

# THE HEART OF A WOMAN

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Author of "The Scarlet Pimpernel," "Petticoat Rule," Etc.

## SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in Brussels. Louisa Harris, a charming English girl of family, friends and wealth, while absent walking along the Boulevard Waterloo in a November rain, runs into a tragedy.

A man is found murdered in a taxicab; his companion who had left the cab some time before and told the chauffeur to drive to a certain address, has disappeared and is unknown.

The scene shifts to London. Luke de Mountford, Louisa's affianced, the nephew and heir of the eccentric and wealthy Lord Radcliffe, is in trouble. An alleged direct heir, the unknown son of another brother, has notified Lord Radcliffe of his claims. The old man, passionately fond of Luke, claims that he has examined the papers and that the claimant is an impostor.

Suddenly the alleged Phillip de Mountford appears in London. After a short interview with Lord Radcliffe his claims are recognized and he is installed as heir. Without explanation Luke is practically disowned. Phillip seems to exert unlimited influence over Lord Radcliffe which puzzles his friends and defies investigation. Lord Radcliffe will explain to no one.

A year has passed since the tragedy in Brussels. Suddenly it is repeated in every detail in London. The victim is Phillip de Mountford. Every circumstance and a very apparent motive points to the displaced nephew, Luke, and the murderer. In vain, Louisa, in her blind faith, tried to prove Luke innocent. Every investigation brightens the chains of evidence. At the coroner's inquest the startling development that the murdered man is not Phillip de Mountford but a common scoundrel denounced by his father and mother, who identified the body as their son, only complicates the situation. It does not in the least upset the appalling proofs of Luke's guilt. A warrant is issued for his arrest but because of his station in life the police secretly warn him to leave the country before the warrant is served. This he prepares to do. Louisa sees him and asks him pointedly for the truth. He confesses his guilt.

(Continued From Last Week.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THEY HAVE NO HEART.

As to what occurred in the heart of the fog on that night in November four years ago, most of you no doubt will remember. Those who do not I must refer to the morning papers of the following day.

A perfect harvest for journalists. Gossip and detail sufficient to fill column upon column of newspapers, gossip that grew as the hours sped on, and the second day of fog pursued its monotonous course.

A man had been found murdered in a taxicab, his throat stabbed through from ear to ear, the jugular pierced, life absolutely extinct; the murderer vanished.

Drama in the midst of reality. Such things are, you know. No amount of so-called realistic literature, no amount of sneers at what is dubbed melodrama, will prevent this fact occurring—and occurring very frequently in the streets of a mighty city.

Just a man murdered and the murderer disappeared. A very real thing that, and London has had to face such facts often enough, more often than has an audience at Drury Lane or the Adelphi. The superior minded critic who spells British drama with a capital B and D, and pronounces it Pritish trams, sat in the stalls of a London theater on this very same foggy evening in November, four years ago. The play was one that did not appeal to the superior-minded critic; it was just a simple tale of jealousy which led to the breaking of that great commandment: "Thou shalt do no murder."

And the superior-minded critic yawned behind a well gloved hand and dubbed the play melodramatic, unreal, and stagey, quite foreign to the life of today. But just at that hour—between 9 and 10 o'clock—a man was murdered in a taxicab, and his murderer vanished in the fog.

London doesn't dub such events melodrama; she does not sneer at them or call them unreal. She knows that they are real; there is nothing stagey or artificial about them; they have even become commonplace.

They occur so often. And most often whilst society dines or dances and the elect applaud with languid grace the newest play of Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Only in this case, the event gained additional interest. The murdered man was a personality. Some one whom everybody that was anybody had talked about, gossiped, and discussed for the past six months. Some one whom few had seen but many had heard about—Phillip de Mountford—the son of the late Arthur de Mountford—Radcliffe's newly found heir, you know.

The news spread as only such news can spread, and when society poured out from theaters, from houses in Governor square, or from the dining room of the Carlton, every one had heard the news.

It was as if the sprite of gossip had been busy whispering in over-willing ears.

"Phillip de Mountford has been murdered."

"He was found in a taxicab; his throat was cut from ear to ear."

"No, no! not cut, I understand. Pierced through with a sharp instrument—a stiletto, I presume."

"How horrible!"

"Poor Lord Radcliffe—such a tragedy!"

"He'll never live through it."

"He has looked very feebly lately."

"The scandal round the late Arthur's name broke him up, I think."

"It seems Arthur de Mountford had married a negress."

"No, no! Phillip did not look like a half-caste. I saw him once or twice. He was dark, but nice looking."

"Still, there was some scandal about the marriage."

"Nothing to what this scandal will be."

"What scandal?"

"Seek whom the crime benefits, you know."

"Then you think?—you really think Luke de Mountford did it?"

"I thought so the moment I heard the story."

"I've always thought that Luke de Mountford a queer sort of fellow."

"And he took his cousin's advent very badly."

"Well one can't wonder at that ex-

actly—to lose a future peerage all of a sudden—and he has no private fortune, either—"

"Poor beggar."

"I heard there were awful rows between the cousins until Lord Radcliffe himself turned Luke and the others out of the house."

