



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 described Mary's flight from her intoxicated father and her father's suicide.

THE NURSE'S STORY

LANGDON, opening the door of the witness-room, glanced in. A sharp little frown of anxiety etched two fine vertical lines between his eyes; but at sight of the tall, trimly clad woman talking to the doctor a smile of relief replaced the scowl. He came forward eagerly.

"Thank goodness you were able to get here," he said, taking her hand in both of his. "It means so much to us to have you; but I didn't like to insist, or call the law to my aid. How is the recalcitrant patient?"

"Oh, the patient is doing splendidly, thanks," she answered with a smile.



"The patient is doing splendidly."

"but I should have come anyway, duty or no duty. How is Miss Page bearing up?"

"Very bravely, all things considered," said Langdon; but now his tone was grave with a hint of wistfulness.

Another day of the trial was begun. As on the day before, so fraught with terrible revelations, it was Mrs. Page who was the first witness.

"I have only a few questions, Mrs. Page," said Langdon gently. "How long after your husband's death was it that you learned the whereabouts of your daughter?"

"It may have been an hour—or perhaps less. A letter came from Phillip and said, 'Don't worry. Mary is safe in Dr. Jamison's home. For obvious reasons I advise you not to come here till later. Will then explain all.' I went and got my hat and cloak to go to her, but James Pollock drove up in his automobile just as I was going down the path to the gate. He said he hated to disturb me at such a time, but that I must remember that Mary was his fiancée, and he was getting tired of Mr. Langdon's attitude. 'I am the one who should have taken care of her last night,' he said, 'and I demand that you immediately stop Langdon's interference.' I told him that my poor child had suffered enough; that I would not in any way interfere in the future. In fact, I—I blamed him for the awful tragedy of the night before. It seemed to me that but for him my daughter would be safe and well and my husband living, and I told him so. He said that if I would not deal with Langdon, he would, and that he would expect Mary to keep her word to him. Then he left. At the gate he met a boy coming in with a note, and after some talk, he gave the boy some money and took the note himself. He tore it open and read it; then, crumpling it in his hand as if angry, he flung it aside and got into his motor. As soon as he was out of sight I ran out and picked up the note. It—it was addressed to me, and it said: 'I am taking Mary to Dr. Foster's sanatorium outside the city. She bears up bravely under the news of her father's death. Will call later. Phillip. The next I remember is lying on the bed in my own room and hearing our doctor say, 'It's all too much for her. I wish to God she had some relatives or someone to help her.'"

"That is all, Mrs. Page, unless the State has some questions to ask." His voice rose interrogatively, but the prosecutor shook his head.

"Dr. Angus Foster?"

Only the fear of the dire threat of the judge to "clear the room if there was any disturbance" held the spectators silent at the sound of that name, for Dr. Foster had played his role in many another court-room, while his fame was a byword all over the world. Kings of Wall Street owed their grip upon affairs to his care when mental breakdowns seemed inevitable.

He was not a tall man, but the dignity of his carriage, and the way he held his shoulders, lent him an appearance of great height as he took his place in the witness-box and held up his right hand to take the oath.

"Dr. Foster, you specialize in diseases of the brain, do you not?"

"I do. In both mental and nervous ills."

"Have you a sanatorium just outside this city?"

"I have."

"Have you ever seen the defendant before?"

"I have seen Miss Page on several occasions. The first time when I saw Mr. Langdon, whom I had known for some years, drive up with a girl beside him in the motor. She seemed to be asleep or only partially conscious. She opened her eyes as I came up, and got unsteadily to her feet, and then I noticed that her heavy veil hid the fact that her face was livid from some great suffering. After we had given her into the charge of Nurse Walton I took Mr. Langdon into my office, where he told me briefly of Miss Page's attack of madness, and the incidents that had led up to it. While Mr. Langdon was still talking I saw an automobile drive furiously up to my gate and a man leap out. My exclamation drew Langdon to the window and he cried sharply, 'My God! that's James Pollock!'"

"Did you already know who he was?"

"Yes, I had heard of him from various men who had been my patients, and Mr. Langdon had already told me that Mr. Pollock was engaged to Miss Page, and also something of how that engagement had been brought about."

"Was Mr. Pollock brought to your office?"

"No. I went out into the hall to meet him and took him into the general reception-room. I told him Miss Page's condition necessitated absolute rest for at least twenty-four hours. He became insulting and abusive and accused me of keeping Miss Page a prisoner, so I decided the best thing to do was to let the young lady herself decide whether or not she wanted to see him."

