The Strange Case of MARY PAGE

The Great McClure Mystery Story, Written by FREDERICK LEWIS In Collaboration With JOHN T. M'INTYRE, Author of the Ashton Kirk Detective Stories. *Read the Story and See the Essanay Moving Pictures*

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SYNOPSIS.

Mary Page, actress, is accused of the murder of James Pollock and is defended by her lover, Philip Langdon. Pollock was intoxicated. At Mary's trial she admits she had the revolver. Her maid testifies that Mary threatened Pollock with it previously, and Mary's leading man implicates Langdon. How Mary disappeared from the scene of the crime is a mystery. Brandon tells of a strange hand print he saw on Mary's shoulder. Further evidence shows that horror of drink produces temporary insanity in Mary. The defense is "repressed psychosis." Witnesses describe Mary's flight from her intoxicated father and her father's suicide. Nurse Walton describes the kidnaping of Mary by Pollock and Amy Barton tells of Mary's struggles to become an actress and Pollock's pursuit of her. There is evidence that Daniels, Mary's manager, threatened Pollock. Mary faints on the stand and again goes insane when a policeman offers her whisky. Daniels testifies that Pollock threatened to kill Mary and Langdon and actually attempted to kill the latter.

IN THE ALLEY

A WITNESS room, like an ocean-liner, begets strange friendships in its enforced intimacy, and also has this in common with the great ships, that those who come on deck only toward the close of a stormy passage, find themselves unreasonably ostracized by their fellow passengers who have been daily sharing the excitement of the voyage. Thus the three newcomers among the witnesses in the trial of Mary Page were left sitting primly on a bench close to the door while the incongruous but friendly group of those who had already testified stood near the window.

The trio themselves were oddly conglomerate—a burly man in what were obviously his best clothes, with a collar a size too small and a buxom woman whose flushed face looked out from under a marvelous purple bonnet. Her hands were encased in very large white cotton gloves and she held back her skirts aggressively from contact with the short and elaborate gown of the over-dressed, tired-looking woman whose face was pasty with powder and hard with rouge.

All of the witnesses, for that matter, from the little bell-hop to Mrs. Page herself, surveyed this last comer with disapproval; and Amy declared succinctly that if "Mr. Langdon put THAT on the witness stand—it would be GOOD NIGHT!"

Langdon, however, greeted her with a warmth that more than overbalanced their chilliness, and his welcome to the other man and woman was equally enthusiastic. To him, the presence of these three was a triumph. It meant that he had succeeded where the police had failed, and that he had still another surprise to spring upon the jury in this most astounding trial.

Some hint of all this crept into his tone lending it a new, almost boyish note, when, at the beginning of the day's proceedings, he rose and said:

"Your Honor, and Gentlemen of the Jury: Ever since the beginning of this trial one point has remained a mystery. The state has admitted its inability to offer evidence on this mooted subject, and therefore I crave the indulgence of the court to digress from direct proceedings this morning, to show you where and how Mary Page spent those hours between the death

"That would be good night!"

of James Pollock and her surrender to the law on the following morning!"

"What!" The startled exclamation was wrung involuntarily from the District Attorney as he half rose from his chair, but it was drowned in the stir of excitement that swept through the entire room. For this had indeed been a mooted question and a decidedly sore point with the Prosecutor—the whereabouts of Mary during those hours immediately following the murder.

"Miss Page," continued Langdon when the Judge's gavel had restored order, "did not herself know exactly what was happening. As always follows an attack of repressed psychosis, the mind of the sufferer was like that of a patient coming out of ether—a flash of recollection and a stretch of blank unconsciousness; therefore, it is not until now that I have succeeded in piecing together the story of that night, and I shall call as my first witness, Kate O'Neill!"

Kate proved to be the buxom woman in the purple bonnet who gave her age as "round about thirty-five" and her occupation as "a cook, and a good one" to the delighted amusement of the spectators.

"Miss O'Neill," said Langdon after the preliminary questions, "you say you are a cook. Where were you last employed?"

"In the boardin'-house of Mrs. Watson," she answered with a strong Hibernian accent. "And the very ould divil of a job it was, too!"

"That is on the same street as the Hotel Republic, is it not?"

"Sure! and it's but two doors away, and what wid the dancin' and the music goin' on there, and the phonygraph at the Club back, 'tis never a quiet moment we had the whole night through."

"But your duties at the boarding-house kept you up pretty late, anyway, didn't they?"

