

room seemed spinning round. She staggered to the fireplace and thrust it into the heart of the dying flames. She held it down with the poker, looking nervously over her shoulder. Then she put more coal on, piled it over the ashes, and stood once more upright.

"Bill, silence here!" she pulled down her veil and made her way to the door. She turned out the electric light and gained the hall. Still no sound. Her knees almost sank beneath her as she raised the latch of the front door and looked out. There was no one to be seen. She passed down the stairs and into the street.

She walked for a mile or more recklessly, close-veiled, with swift, level footsteps, though her brain was in a whirl and a horrible faintness all the time hovered about her. Then she called a hansom and drove home.

"Miss Pellissier," he said gently, "I am afraid that some fresh trouble has come to you."

She smiled at him cheerfully. "Am I dull?" she said. "I am sorry. You could never be that," he answered, "but you are at least more serious than usual."

"Perhaps," she said, "I am superstitious. This is my week at the Universal, you know. We begin rehearsing on Monday at the Garrick."

"Surely," he protested, "the change is all in favor of your own inclinations. It is your own choice, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I believe that Mr. Earles thinks I am a little mad, and between ourselves I am not sure about it myself. It is easy enough to sing these little chansons in an original way—it requires a very different sort of ability to succeed on the stage."

"You have it," he declared confidently. She laughed altogether in her old manner.

"I wonder how it is," she exclaimed, "that my sister should be so confident in me than I have in myself."

"They know you better," he declared. "I am afraid," she answered, "that one's friends can judge only of the externals and the things which meet the things inside, are realized only by oneself—stop."

She laid her finger upon his arm and they both stood still. They had turned into the street, on the opposite side of which were the flats where Anna lived. Glancing idly up at her own window as they had swung round the corner she had seen a strange thing. The curtains which she had left drawn were open and the electric lights were turned on. Then, even as they stood there, the room was plunged into darkness.

"There is some one in my rooms," Anna said.

"Is it your maid?" he asked.

"I have given her two days' holiday," Anna answered. "She has gone down into the country."

"And no one else—has a key?"

"I believe," she said, "that that man must have one. I am safe while I am there, for I have had bolts fitted over here and a pane of glass in the front door. But I am always afraid that he may get in while I am away. Look! Is that some one coming out?"

The front door of the flats stood open and through it a woman, slim and well-dressed, passed on to the pavement and turned with swift footsteps in the opposite direction. Anna watched her with curious eyes.

"Is it any one you know?" Brendon asked.

"I am not sure," Anna answered. "But, of course, she may have come from one of the other flats."

"Perhaps," he said, "you had better let me have your key, and I will go up and explore."

"We will go together," she answered. They crossed the street, and entering the front door passed up the outside stone steps of the flat. Anna herself opened the hall door. They stood for a moment in the passage and listened. Brendon then Anna clutched her companion's arm.

"What was that?" she asked sharply. He had heard nothing. They both listened intently. Again silence.

"I thought that I heard a groan," Anna whispered.

He laughed reassuringly. "I heard nothing," he declared, "and my ears are good. Come."

He threw open the door of the sitting-room and switched on the electric light.

"There is no—God!" he exclaimed.

He turned around to keep Anna out by force if possible, but he was too late. She was by his side. She had seen. The thin stream of blood in which her eyes were fastened with a nameless horror reached almost to her feet.

CHAPTER XXVIII. A Case for the Police.

After that first horrible moment it was perhaps Anna who was the more self-possessed. She dropped on her knees by his side and gently unbuttoned his waistcoat. Then she looked up at Brendon.

"You must fetch a doctor," she said. "Do not think that he is quite dead."

"And leave you here alone?" he asked in a hoarse whisper. "Come with me."

"I am not afraid," she answered. "Please hurry."

He reeled out of the room. Anna was afterward astonished at her own self-possessedness. She found a key in a little round place where the blood seemed to be coming from. Then she stood up and looked around the room.

