

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

At that moment the girl entered the room with the tea-tray.

'Bring tea for two, ordered Stanton.

'And I shall want my bill this evening, as I am running up to London.'

Then, as the two men sat over the meal, Stanton became communicative.

'I'm bound to warn you,' began the detective that—

'It's all right,' laughed Stanton. 'I have nothing to conceal. An innocent man need not fear the law.'

And he gave his version of the affair with such plausibility that the detective was completely taken off his guard, though for all that, he meant to keep a keen watch over his prisoner.

Now, I will just pack my portmanteau,' said Stanton, later. 'You had better come with me to make sure I don't bolt.'

'I'm afraid I'll have to do so, sir.'

'Afraid! Nonsense man. I understand your position.'

'And, leaving the room, he sprang up the stairs.

Entering his bedroom, he slammed the door, and turned the key.

As the detective banged at the door, Stanton stepped to the window, flung it up, and, climbing through, dropped to the ground; then, unharmed by the fall, he fled into the darkness.

A fog had risen, so dense that, when, Stanton had climbed the fence at the bottom of the garden, he could no longer see the lights of the inn.

He did not know what direction he was taking, but cared nothing for this, so long as he escaped arrest.

At last he stopped to listen.

He could hear the distant barking of a dog, then the sound of men's voices urged him on.

Several times he stumbled over the broken ground, but, quickly rising, he continued his flight until the voices had died away in the distance.

Now he stopped, and gazed around helplessly in the dense fog, but he could scarcely see a foot before him, and could only wander on, trusting to chance.

Half-an-hour or more passed by.

He heard a distant roar, and guessed it was the London train.

This gave him hope.

The detective, who would certainly keep his own counsel, might think he had taken this train to London, and follow.

So Stanton once more continued his flight, though now at a walking pace.

He was crossing some low-lying ground where the fog was even denser, when suddenly he stepped into space, to plunge into the river.

He rose to the surface, and shrieking for the help which could never come to him, beat the black waters into foam.

The bank was but a few feet from him, yet, being unable to swim, he could never reach it, and the swift tide swept him down until it flung his lifeless body on the muddy shore.

Muriel slept little that night, and when she entered the breakfast room the following morning, her aunt was already there.

They rang the bell for breakfast, and the servant entered the room in a state of great excitement.

'If you please, miss, there has been a horrible murder. At least, he ain't quite certain whether it's murder or suicide. But the postman heard it as he come along. They have just got his corpse out of the river, and he says as he might have fell in by accident.'

'Whatever do you mean, Mary?' exclaimed Miss Neal.

'Oh! miss, ain't it shocking? He has just brought this letter, and—'

'You are talking utter nonsense,' said Miss Neal sternly. 'If the postman has been drowned, how could he bring a letter?'

'Lor, miss, I never said that. I said the corpse had been drowned. It's a stranger, but they have found some letters in his pocket addressed to James Stanton, and the policeman thinks as he will be able to discover who the man is from this clue. Ain't it wonderful how clever them police—'

'Lor! Miss Muriel, what's—'

'Go and get a glass of water,' ordered Miss Neal.

Then, when the excited girl had gone, the old lady placed her arm round Muriel's slender waist, and murmured—

'There, there, my dear child! Pray, be calm, Muriel. For Heaven's sake do not look like that! Why does not that stupid girl bring—Oh, that you, Mary; you may go.'

Half an hour later, Miss Neal drove to the village, and entered the inn, where the body lay.

'I think he must have fell in the dark, miss,' said the constable. 'It was awful foggy last night, and I says to myself says I—'

'Show me into the room,' said Miss Neal.

The constable opened the door, and the old lady stepped towards the lifeless form.

For some moments she stood gazing at the rigid face.

Then, turning, she left the apartment, and placed a sovereign in the constable's hand as she passed him.

Muriel was standing by the drawing-room window when her aunt returned to Hazlemere.

The old lady placed her arm round her niece.

'It is he, Muriel, and he is dead!'

CHAPTER VI.

'Don't you know me?' murmured Muriel, placing her trembling hand upon his arm.

'Yes!' answered Hugh; 'I recognise that voice. It is Muriel's. You will always be Muriel to me. It is kind of you to come to me in my misery. I promised your aunt that I would never see you again. I shall not break that promise. Heaven help me!'

'I have come to tell you why I could not listen to you,' said Muriel. 'I wish to reveal the mystery of my life. It was by a strange chance that we heard of your terrible affliction which gives me courage enough to speak as I am about to do.'

