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FRANK MORTIMER,
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BY

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ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR!
IN ADVANCE.

The Greyson Mystery

—AND—

HOW IT WAS SOLVED.

BY F. D. L.

CONCLUDED.

SHORTLY afterwards, Father Greyson was carried back to his bed up stairs, it being evident that he only needed an opportunity to sleep off the effects of the opiate. Miss Wyndham, with characteristic obstinacy, took her stand by his bedside, and would not allow even Dote to share her vigils, declaring that she would watch alone.

Phil was indignant over this arrangement, but there seemed no other way than to humor her. Somebody must remain with the sick man through the night since there was no assurance he would not be molested a second time. Phil felt that the duty was his. He even told Honoria of the attempt that had already been made on Father Greyson. She listened with a blanched face, but remained perfectly unmoved.

"I am as well able to protect Mr. Greyson as you are," she said. "You can sleep with one ear open as the saying is. I promise to call you on the slightest alarm."

She would make no other concession. Nevertheless, Phil was determined not to go to bed again, and when the house was restored to something like quiet, he brought a book from the library, and sat down to its perusal.

Five minutes later, Rob, the coach-boy, came in with the message that Father Greyson wished to see him again. Really surprised, he hastened to his bedroom, finding him flushed and excited, while Honoria was trying in vain to quiet him. She looked up rather crossly.

"Mr. Greyson will not get a wink of sleep to-night, if you humor all his whims," she said.

"Don't mind her, Phil," whispered the poor old man. "She would not go for you but Rob happened to pass by the door, and I called to him."

"What can I do for you?"

"It is that paper," he said, querulously. "I have changed my mind about it. Dote must see it this very night. She must know my secret before I die, and then I can hear her say with her own lips that she forgives me. I want you to take it to her. Will you?"

"Yes."

"I would not trust it to any hands but yours, Phil, God bless you."

He laid the paper in Phil's palm. Miss Wyndham saw it, and a lurid light blazed suddenly in her eyes. She made a swift gesture as if she would gladly have torn it away from him, and then drew back, pale, cowering, desperate.

"Go away, Phil Meredith," she said, harshly. "If I am to be Mr. Greyson's nurse, I shall insist that he is not disturbed to-night."

Phil did go, wondering vaguely what had come over Honoria. Dote had not retired, and she immediately answered his tap at her door. He gave her the paper, briefly repeating Father Greyson's message and then went back to his book again.

It was with varied and conflicting emo-

tions that Dote Erricson received the paper which had been sent to her. She sat down, holding it in her hand, fully aware that Father Greyson's cherished secret was written out therein for her perusal, and yet hesitating to make herself mistress of it.

That secret had been a great puzzle to her, especially for the past day or two.—How long it had existed she did not know; perhaps for years, it might be for only a few weeks. And yet there had always been something peculiar in the manner of her adopted father towards herself. It had troubled her before now. At last the whole mystery was to be made clear.

The night was sultry, and her windows were wide open, as she sat revolving these thoughts. Every breath of air brought into the room wafts of perfume from the helleotropes and geraniums on the balcony outside. Her back was in that direction, and she sat facing a pier-glass that hung against the opposite wall.

Several minutes went by, perhaps ten or fifteen. She was falling into a reverie over that magic paper, when a slight rustling sound attracted her attention. Looking up, the next moment, she started suddenly to her feet, fairly dumb with horror, for she saw reflected in the glass a tall, ghostly form moving straight towards her from the open window.

At first she could neither move nor cry out—every faculty seemed paralyzed. Then controlling herself by a powerful effort, she faced slowly about, and the spectral form came to an abrupt pause.

She saw before her a small form draped in white, and black, burning eyes glaring at her from what seemed to be deep hollows in the face. A short, sharp scrutiny, such as only brave women could have given at such a time, soon convinced her that the ghostly lineaments on which she gazed were not the features of a human countenance at all, but of a mask.

This discovery sent the blood back to her heart again. Of a mortal visitant she had but very little dread. Help was near and could easily be summoned. At last she found voice.

"Who are you?" she asked. "Why are you here?"

The figure solemnly shook its head, with the evident intention of terrifying her more than ever. Seeing that the movement produced no such effect, probably, and that she was growing bolder every minute, it advanced a step or two, slowly raising one of its arms pointing to the paper she held in her hand, and saying in a deep, hollow voice that nevertheless had a strangely familiar sound:

"Theodosia Erricson, I am come for that paper and you must give it up."

Dote was fully herself now. The angry blood flushed her face hotly.

"I shall not," was her firm reply.

A low, mocking laugh broke upon her ear—a laugh horrible enough to have curdled one's blood.

"You do not know a single line that the paper contains?" her strange visitor asked.

"No."

"Then open it and satisfy your curiosity."

