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THE·MYSTERY·OF·THE INN·BY·THE·SHORE

By Florence Warden,
Author of "The House on the Marsh," etc.

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CHAPTER XIII.
Continued.

"But didn't you hear what the doctor said? Didn't you want to hear it?" persisted Nell.

"I waited to hear it, but I didn't succeed," said the colonel, in an offended tone.

The fact was that he and a number of other nobodies, who on one account or other considered themselves persons of great importance in the neighborhood, had been cruelly snubbed by the two medical men who had made an examination of the body when it had been brought into the town. For, after making their examination, they had both passed out of the building and through the throng which awaited them as quickly as possible, and had both declined at that stage to give a definite opinion as to the cause of death. So all the little great men felt grossly insulted, and deported to their respective homes at a white heat of indignation.

"For all I know, they may bring it in 'Murder' against this fellow, Kime," said the colonel, irritably, not with any feeling of animosity against the person in question, but in order to get Nell to sympathize with his own grievance.

But the effect of his words upon the girl was electrical.

"Murder! Against Clifford?" cried she, springing to the door and gasping for breath. "Oh, you don't mean that! You can't!"

She burst into a violent fit of weeping, which made the colonel rather ashamed of himself. He tried to calm her, assuring her that nobody but the doctors, who were pompous asses without an idea how to treat men of powers and position vastly superior to their own, would ever entertain such a monstrous opinion. But she could not find enough comfort in his words, and at last, in spite of his and his daughter's efforts to detain her, she set off to walk to the Blue Lion, that she might at least have the assurance she longed for that nobody there shared the colonel's rashly expressed opinion.

"Mind, Nell, you are to come back here to sleep," commanded Miss Rosal, who objected to the girl's remaining in the vicinity of her highly undesirable lover.

But Nell would give no promise. She was deeply anxious, not only to hear how Clifford was and what people thought of Jem Stickels's death, but, also, to know how soon she would be able to speak to Clifford, whose advice had become more necessary than ever.

Refusing, therefore, a rather perfunctory offer on the colonel's part to escort her along the lonely road, she bade her friends good-by and started on her way to the Blue Lion.

But she got little reward for her pains. The house was shut up when she reached it; and Ann, who let her in, started at the sight of her, and hurried her up to her room, with scant information. Of course, the servant had heard of the finding of Jem Stickels's body; but she either would not or could not offer any opinions, either her own or anybody else's, as to the manner in which it came about; and Nell, fearing to rouse suspicion, was fain to go to bed unsatisfied. Only one piece of comfort was given her: Mr. King, who had a professional nurse in attendance on him, was getting on as well as they could hope.

On the following morning, George Claris, who looked worried and anxious, told his niece, as soon as breakfast was over, to pack her trunk for her journey to London. Nell did not dare to make any protest, nor even to ask any questions of her uncle, whose mood was clearly one to be respected. She had to content herself with Meg's report, obtained from the nurse, that Clifford had passed a good night.

Before ten o'clock Nell and her uncle were driving toward Stream in the dog-cart, with her trunk behind them.

They had not gone far when they noticed that something unusual was going on along the road. A party of men, among whom were two or three of the Stream police, were busily engaged in examining the road itself and the ditch on either side. Nell with feminine quickness of perception, guessed that this search was in some way connected with the discovery of Jem Stickels's body on the previous evening; but her uncle, being less acute, pulled up his horse, and made inquiries.

"Hallo, what's up?" said he, addressing the nearest policeman.

"Oh, nothing in particular," replied the man, with a glance at Nell.

"Nothing as would interest you," added another of the searchers, and he, too, looked in an odd manner at the young girl who sat with pale face and silent lips beside George Claris.

"Well, you might give a civil answer to a civil question, I should think," said the innkeeper, angrily.

His mien, more by gestures and evasive little touches of his whip than by words, tried to induce him to drive on. But he was obstinate. An old acquaintance, and one, moreover, who had always been on good terms with every one, he thought he had a right to the information he had unceremoniously asked for.

"Come now," he persisted, leaning out of the dog-cart, and speaking in a confidential tone: "It isn't a secret, you know as I can keep it. I've kept secrets enough before, haven't I?"

But to his great indignation, he saw on some of the faces of the men at work what he took for a paltry smile. He lost his temper.

"Now, then, out with it," said he, in a sullen tone.

