking of to allow such a thing?'

'I don't think she knew how dark it was out of doors.'

By the time their walk was ended, Bessie's excitement had died away.

Mabel had announced her intention of calling about ten o'clock next morning, but it was wanted nearly half an hour of that time when she came.

There was a hard, strained look on her face, to which Bessie put her own interpretation.

'You've heard, then?' she said.

Mabel nodded, and in silence the two girls entered the drawing-room.

'Give them to me, dear,' said Mabel.

'But I have not got the letters. I thought you knew; I thought you had seen him this morning, and—'

Mabel interrupted her with a cry of horror.

'No, thank goodness! I have not seen him,' she said, with a shudder. 'Bess, is it possible that you haven't heard? Why, the whole town is ringing with the news. Don't you know that he—Signor Delmonti—was murdered last night in the copple?'

Bessie sat down suddenly, white and trembling.

'It's true,' Mabel went on, hurriedly; 'and oh, Bess! will the police look through his papers, do you think?'

'I suppose so. They will have to find out who his people are; besides, they must try and gain some clue as to the—the person who did it.'

'You won't let anyone know that you saw him last night, will you?' said Mabel suddenly.

'I meant to tell you,' answered Bessie, slowly, 'that, just as I got clear of the common last night, your garden door opened suddenly, and a man came out. He was saying good-night to one of the maids, so I suppose, he was her young man. I did not see his face; but, if he lives in the town, he is pretty sure to have recognised me.'

'Perhaps it was he who did it?'

Bessie shook her head.

'He overtook us a few minutes later, and

I never lost sight of him till he turned into the Goat and Compasses.'

Mabel made no reply.

Her thoughts were fixed on what, to her, was the one absorbing topic.

'Do you think they will put my letters in the newspapers?' she asked suddenly.

'I don't know,' said Bessie vaguely, wishing she had never had anything to do with Miss Greyling's affairs.

Mabel burst into a flood of tears.

'If they do I shall die,' she sobbed.

'Mother will never forgive me.'

A tap at the door, and, almost before she could turn her head aside, a maid entered.

'Mr. Armitage is in the little room, Miss Bessie. He wants to see you at once, most particular.'

With a hurried apology, Bessie sprang up and went to her lover.

Without a word he caught her in his arms, and kissed her passionately.

Then he put her from him, and looked at her earnestly.

'Bessie, I've come on a most unpleasant errand,' he said, hurriedly. 'There is a horrible report afloat in the town, and I've come to you to know the truth of the matter.'

The girl's color went and came.

She looked up at him nervously.

'You've heard about that—that affair on the common?' he asked, abruptly.

Bessie nodded.

'Well, they are saying you must know something about it. That you are the last person who saw him alive.'

'That can't be,' was the prompt reply.

'He was well enough when I left him.'

There was a moment's silence.

The lawyer's hands clenched involuntarily.

'You did meet him there, then?' he said, hoarsely. 'Bessie, what is the meaning of it all? You must speak out, dear. Unless I know the whole truth I shall be fighting in the dark, and I can't answer for the consequences. Why did you go to the copple last night?'

For a moment Bessie hesitated; then she looked up at her lover with candid eyes.

'Ted, let me go for a few minutes. When I come back, you shall know all.'

Without a word, he released her, and Bessie sped away to pour the whole story into Miss Greyling's ears.

She wound up with a suggestion which moved Mabel more than anything else.

'Lawyers can do a great deal,' she said, in conclusion, 'and Mr. Armitage is very clever. If anyone can prevent your letters being made public, he can. I am sure the best thing you can do is to tell him every thing.'

And this, after some little demur, Mabel consented to do.

Mr. Armitage listened to her story almost in silence, and then questioned her closely as to her movements after Bessie had left her the previous evening.

When he found that she had not been in her cousin's company the whole time, his heart sank, for he felt he was no nearer discovering the murderer.

'I will do the best I can for you,' he said, as he rose to depart.

Bessie followed him out of the room.

He stood for a moment in silence—his arm round her waist, his cheek resting against her sunny hair.