"Did you go at once to Miss Page?"

"No. I left Mr. Pollock in the reception-room and returned to my office, where I apprised Mr. Langdon of the situation. Together we went to the room assigned to Miss Page. She was in bed, and seemed comfortable and calm. While I was talking to her, however, finding out a little of her nervous condition, Mr. Langdon, who had been sitting near the door, gave a sharp exclamation and darted out into the hall. Miss Walton the nurse went to the door after him, but before she reached it we could all hear the sounds of a loud altercation. When I reached the scene myself, I found Mr. Langdon barring the way and Mr. Pollock attempting to force himself past to get to Miss Page's room. He declared to be his right to be with her and said that Mr. Langdon was an interloper, a kidnapper, and a great many other things."

"Did you interfere?"

"I did. It took me some time to quiet Mr. Pollock, but he returned to the reception-room eventually, and Mr. Langdon and I hurried back to Miss Page who was very much excited and was crying out that she did not want to see 'James'—or anyone except her mother and Mr. Langdon. She quieted down when we came in, especially after she had been reassured that no one would disturb her."

"Did you give any orders to that effect?"

"I did. I told Miss Walton to sit where she could watch the door, and that if James Pollock made any attempt to come down the hall she was at once to ring for help and bar him out."

"Did Miss Walton seem to consider the order unusual?"

"Well, not exactly that. She seemed agitated and upset by the name, but evaded my question as to whether she knew him. However, as I had always found her trustworthy and a splendid nurse, I paid but little attention to her excitement."

"You say you paid but little attention to her excitement. Did you have any talking as to what might have caused that agitation?"

"Not at the time, but later when Miss Walton told me what had happened, admitting—"

"May I please the court," interrupted the Prosecutor, leaping to his feet. "Dr. Foster is retelling hearsay, and I object to the question of my learned colleague." There was a tinge of satisfaction in his voice at being able to

interrupt the famous alienist who was said to know as much of law as of medicine, and the doctor flushed with annoyance. But Langdon showed no discomfiture; there was, in fact, a smile of satisfaction curling the corners of his lips as the judge leaned forward and said slowly:

"Strike out the question beginning, 'You say you paid but little attention to her excitement' and its answer. Continue, Mr. Langdon."

"That is all, Dr. Foster," said Langdon promptly, and the District Attorney had only one question:

"When Mary Page was brought to your sanatorium, was she not perfectly sane?"

"Temporarily so, but her nervous condition was such that extreme mental suffering was very evident. We doctors have many definitions of that word 'sane,' sir."

"That is all." And as the doctor stepped down from the witness-box with a covert smile, the name of the next witness was called by the bailiff.

This was a new player in the vast drama whose every act was seemingly a fresh tragedy, and the reporters whispered the name among themselves as they box over their copy, striving to place her among the scores who had been drawn into the net flung by the police and Langdon after the strange murder of James Pollock. Her name slipped from lip to lip through the spectators as well and more than one man in the back of the room stood up to stare when the tall brisk woman came confidently from the witness-room and took her place on the stand.

"Miss Gertrude Walton?"

She gave her name with gravity, her age with a smile, and her occupation with pride, as "trained nurse."

"Miss Walton," said Langdon, "you specialize in nervous cases, do you not?"

"I do."

"How long have you been doing that sort of nursing?"

"For twelve years. I began it by—nursing my sister through a terrible illness when she seemed likely to lose her reason. I have never forgotten her suffering, and I have specialized in nervous cases ever since."

"Are you attached to the staff at Dr. Foster's sanatorium?"

"I am."

"You have been there a good many years, have you not?"

"Yes."

"When was the first time that you saw the defendant, Mary Page?"

"On the morning when she was brought to the sanatorium for treatment."

"Miss Walton, did you know James Pollock?"

For the first time her quiet confidence forsook her, and a red spot crept



"Mr. Pollock asked me if I was Miss Page's nurse."

into each cheek, and there was a visible hesitation before she answered slowly:

"I had never MET Mr. Pollock, but I had heard a great deal about him. His name was very familiar to me."

"Then the first time you saw him was when he came to the sanatorium asking for Miss Page?"

Again there was a hesitation before the answer:

"Yes."

"Will you tell the court, please, what happened after Dr. Foster ordered you to keep James Pollock out of the room of your new patient—Miss Page?"