The policeman to whom he had first spoken repressed the smile on his own face, and answered seriously enough:

"We're not at liberty to say anything more at present. But you'll know as much as we do very soon, this afternoon, most likely."

"Uncle George, we shall lose the train," said Nell, in a quavering voice.

Then the policeman glanced from George Claris to the trunk, behind; and, as the dog-cart drove off, he whispered some words to the man nearest to him, which sent him running at a good pace in the direction of Stream.

Uncle and niece had scarcely got on the platform of the little station when the local police superintendent dashed through the doorway after them.

"Ah, Mr. Claris, I'm just in time, I see," he sang out cheerily, as he touched his hat politely to Nell. "Going up to London for a holiday?"

"Not me. Can't afford holidays," replied Claris, rather surlily. "I'm sending my niece off, that's all."

"Well, I'm sorry to have to stop the lady's trip, but we shall want her as a witness at the inquest that's to be held this afternoon. Very sorry, Miss," he went on to Nell, "but it's only putting off the pleasure for a few days."

But Nell looked as much over wrecked as if the summons had been a death warrant. She made no answer, but stood silently, hopeless but terror-struck, in front of the two men staring at the approaching train, with her lips parted and a wild look in her eyes.

Her uncle roused her with a rough shake of the arm.

"What's come to the girl? Don't look like that!" said he in her ear. "Folks'll think that you had a hand in it yourself if you go into court with that face!"

To his surprise and chagrin she took him at his word.

"Will they say that, uncle? Will they dare to say that?" she asked, with such breathless earnestness that he stepped back with a frown on his honest red face.

"Bless the girl! You give me quite a turn with your whisperings and your scared face," said he testily. "Come along back home, and for goodness' sake don't let them think as you wanted to get away. The Lord only knows what people say at these times if you don't keep your eyes about you, and answer questions like a reasonable creature."

Nell said nothing. But the innkeeper's heart sank within him as he drove her home, and perceived that his once light-hearted and merry little niece was trembling like a leaf the whole way.

CHAPTER XIV.

The inquest was held in the little town hall in the market place, and the ugly whispers which were afloat concerning Jem Stickels's death brought together such a gathering that the meagre accommodation provided by the old building was taxed to the utmost.

It was evident from the outset that this was no ordinary case of a drunken man found dead in a ditch, with nothing about him to tell how he came by his death. From the very first moment when the doors were opened, and the crowd rushed in and filled in a moment the space allotted to the public, there were murmurs and whispers flying from mouth to mouth, indicative of the general belief that some person or persons of a higher social position than the dead fisherman, and more generally interesting than he, would be implicated in the course of the proceedings. The questions "Where's the young lady?" And "Won't the gentleman be well enough to come?" were often but never satisfactorily answered. The witnesses in the case were in the magistrate's room, so rumor said, and were to be brought out one by one as they were wanted.

That part of the court usually occupied by the officials alone held on this occasion a good many curious onlookers drawn thither by the open secret of the romantic interest attached to the case. A few portly wives of local tradesmen, scrubbed in among the members of the stronger sex, lent their presence to the scene. There was a hum and a buzz from end to end of the tightly-packed court as the jurymen filed in, and taking their places on the oaken seats, black with age, which were already old when Charles the First was king, were sworn one by one, duly charged by the coroner.

After the full in the court caused by these proceedings, there was a hush of silence as the jury filed out to view the body. The police-station little room, and a scene of curious interest the business hours in town, caused the officials hence to form an opinion as to the information he had unceremoniously asked for.

When the jurymen returned the interesting part of the proceedings began. The first witness called was the boy, Charles Wallett, who had found the body. His evidence did not take many minutes, and consisted merely of the information he had given at the Bell Inn the evening before. He had seen the body lying by the roadside, had called to the man, had touched him, and being unable to detect a movement or to obtain an answer, had run with all speed to give information of his discovery.

The second witness was the detective, Heminge. He confirmed the open secret that he was a private inquiry agent, and that he was staying at Stream on business. He had been the first to reach the body after Wallett's discovery of it, and he had been one of those to identify the deceased as Jem Stickels, the fisherman. The man was quite dead when he found him, but the body was still quite warm.

"At what time was it that you first saw the body?" asked the coroner.

"I heard a chime of the half-past eight by St. Martin's Church clock when I was about halfway between Stream bridge and the place where we discovered the body."

