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THE·MYSTERY·OF·THE INN·BY·THE·SHORE

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

CHAPTER XIV.
Continued.

The feminine portion of the population was strongly anti-Nellite in Nell on account of her unbelief in claims to beauty, and the strong feeling against her was undoubtedly the result of simple jealousy rather than a solid opinion founded upon her own conduct. The male portion of the population, on the other hand, while less virulent than the women, were not inclined to warm partisanship on behalf of the girl who had always displayed a marked indifference to their attentions. There was fanny a young man in the crowded court that day who was found a ready salve for his wounded vanity in the thought that the girl who would not vouchsafe him so much as a look had come to grief between two admirers, one of whom was not to love to be proud of, while the other had brought himself into a dangerous position.

On the whole, therefore, it was Miss Bostal rather than Nell who carried the sympathy of the crowd. When the little, thin lady, with the pinched face and the [illegible] hair, slipped into the witness box and kissed the book with grave and decorous reverence, there was little in her bearing or her odd costume to bring a smile before at the "right moment." Court dressed, bonnet on, gown and Tyrolean hat which [illegible] "smart" and up-to-date, had not become such a quaint relic of the past. People pardoned her eccentric dress, for of her little manners in consideration of the sickness of heart which had caused the little lady to hold on to a bygone trend to the past scarcely ever and to change in the course of the man of the proper manner the getting on.

Every eye in the court was strained to catch her words, but the little woman spoke so low that in a thin almost shrill voice, indeed, for with a distinct accent, which made every word as clear as a bell.

"I understand," it stated, "that you were the last person who is known to have spoken to Jem Stickels before his death," said the coroner.

"Yes, sir," she replied Miss Theodora. "I was in the wing, where he helped me soon as I heard of his accident, to learn how he was."

"He, and the door to you himself, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"And he was very shy to you, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, he was rather. He was much excited and said that we should have to answer some questions to-morrow morning."

At these words every man and woman in the court felt stirred to a deeper interest. They were reading the video of the mystery at last.

"He said you would be asked some questions? What did you suppose him to mean by that?"

"I hardly thought about it. He spoke in a wild way. He was very angry and excited. All I thought about was trying to pacify him."

"Did it occur to you at all that he had any idea of making away with himself?"

This question evidently took the witness by surprise. Miss Bostal stared at the coroner in frank perplexity. It was clear that the notion was new to her.

"No, sir, I certainly did not think that."

"You had no idea what he meant?"

"Well, sir, I thought he meant to refer to the story that has been about—the story of some robberies not far from where he lived. He often used to say he knew who the thief was."

At this ingenious reply, which slipped out of the witness's mouth without her having any idea of the foolish it she was throwing down, a great sensation shook the listening crowd, and it called for a series of silence from the police.

"He was much excited, you say? Did he seem otherwise in his usual state? I mean, did he speak as a man who is in perfect health, in perfect command of himself?" asked the coroner, much to the disappointment of the listeners, who were more interested in the mystery lying underneath the story than in the death of Jem Stickels.

"Oh, yes." He seemed quite himself. We were surprised to find him like that."

"And was he sober?"

"Quite sober, I should say."

"Did he say anything about the blow he had received? Did he make any complaint?"

"None while I was there."

"And, as we understand, I must ask you another question. How far is it from your house to the spot where the deceased was found?"

Miss Bostal replied:

"If you go by the fields it must be about a mile and a half. By the road, I should think nearly two miles."

At this point the superintendent of police [illegible] to the coroner to express his assent to his calculation.

"And now tell me, if you please, what time it was when you left the cottage, when you saw the last of the deceased, that is to say?"

"It was about ten minutes past seven."

"How [illegible] the time?"

"I looked at my watch [illegible] pack [illegible] to light a fire in the dining-room for my father's return home. And it was then five and twenty minutes past seven."

"Then you reckon that you did the walk in a quarter of an hour?"

"Yes. It is about three quarters of a mile, by the way we came over the fields."

There was a short pause, and the [illegible] crowd, less more on the alert than ever, waited breathlessly for the coroner's next question. It came in a rather surprising form.

"Can you tell me, Miss Bostal, whether you and Miss Charis remained together in company from the moment you returned home until your father's return?"

Miss Bostal replied:

"Not quite all the time," she answered. "I tore my dress on a nail as I came through the back door, and I asked Miss Charis to make the tea while I ran up to my room and mended it."

"And how long were you upstairs?"

"About ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, I should think."

"You have no way of fixing the time?"

"I had no reason to take particular notice of it."

"Was Miss Charis in when you came down?"

"Yes, she came in with the tea not long afterward."

"And what time was there?"

"I cannot tell exactly. But I think it was soon after eight."

"And during that time that you were in the dining-room together, did you hear her moving about in the kitchen?"

"I don't remember noticing. I was thinking of the tea. It would not have me."

"Are [illegible] alone, I rather from what you have said, spent half a quarter of an hour alone between the time you left Miss Charis at the back door and the time she brought in the tea?"