There were no evidences of any struggle, no overturned chairs or disarranged furniture. The grate was full of the fluttering ashes of burnt papers, and the easy chair near the fire had evidently been used. On the floor was a handkerchief, a little morsel of lace. Anna saw it and for the first time found herself trembling.

She moved toward it slowly and picked it up, holding it out in front of her whilst the familiar perfume seemed to assert itself with damning insistence. It was Annabel's. The lace was family lace, easily recognizable. The perfume was the only one she ever used. Annabel had been here then. It was she who had come out from the flat only a few minutes before. It was she—

Anna's nerves were not easily shaken, but she found herself suddenly clutching at the table for support. The room was reeling, or was it that she was going to faint? She recovered herself with a supreme effort. There were the burnt papers still on the grate. She took up the poker and stirred the fire vigorously. Almost at the same moment the door opened and Brendon entered, followed by the doctor.

Anna turned round with a start, which was almost of guilt, the poker still in her hand. She met the keen gray eyes of a clean shaven man, between 40 and 50, quietly dressed in professional attire. Before he even glanced at the man on the floor he stepped over to her side and took the poker from her.

"Forgive me, madame," he said stiffly, "but in such a case as this it is better that nothing in the room should be disturbed until the arrival of the police. You have been burning paper, I see."

"Are you a detective or a doctor?" she asked calmly. "Do you think me to remind you that your patient is bleeding to death?"

He dropped on his knees by the man's side and made a hurried examination. "The doctor shook his head. 'It is very doubtful,' he said. 'You must send for the police at once, you know. You, sir,' he added, turning to Brendon, 'had better take my card round to the police station in Werner street and ask that Detective Dunster to be sent round here at once on urgent business.'"

"Is it necessary to send for the police?" Anna asked.

"Absolutely," the doctor answered, "and the sooner the better. This is a case either of suicide or murder. The police are concerned in it in either event."

"Please go then, Mr. Brendon," Anna said. "You will come back, won't you?"

He nodded cheerfully. "Of course I will," he answered.

The doctor and Anna were left alone. Every moment or two he bent over his patient. He seemed to avoid meeting Anna's eyes as much as possible.

"Does he live here?" he asked presently.

"Far away?" Anna answered.

"Who is the tenant of these rooms?" he inquired.

"I am."

"You will have no objection to his remaining here?" he asked. "A move of any sort would certainly be fatal."

"Of course not," Anna said. "Had he better have a nurse? I will be responsible for anything of that sort."

"If he lives through the next hour," the doctor said, "I will send some one. Do you know any of his friends? Is there any one for whom we ought to send?"

"I know very little of him beyond his name," Anna answered. "I know nothing whatever of his friends or his home. He used to live in a boarding-house in Russell square. That is where I first knew him."

The doctor looked at her thoughtfully. Perhaps for the first time he realized that Anna was by no means an ordinary person. His patient was distinctly of a different order of life. It was possible that his first impressions had not been correct.

"Your name, I believe, is—"

"Pellissier, Anna answered. "To give you the word of order, Miss Pellissier. A detective will be here in a few minutes to make inquiries into this affair. You may have something to conceal, you may not. Tell the whole truth. It always comes out sooner or later. Don't try to shield anybody or hide anything. It is bad policy."

Anna smiled very faintly. "I thank you for your advice," she said. "I can assure you that it was quite unnecessary. I know less about this affair perhaps than you suppose. What I do know I shall have no hesitation in telling any one who has the right to ask."

"Just so," the doctor remarked drily. "And if you say I would keep away from the fire."

Brendon reappeared, followed by a tall, thin man with a stubby brown moustache and restless gray eyes. The doctor nodded to him curiously.

"Good evening," he said. "Before you do anything else I should advise you to secure those charred fragments of paper from the grate. I know nothing about this affair, but some one has been burning documents."

