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with us. You have not been frank with us from the first. You have sought to blind us, to throw us off the track. Therefore I shall tell you what we already know in order that you may realize how useless it is for you to try to hold us off. We're going to see that the guilty man is punished, not for this crime alone, but also for that other one at the Marathon, of which you were the only witness. You shall not be permitted to keep him from justice a day longer. In the first place, we know that this man Tremaine inveigled your sister into a schoolgirl elopement and marriage; she was rescued from him; she thought him dead; she married Delroy; came to New York; Tremaine followed her and attempted the extortion of blackmail; you met him at the Marathon; while you were talking Thompson interfered and Tremaine killed him, escaping before the officers arrive. You did not know Thompson, but you saw Simmonds and me take out his pocketbook. You heard me read a line or two from one of a packet of clippings we found there, and while we were in the bedroom you took those clippings from the body and hid them under the edge of the carpet."

She breathed a long sigh and sat erect again.

"Ah," she said, with a little smile, "I was beginning to fear you, all that seemed so supernatural. But now I see where your information came from."

"It is correct, then?" asked Godfrey.

"Yes," she answered. "Yes," Godfrey leaned back in his chair, with a long sign of relief. He had won the battle.

"Miss Croydon," he said, "I'm going to reward you for your frankness by telling you something which I had intended to keep secret awhile longer, just to punish you. Your sister never was the wife of Tremaine and has nothing whatever to fear from him. He has no hold on her at all. She has never been anybody's wife but Mr. Delroy's."

She was staring at him with widely opened eyes, her hands clasped above her heart.

"Oh, if it were really so!" she cried. "If it were really so!"

"It is so," repeated Godfrey, and took a little yellow envelope from his pocket. "Read this." And he unfolded a sheet of paper and held it toward her.

She took it with trembling hand and read the message written upon it, but seemingly without understanding it.

"It is a cable," he explained, "from the Record's correspondent at Dieppe.



"Your sister never was the wife of Tremaine."

Your pardon, Lester," he added, with a fleeting smile; "I forgot to show it to you on the trip out. Please read it aloud, Miss Croydon."

"The widow of Victor Charente," she read in a low voice, "died here Feb. 21, 1901. Had never married again." She looked up, her brows still knitted. "Well?" she asked.

"Well," said Godfrey, "Victor Charente is the real name of Tremaine. He married that girl many years before he met your sister. She was his legal wife. Your sister never was. She was never the legal wife of any one except Richard Delroy."

She understood now, and the glad tears burst forth unrestrained. Indeed, she made no effort to restrain them, but only rocked back and forth, pressing the message against her heart.

"Thank God!" she sobbed. "Thank God!" And then she started up from her chair. "I must tell her," she said, "at once. If you knew how she has suffered! She must not be left in that cruel position an instant longer."

"Very well," agreed Godfrey. "We will wait for you here."

She disappeared through a door at the farther end of the room, but in a moment came softly back again.

"She is asleep," she said. "I will wait until she wakes. What a joyful awakening it will be!" And she sat down again. She wiped away the tears, but her eyes were still shining. Godfrey gazed at her with a face full of emotion.

"Now, Miss Croydon," he began, "you've told me that my theory's correct, but there are three or four points I should like you to help me clear up, if you will."

"I shall be glad to if I can," she answered, and smiled at him, her eyes brimming again. "You've lifted such a load from me, Mr. Godfrey, that I'd do almost anything to show my gratitude."

Why, looking at her, did his face

change—sorten, harden? why did his hands tremble so? It was over in an instant; yet I had caught a glimpse of his secret. I understood.

"It was nothing," he said. "I was glad to do it. I was deeply pleased when that message came this morning."

"You've been kinder to me than I deserved," she said; and more than half agreed with her. How, with his eyes before her, could she fail to understand? Perhaps she did understand. It was never sure.

"In the first place, then, Miss Croydon," he went on, in a different tone, "how did your father succeed in getting your sister away from Tremaine?"

"They had gone to Paris," she answered, "and in two or three days Edith had awakened from her dream. She saw something in the man which terrified her, and she wrote a pitiful letter to father, who went over to Paris at once and finally succeeded in buying the man off. Father paid him 50,000 francs, I believe. Perhaps it was the fact that he knew he was not really Edith's husband, that he himself had committed a crime, which made him take it. He agreed to leave the country, and in the following December he wrote father that he was about to sail for Martinique in a ship called the Centaur. He said he intended to buy a plantation at Martinique and make that his home. In February we learned that the Centaur had been lost, with all on board. After eight years it seemed certain that he was dead, and Edith felt free to marry again."