"Was there anything about the position in which the body lay, or anything else, in fact, to enable you to form an opinion as to the cause of death?"

"Nothing whatever, sir," answered Heminge, who gave his evidence in the clear voice and confident manner of the old policeman, who feels that the court is his own theatre, where he is honored to act leading and deserving parts.

"Was the body lying face downward in such a position that the man might have been too drunk to rise, and have been suffocated in the grass and mud?"

"He was lying face downward, as I have said, sir. But his mouth was not close to the ground. I don't think it possible that he could have been suffocated. His clothes were quite loose about his neck, also."

"Then you formed no opinion as to the cause of death?"

"Well, sir, I had heard something; and it made me jump to a conclusion as I should not otherwise have done. With your permission, sir, I would rather not say at the present stage what that conclusion was. It was formed from nothing I saw about the body."

There were whispers in the court. The people in the crowd looked at one another, and informed that there was not much worth knowing that the London chap didn't know. They all felt kindly toward Heminge for speaking out so that they could hear him, an accomplishment in which the non-professional witness was so remarkably deficient.

The time, the gist of Heminge's evidence, he felt, further questions which he was asked producing unimportant answers. Each witness had to pass muster with a trivial question or two from the members of the jury, who all wished to make the evidence given hear more weight than the given witnesses.

The third witness called was Lucas Mann, in whose house the deceased man had been a lodger at the time of his death.

Mann deposed that Stickels was brought home by two men at a time which he fixed as between a quarter and half past six. Stickels, who was in a half-dazed condition when he arrived, came to himself entirely within a few minutes and told him a story as to how he came to be stunned. Stickels had then seemed quite well, had had a cup of tea by the fire, and had expressed his intention of walking to Stream that night. Then there had been a knock at the door. Stickels himself had opened it, and after a conversation with two ladies who had come to see him, he had gone out by the back door abruptly. The next thing Mann had heard of him was that he had been found dead on the road.

The next two witnesses were the men who had picked Jem Stickels up from the ground, at the back of the Blue Lion, a tier his encounter with Clifford. These both deposed that the man was unconscious when they picked him up, that he began to recover almost immediately, and that they did not have to carry him to the cottage where he lodged, but only to support him a little, as he complained of feeling "a bit giddy-like." They said that he seemed to be quite himself before they left him at the cottage.

There was a long interval in the court when Miss Rosal was called. With the feminine witnesses began the real interest of the case. Enough had leaked out by this time for every gossip in Stream to be aware that the quarrel between the gentleman, Clifford King, and the fisherman, Jem Stickels, had been on Nell Claris's account; and everybody knew, also, that Miss Rosal had examined the cottage of Jem Stickels, and so had brought herself prominently forward into the romantic story. Although Jem Stickels and she became the best of characters, it was natural that after his sudden and mysterious death there should be a strong revulsion of popular feeling in his favor.

"Poor chap!" they said to one another. "It was clear he was awful fond of the girl, and, to be sure, she must have given him some encouragement for him to have made bold to go for her like that—the—the—lover."

To be Continued.

Familiarity Breeds Contempt.

"There's one thing I am sure cannot be denied," remarked the Observer of Events and Things, "and that is no judge is a hero to his cashier."—Yonkers Statesman.

The Chinese never wear wool, not even in the depth of winter, and generally speaking, the entire population dress themselves in cotton all the year round.

FOREWOMAN'S BENEFIT

REVIVAL OF THE SUNBONNET.

It's a Part of Every Summer Girl's Wardrobe This Season.

The revival of sunbonnets, which began last year, is to be renewed this season, it is said, and many an enchanting frille of frills and insertions and ribbons is being got ready against the days when the summer girl's active campaign begins. The mannish girl has had her sway. For some seasons past she held unquestioned sway, and the men's furnisher wanted rich on the proceeds from her toggery. Collars, cuffs, cuff links, ties, hats, waistcoats, hose, there were few of the accessories of man's attire she did not lay violent hands on.

But people have rather tired of the athletic girl, the girl who was athletic and nothing else, they do. Good fellow as she was, jolly as men found her to ride and golf with, she was a chum, not queen of their hearts. With her muscular arms bared to the elbow, her tanned face and tousled locks, she developed a splendid physique and an astounding health, which the up-to-date sunbonnet accentuated charmingly. The sunbonnet lassie can swim and golf and play basketball, too, just as she can dance and flirt and play bridge, but the grace and the daintiness that seem so essentially feminine remain hers.