She made a defiant gesture. "I do not intend you shall frighten me from so doing by coming here in that masquerade costume," she said, slowly unfolding the document to show how determined she was.

As she had suspected, it was a letter from Father Greyson. "I am about to disclose to you the carefully-guarded secret of many years, dear Dote," it began. She had read this sentence and no more when she suddenly felt violent hands laid hold on her, a sponge that gave out a powerful and sickening odor was pressed firmly to her nostrils and held there; then a dizzy, dreamy sensation seemed to come upon her, and everything was blank.

When she came to a realizing sense of her condition, she was lying helpless upon the floor, in a strangely weak and languid state. Her visitor was gone, the lamp was

out, and worse than all the rest, that precious message of Father Greyson's was no where to be found when she finally staggered to her feet to look for it. The thief in the night had accomplished his or her object. For some reason, that letter seemed to be of value to somebody else, and had therefore been stolen from her.

With considerable difficulty she made her way to the closet, and took down a bottle of old wine that happened to be there.—Hastily swallowing half a glass, it had the effect of clearing her head, somewhat, and she had sense enough remaining to give the bell-ropes a smart pull.

The excitement of the evening had driven sleep from Phil, and he consequently sat till past midnight in the library trying to read.

The loud ringing of Dote's bell brought him suddenly to his feet. His first confused idea was that Father Greyson had fallen violently ill again, and Miss Wyndham was trying to summon assistance. On stepping into the hall, however, and observing which bell was in motion, his alarm took a new direction.

"What can have happened to Dote?" he thought, darting up stairs at the top of his speed.

She was seated in a chair beside the table, when he reached her apartment, very pale and in deep distress.

"Father Greyson's letter!" she cried out to him, helplessly. "Somebody has come into the room and taken it. O, Phil, what shall I do?"

The truth flashed suddenly upon his mind. The mysterious personage who had attempted to prey upon both Father Greyson and himself had become aware of the transfer of the paper, and therefore paid Dote a visit, thus succeeding in accomplishing his or her base design at last. Why had he not put her on her guard?

"O, Dote," he exclaimed, standing before her whiter and more shaken than she was herself, "this house is haunted by a devil, to-night. I might have warned you, and thus have spared you what you must have suffered."

"Never mind, Phil," she said, sweetly, taking his hand and holding tight to it while she told him all that had occurred, but in low tones, for the servants were already thronging in to learn what was the matter, and she did not care to have them hear the ghostly recital. It was scarcely concluded when a scream from Mrs. Henderson, who had crossed the hall to enter Father Greyson's bed-room, echoed suddenly through the house, calling them all in that direction, and awakening fresh fears in poor Phil's mind.

It was a sad sight they looked upon the next moment—the culminating horror of that wretched night. Father Greyson lay on his couch, stiff, dead! The first sight of his ghastly face was enough to show them that. Honoria Wyndham had fallen forward among a pile of cushions beside the bed, and lay there writhing and moaning like one in a fit.

I do not like to dwell on the scene that followed—Dote's despair, Phil's grief, the cries and sobs of the servants, and the general confusion that prevailed. Suffice it to say Honoria soon recovered from the effects of the chloroform, (for that deadly opiate had been at work here as well as elsewhere in the house, that night,) and was enabled to answer their eager inquiries. But she could throw no light on the manner in which the drug had been administered to herself, or, at least, such was her declaration. She thought somebody must have stolen stealthily upon her from behind.

When the first stupefaction was over, and she realized that Father Greyson was really dead, she threw herself on the couch beside him, giving away to the most violent demonstrations of grief. Her cries and shrieks were enough to frighten one.

"My husband! my dear, dear husband!" she moaned. "Have you no word of com-

fort for me—no last tender message of love? Have you died without so much as confessing your secret and mine? God pity me—God help and pity."

There were curious, startled looks on every face. Dote sank shivering into the nearest chair. Phil seemed like a person in a dream as he stooped to raise the sorrowing woman.

"You are beside yourself with grief—you do not know what you are saying," he began. "Let me entreat you to be calm."

"O, Phil," she cried, "that man was my husband. Old and gray as he was I loved him. We were afraid of you and Dote, and we were married in secret. Great God! that he should be taken from me like this!"

She wrung her hands in a convulsive fit of weeping. Dote, sitting in a chair close by seemed like a statue carved in stone. She drew her hand once or twice across her brow, and then got up slowly, looking into Honoria's face with a steady, burning gaze.

"What are your proofs of the romantic story with which you have been entertaining us?" she asked, in a clear, cold voice.

A resentful flush crept into Honoria's face, but she preserved perfect self-control.