"And now Phillip de Mountford has been murdered."

"And the police will seek him whom the crime benefits."

"It certainly looks very suspicious."

"A real cause celebre. Won't it be exciting?"

"Something to read about in one's morning papers."

"I shall try and get reserved seats for the trial. I hate a crush, don't you?"

"Will they hang him, do you think?"

"If he is found guilty—English justice is no respecter of persons."

"How awful."

And little-tattle, senseless talk, insane remarks, were wafted on the grimy wings of the fog. They penetrated everywhere, in the lobbies, the theaters, the boudoir of madame, the smoking room of my lord.

They penetrated to the magnificent reception rooms of the Danish legation and Louisa heard the remarks even before she knew the full details of the story. Louisa had a well trained contralto voice and had been asked to sing, in the course of the evening.

Just as she stood in an outer room selecting her music, she heard a group of idlers—men and women—talking over the mysterious murder in the taxicab.

They had at first been unconcerned toward her presence. She had her back toward them, turning over the leaves of her song. Suddenly there was a hush in the conversation; one of the chatterboxes must have pointed her out to the others.

Whereupon Louisa, serene and smiling, a roll of music in her hand, joined the merry group.

"Please," she said, "don't stop. I have heard nothing yet. And of course I want to know."

One of the men laughed and the ladies murmured silly nothings.

"Oh!" said some one, "it mayn't be true. Such lots of wild rumors get about."

"What," asked Louisa placidly, "mayn't be true? Some one said just now that Phillip de Mountford has been murdered."

"Well," murmured one of the ladies, "they say it was Mr. de Mountford; but they can't be sure, can they?"

The group was dissolving; almost, it seemed, as if it had vanished into thin air. When Louisa first heard them talking there were about a dozen men and women, a brilliant throng of gaily plumaged birds; now the ladies remembered that they wanted to hear the latest infant prodigy who had been engaged to entertain the guests at the post-dinner reception tonight, and the men too, feeling uncomfortable and awkward, made good their escape.

People—the pleasure-loving people of today—have no use for latent tragedy. Excitement, yes; and drama; but only from the secure distance of a private seat at an Old Bailey trial. The murder of Phillip de Mountford could be discussed with quite an amount of enjoyment between a dinner party and a ball supper, but not in Louisa Harris' presence. By Gad! too much of a good thing you know.

Within a very few minutes Louisa found herself almost alone, just the one or two near her to whom she had directly spoken and—fortunately—Colonel Harris in the doorway, come to look for his daughter.

"The infant with the violin," he said as soon as he caught sight of Louisa, "is just finishing his piece, poor little rat! You promised you would sing next, Lou. What songs have you got?"

"I was just making a selection when you came, father. What would you like me to sing?"

With an unexpressed sigh of relief the last two of the original group of gossips dwindled away into the reception room beyond, congratulating themselves on having successfully engineered their exit.

"Dozed awkward, don't you know, Miss Harris asking questions."

"I suppose she doesn't realize—"

"She will soon enough."

"She ought to have broken off her engagement long ago."

"Isn't it awful? Poor thing."

Louisa, left alone with her father, could allow her nerves to ease their fearful tension. She had no need to hide from him the painful quiver of her lips, or the anxious frown across her brow.

"Do you know," she asked, "anything about this awful business, father?"

"There's a lot of gossip," he replied; his voice was not only gruff but hoarse, which showed that he was strangely moved.

"But," she insisted, "some truth in the gossip?"

"They say Phillip de Mountford has been murdered."

"Who says so?"

"Some people have come on from the theaters, and men from the clubs. The streets are full of it—and evening papers have brought out midnight editions which are selling like hot cakes."

"And do they say that Luke has killed Phillip de Mountford?"

"No"—with some hesitation—"they don't say that."

"But they hint at it."

"Newspaper tittle-tattle."

"How much is actual fact?"

"I understand," he explained, "that at 9 o'clock or thereabouts, two men in evening dress hailed a passing taxicab just outside the Lyric theater in Shaftesbury avenue and told the chauffeur to drive to Hyde Park corner, just by the railings of the Green Park. The driver drew up there and one of the two men got out. As he reached the door of the cab he leaned toward the interior and said cheerfully, 'S'long old man. See you tomorrow.' Then he told the chauffeur to drive on to 1 Cromwell Road opposite the museum, and turning on his heel disappeared in the fog. When the chauffeur drew up for the second time no one alighted from the cab. So he got down from his box and opened the door."

"The other man," murmured Louisa vaguely, "was in the cab—dead?"

"That's about it."

"With his throat cut from ear to ear by a sharp instrument which might

have been a skewer."

"You have heard it all then?"

"No, no," she said hurriedly.