"I—I felt that I ought to know what he looked like that I might make no mistake, so I went down the hall towards the reception-room. As I reached the door, however, it was opened

and Mr. Pollock stepped out. At sight of me he paused, then asked me if I was Miss Page's nurse. I said I was, and when we were in the reception-room, Mr. Pollock told me that he was the fiancée of Miss Page, and that Mr. Langdon was taking advantage of Miss Page's nervous condition to influence her against him. He told me that—that—he would make it well worth my while to help him remove her to another sanatorium which had been selected by her mother, and pointed out the fact that Mrs. Page had not come with her daughter as indicating her dissatisfaction with Dr. Foster's hospital."

"Did you agree to help him?"

A hot flush dyed her cheeks, and her fingers nervously fumbled her gloves as she answered softly:

"Yes."

"What instructions did he give you?"

"He—he told me to give Miss Page a sleeping draught that night, and said that when the hospital was quiet at eleven he would have his automobile outside and if I would let him in, he would carry Miss Page to it, and take her to the other sanatorium. He also asked me if I would take the case, as a private nurse, and when I said yes, he wrote the name down on a piece of paper for me."

"Do you mean," interrupted the judge, "that you were ready to throw up your position with Dr. Foster, and allow one of his patients to be stolen from his sanatorium without investigating the truth of the man's statements?"

"You mean about Mr. Langdon?" she stammered. "Oh—I—I knew that was not true. I—I agreed because of—a certain plan I had in mind. Then—he—had me to expect that he would pay me well and left."

"Miss Walton, do you recall the name of the sanatorium to which Mr. Pollock wished to take Miss Page?"

"Yes. It was Professor Zellar's sanatorium at Ortonville."

"Did you carry out your plans for that night?"

"No. The plan I had formed miscarried, because of the watchfulness of Mr. Langdon, who unwittingly hindered me."

"I gave Miss Page a sleeping-draught at ten o'clock and then put on my own hat and laid my cloak ready. At eleven I went down to the reception-room and unlocked one of the French windows which was almost immediately opened by Mr. Pollock. He followed me back to the bedroom, and picking up Miss Page whom I had carefully wrapped in blankets he carried her out to his automobile. As soon as he was on the veranda I closed the window and started to run to the front of the house, but I was stopped by Mr. Langdon, who was spending the night at the sanatorium and had already discovered Miss Page's absence. He—he caught me by the arm and demanded to know where she was. I tried to get away—because—because moments were precious just then, but he wouldn't let go and finally I told him that Mr. Pollock had just carried Miss Page off. At that he rushed out of the house and down the drive, and sprang onto the running board of Mr. Pollock's motor, which was just starting up. Mr. Pollock struck at him, but he hung on, and kept on fighting till the motor swung around the curve and into the main road, and then the force of the turn flung Mr. Langdon off. By that time the detectives were in the road and fired after the car but it didn't stop."

"Detectives! What detectives?" Langdon's question snapped like a whip lash.

"Why—why—?" she stammered, confused by the sudden interruption. "The ones I sent for. I wanted Mr. Pollock caught in the act of kidnapping Miss Page, but Mr. Langdon held me back too long and prevented my giving the signal agreed upon."

A wave of sound that was the composite exclamation of those in the room swept like a breath of wind through the court and faded to silence, and Langdon asked:

"You had a special reason for wanting David Pollock caught by the police, had you not, Miss Walton?"

"Yes!" she cried, and her voice took on a sudden fierce note of suffering and anger. "I wanted him punished, and I thanked God for the chance that had been put into my hands!"

"Why?"

"Because he ruined my little sister, and left her to die of shame and heart-break!"

"Your honor!" It was the prosecutor's voice. "I object to that question and answer. It defames the character of a dead man, and has no bearing upon this case. What is more, it cannot be proved!"

"You are perfectly right," said the judge sternly. "Let the evidence of the witness be stricken out from the words 'signal agreed upon.'"

Langdon bowed his head submissively, but there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes, for he knew that though the words might be stricken out of the record, they could not so easily be erased from the minds of those who had heard them.

They had, in fact, laid bare another tragedy, and the words of Miss Walton earlier in the day, "I began by nursing my sister through a terrible illness when she seemed likely to lose her reason," gained a poignant meaning, that made more than one jurymen move restlessly, and brought a whisper of sympathy from the spectators.

