

POETRY.

MR. PETERS' CITY RELATIONS.

I don't know how it is, but I don't seem to get on well. With them of my relations that down in the city dwell—

SELECT STORY.

A TREVOR COURT TRAGEDY.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM TRIVIAL CAUSES, GIANT ISSUES SPRING.

CONTINUED.

It was not long before she, as well as the rest of Gately Regis, knew all. Suddenly the news burst like a thunder-clap upon the village, that Oliver West had been arrested for the murder of Sir Philip Trevor.

After the Dering had left the cottage, Miss Amelia Plowman engaged Ellen, their maid, as housemaid at the vicarage. She was incompetent and stupid; but with the instinct of a born scandal-monger, Miss Plowman knew that by pumping the girl a good many trifling particulars might be elicited, to do with as she pleased.

She sobbed and talked to herself at night, so she can't get a wink of sleep. It's my opinion that something on her mind, and I see it myself, m'm, as you ought to know," she added.

Miss Plowman said nothing. But some days after, calling the girl into the study, she subjected her to a severe cross-examination, backed up with hints of the most awe-inspiring kind, of the late and unfortunate Oliver West.

At first Ellen was obstinately dumb. Then suddenly she muttered, as she cast down her eyes and twisted her apron with hot, nervous fingers—

"Do you mean as how they would hang me, if I know'd who killed somebody and didn't tell of them?"

"It is very probable," said Miss Plowman, who held the convenient doctrine that occasionally a crime is justified by the means, and so quieted her conscience by this enlargement of the truth.

Ellen could bear the strain no longer. That night, with floods of tears, and many incoherent, wild exclamations, she was given up to the police, she told her master and mistress of the words she had overheard Oliver West say, when trying to rouse Miss Dering from her swoon—

lay in prison charged with having committed the murder at Trevor Court.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

The words in all their solemnity, fell terrible, awe-inspiring, on a silence the most profound.

It was ill-fated, and the court was crowded with a dense mass of people, packed from floor to ceiling with human beings, their eyes, excited faces all bent in one direction; whose hearts throbbed with that strange cruelty and curiosity which, centuries ago, brought thousands to the amphitheatre to see brave men butchered for a moment's sport.

But this time, it was only one man upon whom all eyes were turned.

The prisoner at the bar stood as though carved out of marble. His stern, aquiline face neither blanch nor moved a muscle, even when the summing up of the judge showed all too plainly what the verdict must be.

Not quite. The counsel for the crown was chivalrous and impressive—a well-known admirer of the fair sex, though at middle age, a bachelor still.

His cross-examination was courteous and marked by no unnecessary harrowing of the witness's feelings; all it elicited, was the fact damaging to Oliver, that the two men had been rival suitors for her hand.

Every word that Kathleen uttered, was drawn from her in terror lest she should, by some unconscious answer to this close questioning, help to imperil Oliver's life.

She suffered agonies of mind until they allowed her to go.

After the doctor's arrest, the will, dated the day of the murder, bequeathing all to Miss Dering, was found upon him. It was produced in court, where it deepened the adverse impression against the prisoner, as did the evidence, given unwillingly enough, by his servants, of the strangeness of their master's manner on the evening of the tragedy.

Their attempt to screen Oliver, by trying to make Ellen suppress what she knew, also did more harm than good, and Robert's vehement assertion that he knew the girl was telling lies, availed nothing against Oliver's own statement, that he had really used the words reported.

The counsel appointed by the crown for the defence, groaned inwardly. His was a thankless task. Dr. West had refused to employ an advocate in his own case, and his peculiar nature excited great attention, the belief was universal that Oliver West was the murderer of Sir Philip Trevor.

of surprise dawned on every face, and a gray-haired, shabby little man, who sat near her started and muttered something under his breath—Lady Trevor is the name that I have borne for the last ten years. Even Dr. Bell, under whose charge I have been for so long, bears the truth now for the first time.

For the accidental discovery that the only person on earth to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, was to suffer for my crime."