"Was Mr. Delroy informed of this early indiscretion?"

"Certainly, and forgave it, as any good man would."

"Pardon me for asking the question, Miss Croydon; but it was necessary. When was it you first learned that Tremaine was still alive?"

"One night nearly two months ago Edith brought his letter to me. She was wild, distracted, ready to kill herself—that is what I have feared every day since. She loves Mr. Delroy, Mr. Godfrey, and yet she believed herself the wife of another man. He demanded that she meet him in that apartment house. I knew she could not bear such a meeting, and yet he must be seen. I offered to go in her stead. I had some wild idea of appealing to his better nature, of persuading him."

She stopped, silenced by her own emotion.

"That, of course, would not have altered the fact that your sister was his wife," observed Godfrey.

"No. That was the terrible part of it; nothing could alter that. There must, of course, be a separation, but we thought we would solve that problem after we had settled the other. So I went. He opened the door for me. I had never seen him, and I confess his appearance and manner were not at all what I expected. He did not look in the least like a scoundrel, or did he act like one. He listened to me with attention and seeming respect. He even appeared moved. Oh, I know now what a hypocrite he was. I know that he was laughing at me; that he was planning something deeper, more villainous. I had brought \$1,200 with me—all that we could gather together at that moment—and I pressed it upon him, urging him to take it and go away and we would send him more. He pretended to refuse the money, to protest that that was not in the least what he wanted, but I compelled him to take it. And just as I was hoping that I had prevailed with him the door of the bedroom opened and a horrible drunken man staggered out.

"Well, Vic," he cried, "so this is the gal, is it? She's a likely piece. I wouldn't give her up, Vic, no, not for ten thousand."

"Go back to bed, you drunken brute!" cried Tremaine, and took him roughly by the arm.

"But the other shook him off.

"Don't lay your hands on me, Vic!" he cried. "Don't dare lay your hands on me!"

"I saw a very devil spring into Tremaine's face. He looked about him for some weapon and picked up a piece of pipe that lay beside the radiator. Thompson saw the action and lurched heavily toward him.

"Goin' t' use that on me, Vic?" he asked, "you'd better try it." And he made a pass at Tremaine and tried to snatch the pipe away. "You try it on, an' I'll blow your game like I did once before down at Sydney."

"He struck at Tremaine again, but the latter sprang away and in an instant had brought the pipe down upon his head. Thompson fell like a log; then that fiendish look flashed into Tremaine's face for a second time; he snatched out a revolver; I dimly understood what was coming—indeed, I had my own revolver in my hand, and I fired at him, but my shot went wild, while his—"

She stopped and buried her face in her hands, overcome for the moment by the terrible spectacle her words had evoked.

She controlled herself by an effort, took down her hands—

"He put his pistol away and stepped over very close to me.

"Miss Croydon," he said rapidly, "it will be well for you to say you did not know me. I have committed no crime; he was the aggressor; what I did was done in self defense. One thing more—your sister has nothing to fear from me; I shall never bother her again; I promise you that."

"He was gone in an instant, and then the janitor came and you and the detectives."

Godfrey nodded thoughtfully.

"That supplies the motive, Lester," he said. "I have felt that my explanation of the crime was not quite adequate. But it was not only desire for revenge that urged Tremaine on; it was also the knowledge that Thompson knew of his first marriage and threatened with a word to wreck his plans a second time."

"Yes," I agreed and sat silent, pondering the story.

"Why did you take the clippings, Miss Croydon?" asked Godfrey after a moment.

"From what you read of them I suspected how vitally they concerned my sister. That was a secret, I felt, which must be kept at any hazard. It was done without consideration, on the spur of the moment, or I should never have had the courage to do it at all."

"And why did you hide them under the carpet?"

She laughed outright. The load was lifted. She was fast becoming her usual self.

"I had a wild idea that you were going to search me. I saw that loose place in the carpet the instant I arose with the clippings in my hand. Once I had put them there I had no chance at all to get them again."

Godfrey nodded.

"You tried to get them the day after the inquest, didn't you?"

"Yes; but the janitor was so afraid of me that he wouldn't even let me go upstairs."

"And there weren't any papers?"

"No; that was a lie. I saw I must invent one—that I must offer some explanation of my presence there."

"Did Tremaine keep his promise?"

"Not to bother my sister? Yes; he mentioned it again only to assure me that the past was dead—that he would never revive it."

"But how could you admit his presence here?"

"How could we prevent it? It was Mr. Delroy who brought him. We weren't strong enough to tell him the whole story."

"You mean you told him part of it?"

"There has been a virtual separation ever since Mr. Tremaine appeared."

Godfrey paused reflectively.

