

# The Filigree Ball

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That she could stand and face that lady never so much as occurred to her. Her own guilty consciousness made her cheeks too hot for her to wish to meet an eye which had never rested on her any too kindly; so noticing how straight the curtains fell over one of the windows on the opposite side of the room, she dashed toward it and slipped in out of sight just as Miss Tuttle came in. This window was one seldom used, owing to the fact that it overlooked an adjoining wall, so she had no fear of Miss Tuttle approaching it. Consequently, she could stand there quite at her ease, and, as the curtains in falling behind her had not come quite together, she really could not help seeing what that lady did.

Here the witness paused with every appearance of looking for some token of disapprobation from the crowd.

But she encountered nothing there but eager anxiety for her to proceed, so without waiting for the coroner's question, she added in so many words: "She went first to the bookshelves."

We had expected it; but yet a general movement took place, and a few suppressed exclamations could be heard.

"And what did she do there?" "Took down a book, after looking carefully up and down the shelves."

"What color of book?"

"A green one with red figures on it. I could see the cover plainly as she took it down."

"Like this one?"

"Exactly like that one."

"And what did she do with this book?"

"Opened it, but not to read it. She was too quick in closing it for that."

"Did she take the book away?"

"No; she put it back on the shelf."

"After opening and closing it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see whether she put anything into the book?"

"I cannot swear that she did, but when her back was to me, and I could not have seen it if she had."

The implied suggestion caused some excitement, but the coroner, frowning

Loretta's testimony creates a sensation



on this, pressed the girl to continue, asking if Miss Tuttle left the room immediately after turning from the bookshelves. Loretta replied no; that, on the contrary, she stood for some minutes near them, gazing in what seemed like a great distress of mind straight upon the floor, after which she moved in an agitated way and with more than one anxious look behind her into the adjoining room, where she paused before a large bureau. As this bureau was devoted entirely to Mr. Jeffrey's use, Loretta experienced some surprise at seeing his wife's sister approach it in so stealthily a manner. Consequently she was watching with all her might when this young lady opened the upper drawer and with very evident emotion thrust her hand into it. What she took out or whether she took out anything this spy upon her movements could not say, for when Loretta heard the drawer being pushed back into place she drew the curtains close, perceiving that Miss Tuttle would have to face this window in coming back. However, she ventured upon one other peep through them just as that lady was leaving the room and remembered as if it were yesterday how clay white her face looked and how she held her left hand pressed close against the folds of her dress. It was but a few minutes after that Miss Tuttle left the house.

As we all knew what was kept in that drawer, the conclusion was obvious. She wished to see if her pistol was still there or if it had been taken away by her sister.

The temerity which had made it possible to associate the name of such a man as Francis Jeffrey with an outrageous crime having been thus in a measure explained, the coroner recalled that gentleman and again thoroughly surprised the gaping public.

Had the witness accompanied his wife to the Moore house?

"No."

Had he met her there by any appointment he had made with her or which had been made for them both by some third person?

"No."

Would he glance at this impression of certain finger tips which had been left in the dust of the southwest chamber mantel?

He had already noted them.

Now would he place his left hand on the paper and see—

"It is not necessary," he burst forth, in great heat. "I own to those marks.

That is, I have no doubt they were made by my hand." Here, unconsciously, his eyes flew to the member thus referred to, as if conscious that in some way it had proved a traitor to him; after which his gaze traveled slowly my way, with an indescribable question in it which roused my conscience and made the trick by which I had got the impression of his hand seem less of a triumph than I had heretofore considered it. The next minute he was answering the coroner under oath, very much as he had answered him in the unofficial interview at which I had been present.

"I acknowledge having been in the Moore house and even having been in its southwest chamber, but not at the time supposed. It was on the previous night." He went on to relate how, being in a nervous condition and having the key to this old dwelling in his pocket, he had amused himself by going through its dilapidated interior. All of this made a doubtful impression which was greatly emphasized when, in reply to the inquiry as to where he got the light to see by, he admitted that he had come upon a candle in an upstairs room and made use of that; though he could not remember what he had done with this candle afterward, and looked dazed and quite at sea, till the coroner suggested that he might have carried it into the closet of the room where his fingers had left their impression in the dust of the mantelshelf.

Then he broke down like a man from whom some prop is suddenly snatched and looked around for a seat. This was given him, while a silence, the most dreadful I ever experienced, held every one there in check. But he speedily rallied and, with the remark that he was a little confused in regard to the incidents of that night, waited with a wild look in his averted eye for the coroner's next question.