'I shall come back again as soon as possible,' he whispered. 'And oh, my dearest, how can I tell you? The inquest will be held to-morrow, and they may—they will—want you to be there. You must answer frankly. Don't let any quixotic idea of shielding that foolish girl induce you to try and suppress the real motive of your meeting that man.'

Meanwhile, what of Lydia, the girl who, notwithstanding all her faults, loved Delmonti with passionate intensity whose every thought of happiness was bound up in him? Dr. Strong himself had carried home the news of the murder.

Breakfast was over, but Mrs. Strong and Lydia still lingered at the table, the former not because she was desirous of ministering to her husband's wants on his return, but because she was anxious to hear full particulars of the 'accident' to which he had been called out soon after daybreak.

He came at last, and, as he entered the room, Mrs. Strong looked up enquiringly.

'Anything serious?' she asked, in the tone of one to whom sickness or accident was not a cause for lamentation.

'Murder!' was the curt reply. 'Blow on the temple. Death must have been instantaneous. Man has been dead twelve hours at least.'

Dr. Strong had been right in thinking that a brief space of consciousness would be granted Lydia, but it was not till the following day that memory returned. Then a look of poignant distress came into her face.

'Is it true?' she asked, looking up at the doctor, wistfully. 'Are you sure he is—dead?'

'He! Who? Delmonti, do you mean?' Then, seeing he had guessed right: 'Yes—there's not much doubt about that.'

A look of terror came into Lydia's eyes.

'Will they—hang me?' she gasped painfully. 'Father, I did not mean to kill him. You won't let them take me away?'

For a moment Dr. Strong's heart stood still.

Then he pulled himself together with an effort.

'You are wandering, Lydia, you don't know what you are talking about,' he began, but his words died away at the look on his daughter's face.

'I must tell you how it was father. I have deceived you terribly. I loved him—Mario—and I believed he loved me, but on Tuesday, I fancied he was deceiving me, and, when I asked him to meet me between six and seven, he would not. Then I knew my suspicions were true. I followed him and heard him sneer at my love; heard him tell another girl I had flung myself at his head, and then I think I must have gone mad. There was a heap of flints at my feet, and as soon as she had gone, I flung one at him. I did not mean to kill

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'Who is it?' asked Mrs. Strong, in awe-struck tones.

'That Italian, Delmonti.'

'What a dreadful thing! Do they know who did it?'

'They seem to have pretty strong suspicions; but I would rather not discuss the matter.'

Mrs. Strong looked across at her daughter.

Lydia was deathly pale, and, believing she had had a penchant for the murdered man and be glad to digest the news of his untimely end in solitude, Mrs. Strong briskly asked her to run down stairs and see if the children were ready for school.

Lydia departed in silence.

She was sick with horror.

A sudden and awful fear was gnawing at her heart.

She turned faint and dizzy, a black mist seemed to come before her eyes, and she fell headlong down the stairs that led into the basement where was the children's 'den.'

The noise and the children's screams brought her parents in hot haste.

Dr. Strong's heart sank when he saw the position in which his eldest daughter lay.

Very gently they carried the unconscious girl into the 'den' and everything that was possible was done at once; but from the first the father knew the spine was injured and there was no hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE DEED WAS DONE.

If Elverton had been startled at the news of the tragedy that had taken place within its boundaries, it was still more amazed to hear that Lawyer Wilmer's daughter was suspected of knowing more about the matter than anyone else.

The coroner's court was crowded.

Everyone wanted to know the rights of the case, and keen eyes scrutinized the girl who was giving her evidence so clearly and quietly—evidence which, as everyone felt, was drawing suspicion more and more upon herself.

Even those whose belief in Bessie's innocence had been most strong were beginning to waver when the door was hastily opened, and a young man, excited and breathless, entered hastily.

Everyone recognised Dr. Strong's assistant.

He handed a sealed letter to the coroner.

'From Doctor Strong—about the murder.'

There was a sudden hush in the room.

Ted Armitage's heart almost stood still. Would this missive exonerate Bessie from all suspicion, or would it add yet another link in the terrible chain of evidence against her?