The detective went down on his hands and knees. With delicate touch he rescued all that was possible of them, and made a careful little parcel. Then he stepped briskly to his feet and bent over the wounded man.

"Shot through the lungs," he remarked.

The doctor nodded. "Bad hemorrhage," he said. "I am going to fetch some things that will be wanted if he pulls through the next hour. I found him lying like this, the bleeding partly stopped by this scarf, else he had been dead by now."

The doctor glanced toward Anna. Considering his convictions, he felt that his remark was a generous one. Anna's face, however, was wholly impassive.

He took up his hat and went. The detective rapidly sketched the appearance of the room in his notebook and picked up the pistol from under the table. Then he turned to Anna.

"Can you give me any information as to this affair?" he asked.

"I will tell you all that I know," Anna said. "My name is Anna Pellissier, sometimes called Annabel. I am engaged to sing every evening at the 'Universal' music hall. This man's name is Montague Hill. I saw him first a few months ago at Mrs. White's boarding-house in Russell square. He subjected me there to great annoyance by claiming me as his wife. As a matter of fact, I had never spoken to him before in my life. Since then he has persistently annoyed me. A few nights ago he fired a pistol at me at the 'Universal,' and was bound over to keep the peace. Ever since then, however, I have seen him hanging about the place. I have suspected him of possessing a skeleton key to my apartments. To-night I locked up my flat at 6 o'clock. It was then, I am sure, empty. I dined with a friend and went to the 'Universal.' At 11:15 o'clock I returned here with this gentleman, Mr. Brendon. As we turned the corner of the street I noticed that the electric light was burning in this room. We stopped for a moment to watch it, and almost immediately it was turned out. We came on here at once. I found the door locked as usual, but when we entered this room everything was as you see. Nothing has been touched since."

The detective nodded. "A very clear statement, madam," he said. "From what you saw from the opposite pavement, then, it is cer-

tain that some person who was able to move about in this room only a minute or so before you entered it?"

"That is so," Anna answered.

"You met no one upon the stair, nor saw no one leave the flats?"

"No one," Anna answered firmly. "Then either this man shot himself or some one else shot him immediately before your arrival—or rather if it was not himself, the person who did it was in the room, say two minutes, before you arrived."

"That is so," Anna admitted.

"I will not trouble you with any questions about the other occupants of the flats," Mr. Dunster said. "I shall have to go through the building. You say that this gentleman was with you?"

"Yes," Brendon answered, "most providentially."

"You did not notice anything which may have escaped this lady? You saw no one leave the flats?"

"No one," Brendon answered.

"You heard no pistol shot?"

"No," Brendon answered.

The detective turned again to Anna. "You know of no one likely to have had a grudge against this man?" he asked.

"No."

"There is no one else who has a key to your rooms?"

"No one except my maid, who is in Villshire."

"The inference is, then," the detective said smoothly, "that this man did it by means of a false key, that he burned some papers here and shot himself within a few moments of your return. Either that or some other person also obtained access here and shot him, and that person is either still upon the premises or escaped without your notice."

"I suppose," Anna said, "that those are reasonable deductions."

The detective thrust his notebook into his pocket. "I brought a man with me who is posted outside," he remarked. "With your permission I should like to search the remainder of your rooms."

Anna showed him the way.

"Have either of you been out of this room since you discovered what had happened?" he asked.

"Mr. Brendon went for the doctor," Anna answered. "I have not left this apartment since."

Nothing unusual was discovered in any other part of the flat. While they were still engaged in looking around the doctor returned with a nurse and assistant.

"With your permission," he said to Anna, "I shall arrange a bed for him to attend at the inquiry."

"I am going to pack my bag," Anna answered. "In five minutes I shall be ready."

Mr. Dunster drew the doctor to one side. "What do you think?" he whispered.

"She shot him, of course," the doctor answered. "It is quite plain—motive and everything. One can picture the whole scene. The man is probably her husband, a disreputable lot, by the look of him. He finds his way here and waits for her. She returns—with the other fellow. Of course there's a row—either she or the other fellow shoots him. You will see what those scraps of paper are which they probably took from him and burned."