The modern sunbonnet usually belongs to the same genus as the queer old Noah's Arks of sunbonnets worn years ago by all minds and statures, constructed out of stout, honest calico, and irreverently known as "poke." The primitive ancestor of the sunbonnet was to shade the eyes and preserve the complexion. It did both so effectually as to put the face of the wearer in a chronic state of semi-eclipse. Nobody minded much when it really was bundled off the stage and handled into the attic, making way for generation of hopes, capotes and hats of all kinds.

If the summer girl is skilled with her needle, she buys a frame and covers it herself. With a deft touch here, a pat there, a twist in another place, she lays on the airy frills, the puffings and the shirrings. Then she puts a group of rosebuds at a coquettish angle, and finally, two dainty streamers, to be tied or left fluttering at the sides, as the mood may dictate.

For the tramp over the links or for long, lazy hours on the sand, the sunbonnet takes another, and hardly less attractive form. All white, of a stuff called dimity, and so fashioned that the cover can be taken on and off the frame. It may even get its wash with water and mud, and the very next day reappear, clean, more dazzling than ever. Such a bonnet as this "goes" with almost any gown, any type of face. And it is so easy to make, and so becoming, too. No matter how the hair may be "done" it nestles down softly upon it. In fact, it is quite satisfactory in every way.—New York Tribune.

Why Women Become Plain.

There is no getting over the fact that women generally lose their good looks and become positively plain as life grows on. Why is this? It is not merely that the plain girls become plainer, often they become better looking, but the pretty ones become plain, so that not a trace of their former good looks remains.

Of course, the cause of a woman becoming plain may be illness, but it seems that mental and moral causes have far more to do with the waning of beauty than those which are merely physical.

Woman is a creature of emotions, and these emotions are all reflected in her face. A repetition of these emotions and their constant reflection causes deep lines to appear as time goes on, and these lines, which stamp the face with a look of worry, stern loss, or anxiety, soon obliterate all beauty in woman. In man they might not be considered detrimental to good looks, but with our ideal feminine beauty we associate calmness, gentleness and sweet content, and therefore lines which indicate the contrary state of affairs must be disfiguring to woman.

The rule at which we live now-a-days—the scramble many of us have for bread, and the almost equally keen struggle of others to gratify their social ambitions and be in a smarter set than their income justifies, are among the most frequent causes of plainness in women.

The woman who would have her youthful charms develop into attractive middle-aged comeliness must keep herself well in hand, and neither allow herself to fret nor rage, however much things seem going against her. If she can only school herself to look on the best side of life and to speak and think kindly of her neighbors, she will keep many ugly lines out of her face, while her kindly emotions will so register themselves there that, as time goes by, her face even if not beautiful as regards feature, may be so good to look upon that no one could ever think of her as plain. Therefore watch your expression.—Philadelphia Telegraph.

Ruskin's Pretty Nurse.

An old friend of Ruskin writes as follows to Household Words:

After Ruskin's serious illness, or brain fever, he have me an idea of the strange hallucinations which haunted him.

Jackson, his valet, was taking charge of him, and although Ruskin said he was a splendid nurse and did everything he could to alleviate his pain and soothe him, yet, strange to say, Ruskin took a dreadful hatred to him, and every time he came into the room he thought it was the devil that had come for him.

"Laughingly, he said: 'The delusion was so terrible that only the evidence of my eyes and I could see a hooked tail, and horns on his head.' I was a veritable child in his hands.

"The strange delusion lasted for several days and nights.

"Sir William Gull was attending at the time, and was astonished to find that every day he patient got worse. Ruskin told Sir William of this disturbing element, and asked him if he could find a very pretty female nurse to come and take charge of him. Sir William said he could, and a nurse of this description was sent, and, as Ruskin tell me, the effect on that poetic, pure and graceful nature was a greater restorative than all Sir William's medicine.

"When the doctor came again he was nearly astonished to find Ruskin almost recovered. At the consultation Ruskin asked Sir William if he knew if Kate Vaughan was performing that afternoon in London, and if he thought he could see her dance. Sir William answered that she was and Ruskin and Sir William Gull went off to see her.