It seemed ages before the coroner handed the letter to the jury and turned to Bessie with a smile.

'We need trouble you with no more questions, Miss Wilmer,' he said, kindly; 'we have learned that the last person who saw Mario Delmonti alive was—Lydia Strong.'

Ted Armitage sprang up and made his way to Bessie's side.

'Come away, darling, come away,' he said, with something very like a sob in his voice, and there was a murmur of congratulation as the two made their way towards the door and stepped out into the sunlight—an omen of the bright future that stretched before them.

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him, never thought of such a thing, but I was angry. His words had hurt me so terribly that I felt I must hurt him, so I threw it with all my strength. It struck him on the temple, and he fell. I ran away then; but indeed I did not think he was dead—I did not mean to kill him. Father you won't let them take me to prison, will you?'

'You need not be afraid of that,' said Dr. Strong, huskily, and then, unable to control his feelings he rose and walked unsteadily out of the room.

Mabel Greyling's wish was granted. Her name did not transpire, and her letters and the marriage license, which were found amongst the murdered man's papers were returned to her through Mr. Armitage.

Lady Greyling wonders sometimes that her daughter seems so averse to all thought of marriage.

She does not know how utterly humiliated Mabel has felt since she discovered that the man who had tempted her to deceive her parents, the man to whom she had nearly linked her life, was but the son of an Italian restaurant-keeper, who had never been out of England in his life, and who was no more the Count of Trocadero than he was Prince of Wales.

A WISE WOMAN.

Was Mrs. Hattie M. Morris of Burts Corners, York County, N. B.

She Needed Some Medicine for the Kidneys, and she Took Dodd's Kidney Pills—She was Not Deceived by the False Pretensions of Imitators.

BURTS CORNERS, Nov. 6.—Mrs. Hattie M. Morris, of this place, in her capacity of mistress of an hotel and general store, is known throughout this district as a woman of such shrewd business ability as is possessed but by few of her sex. This shrewdness did not desert Mrs. Morris when a little while ago she lost her health. Many women, and men too, for that matter, experiment with the various imitations of Dodd's Kidney Pills, thinking that because a medicine is cheaper, or is put up in the same kind of a box, or bears a similar name, it is liable to be better, or just as good as the original. Mrs. Morris had too much business experience for that. She writes:

'A year ago I had occasion to use some medicine. I resolved to try Dodd's Kidney Pills, thinking they would be what I required, and in that respect I was not disappointed. For some time I had been so run down in strength and ambition that everything I had to do seemed a drag. I had no ambition to get up from a chair to attend to my household affairs, and, though of course, I had to do it, it felt like a punishment to move. I did not look sickly, being stout, but I must say I had no energy to do the smallest thing around the hotel. I used three boxes of Dodd's Kidney Pills, and can heartily recommend them for that dull, heavy, do-nothing kind of a tired feeling. They give you the right kind of snap and push, and fill you with a determination to get around and do something. We keep a store here and a hotel, and I can now do all my work with pleasure and light-heartedness.'

In the Golden Future.

Park Policeman—Kape out! Yez can't come in here wid that dog!

The Other Man—Why not?

'It's agin the rules. How can we kape the park clean an the roadways smooth if we let the dirty baists in? Dhrive out o' here now!'

A WOMAN'S NERVE.

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Miss Annie Patterson, of Sackville, N. B., writes: 'Indigestion and weak nerves were the bugbears of my life for years. I tried doctors and proprietary medicines till I completely lost heart. Being induced by a friend to try South American Nerve, after taking one bottle I was greatly relieved. Three bottles effected a complete cure. I can recommend it as a valuable remedy and believe it to be the best nerve and stomach tonic in the world.' Sold by E. C. Brown.

Didn't Leak.

'It seems to me,' remarked the prospective tenant as he noted four inches of water in the basement, 'that this cellar leaks.'

'Leaks? Not a bit of it,' spoke up the hustling agent. 'Why, that water's been there for a month, and not a drop has escaped.'

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