"About that, I should think."

"You did not see her or remember hearing her during that time?"

"I certainly did not see her. I don't remember hearing her."

There was another [illegible] pause.

"When you did see her next, when she brought in the tea, that is to say—did she seem agitated, or was she calm?"

"She was very much agitated. She had been crying, all the time I think she told me."

"I must thank you for the clear way in which you have given your evidence, only one more question. Would it be possible for you to tell us, for a positive fact, that you went to the place where the body was discovered and back again in three quarters of an hour or a little more?"

The crowd on the [illegible] seemed to draw a deep breath of [illegible] excitement. Only the witness seemed to ignore the drift of the question.

"It would be absolutely impossible, I am sure," she answered [illegible].

"And you are [illegible] quite sure of [illegible]?"

"As sure as I can be, considering that I took no particular note of the time."

"Thank you. That is all I have to ask you at present. Unless it is possible we may have to call you again," he went on, turning to the jury. Who were already springing up with their questions. "I think it will be better for you to hear the evidence of the doctors before you ask this witness any further questions."

They sat down again and again there was a buzz and a hum of excitement in the court, and people turned at one another and began to ask one another who the [illegible] was that Nell Charis had been brought from the station, and whether she would be called as a witness. The story was growing more mysterious.

The last witness was the doctor who saw the body before it was moved, took the train and gave his evidence.

He had noticed nothing to give him a clue as to the cause of death in the first cursory examination he was able to make on the spot.

"You afterwards, with the assistance of Doctor Charis, made a thorough examination of the body?"

"I did."

"And were you then able to come to some definite conclusion?"

"I was. On the right side of the head I found a small wound, and, after probing for some time I found a bullet imbedded in the cerebellum."

CHAPTER XV.

"Do you that you could have heard a pin drop in the crowded court at Sessan when the doctor announced that he had found a bullet in the brain of poor Jem Stickels. So to underscore the deathlike silence which fell upon the dense mass of listeners.

Not one man in twenty among the crowd had been prepared for this sensational disclosure, which had indeed, been communicated to no one but the police. This new fact threw such a sudden light upon the case, [illegible] as it did [illegible] of [illegible] to his death [illegible] "Man and Woman [illegible] not needed a moment's breathing space to grasp the new view of the situation thus abruptly presented.

In the meantime the doctor went quietly on with his evidence, much of which was technical and uninteresting to the majority. But the crowd was able to fasten on to the important facts: that the shot had been fired from behind the man, and from the right side of the road, supposing the victim to have been coming toward Stream; that the injury could not have been self-inflicted, and the crime had been committed within a very short time of the discovery of the body.

"Can you give us an opinion, doctor, as to the length of time which must have elapsed between the firing of the shot and your inspection of the body?"

"My opinion is that death had taken place within an hour, and probably within a much shorter period."

"Can you give us your reasons for this opinion?"

"The body was still quite warm. As it was a cold night, and the body was lying in a very open situation, the cooling process would be very rapid."

"Can you tell us the time exactly when you made the first examination of the body and came to this opinion?"

"It was sixteen minutes past eight when I was sent for, and I arrived at the spot where the body lay at twenty and five-and-twenty minutes past."

"And the body had, in your opinion, been lying there about an hour?"

"Or considerably less."

"You would suppose, then, that death had taken place, about what time? Or is it impossible to get a closer estimate than that?"

"It is difficult to say exactly, of course. But I should be strongly inclined to put the time of death at eight o'clock, or even later."

"Or, in fact, a few minutes before the body was first discovered by the boy?"

"A very few minutes."

There was another sensation among the listening throng.

"I should even have expected," went on the doctor, "to hear that the boy had heard the report of a firearm."

Every one looked toward the unhappy boy, Charles Wallett, who, having given his evidence, was now sitting in court. On the suggestion of one of the jurymen he was called and questioned again. But he maintained with hot blushes of confusion at the notice thus directed to him, that he had noticed no noise; that he had seen or heard nothing to attract his attention until he came upon the man lying on his face at the side of the road.

"At least—" He stopped short, and from crimson became very pale.

"Then he heard a murmur in the court behind, and he began to look scared and to tremble.

"That's right, my boy," said the coroner, encouragingly. "think well before you answer, and then tell us everything, even the slightest thing that may come under your notice."

"Sir," said the boy, turning red and white alternately, "I did hear something. It was just before I turned the head and saw the man, but I never thought of it before this minute."

"It was what I took for Mr. Wells shooting at the birds, sir. He's always about there with his gun, and so I never give it a thought."

There was truth on the face of this statement, drawn forth so tardily and so unwillingly. Hearing, as he said, the firing at the birds so often, the sound had no significance for him, and it had not even struck him as singular that the farmer should have been out shooting so late.

There was a shade of disappointment in the court at the idea that Jem Stickels might have been shot by accident, after all, a mistake for a snare. But this notion was quickly put to flight by the calling of Mr. Wells himself, who was in court, as a witness. He was never out shooting after dark, and on the previous day he had been at Canterbury, and had not returned home until past nine o'clock.