The room was swaying around her; the furniture started lopping and dancing. Louisa, who had never fainted in her life, felt as if the floor was giving way under her feet. Memory was unloading one of her storerooms, looking over the contents of a hidden cell, wherein she had put away a strange winter scene in Brussels, a taxicab, the ill-lighted boulevard, the chauffeur getting down from his box and finding a man crouched in the farther corner of the cab—dead—with his throat pierced from ear to ear by an instrument which might have been a skewer. And memory was raking out that cell, clearing it in every corner, trying to find the recollection of a certain morning in Battersea Park a year ago, when Louisa recounted her impressions of that weird scene and told the tale of this crime which she had almost witnessed. Memory found a distinct impression that she had told the tale at full length and with all the details which she knew. She remembered talking it all over, and that when she did so, the ground in Battersea Park was crisp with the frost under her feet, and an inquisitive robin perched himself on the railings and then flew away, accompanying her and another all the way along as far as the gates.

Two pictures, vivid and distinct, that evening in Brussels, and the morning in Battersea Park, her first meeting with Luke after his letter to her—the letter which had come to her in the Palace Hotel and which had made her the happiest woman in all the world. Memory—satisfied—had at last emptied the storehouse of that one cell and left Louisa Harris standing here, staring at her father, her ears buzzing with the idle and irresponsible chatter of society jackdaws, her mind seeing all that had happened outside 1 Cromwell Road; the cab stopping, the chauffeur terrified, the crowd collecting, the police taking notes. Her mind saw it as if her bodily eyes had been there, and all that her father told her seemed but the recapitulation of what she knew already.

"Where," she said after awhile, "is the dead man now?"

"I don't know," he replied. "I should imagine they would keep the body at the police station until the morning. I don't suppose they'd be such mugs as to disturb Lord Radcliffe at this time of night; the shock might kill the old man."

"I suppose they are quite sure that it is Phillip de Mountford who was killed?"

"Why, yes; he had his pocketbook, his cards, his letters on him and money too—robbery was not the object of the crime."

"It was Phillip de Mountford then?"

"Good God, yes! Of whom were you thinking?"

"I was thinking of Luke," she replied, simply.

The old man said nothing more. Had he spoken at all then it would have been to tell her that he, too, was thinking of Luke and that there was perhaps not a single person in the magnificent house at that moment who was not—in some way or another—thinking of Luke.

The hostess came in, elegant and worldly, with banal words to request the pleasure of hearing Miss Harris sing.

"It is so kind of you," she said, "to offer. I have never heard you, you know, and people say you have such a splendid voice. But perhaps you would rather not sing tonight."

She spoke English perfect, but with a slight Scandinavian intonation, which seemed to soften the banality of her words. Being foreign, she thought less of concealing her sympathy and was much less fearful of venturing on delicate ground.

She held out a small, exquisitely gloved hand and laid it almost affectionately on the younger woman's arm.

"I am sure you would rather not sing tonight," she said kindly.

"Indeed, countess, why should you think that?" retorted Louisa lightly.

"I shall be delighted to sing. I wonder which of these new songs you would like best. There is an exquisite one by Guy d'Hardelot. Shall I sing that?"

And her excellency, who so charmingly represented Denmark in English society, followed her guest into the reception room; she admired the elegant carriage of the English girl, the slender figure, the soft abundant hair.

And her excellency sighed and murmured to herself:

"They are stiff, these English! and oh! they have no feeling, no sentiment."

And a few moments later when Louisa Harris's really firm voice, firm and clear, echoed in the wide reception room, her excellency reiterated her impressions:

"These English have no heart! She sings and her lover is suspected of murder! Bah! they have no heart!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TALE HAD TO BE TOLD.

And whilst the morning papers were unfolded by millions of English men and women, and the details of the mysterious crime discussed over eggs and bacon and buttered toast, Phillip de Mountford, the newly found heir presumptive to the earldom of Radcliffe, was lying in the gloomy mortuary chamber of a London police court, whether he had been conveyed in the same cab whose four narrow walls jealously guarded the secret of the tragedy which had been enacted within their precincts.

Lord Radcliffe had been aroused at 10 o'clock the previous night by representatives of the police, who came to break the news to him. It was not late, and the old man was not yet in bed. He had opened the front door of his house himself, his servants, he explained curtly, were spending their evening more agreeably elsewhere.

The house—even to the police officers—appeared lonely and gloomy in the extreme, and the figure of the old man, who should have been surrounded by every luxury that rank and wealth can give, looked singularly pathetic as he stood in his own doorway, evidently unprotected and uncared for and suspiciously demanding what his late visitors' business might be.

Very reluctantly on hearing the latter's status he consented to admit them. He did not at first appear to suspect that anything wrong might have happened, or that anything untoward could occasion this nocturnal visit; in fact, he seemed unconscious of the lateness of the hour.

He walked straight into the library, where he had obviously been sitting, for an armchair was drawn to the fire, a reading lamp was lighted on the table and papers and magazines lay scattered about.

(Continued Next Week.)

## IN THE KINDERGARTEN.



"Now, Willie, why do bees swarm—what is the cause of it?"

"Oh, simply bee cause, I guess."

## Law of Life.

Two men were out walking one day in sun-kissed California. Suddenly, kissing time being over, it began to rain in torrents and they were miles from the car line. One man laughed, long and loud. The other wept bitterly. "Why do you laugh?" he asked his chuckling companion. "Because I am paying meter rates on water. But why do you weep?" "Because I am paying \$10 a day for climate," replied the tourist. "One man's meat is another man's meat bill."

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