"Sure an' they did then. What with hot bread two days a week, and me cake-bakin', I set up every night till 'most cock-crow."

"Now, Kate," Langdon's voice was very friendly, almost coaxing, in fact, "I want you to tell me if you ever went out into the alley or street that ran back of the boarding-house late at night."

"Go on wid you!" she retorted, bridling. "Didn't I tell you that?"

"I know you told me, but I want you to tell the court. You had a friend who was watchman for the block, didn't you? Denny by name."

"He was not me friend, he was me finance!" she responded with dignity. "And some nights when it would be cold, and I had made mysel' a sup of hot tea or maybe coffee, I would take a bit out to Denny. It's weary work watching houses in the dark."

"Of course your mistress knew nothing of this?"

"Sure, and what would I tell that ould snoopin' divil for? It weren't none of her business!"

"On the night when James Pollock was shot in the Hotel Republic, you had been up late, had you not?"

"Yes, sor. I had set the dough for bakin', and seein' as how the fire was hot, I thought I'd fix up a bite for Denny when he made his rounds."

"Will you tell us please, what you saw when you went to the back gate with the—er—bite for Dennis?"

"Well, then, it was this way. I shlipped out and opened the gate, just a bit at a time, for sometimes it would get the ould Nick in it and squeak fer all the lard we put on it, and I took a look out fer Denny. There was a man standin' in the shadows so near I could have put my hand on him, but I knows it wasn't my man by reason of the narrer shoulders, so I stood waitin' fer him to move on."

"Did he seem to be watching for anyone?"

"Yes, sor. He was starin' up at the Hotel Republic, and I thought he was watchin' a man who was on the fire-escape. Then I decided it weren't a man I saw, but just a shadder, and suddenly a young lady, all dressed up in evenin'-clothes, climbs out of a winder and starts down the fire-escape and the man says, 'Thank Gawd! She was slow enough!'"

"Were you near enough to recognize the young lady?"

"Not then, no sir. All I could see was the shimmer of her dress and the light on her face when she passed the winders. She was walkin' kind of queer and unsteady, like as though she might have been drunk or sick, and when she reached the street she just stood there dazed. She had no coat nor hat and she was drawin' her breath like a bit of a childer that's been cryin'."

"Did the man who was waiting speak to her?"

"Yes. He said, 'Where in —— have you been? I been waitin' a good half-hour. And believe me, this alley is no cozy corner to lounge in.' But the girl didn't answer him. She just leaned against a wall and moaned like. At that he took hold of her arm and shook it and told her not to git cold feet, that he had it all fixed to git away safe. He called her Sadie, but she didn't seem to recognize the name and she wouldn't go with him. Then he took hold of her and dragged her along right past me, so near I could have touched her."

"Were you close enough to recognize her then?"

"Yes, sor."

"Was it the defendant, Mary Page?"

"It was, sor. Though she looked terrible sick and different, and there was an awful lookin' bruise on her shoulder like somebody had hurt her bad."

"Could you see where they went?"

"Yes, sor. Sure and I slipped out the gate and followed them a bit to see where they would go. But they stopped just beyond me on the alley and the man gives a whistle. Just three notes, like it might have been the echo of the band at the hotel, but somebody was listenin' for it, and I heard a winder go up in one of the houses across the way.

"At that the man sings out in a whisper, 'I got Sadie down here, let it down quick.' Then I saw something comin' down like a bit of white on the end of a rope, and I could hear it slap, slappin' the side of the house as it hit."

"Could you see what it was?"

"Not then, sor, except that it was something on the end of a rope."

"Did the man say anything that you could hear, to the girl—Miss Page?"

"Yes. He said, 'Larry is up there. He's all right, but don't blab too much

"Then I looks up and I says nix, he's a gumshoe crook."

and don't give him a peep at the shiners. Keep close till I git back. I won't be long.' At that the girl seemed to wake up, as if she was comin' out of a dream, and she clutched at his arm and began to cry. 'James!' she says. 'James Pollock!' And the man he laughs. 'So that's what's eatin' you, is it,' he says. 'Well, fergit it. My Gawd, you ain't guilty just because you was in the hotel. They can't connect it up with you. I give you my word.' 'Oh, thank God, thank God!' she whispers, and begins to cry harder than ever, and the man shook her again. 'Cut out the water works,' he says angrily, 'and get into this seat, unless you want the bulls to pull you in.'"