"This ought to be sufficient evidence," she said, taking a marriage-certificate from her bosom, and spreading it open before Dote and Phil. "I wanted to tell you in the first place, but Mr. Greyson would not hear to it. He knew you would be angry, and has kept putting it off. He wrote out a confession, though, and sent it to you to-night, Dote. Can you deny that?"

Poor girl, she could not. With a face white as was that of the dead man, she tottered to the door, turning to wring Phil's hand as he followed her, and to say, in a broken voice—

"But we will at least try if surgical aid will not bring him to us again and then we can hear the story from his own lips."

A physician was accordingly sent for from the nearest village, who made futile efforts to restore Father Greyson to life. His decision was that the deceased had come to his death from an overdose of chloroform. The weakened state of his system had probably helped to render the effect of the drug fatal. By whom it had been administered, and for what purpose was still a matter for conjecture.

After the strange revelation that had been made, Phil would have suspected Honoria but for the fact that she, too, was found to have been put under the influence of the same opiate. If she was really Father Greyson's widow, (and he could not deny the evidence of the certificate in her possession,) she had married him for his money, no matter what she might say to the contrary; and what was more probable under such circumstances, than that she should seek to make away with a life that stood between her and half a million?

But the insensible condition in which she had been discovered by those who first entered Father Greyson's bedroom, seemed conclusively to prove that the foul deed had been committed by some person outside of the household. It was even uncertain whether there had been an intent to kill, or merely to cause insensibility. A profound mystery enveloped the whole affair.

Early on the following morning, Mr. Arthur Clayton and Mr. Green, the family solicitor, come over from the village. Both expressed the deepest consternation respecting the singular events that had transpired during the night. The latter immediately set about putting the papers of the deceased to rights. At the end of half an hour Phil and Dote were summoned to the library, when he communicated the startling intelligence that the will which he had drawn up less than a year previously was nowhere to be found, nor was there any other to supply its place.

This was singular to say the least. Mr.

Clayton, being present, suggested a word in explanation.

"Mr. Greyson must have destroyed the will when he married Miss Wyndham. He probably intended to draw up another."

Mr. Green gave a dissatisfied grunt. "Some very singular circumstances have transpired in this house that ought to be inquired into, and that will be," he said.

Mr. Clayton nodded approval. "Your duty in the matter is very clear sir. May I ask what were the terms of the missing will?"

"The property of the deceased was to be equally divided between Mr. Meredith and Miss Erricson.

For several minutes there was silence in the room, which was suddenly broken by Dote saying sharply, "Phil I don't believe Father Greyson ever married that woman. I have been thinking it all over. That was not the revelation he had to make. I read the first line of his letter, and it said the secret was one he had kept for many years. This matter is of recent occurrence."

The lawyer looked up, keen and quick. Mr. Clayton changed color, and seemed startled.

"The matter ought to be thoroughly investigated," the latter remarked, trying to appear unconcerned. "Many a woman would perjure her soul for half a million. You must test the validity of the marriage certificate."

"Humph! yes," grunted Mr. Green. "That shall be my work," cried Phil. "I cannot sit by and see Dote's inheritance as well as my own snatched from us by a comparative stranger."

"Am I to understand that if the certificate is genuine, neither Mr. Meredith nor Miss Erricson can claim any part of the property left by their adopted father?" put in Mr. Clayton.

"Such is the fact. Unfortunately, the adoption was never made legal, and in the absence of a will, the property falls to the widow, if widow there be.

Phil felt the full force of this remark.—The certificate was given by the clergyman of a village some ten miles away. He ordered a horse to be saddled and rode directly thither. Dote awaited his return with feverish impatience. Several hours dragged by. When he first made his appearance far down the avenue, she saw him, and ran out to meet him.

"O, Phil," she cried, "what have you learned?"

"All is lost, dear Dote," he said, unsteadily. "The clergyman remembered the parties perfectly. They came to his house late one evening, and seemed in a great hurry. He could not identify the man, though he describes him as being old and decrepid, and evidently suffering from ill-health, for he was closely muffled. He gave an accurate description of the lady, however, one that tallies exactly with Miss Wyndham's appearance."

Neither could recall the prolonged absence of the parties in question during the day when the certificate was dated. But they made frequent excursions together, and such an absence might have passed unnoticed.

Honoria met them, as they walked slowly up the path. Her eyes were red and swollen, and her hands trembled as she extended one to each.

"Forgive me for having deceived you so," she plead, in a tremulous voice. "It was not my wish, but his. And do not think I want all this money, and am ungrateful enough to turn two such friends away penniless. I shall immediately take steps for having fifty thousand dollars settled on each of you."

Both Dote and Phil felt this was only offered as a bribe to prevent any further attempt to investigate the matter of the marriage, and made them consequently the more certain that the terrible mystery would yet be made plain if proper steps were taken. As there was no deceit in either