Unhappily for him, it was in continuation of the same subject. Had he bought candles or not at the grocer's around the corner? Yes, he had. Before visiting the house? Yes. Had he also bought matches? Yes. What kind? Common safety matches. Had he noticed when he got home that the box he had just bought was half empty? No. Nevertheless he had used many matches in going through this old house, had he not? Possibly. To light his way upstairs, perhaps? It might be. Had he not so used them? Yes. Why had he done so if he had candles in his pocket, which were so much easier to hold and so much more lasting than a lighted match? Ah, he could not say; he did not know; his mind was confused. He was awake when he should have been asleep. It was all a dream to him.

The coroner became still more persistent. "Did you enter the library on your solitary visit to this old house?" "I believe so."

"What did you do there?"

"Potted around. I don't remember."

"What light did you use?"

"A candle, I think."

"You must know."

"Well, I had a candle. It was in a candelabrum."

"What candle and what candelabrum?"

"The same I used upstairs, of course."

"And you cannot remember where you left this candle and candelabrum when you finally quitted the house?"

"No. I wasn't thinking about candles."

"What were you thinking about?"

"The rupture with my wife and the bad name of the house I was in."

"Oh! And this was on Tuesday night?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you prove this to us?"

"I cannot."

"But you swear!"

"I swear that it was Tuesday night, the night immediately preceding the one when—when my wife's death robbed me of all earthly happiness."

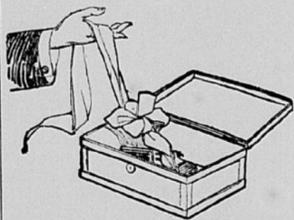
It was feelingly uttered, and several faces lightened; but the coroner repeating, "Is there no way you can prove this to our satisfaction?" the shadow settled again, and on no head more perceptibly than on that of the unfortunate witness.

It was now late in the day and the atmosphere of the room had become stifling, but no one seemed to be conscious of any discomfort, and a general gasp of excitement passed through the room when the coroner, taking out a box from under a pile of papers, disclosed to the general gaze the famous white ribbon with its dainty bow, lying on top of the fatal pistol.

That this special feature, the most interesting one of all connected with this tragedy, should have been kept so long in reserve and brought out just at this time, struck many of Mr. Jeffrey's closest friends as unnecessarily dramatic; but when the coroner, lifting out the ribbon, remarked tentatively, "You know this ribbon?" we were more struck by the involuntary cry of surprise which rose from some one in the crowd about the door than by the look with which Mr. Jeffrey eyed it and made the necessary reply. That cry had something more than nervous

excitement in it. Identifying the person who had uttered it as a certain busy little woman well known in town, I sent an officer to watch her; then recalled my attention to the point the coroner was attempting to make. He had forced Mr. Jeffrey to recognize the

The tell-tale ribbon



ribbon as the one which had fastened the pistol to his wife's arm. Now he asked whether, in his opinion, a woman could tie such a bow to her own wrist, and when in common justice Mr. Jeffrey was obliged to say no, waited a third time before he put the general suspicion again into words:

"Can you not, by some means or some witness, prove to us that it was on Tuesday night and not on Wednesday you spent the hours you speak of on this scene of your marriage and your wife's death?"

The hopelessness which more than once had marked Mr. Jeffrey's features since the beginning of this inquiry reappeared with renewed force as this suggestive question fell again upon his ears, and he was about to repeat his plea of forgetfulness when the coroner's attention was diverted by a request made in his ear by one of the detectives. In another moment Mr. Jeffrey had been waved aside and a new witness sworn in.

You can imagine every one's surprise, mine most of all, when this witness proved to be Uncle David.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I DO not know why the coroner had so long delayed to call this witness. What he said was in the way of confirming the last witness' testimony as to his having been at the Moore house on Tuesday evening. Mr. Moore, who was very particular as to dates and days, admitted that the light which he had seen in a certain window of his ancestral home on the evening when he summoned the police was but the repetition of one he had detected there the evening before. It was this repetition which alarmed him and caused him to break through all his usual habits and leave his home at night to notify the police.

The coroner asked him if he had seen Mr. Jeffrey go in on the night in question; if he had ever seen any one go in there since the wedding, or even if he had seen any one loitering about the steps or sneaking into the rear yard. But the answer was always no; these same noes growing more and more emphatic, and the gentleman more and more impenetrable and dignified as the examination went on. In fact, he was as unshakable a witness as I have ever heard testify before any jury. Beyond the fact already mentioned of his having observed a light in the opposite house on the two evenings in question he admitted nothing. His life in the little cottage was so engrossing, he had his organ, his dog, why should he look out of the window? Had it not been for his usual habit of letting his dog run the pavements for a quarter of an hour before finally locking up for the night he would not have seen as much as he did.

"Have you any stated hour for doing this?" the coroner now asked.

"Yes; half past 9."

"And was this the hour when you saw that light?"

"Yes; both times."

As he had appeared at the station house at a few minutes before 10, he was probably correct in this statement.