"What did he mean by 'this seat'? Could you see?"

"Yes, sor. The rope that the man had let down had a sort of a swing at the end of it, and he made the girl sit in that, then he whistled again and the other man pulled her up and she disappeared in a winder."

"What did the man do?"

"He waited till she was gone, then he went on down the street and round the corner. Then I saw Denny comin' up the other way and I went to meet him, and I found he'd been watchin' too. That was why I couldn't see him when I come to the gate."

"That is all, thank you, Miss O'Neill," said Langdon; but the Judge leaned forward with an arresting gesture.

"And having seen all this," he said harshly, "didn't you read the papers the next morning? Didn't you see that a girl was missing, or connect her in any way with the occurrences you had witnessed?"

"Well, I ain't sayin' but what I had my suspicions," she admitted readily.

"Then why didn't you tell someone?"

"Huh!" she retorted. "And let that ould divil of a Mrs. Watson know I was meetin' Denny and maybe givin' him a bite, and lose me job? I guess not!"

"Then why," persisted his Honor, "have you told now?"

"Sure, and it's me that's bein' married this week, yer Honor, and I'm after lavin' Mrs. Watson last Saturday," she said amid a stifled gale of mirth from spectators and jury alike.

Even the prosecutor smiled, waiving his right to cross examine, for the moment at least; and Langdon, with a cheery and encouraging nod towards Mary, called the second of his three new witnesses:

"Dennis Gallagher."

Denny, whose collar seemed to have shrunk to even more torturing tightness during the interim of waiting, took his place on the stand with a face the hue of his fiancee's bonnet, and cleared his throat noisily between each sentence as if the linen band about his neck were somehow pressing his vocal chords.

He was, he admitted, a private watchman who had most of the block near the Hotel Republic, and he usually paid a visit to the back gate of the Watson boarding-house once or twice during the course of his rounds.

He verified all that the buxom cook had already told, since he himself had watched proceedings from a dark corner a little further along the alley, but his account was amplified and more definite as to detail.

"Did you," asked Langdon, "know who resided in the house into which the girl was lifted by means of the rope swing?"

"I did, sor," he answered. "It was Barker's, the gamblin' place, you know, sor. They kep' it dark in the back and in the front, but it was bright enough inside, begorra."

"Were you watchman for that building?"

"No, sor. They had their own man to keep an eye out for the bulls, but it was that very night they were pulled. Tim, the policeman at the corner, had wised me up to it only an hour before. "'Stick around, Denny,' says he, 'there'll be big doin's soon. They're goin' to raid Barker's,' sez he, 'and I'll bet we pull a few big bugs, or my name is mud.'

"So I was kind of hangin' around waitin' when I see this other fellow posted in the alley. First off, I sez, he's a plain clothes man. Then I looks at his feet and I says nix, he's a gumshoe crook, and then the girl comes down the fire escape."

"When the girl had disappeared into Barker's, what did you do?"

"I joined Katie and says to her, said I, 'It's goin' to be a big night, and that girl has jumped out of the fryin' pan into the fire.' And begorra, sor, I'd no more than said it, then I heard the signal blow and saw the bluecoats marchin' up the alley and across the street at the end surroundin' the place. 'Good night to Barker's,' says I; and we watched 'em batter in the door and march up stairs. It was then that I felt the other man tuggin' at me arm.'

"The other man?" It was more an exclamation than a question and Dennis nodded.

"Sure the feller that had been standin' some place in the shadows. 'Wot are the perlice after?' he says all hoarse like. 'Who are they lookin' fer—the girl?' 'Not on your life,' says I, 'they're raidin' Barker's.' 'Barker's?' says he, as if he'd never heard of the place. I—I—thought the trouble was in the hotel. I—I—heard a shot.' 'Then,' says I, 'you've got one on me, fer with all these auttymobiles hangin' about, the man that kin tell a bullet from a tire has some ears.' 'You're right,' says he, 'it was probably a tire.' And he laughs; then he slunk away, as if he didn't like the perlice even if they weren't doin' anything but raid a gamblin' joint."

"Can you describe that man?"

"No. He was kind of fattish, and short. He looked like the sort of a feller that hits 'em up considerable, but I didn't take particular notice, sor."

"Did you and Miss O'Neill remain in the alley after he had gone?"

"Yes, fer the police had run up the shades and we could see right into Barker's place. Then I seen the girl again."

"Do you mean Miss Page?"