"The great exponent of beauty in nature enjoyed Kate Vaughan's dancing immensely, and from that day onward there was no more mentioned."

Preparing for the Wedding.

The teacher or working girl who will have to be busy with other work until within a few weeks of her wedding day and a plan follows of a preparing for my own wedding helpful, says a writer in Good Housekeeping. As long as her trousseau is before the wedding provide yourself with two blank books and a large envelope, such as business men use in. Leave one of the note books in the drawer, allowing a number of pages to each letter. Arrange in this book the alphabetical order the names and addresses of friends to whom invitations or announcement cards are to be sent. Almost every week, until the invitations are under if you will want to add some name, not forgotten at first. When the time comes to order your cards the list will be without any searching, and how much you will need. You will have occasion to refer to this memorandum after your wedding for correct details on address dresses. In the large envelope put all clippings you find pertinent to any part of a wedding, such as souvenirs, decorations, menus, etc., and in the second blank book every any suggestion or notes that cannot be classed in my book. I called these addresses, receipts, notes, etc., and they proved like. What I say about all of work will be accomplished in a very short time by yourself and some who are to assist you, if you know and want to be done.

Skirts of Linen.

Skirts of linen or cotton are worn with the shirtwaist by many young women. Pique is a fabric desired and will be popularly used in washing by the school girls. There are many new and striking effects that will be favored by those who have a rather more pronounced figure, shown on the country than plains in style. Blue and white checks are popular, large checks in pure personality, as well as small ones. Blue will be favored in all the shades from pale to the deepest indigo, although a good deal of color's very blue will be the most fashionable.

* * *

The beauty of these new fabrics is that on account of the new manner of wearing they will not mass so easily as the old-fashioned linens. This applies particularly to the more elegant waist weaves, in which stiffness is very noticeable.

* * *

The cause for wash goods so great that for the past few days the students at one girls' college have been wearing the white muslin outfit, slips of white lines or crash with the white shirtwaist. This, no doubt, is a reflection of a jacket which on the campus.—Philadelphia Record.

Bracelets are popular in jewelry this year.

The jewelled collar also should more popular.

Two-in-one corsets are made of silver on white satin.

A striking gown is one of mauve silk and voile, trimmed with black velvet.

In colorings, mauve, blue and green combinations are still much in favor.

Revers of white linen embroidered in red used on a gray serge gown are stylish.

Linen bottoms embroidered are more attractive on some of the same models.

Long coats continue everything—fingers, ribbons and pendant coins.

The dainty lace embroidered scarfs call to mind unbleached pure linen of a pretty buckwear.

Covering yourself in good condition, combined with a slight cold, is a sure sign and a main cause for bronchial troubles in the novelties.

Hats of chiffon in white and straw and delicate are very dressy. They come in all colors. In fact, almost with hats, they are all shades.

To be really [illegible] the accessories, pulled down to the [illegible] The girls Gainsborough [illegible] the sunshades handy, in order from pieces of lace rocks.

HOUSEHOLD MATTERS

The Home Medicine Chest.

[illegible] keep a supply of pure [illegible] on hand for some [illegible] This can be got at the [illegible] stores at any quantity and put up in [illegible] containing the [illegible] of [illegible]. In cases the [illegible] breath [illegible] to the wound, [illegible] and [illegible] healing [illegible] at once. A small bottle of arnica should always be on hand for bruises and hurts. A bottle of [illegible] containing a solution of [illegible] and water will [illegible] kept, to be used as a lotion for cuts in the form or sores. Alcohol should always be in stock, to rub on sprains, etc.

Removing the Napery.

The friends home of the Olympic Sports will be found [illegible] for the laundry of table linen. This differs from the ordinary [illegible] which in the way to which it is [illegible]. Then the linen [illegible] ordinary [illegible], then [illegible] the [illegible] back and [illegible] and [illegible] stitch [illegible]. By this process [illegible] the linen is [illegible] it will be very different in [illegible] a table [illegible]. The napkins should be made [illegible] and [illegible] they [illegible] [illegible] an inch in width, but [illegible] will be [illegible]. Only [illegible] fine linen should be [illegible]. It lasts longer and looks [illegible] it is for [illegible]. If [illegible] napkins at home, the [illegible] and [illegible] like [illegible] [illegible].

Notes of a Naturalist.

A [illegible] and [illegible] the study of a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]