She paused for a moment. There was dead silence in the court. Kathleen Dering looked across at Oliver West. His gaze was fixed with intensity on the woman, Marquita Lopez. As she spoke, a faint light struggled through the gloom of memory. He believed that he had seen her before.

"I will tell you the whole story," she continued, in answer to the formal questions of the counsel. "When, long ago, I met and loved Philip Trevor, my husband Pepito Lopez, was still living, though I passed on the stage as a single woman."

"We were only married for a few months, when I found out the brutal, depraved nature of the man to whom I was pledged, and I refused to live with him, making him a handsome allowance out of my earnings to be silent as to the which bound me to him."

"I went through the form of marriage with Philip Trevor, as in the flush of his boyish passion, he insisted on it, and was almost happy for a time. Alas! I soon discovered that, though Sir Philip lacked outwardly the coarse brutality of Pepito, my second venture was little better than the first. The man who had been my ardent lover, soon became cold and cold."

"Alas! I loved him still. As a dog will lick the hand which beats it, I dabbed myself to the dust to retain his favor. My secret was my own, and I hugged it to my breast, fancying that as long as Philip imagined I was legally his wife, he would not desert me utterly. Vain hope! To drown my misery, I became slave to a vice which I could not resist."

"I had long taken secretly, one day I attempted to stab my husband, for such I had ever regarded Philip Trevor. Pepito Lopez had been killed in a gambling brawl some time back, but Philip never knew of his existence, this made no difference in the relations between us. My rash act gave him a loophole he had been seeking for some time; to release himself from my hated presence, when he could not sever the tie that bound us. When I came to my senses, and was wild with remorse and shame, Philip pretended to forgive me, and said he would take me to England, where we would begin a new life together and forget the past. By a stratagem, he induced me to accompany him to a house at Ilford, saying Trevor Court was not quite ready to receive us. Tired with my journey, I slept heavily, waking late the next day to find Philip gone, and myself in the charge of Dr. Bell, whom you see here?"

"Did he ever smile, sadly, as he bowed his head to the judges' decree, without speaking?"

"Some thought so; others said that a look of relief, which was almost gladness, lit up the stern-lined face, as his glance fell for an instant on the opposite side of the court. Amongst others, Kathleen Dering sat there, her handkerchief over her eyes, as heavy sobs shook her frame. No one heeded her, the excitement was too intense. All attention was centred on the man who met his fate, well as he deserved it, almost like a hero."

"There were none present who forgot that moment, nor the strange scene which followed."

"The two wardens were about to remove the prisoner, when a shrill cry rang through the court—a cry which made every heart stand still—and even startled Oliver out of his icy calmness."

"Stop! in Heaven's name, I implore you! The prisoner is innocent!"

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"She (in affright)—Oh, Tom, why do you make such awful faces at me? He (continuing)—I can't help it, my dear. My eyeglasses are falling off and I don't want to let go of your hands."

"The doctor turned pale as he continued. "My housekeeper and her husband finally agreed to keep the whole thing a secret from me; Lady Trevor they knew was safe. Regarding me as her jailer, she always maintained a cold, disdainful silence towards me; and as I knew that she cherished a revengeful anger against her husband, for having caused her incarceration, I was somewhat surprised by the excess of agitation she displayed, when I acquainted her, as in duty bound, with his tragic fate. Her subsequent confession was, and is still almost incredible to me. That is why I brought her here, that its truth may be sifted, and an innocent man, if possible, cleared."

Dr. Bell sat down, and Lady, or rather Marquita Lopez, was further interrogated by the counsel for the crown. A sensation was caused by her pointing at someone in the body of the court, who had slouched his hat over his eyes and shrunk back as far as possible so soon as he recognized her. It was Job Hearn, the carrier.

"There is the man who found me on the moor and took me to Trevor Court. I hid in the shrubbery, and seeing a light through an open window, I cautiously stole towards it. The servants were laying the table for dinner; I saw the glitter of the glass and cutlery, and an evil thought came into my mind. At last; it seemed an eternity, both men went out of the room together. I gilded in noiselessly, and snatching up a knife from the table, hid myself behind the tapestry."

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