The court clerk monotonously read the corrected evidence and then Langdon, after a moment's thought, said:

"Miss Walton, when your plan miscarried and Mr. Pollock succeeded in carrying off Miss Page, what did you do?"

"I ran back to the hospital veranda where Dr. Foster was standing, having been drawn out by the sound of shots,

and told him as quickly as I could what had happened, and where they had taken Miss Page."

"Did he make any comment upon the address you gave him?"

"Yes. He gave a sharp exclamation when I handed it to him and said, 'Great heavens! I've heard of that place—and what I've heard was anything but good.' At that one of the detectives took it and when he had read it he whistled and said, 'Zellar's! My God, we'd better follow pretty quick, if you want to rescue the girl. We've had our eye on that joint for some time.' At that Dr. Foster said, 'We will follow quickly, for my car can be here in a minute.'"

"Will you tell the court, please, exactly what happened when you reached the sanatorium?"

"Dr. Foster stopped the automobile at some distance down the road and put out the lights. Then we all slipped into the grounds as quietly as possible and the four men hid in the bush—"

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as while I went boldly up to the door and rang the bell. I asked to see either Dr. Zellar or Mr. Pollock, and was taken into an office where both men were sitting. Mr. Pollock seemed relieved to see me, as he said Miss Page was very much excited and had been sobbing and screaming, but he was obviously suspicious of me. I—I—told him, however, that I had had a fierce battle with Langdon to hold him back from pursuing them, and that it was he who had fired the shots; so at last he seemed convinced and took me up to Miss Page's room. She was hysterical and feverish and clung to me desperately. She was sitting on the edge of her bed, in a narrow room whose windows were heavily barred, while the door had not only a lock but two bolts as well."

"Was Miss Page locked in when you got to her room?"

"Yes, and Mr. Pollock would have locked us both in, had it not been that I protested, saying that if Miss Page grew violent in the night I must be free to get out and call for help. But even though he left the door unlocked he lingered just outside for a long time, and I was unable either to soothe Miss Page or give the signal, for fear of arousing his suspicions. At last I heard him go downstairs, and I told Miss Page that Dr. Foster and Mr. Langdon were outside, and when she had sunk back crying with relief I carried the lamp to the window and gave the signal. Then I started down stairs to let the men in."

"Were the halls deserted?"

"Yes—both deserted and dark. But just as I was slipping back the bolts of the front door, the door to the office was opened by an attendant and in the light that streamed out he could see me plainly. I tried to slip the last bolt before he could reach me, but it was stiff and I couldn't move it. With an oath he grabbed me by the arm and dragged me into the office. Both Dr. Zellar and Mr. Pollock were there, and he told them what I had been doing. At that Mr. Pollock grabbed me and shook me and demanded to know what I was up to. He hurt me and frightened me so, I couldn't think of anything to say and I just screamed, thinking that those outside would hear me and break in. They did hear me, for they began to hammer on the door and demand entrance, and I screamed again. But at that Mr. Pollock clapped his hand over my mouth and Dr. Zellar caught my wrists, and between them they dragged me into a little room beyond the office and flung me into a chair. Then I saw that Dr. Zellar had a revolver in his hand and he thrust it into my face, promising to 'do for me' if I made any noise. They went out and locked the door, but as soon as they were gone I ran to it and listened, and I heard the doctor tell his assistant (the one who had caught me at the door) to go upstairs and watch 'the girl.' Then he and Mr. Pollock had a conference and decided to let Dr. Foster and Mr. Langdon in, but to deny that Miss Page was there. 'I'll go upstairs and wait till you get rid of them,' said Mr. Pollock. Then I heard a door close and everything was quiet."

"Soon I heard Dr. Foster's voice saying, 'Miss Page has been forcibly dragged from my sanatorium and brought here. I demand her instant release, and I have my car outside to take her back to the hospital.' At that Dr. Zellar laughed sneeringly and said, 'Is it your usual method of getting patients to run about at night and kidnap them from rival sanatoriums? I could hear Dr. Foster give a little muttered oath of anger, but Mr. Langdon broke in sharply saying, 'This is no time for listening to any tomfool insults from

you, Zellar—what we want is Miss Page, and by heaven, I'll get her out of here, if I have to kill you and break down every door in the place! 'Even that wouldn't get her,' said Dr. Zellar, 'for this Miss Page, as you call her, is not here.' 'You lie!' shouted Langdon, 'we know she is. The nurse has already signalled us to that effect.' 'I'm afraid your friend has been drinking a little too much,' sneered Zellar, speaking apparently to Dr. Foster, for it was the latter who answered: 'I suppose,' he said drily, 'that you will deny also that a woman screamed to us for help a few minutes ago.' 'One of the patients had a nightmare,' said Zellar, but he spoke uneasily.