'You must know that I was brought up by my step father, who, although not actually unkind to me, was always very stern. My only brother quarrelled with him, and left the country.'

'My own father had left a large fortune to be divided between us, so that my brother who was then of age, could please himself as to where he lived. I was only seventeen, and my mother having been dead some years I was under the guardianship of my step-father.'

'About this time he frequently brought a young friend named James Stanton to the house. This man showed me marked attention, and one day he asked me to become his wife.'

'I thought he truly loved me, and I gave my consent. My step father who was very anxious for the marriage to take place, did all in his power to urge it on, and he induced me to name an early date. Then I wrote to my brother, telling him that I was to be married the following month.'

'No one could have been kinder to me than was James Stanton, and I tried to convince myself that I really loved him. The dreadful day arrived all too quickly, and one morning, the most miserable one in my life, I became James Stanton's wife. The ceremony was scarcely completed, when my brother hurriedly entered the church.'

'I have travelled night and day to be in time to stop this marriage,' he said. 'Heaven grant that I am not too late!'

'But he was too late. By James Stanton's face I knew that he dreaded what my brother would reveal, and so I am sure my step-father did.'

'That man,' cried my brother pointing to Stanton, 'is an adventurer and a common thief. He is a forger, too. He is a great villain, but not such a villain as is this other man who know James Stanton's character, his object in marrying my sister to him, being doubtless, that between them they may rob her of her inheritance.'

'You must be made!' said Stanton, who was deadly white, and on whose face guilt was clearly stamped. Besides you forget where you are.'

'Quite true answered my brother. 'I should like a word with you in private.'

'They left the church together, and until the other morning, I never saw the man, who in the eyes of the law was my husband again. I believe my brother struck him. At any rate they fought a duel, and the news was brought me that my dear brother was shot through the heart.'

'This was in Mexico, where dueling is thought little of and the law did not touch the murderer. I never returned to my step-father's house but went to live with my aunt. We left the country so that I might never see that fearful man. I never saw him again until the morning of the day on which he died. He then told me that you had given him my address.'

'That was not true,' said Hugh; 'but I was talking of you to Inez, the young girl to whom your poor brother was engaged, and I think that man Stanton overheard our conversation.'

'I did not believe his words,' continued Muriel. 'I have since received a letter from my brother, who was not killed, as all these years I had believed. He was placed in prison, and a brave man helped him to escape. Now Inez is his bride, and they are on their way to England. Inez has also written to me, telling how you saved her life, and also saying that she believes it was you who rescued Jack from that dreadful prison.'

'I helped to do so,' said Hugh, 'though I had no idea he was your brother.'

'It was an action worthy of you,' continued Muriel. 'Stanton met his death on the very day that he met me at Hazlemere. Of course, by law, I was his wife, though I have never borne his name. But now death has released me from the fatal contract.'

'Muriel!' exclaimed Hugh, taking her trembling hand, 'was this the only barrier between us? Can it be that you love me?'

'I love you, Hugh,' she whispered.

'That knowledge will at least brighten the darkness of my life,' exclaimed Hugh. 'I told you that I loved you. That was true dear Muriel. I love you far too well to bring trouble to you, and though I believe you would make a great sacrifice for my sake, it shall never be. I will bear my burden alone, and the knowledge that I have your love will lighten it. My prayers will ever be that your future life may prove as bright and happy as in the past it has been miserable. Heaven bless you, Muriel.'

'Then she left him, and for many hours he sat alone; but the old church clock seemed to chime faster now; the expression of anguish upon his face changed to a look of peace.

'That he was loved by Muriel and had her gentle pity calmed the agony of his mind.

He felt that he had acted rightly for her happiness, and, however much the sacrifice cost him, he determined not to blight her life with his calamity.

The day passed by, and the blackness of night settled over the great city.

The moaning wind grew louder, until it howled round the dreary garret.

For a long time Hugh sat listening to the rising gale; then, entering the adjoining room, he threw himself upon his bed, and his sightless eyes closed in sleep.

The storm grew fiercer, but he no longer heard it, and he lay so still that it seemed as though the shadow of Death was upon him.

Hour after hour the old clock chimed; then the storm died away.

Day dawned.

A stream of sunlight came through the little window, and as the clock tolled forth the hours, that stream of brightness stole onwards towards the sleeper's face.

At last it spread its golden light upon him, his eyes opened; then, with a thrilling cry, he leapt from the bed.

For he saw that sunlight!