"I have a very strong idea," the detective said slowly, "that it was a marriage certificate."

"If you can prove that," the doctor answered, "it should hang her. You are not letting her go, are you?"

"Indeed I am not," the doctor said. "There is not the slightest object in arresting her," he said, "unless she tries to leave London. We can do that at any moment, and if we leave her alone she is far more likely to give herself away. How about the man?"

"He will die," the doctor answered.

CHAPTER XXIX. The Steel Edge of the Truth.

The man servant, with his plain black clothes and black tie, had entered the room with a deferential little gesture.

"You will pardon me, sir," he said in a subdued tone, "but I think that you have forgotten to look at your engagement book. There is Lady Arlington's reception to-night, ten till twelve, and the Hatton House ball, marked with a cross, sir, important. I put you down for it at an hour ago."

Nigel Ennison looked up with a little start.

"All right, Dunster," he said. "I will go to Hatton House later, but you needn't wait. I can get into my clothes."

The man hesitated. "Can I bring you anything, sir—a whisky and soda, or a liqueur? You'll excuse me, sir, but you haven't touched your coffee."

"Bring me a whisky and soda and a box of cigarettes," Ennison answered, "and then leave me alone, there's a good fellow. I'm a little tired."

The man obeyed his orders noiselessly.

"I have put the onyx buttons in the single-breasted waistcoat, sir," he remarked, before leaving the room. "I saw Mr. Hamilton to-day, outfitter, sir, at Poole's, and he advised me to put the double-breasted ones away for the moment. I wish you good night, sir."

Ennison roused himself with an effort, took a long drink from his whisky and soda and lit a cigarette.

"What a fool am!" he muttered, standing up to the hearthrug and leaning his elbows upon the broad mantelpiece. "And yet I wonder whether the world ever held such another enigma of her sex. Paris looms behind—a tragedy of strange recollections—here she emerges Phoenix-like, subtly developed, a flawless woman, beautiful, self-reliant, witty, a woman with the strange gift of making all others beside her seem plain or vulgar. And then—this sudden thrust, God only knows what I have done or left undone. Something unpardonable is laid to my charge. Only last night she saw me, and there was horror in her eyes. I have written, called—of what avail is anything—against that look! What the devil is the matter, Dunster?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," the man answered, "there is a lady here to see you."

Ennison turned round sharply. "A lady, Dunster! Who is it?"

The man came a little farther into the room.

"Lady Ferringhall, sir."

"Lady Ferringhall—alone?" Ennison exclaimed.

"Quite alone, sir."

Ennison was dismayed.

"For heaven's sake, Dunster, don't let her out of the carriage, or hansom, or whatever she came in. Say 'I'm out, away, anything!'"

"I am sorry, sir," the man answered, "but she had sent away her hansom before I answered the bell. She is in the hall now."

The door was flung open. Annabel entered.

"Forgive my coming in," she said to Ennison. "I heard your voices and the hall is draughty. What is the matter with you?"

Dunster had withdrawn discreetly. Ennison's manner was certainly not one of a willing host.

"I cannot pretend that I am glad to see you, Lady Ferringhall," he said quietly. "For your own sake let me beg of you not to stay for a moment. Dunster will fetch you a cab. I—"

She threw herself into an easy chair. She was unusually pale and her eyes were brilliant. Never had she seemed to him so much like Anna.

"You need not be worried," she said quietly. "The conventions do not matter one little bit. You will agree with me when you have heard what I have to say. For me that is all over and done with."

"Lady Ferringhall! Anna!" he exclaimed.

She fixed her brilliant eyes upon him. "Suppose you call me by my proper name," she said quietly. "Call me Annabel."

He started back as though he had been shot.

"Annabel!" he exclaimed. "That is your sister's name."