"Why were you so agitated," he continued finally, "when you were asked to identify Jimmy the Dude at the inquest?"

"Because I did identify him."

"You did?"

"Yes—as the man I had seen talking to the janitor in the lower hall. Let me explain, Mr. Godfrey. When I was asked suddenly for a description of the murderer, I was taken aback; I endeavored to think, to collect myself—and I remembered the man I had passed in the hall. Without stopping to consider—wishing only to disarm suspicion—I described him roughly as I remembered him. When I was confronted with him at the inquest next day, I instantly realized what I had done—I had implicated an innocent man—and it turned me a little faint for a moment."

"Had you ever met him?"

"Met him?" she repeated in surprise.

"Why, no."

"But he seemed to know you."

"Oh"—and she laughed again—"I had a letter from him next day, a letter filled with gratitude, touching even. It seems that my sister and I had helped his family—a mother and sister—without knowing it while he was away—"

"At Sing Sing. He's the most expert burglar in New York, but he's got his good points too. Witness his taking Thompson home that night."

"Yes; he wanted to do anything he could to help me. I intend to look up Jimmy."

"Do. If you can reform him the New York police force will be mighty grateful."

"I'm going to try," she said. And I rather envied Jimmy.

Godfrey leaned back in his chair, with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I think that clears up that affair pretty well," he said, "and that brings us to the second and more serious one. And first, Miss Croydon, I want to ask you if you think it was just the right thing to let them march Jack Drysdale off to prison when a single word from you might have saved him?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"FROM me?" repeated Miss Croydon blankly. "A single word from me? I do not understand you, Mr. Godfrey."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Godfrey with emphasis, "that you do not know where Mr. Drysdale was Monday night; that you were not yourself the cause of his leaving the house?"

She was staring at him with distended eyes.

"I the cause?" she repeated hoarsely after a moment. "Mr. Godfrey, I will tell you something of which I had determined never to speak. When he left the house that evening he deliberately broke an appointment he had made with me. He had happened to hear Mr. Tremaine make certain proposals to me. In short—she hesitated and then proceeded steadily with raised head—"I may as well tell the whole truth. Since the evening of that first tragedy Mr. Tremaine has been persecuting me with his attentions. At the time I thought them merely insulting; I see now that they may have been in earnest."

"I don't in the least doubt that he was in earnest," agreed Godfrey. "Mr. Drysdale, then, overheard him ask you to be his wife?"

"Yes; just that."

"But he also heard you refuse, no doubt?"

"Oh, yes," she said, smiling and coloring a little, "he heard me refuse in the most positive way, but my refusal provoked Mr. Tremaine to an intemperance of language which Mr. Drysdale resented and which he thought I should have resented too. He demanded that I explain to him Mr. Tremaine's position, and I promised to do so on the very evening he—he stayed away from the house. His staying away offended me deeply."

Godfrey had listened with intent eyes and a quick nod from time to time.

"WAGER OF BATTLE.

The First Duels Are Said to Have Been Fought in Italy.

The first duels were fought in Italy, according to Millingen, who speaks of a manuscript discovered at Cassel and describes a duel between a father and a son in the reign of the Emperor Theodorice. When Charlemagne forbade wagers of battle among the Lombards he encountered the fiercest opposition from the nobles. Early in the ninth century De Medicis, a knight, defeated in single combat the bandit Mugal, who devastated the Florentine district now called after him, Muggello. Otho II, granted the prayer of the nobility for the re-establishment of wagers of battle in 988. Women and priests were not compelled to accept it. The Normans showed less gallantry. With them a woman had to accept, nor could she name a champion. Her male opponent, however, was buried to his waist in the earth. Armed with a club, he tried to strike her as she circled around him, his weapon being a ball of iron at the end of a cord. If he failed to touch her at the third attempt he was vanquished, which meant to him death with dishonor.

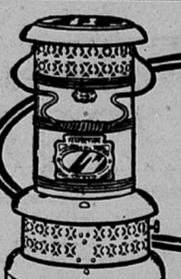
Becarrin says that the reason so many duels were fought in Italy in the early days is that where the law does not afford protection one must look to single combat to retain the respect of one's fellow men. In the middle ages the ferocity of Italian duels passes belief. "Any way of putting an enemy to death ('ogni modo) is good enough," says one of their writers. "When an Italian spares his vanquished adversary," says Brantome, "he maims his arms and legs and gives him as a memento of his kindness and generosity a hideous gash across the face." Lampugnano practiced on a painted model of Galeazzo Sforza before he stabbed him. Duelling was called "la scienza cavalleresca."—Cornhill Magazine.

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