"Yes, sor; leastwise, I suppose it was her. She was standin' with her hands over her face, and one of the policemen jerks 'em down and turns to another one and says, says he, 'Is this the girl?' I could hear plain even down in the street, but the other bull seemed puzzled. 'It looks like it might be,' he says, 'especially the glad rags, but she ain't got Maggie's ear marks.' Then he grabs the girl by the arm and says, 'Wot's your name?' But she didn't answer, just moans, and at that he laughs and says, 'Playin' dumb, eh? Same old game. Now I'm dead sure you are Maggie Hale that bums around the restaurants and hooks the suckers. Well, if you won't talk to us, you can tell it to the judge.' And with that he marches her away where we couldn't see her."

"Just a minute, Mr. Gallagher," interrupted Langdon. "Let's return to that fattish man in the alley. Did he come up the street with the police?"

"No, sor. He was alongside o' me by that time."

"Then he came from the other end of the street?"

Dennis scratched his head.

"Not as I seen, sor," he admitted.

"Would you have seen him had he come from the corner beyond the Hotel Republic?" Langdon's voice was vibrant with eager excitement and the spirit of it swept through the courtroom in a shivering whisper.

"Yes, I'd a seen anybody comin' from either end of the street. I allus could when I stood at the gate with Katie, fer there's a big arc light they have to pass under and you can see them plain as plain."

"One moment." Langdon swung about to the court clerk. "Read out the testimony of Kate O'Neill beginning with the question, 'Did he seem to be watching for someone?'"

"'Question: Did he seem to be watching for someone? Answer: 'Yes, sir. He was staring up at the Hotel Republic, and I thought he was watching a man who was on the fire escape. Then I decided it wasn't a man that I saw but just a shadow, and suddenly a young lady all dressed up in—'"

"That will do, thank you," interrupted Langdon. "Now, Mr. Gallagher, if that was a man whom Miss O'Neill saw on the fire-escape, would you have seen him come down?"

"No, sor. I wasn't lookin' at the hotel."

"But that is the one place he could have come from when he joined you, isn't it?"

"No, sor. There's a servants' entrance to the hotel, just under the fire escape. He might have been someone from the hotel."

"Did he look like a waiter? What sort of a suit did he have on?"

"A check one, sor, and a red tie."

"Did you see anyone else while you were standing there?"

"Yes, sor. Me and Katie saw some people put their heads out of a winder in the hotel, then presently a policeman starts down the fire escape and Katie says, says she, 'Let's get in the kitchen; I don't want to be mixed up in this.' And I says, 'Me neither. Besides, a sup of hot coffee will set me up after the excitement'; so we went in."

"That is all, thank you, Mr. Gallagher." But now the Prosecutor was on his feet.

"Mr. Gallagher," he said sharply, "having seen all this, didn't you realize that you should have testified to it before the police?"

"I didn't connect it with the murder of this man Pollock," said Gallagher in some indignation. "And I took it for granted the police had got all the evidence they wanted on Barker's place."

"And may one ask," said the prosecutor with honied sweetness, "just what influence was brought to bear to make you tell this story today?"

"Well, you see," said Gallagher, scenting no sarcasm or coercion, "it was like this. When the police come to the house Katie gits mad at their questions and she says she was abed and asleep. Then a few days ago along comes a young feller selling a thing to lift the covers off of bilin' pots. He came to the back gate and he talks to Kate, till she says she don't be wantin' one, because she's leavin' of a Saturday to git married. Then he kids her a bit about he bets she's marryin' a policeman, so she tells him who I am. Then he gits talkin' about this affair, and he has the night's doin's so mixed up Kate she corrects him. He bets her a hat she's wrong; she says she kin prove it all by me. And so she does; but then another young feller comes around and says as how we can help a young lady and clear up a lot of trouble if we tell it in court. And begorra, Kate got her hat at that!"

A shout of laughter rang through the court, and the Prosecutor sat down, far more discomfited than he would admit. It was such a simple subterfuge. The back gate peddler with his packet of gossip—and the police of course blundering in and bullying. His respect for Langdon not only as a man but as a lawyer was growing, and in the back of his mind there hovered a black phantom—the mysterious man in the checked suit who had been in the alley. Had Langdon this man up his sleeve? He frowned and shifted the papers on his desk uneasily, then looked up with a start of surprise as the door of the witness-room opened to admit the flamboyantly gowned woman, with the hard and tired eyes.