This new link in the chain of evidence, forming as it did an important clue to the exact time of Jem's death, resulted in a little conversation between the coroner and the superintendent of police, and in the calling of Mrs. Mann as a witness.

"Your husband has told us, Mrs. Mann, that the deceased passed you on his way to the back door. And we have heard that he said he was going to have his pipe and his glass of beer. Now did you notice in which direction he went?"

"Yes, sir, I did," answered Mrs. Mann, a nervous woman, who could not be persuaded to give her evidence except in a whisper.

"And did he go in the direction of the Blue Lion?"

"No, sir."

There was another murmur, quickly suppressed.

"Which way did he go, then?"

"He went into the washhouse and had a wash, and then he went up to his room, which he went up by the wooden steps as is in the washhouse. And I watched him for fear he should leave his candle a-burnin'. Which he did, so I goes up and puts it out, so as it shouldn't burn to waste like."

"And how long was he there?"

But to this the witness could not undertake to give a straight answer. "She couldn't 'ardly say," she didn't rightly know. "It might be a 'alf-hour," it might be more. She eventually admitted that it could scarcely be less.

So that it seemed now possible to fix the time of Jem's death at a time between ten minutes to eight, which was about the earliest moment by which he could have reached the spot where he was found, and ten minutes past, which was the time at which the boy, Charles Wallett, had discovered the body.

To be Continued.

To be born without humor one loses two-thirds of life's enjoyment.

FOR A WOMAN'S BENEFIT

THE NURSES OF THE ARMY.

Women Regularly Employed With Marked Success.

A brief account by Dr. McGee, of the Nurse Corps of the Army as it exists now, has recently been published in the Journal of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. A previous article described the conditions attending the appointment of trained women nurses for army duty, which began in May, 1898, and culminated in September, when about 1200 were employed. Between that and the present time they have served in the United States, Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines, and even in the Chinese campaign. The number is now fixed at 100 on active duty, with a small body of "reserves" who have seen active service and are ready to answer immediate calls. Trained nurses are [illegible] stationed at the army hospital at San Francisco, at the one for the soldiers at Fort Bayard, N. M., and at the larger hospitals in the Philippines. They are temporarily sent to any post where there may be need of them. They come under a section of the army organization law framed in 1899 which provided that the medical department should consist of specified medical officers, of the enlisted men of the hospital corps, and of the nurse corps, female. A superintendent is stationed in the surgeon general's office and a chief nurse is at each of the hospitals where nurses are serving. Recent regulations provide for an examination in nursing, cooking and allied subjects before promotion from the grades of nurse to that of chief nurse. Women are employed in matrons' and cooking in the two schools, and tried to give brief preliminary instruction to the hospital corps recruits. Dr. McGee urges that in the future the nurse corps be more largely utilized in giving systematic ward training to the hospital corps men, for if it does so the smaller hospitals which they have to treat separately will be [illegible] the general formation of a large corps of reserves who have received some post-graduate military training. American Medicine.

Our Spoiled Children.

The girls of today have been petted and made much of, from their cradles. Everything has been done to make the hard stony way easy and the rough roads smooth. Their feeding and clothing in the [illegible] nowadays in only a few children may learn without their knowing it. A sort of "immaculate extract of wholesomeness system" is from kind [illegible]. At birth, it has [illegible] American children are mentally and morbidly spoilt, and while the effects of such wholesale injury to our children's life cloth wear off with [illegible] as the [illegible] into the world to cope with their equals on every side, by the rule of kick the [illegible] in the chariots of life and work, without flattery or favors of any kind, is usually [illegible]. With girls the petting and coddling continues long after womanhood is reached, and so too sons and daughters do not get over the effects of it. American mamma is spoiling children as promptly and as thoroughly as she ever [illegible]. These spoiled children will have to face very earnestly and tenderly [illegible] they are to be really successful hope makers. The ability to [illegible] the training needed they often have, and can always get even if the disillusionment comes after marriage. It is the ill-applied nurture which will be most needed in the habit of doing disagreeable things and doing them [illegible] and continually; the power to give no checked pause to devise ways of helpfulness to others, to be small for others and not themselves, and the habitual practice of forgetfulness of self and remembrance of others in the recurring trifles of daily life. Woman's Home Companion.

A Place for the Pocket.

Lucy Larcom, the immortal woman who has her pseudonym is hardly so much to be pitied as we have. In her case it was found, but schools can find out pockets for us. Man, happy creature, is a [illegible]. He is blessed with more pockets than he knows what to do with. But poor, unfortunate woman, with styles in their present state, has not so much as one little pocket in which to hide a handkerchief.

A weekly bereavement in the throes this is of common occurrence, and in the course of time becomes a serious strain. As for purses, they only travel in the wake of the handkerchiefs. The left shoulder [illegible] hopelessly the military [illegible] of tucking one's handkerchief up in the white [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible]. The [illegible] of [illegible] right [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]