"No, mine."

It came upon him like a flash. Innumerable little puzzles were instantly solved. He could only wonder that this amazing thing had remained so long a secret to him. He remembered little whispered speeches of hers, so like the Annabel of Paris, so unlike the woman he had known a hundred little things should have told him long ago. Nevertheless it was overwhelming.

"But your hair," he gasped.

"Dyed!"

"And your figure?"

"One's corsetiers arranges that. My friends and I only grieved that you of all others should have been so deceived. I have seen you with Anna, and I have not known whether to be glad or sorry. I have been in torment all the while to know whether it was to Anna or to Annabel that you were making love so charmingly. Nigel, do you know that I have been very jealous?"

He avoided the invitation of her eyes. He was, indeed, still in the throes of his bewilderment.

"But Sir John?" he exclaimed. "What made you marry him? What made you leave Paris without a word to any one? What made you and your sister exchange identities?"

There is one answer to all these questions, Nigel, she said, with a nervous little shudder. "It is a hateful story. Come close to me and let me hold your hand, dear. I am a little afraid."

There was a strange look in her face, the look of a frightened child. Ennison seemed to feel already the shadow of tragedy approaching. He stood by her side, and he suffered her hands to rest in his.

"You remember the man in Paris who used to follow me about—Meysey Hill, he called him long ago?"

He nodded.

"Miserable hound," he murmured. "Turned out to be an impostor, too."

"He imposed on me," Annabel continued. "I believed that he was the great multi-millionaire. He wanted me to marry him. I let him take me to the English Embassy, and we went through some sort of a ceremony. I thought it would be magnificent to have a great house in Paris and more women in London. You shall know the truth. I do not love you. I have never loved you. I call myself a man of the world, a man of many experiences, but I never knew what love meant—until I met your sister."

"You love—Anna?" she exclaimed.

"I do," he answered. "I always shall. Now if you are ready to go with me, I too am ready. We will go to Ostend by the early morning boat and choose a hiding place from that I will marry you when Sir John gets his divorce, and I will do all I can to keep you out of harm. But you had better know the truth to start with. I will do all this not because I love you, but—because you are Anna's sister."

"You love—Anna?" she exclaimed.

"You are magnificent," she said, "but the steel of your truth is a little over-sharpened. It cuts. Will you let your servant call me a hansom?" she continued, opening the door before he could reach her side. "I had no idea that it was so abominably late."

He scarcely saw her face again. She pulled her veil down, and he knew that silence was best.

"Where to?" he asked, as the hansom drove up.

"Home, of course," she answered. "3 Cavendish Square."

CHAPTER XXX. Annabel Is Warned.

"You!" He crossed the floor of the dingy little sitting-room with outstretched hands.

"You cannot say that you did not expect me," he answered. "I got Sydney's telegram at 10 o'clock, and caught the 10:30 from the Gare du Nord."

JOE ROSENBERG'S.

COTTON IS KING. Especially for This Underwear. Grows out of clean earth, under bright Southern skies. It is nature's own fabric. So much for cotton. Now for its highest use. MERODE AND MENTOR UNDERWEAR. Made for the Whole Family. Jersey knitted and perfect finish. Is made from this very cotton, combed and spun into yarn. It is made by the cleanest operators in the cleanest factory. SILK WOOL, VELVET FINISH. Many wise folks discovered long ago that this cotton offers most comfort and health in summer and winter underwear. You can HALVE your underwear expense and DOUBLE your satisfaction by getting MERODE OR MENTOR. You'll like it better after you wear it. Don't shrink, don't scratch. It's dry and warm, skin soothing and comfortable. CHILDREN'S DRAWERS, PANTS, VESTS, in gray or ecru. Price 25c garment. LADIES' VESTS, TIGHTS, DRAWERS, 50c garment. JOE ROSENBERG THE HOME 816 MARKET and 11 O'FARRELL STREET.

[Concluded Next Sunday.]