He sprang to the window, and gazed at the deep blue heavens. His sight had returned as suddenly as it had left him.

It appeared to him that he had never seen so clearly, and, in his heartfelt gratitude, he knelt in the golden light and prayed more fervently than he had ever prayed before.

Presently he went out, and walked on until he came to the park.

Here the sweet smell of the grass reminded him of Hazlemere, and very soon he was journeying thither.

Tempted by the brightness of the day, Muriel wandered round the grounds of the old mansion.

Her heart was very sad by reason of the terrible affliction that had befallen the man whom she loved so dearly.

Seating herself in the summer house, she looked out on the sunlit lawn, and her blue eyes filled with tears.

She hastily wiped them away, for a footstep sounded on the gravel path—a quick footstep, which she knew was not her aunt's.

A tall form darkened the entrance to the summer house.

Muriel looked up, then she uttered a cry of joy, for Hugh stood before her.

In that instant their eyes met, then Muriel was clasped in her lover's arms, and his lips were pressed to hers.

'My Muriel!' he cried. 'Will you be mine for all time?'

'Yes, dear Hugh,' she murmured. 'You have won my heart.'

'This happiness is greater than I deserve little Muriel,' he said presently. 'I will try to make myself worthy to be your husband. I will gain fame and wealth. Your lovely face shall be my first picture. Do you know what perfect happiness is.'

And Muriel answered—

'Yes.'

The weeks of happiness passed by.

Jack returned with his beautiful bride, and Hugh and he became the closest friends, while Inez regarded the young artist as a hero.

Since those bright days Hugh Allingham had gained both fame and wealth.

The picture he painted of Muriel satisfied even his critical eye.

She was looking from a bower of roses, and he had caught the laughing light in her beautiful eyes exactly.

Hugh called his picture 'The Artist's Bride.'

Then one morning, when the earth was beautiful with the summer flowers, the bells in the old church tower pealed forth merrily as Hugh led his blushing bride from the altar.

Their happiness was complete.

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A "Slim" Lieutenant.

One day the officer commanding a Sussex volunteer regiment met one of his lieutenants on the rifle range. The lieutenant was shooting, and he 'called' each shot as he fired without waiting for the markers to signal the result.

'You're a pretty good guesser,' said the colonel. 'Why don't you admit you're guessing where those shots land?'

'I bet you a box of cigars,' said the junior, 'that I can call twenty shots correctly in succession.'

'Taken!' said the old warrior, who was nothing if not a sportsman.

'Miss,' he announced, and a red flag from the target told that this was correct. Another shot. 'Miss,' he declared. A third shot. 'Miss again,' he said. Fourth shot. 'Fourth miss,' answered the young officer. Another shot. Miss again, sang out the lieutenant.

'Hold on there!' put in the colonel. 'What are you trying to do? I thought you were going to fire at the target.'

'I am trying to win my box of cigars,' said the lieutenant.

'Don't fire any more, said the colonel; 'they're yours.'

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'There's one peculiar feature about the trust business.'

'What?'

'Those interested in it don't need it.'

'Don't need what?'

'Trust. They can pay cash.'

Editor—Your narrative is too bald. Author—Very well. I will introduce some hair-raising incidents.

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Experience of a Sharp Lawyer With Victims of a Railroad Wreck.

'When I first put out my shingle,' said a New Orleans lawyer, putting his heels on the desk for a little chat, 'I made up my mind firmly that I would allow no opportunity to pass me by on account of diffidence, says the New Orleans Times-Democrat. No matter where I saw a chance to improve I would nail it on the spot—or as near the spot as possible. Well, I was still full of this youthful and very admirable enthusiasm when something—it wasn't business—called me to Washington, and on the way up our train met with an accident. It happened just about dusk, and was not very extensive, confined in fact to the derailing and upsetting of one empty day coach; but as bad luck would have it, two men were crossing the platform at the time, and both were rather painfully hurt. One had his hip sprained and received several cuts and the other got some ugly contusions and a four-inch scalp wound. They were taken into the sleeper and made as comfortable as possible, while some of the train crew started off with the engine to get help. One could see at glance continued the lawyer reflectively, 'that the victims of the accident were men in well to do circumstances. The one with the sprained hip was middle aged and gray and the other was considerable younger, but they both had the air of business men or upper class employees. Sitting near by in the sleeper, it suddenly flashed into my mind that here was the chance of my life to get solid with a big corporation. I remembered, as by inspiration, a story I had once read of a young station agent who was one of the first people at a great railroad wreck and who had gone immediately among the injured and secured written agreements of compromise from all of them at cut rates. He acted solely on his own responsibility, but he saved the road so much money that he was made receiver or sixteenth vice president or something else equally good and fat, and lived happily ever after. Providence seemed to have chuckled a similar opportunity on a small scale on my own head. Here was two well dressed men injured plenty for jury purposes! As soon as they reached town damage suit shysters would undoubtedly take them in hand and the road would have a couple of mighty dangerous actions to defend. Suppose I nipped the thing in the bud by securing a favorable agreement to compromise!'