"Suddenly Mr. Langdon shouted, 'Nurse Walton! Nurse Walton!' And in answer I beat upon the door and cried, 'In here! In here!' Almost instantly it seemed I heard the sound of running feet, and the door was unlocked and I stumbled out almost into Mr. Langdon's arms. But before we could either of us move away from the spot Zellar said grimly, 'Stand where you are, all three of you! And we saw that he was covering us with his revolver. Then there came a most terrible cry from upstairs—the long scream of a woman either half crazed or in deadly fear. Even Zellar was horrified by it, and his arm wavered a little as he turned his head. At that Mr. Langdon sprang upon him, and bore him back against the table. They fought desperately, both Dr. Foster and I trying to help, and at length Mr. Langdon succeeded in twisting the arm of Dr. Zellar so that his fingers went limp and the revolver fell to the floor. Dr. Foster snatched it up and Mr. Langdon cried, 'Keep that beast covered till I get Mary,' and went running out of the room and up the stairs. It was then that I remembered the two detectives and realized that we had help outside, so I hurried to the door and flung it open. They were right there, half crazy with anxiety, and when I shouted, 'Up stairs,' they went up two at a time with me close behind."

"Will you tell us, please, what you saw when you reached the upper landing?"

"We saw Mr. Langdon and Mr. Pollock on the door engaged in a furious struggle, while from the door of Miss Page's room came the sound of little hands beating against the wood, and almost continuous screams or bursts of hysterical laughter, interspersed with outcries in a man's voice! The detectives went at once to Mr. Langdon's aid, and when they had seized Mr. Pollock one of them covered him with his revolver while the other ran with Mr. Langdon and myself to the door of Miss Page's room. It was locked, and our cries to Mary to let us in only brought more terrible screams from her, so the detective, warning us back, fired his revolver downward through the keyhole, shattering the lock, and we burst into the room."

"Miss Page was standing at the window sobbing and laughing and tearing at the iron bars with hands already cut and bleeding from her efforts. Half crouched by the bed, was the ugly attendant Dr. Zellar had sent to watch her, and lying shattered on the floor beside him was a whiskey bottle. He was obviously brutally drunk, but either Miss Page's madness or our entrance terrified him into a momentary sobriety, and as we ran towards Miss Page he darted out of the room."

"How long was it before Miss Page quieted down?"

"It was some hours. When we found that neither Mr. Langdon nor I was recognized by Miss Page I ran downstairs for Dr. Foster. As I came out in the hall the detective who was

guarding Mr. Pollock turned towards me and the latter instantly leapt over the banisters and rushed into the office. The detective and I were close behind him, and as we reached the door we saw Mr. Pollock leap upon Dr. Foster and strike the revolver from his hand. Then he switched out the light and called to Zellar to 'come quick.' Before we could stop them both men ran out through one of the long windows."

"Did you see either of them again?"

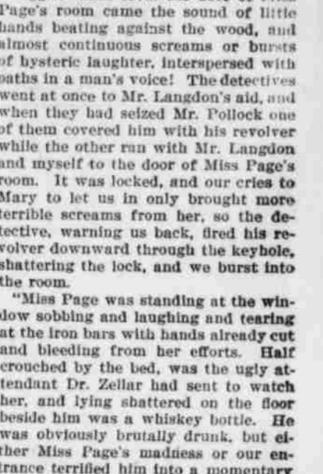
"No. We at once locked all the doors and windows and then Dr. Foster hurried upstairs to Miss Page. It was some hours before he could quiet her even with strong sedatives, and when at last she was asleep it was so near dawn that it seemed best for us all to stay right there until morning."

"Did you hear Dr. Foster give any opinion as to this second attack of madness on the part of Miss Page?"

"Yes. I asked him what could have caused it, and he pointed to the broken whiskey bottle, saying that the brutal attendant was undoubtedly drunk even before he had entered the room, and had probably continued drinking in Miss Page's presence. 'This,' he said, 'proves conclusively to me that Miss Page is suffering from what we term 'repressed psychosis,' superinduced by the sight of intoxication!'"

(To be continued.)

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