He wound up with such a distinct repetition of his former emphatic assertion as to the presence of light in the old house on Tuesday as well as Wednesday evening that Mr. Jeffrey's testimony in this regard received a decided confirmation. I looked to see some open recognition of this, when suddenly and with a persistence understood only by the police the coroner recalled Mr. Jeffrey and asked him what proof he had to offer that his visit of Tuesday had not been repeated the next night and that he was not in the building when that fatal trigger was pulled.

At this leading question a lawyer sitting near me edged himself forward as if he hoped for some sign from Mr. Jeffrey which would warrant him in interfering. But Mr. Jeffrey gave no such sign. I doubt if he even noticed this man's proximity, though he knew him well and had often employed him as his legal adviser in times gone by. He was evidently exerting himself to recall the name which so persistently eluded his memory, putting his hand to his head and showing the utmost confusion.

"I cannot give you one," he finally stammered. "There is a man who

A call for Tallman



could tell if only I could remember his name." Suddenly, with a loud cry which escaped him involuntarily, he gave a gurgling laugh, and we heard

the name "Tallman" leap from his lips.

The witness had at last remembered whom he had met at the cemetery gate at the hour or near the hour his wife lay dying in the lower part of the city.

The effect was electrical. One of the spectators—some country boor, no doubt—so far forgot himself as to cry out loud enough for all to hear:

"Tallman! Let us have Tallman!"

Of course he met with an instant rebuke, but I did not wait to hear it or to see order restored, for a glance from the coroner had already sent me to the door in search of this new witness.

My destination was the Cosmos club, for Phil Tallman and his habits and haunts were as well known in Washington as the figure of Liberty on the summit of the capitol dome. When I saw him I did not wonder. Never have

I seen a more amiable looking man or one with a more absentminded expression. To my query as to whether he had ever met Mr. Jeffrey at or near the entrance of Rock Creek cemetery he replied with an amazed look and the quick response:

"Of course I did. It was the very night that his wife— But what's up? You look excited for a detective."

"Come to the morgue and see. This testimony of yours will prove invaluable to Mr. Jeffrey."

The result was an absolute proof that Mr. Jeffrey had been near Soldiers' home as late as 7, which was barely fifteen minutes previous to the hour Mrs. Jeffrey's watch was stopped by her fall in the old house on Waver

Phil Tallman



ley avenue. As the distance between the two places could not be compassed in that time, Mr. Jeffrey's alibi could be regarded as established.

When we were all rising, glad of an adjournment which restored free movement and an open interchange of speech, a sudden check in the general rush called our attention back to Mr. Jeffrey. He was standing facing Miss Tuttle, who had fainted away, sitting upright in her chair.

## CHAPTER XV.

MR. JEFFREY'S examination and its triumphant conclusion created a great furore in town. What might be expected next? Something equally bold and reprehensible, of course, but what? It was a question which at the next sitting completely filled the inquest room.

To my great surprise Mr. Jeffrey was recalled to the stand.

Miss Tuttle sat in a less conspicuous position than on the previous day, and Mr. Moore, her uncle, was not there at all.

The testimony called for revived an old point which seemingly had not been settled to the coroner's satisfaction.

Had Mr. Jeffrey placed the small stand holding the candelabrum on the spot where it had been found? No. Had he carried into the house at the time of his acknowledged visit the candles which had been afterward discovered there? No. He had had time to think since his hesitating and unsatisfactory replies of the day before, and he was now in a position to say that, while he distinctly remembered buying candles on his way to the Moore house, he had not found them in his pocket on getting there and had been obliged to make use of the matches he always carried on his person in order to find his way to the upstairs room where he felt positive he would find a candle.

This gave the coroner an opportunity to ask:

"And why did you expect to find a candle there?"

The answer astonished me and, I have no doubt, many others:

"It was the room in which my wife had dressed for the ceremony. It had not been disturbed since that time. My wife had little ways of her own. One was to complete her toilet by using a curling iron on a little lock she wore over her temple. When at home, she heated this curling iron in the gas jet; but, there being no gas in the Moore house, I naturally concluded that she had made use of a candle, as the curl had been noticeable under her veil."

He had accounted for one candle in the house. Could he account for the one found in the tumbler or for the one lying crushed and battered on the closet floor?

He could not.

(To be continued next week)

Train up a child in the way he should go, but don't look for miracles in little minds. A child should be taught to tell the truth, but ought never to be punished to the extent of making him afraid to own up when it is against him. Another thing, the child ought never to catch his mentor in a lie or practicing any dissimulation whatever. White lies from policy may work with grown folks, but the young mind wants straight out truth. A child feels weak and helpless and needs to be surrounded by absolute truth and honesty as an anchorage against fear, which leads to dodging and deceit.

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