'I had to admit,' the lawyer went on, 'that it seemed pretty nervy to tackle the sufferers before their wounds were dressed, but I remember my resolution, I dashed off a brief agreement in blank in my notebook and walked over to where they were lying. 'Excuse me, sir,' I said to the elder man, 'I know you are in pain and I am going to waste no words but come straight to the point. 'Such mishaps as yours usually mean damage suits, with endless litigation, in which the lawyers get all the money, how would you like to avoid all that, that now by agreeing on a mutually satisfactory figure of compromise? As I made my little talk, both men stared at me in evident amazement, but that gave me no surprise, for my proposition was certainly unusual. 'Are you authorized to make us this offer?' said the middle-aged man, finally. 'Well—er—yes,' I replied, 'giving my conscience a severe wrench; [any] terms you may make with me will be ratified.' He reflected a few moments and then turned to his companion. 'What d'ye think about it?' he asked, 'I don't feel very vindictive, do you?' 'No,' replied the young man, 'I'm not especially hostile. I'd settle for considerably less than the bounded indebtedness.' 'Suppose you mention a figure?' said I, blandly. 'All right,' replied the old man, 'what do you think of \$15 and a new suit of clothes?' I could hardly believe my ears, because I had expected him to demand \$500 at the very least, and, needless to say, I snapped at the proposition. 'I

think I can assure, positively,' said I, 'that your offer will be accepted and carried out as soon as it reaches the general offices. Kindly sign this agreement and I'll forward it at once.'

He put his signature at the foot of my penciled memoranda, and I turned to the younger man. 'Oh, well,' said he anticipating my question, 'I don't want to be hoggish about this thing. If agreeable to you just put me down for the same—\$15 and a suit of clothes; nothing ready made, by the way, but a good ordinary business suit.' 'You shall have it!' I assured him, overjoyed at the extraordinary success of my play, and he also signed the agreement. Then I slipped away, so they wouldn't have a chance to make other conditions, and waited anxiously for the relief train. It arrived in a couple of hours, and with it was the division superintendent. I rushed up the track to meet him. 'I want to notify you to pay no attention to damage suit lawyers when we get to town,' I exclaimed excitedly, 'because I have already secured an agreement from both men to settle for \$15 and a suit of clothes!' 'The dickens you have!' he bellowed; 'why, you contounded blubbering idiot, that's our new general manager and his secretary!'

Two Much Hair.

for a man, is what Paderewski has, but you have too little and are worse off. You will soon have less if you do not use Dr. White's Electric Comb. Sold on a written guarantee to cure all scalp ailments, at the same price you pay for combs that break up. Send for one 60c. D. N. Rose, Gen. Mgr., Decatur, Ill.

Brother Dickey's Ideas.

'I hez hearn tell dat some er de big mens made big money outen de Wall street mix-up lately,' said Brother Dickey, 'en furder mo' dat some er dem los' big money dar. I ain't gollin' 'bout dat—on' way or 'ter; le'm make all dey kin, en lose all dey kin'—hit makes no sturbance in my family. But I does want ter say one ting en dat ain't two; is it right ter let a man win en lose in de Wall street game en go free afterwards, en den tu'n round en arres' me en five er my holiness deacons fer playin' seven-up on Saturday night fer one nickel a corner? Dat's a plain question, en all I wants is a plain answer ter it—dat's what!'

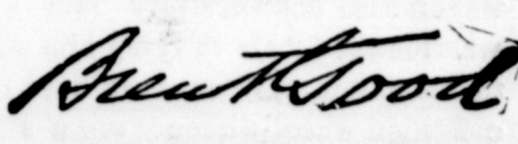
The Mermaid sat on the silvery sand combing her hair with a golden comb. If she had been wise, she would have used Dr. White's Electric Comb; it would have prevented her hair falling out and cured her dandruff. Unbreakable, always clean and ready for use. Sent upon receipt of price, 60c (stamps taken). D. N. Rose, Gen. Mgr., Decatur, Ill.

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