She gave her name as Agnes Keenan, but when the question came as to her occupation, she stared straight ahead of her with a sort of grim humor, then shrugged her thin shoulders.

"None," she said with the imitation of an English accent. "I live on my income."

The crowd grinned, but Langdon flushed, and his voice was a little hard as he said quietly:

"I am sorry, Miss Keenan, to have to ask you such a question, but were you not an occupant of a cell in the Fiftieth Street police station on the night of the raid of Barker's gambling rooms?"

"I was." Her tone was more quiet now. "I had failed to come across, and having had a drop too much I sassed the sergeant, and he locked me up to 'cool off'."

"Had you a cell to yourself?"

"Well, at first I thought it was a private room, but a little later they shoved a girl in."

"Was that girl the defendant—Mary Page?"

"It was. But she looked some differ-

"And that girl was Mary Page?"

ent then. She was all dolled up in an evening gown, and hadn't even a cloak. I wondered what was up and tried to make her talk, but she seemed looney. I thought it was the d. t.'s at first, but when I found out she was plain batty, I got scared and called the guard. But he only cussed me out, so I got hold of her hands and tried to make her stop crying in that queer fashion. After a bit she began to talk. It was incoherent at first, about James, and the big house, and she wasn't Sadie or Maggie. Then she seemed to come to herself and asked who I was and where she was.

"Did she remain sane and conscious after that?"

"Not at first. She'd ramble, then she talked sanely. Finally she quieted down, and when I said that I was sure to get off first thing in the morning, she asked me if I would take a note to her lawyer. And I said I would."

"Did you ask her her name?"

"No." She smiled a little, half whimsically, half bitterly. "It ain't etiquette to ask names under the circumstances, but I said as it was the first time, the best thing to do was to say nothing till she had a lawyer to do the talking for her."

"Whom was the note she gave you addressed to?"

The question seemed to surprise her. "Why, you know—" she stammered, then laughed. "Gee, I forgot. I'm tellin' the court. The note was addressed

"She was all dolled up."

to Mr. Philip Langdon and I took it straight to him. Then him and me beat it back to the police station and he had a conference with the Magistrate. Then he shook my hand and thanked me like a gentleman,—and—that's all."

"One moment, Miss Keenan. You say that Miss Page would become sane, and then would lapse into delirium again. Did she mention any particular incident—or ask you any strange questions?"

"Yes. Once she said, 'He acts funny for a man who has just put on a successful play.' Then suddenly she sat up and grabbed me and cried, 'Was it blood or—was it just a red necktie—I saw it—' And I said, 'You saw it where?' And she said—sane as she could be, 'It was the other man outside—I couldn't see his face—just the red—' Then she began to cry and went off again into delirium, or whatever you call it. Next time she opened her eyes, she asked if I knew whether James Pollock was dead or if she had dreamed it, and I said so far as I knew James was about the livest thing I'd ever bumped against in this old town. Then she sighed like a kid and went to sleep, but when she woke up she seemed to know he was dead."

"Did she make any other mention of the man with the red tie?"

"No. When I asked her, she said it was a blur, but it would come back to her—she was sure of that. Someone else would have seen it too."

"That is all—" began Langdon, and broke off in astonishment. There was a commotion in the back of the room and a man stood up, raising one hand as if about to speak. His face was ashy, his jaw dropped. Then as suddenly as he had arisen he dropped back out of sight into his chair.

It was Daniels.

[To be continued.]

The Skip In Dundreary's Gait.

My father each year copied out his own prompt books, or had them copied, and then wrote in his most recent additions. I have many such prompt books with most minute notes and directions.

When I produced "Our American Cousin," nearly thirty years after his death, these manuscripts were so perfect that I had no difficulty in recalling every movement of all the characters. My father's genius was indeed the genius of infinite pains. I have heard him relate that the little skip he used in his gait in Dundreary originated simply from his habit of trying to keep in step with my mother as they walked up and down at the back of the stage arranging their lines. The skip and the stutter and other business grew and grew from performance to performance.

As Jefferson says in his "Life," the character of Dundreary gradually pushed all the other characters out of the play.—From "My Remembrances," by Edward H. Sothern, in Scribner's Magazine.

Safe Refuge.

"Say, Philadelphia is the only city which is immune from leap year propos'ls."

"Why so?"

"Bec use a fellow can plead it is the city of brotherly love."—Baltimore American.