

THE MYSTERY OF THE INN BY THE SHORE



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

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CHAPTER XVII.

Continued.

Now these words, taken with the tone in which they were spoken, were strong tests of the lover's trust. But Clifford did not flinch. He told Hemming to call the nurse, who was waiting outside the door, and at once sent a message to Nell to ask her to come and see him.

"And don't tell her," he went on, with a defiant glance at the detective, "who it is that wishes to see her."

When Nell came in, therefore, she was taken by surprise. It worried Clifford to note that she turned white when she found who it was that wanted to speak to her. Hemming came to the point at once.

"The young gentleman, Miss," said he, in a very deferential tone, "Colonel Bostall's taking down an old pistol from a nail in the wall of his house, about a week ago, and showing it to you and some other ladies?"

Yes, Nell remembered. She threw a frightened glance at Clifford as she made this admission.

"Can you tell me who the ladies were?"

"Mrs. Lansdowne and her daughter and Miss Theodore and—ah!—"

"The colored girl in off, did he not?"

"Yes."

"And wanted you ladies to do the same?"

"Yes."

"And did you do so? Please tell me what happened."

"They were all afraid to touch it."

"All except—except me?"

"Trembling from head to foot, Nell cast an imploring glance at her lover.

"You tried it off two or three times, I believe, Miss? And you hit a mark that you fired at?"

"The girl answered almost in a shriek of terror.

"I did not hit it! Who says that I hit it?"

Clifford started up, leaning on his arm. In an instant Nell recovered enough of her self-possession to tell him to lie down again. But her voice shook. Hemming spoke in a very gentle and apologetic tone as he went on with his interrogatory.

"Is this the pistol you used, Miss?"

He produced from one of his pockets the old cavalry pistol, which he had brought from Shingle End.

"Yes," replied Nell, not heeding Clifford's attempts to bring the examination to an end, "that is the one."

"Do you remember what happened when you had all seen it, and it was done with?"

"Yes. The colored girl shot it."

"She stopped and looked down. "You are sure that he rebuffed it?"

"Yes. He rebuffed it, and hung it upon the nail again."

"Have you ever touched the pistol since?"

"No, no."

"Has any one else, to your knowledge, touched it since?"

"No."

"What is all this to lead to?" asked Clifford, impatiently.

"Well, I can't tell you yet, sir. But the colored girl says—and the young lady and Miss Bostall all say the same—that he put the pistol back on its nail, about a week ago, and when I took it down from its nail to-night, it had been discharged. That's all at present, sir."

For one minute Hemming waited, expecting to have something said to him by Clifford King or Nell. As they remained silent, he took his leave, with more apologies for his intrusion.

The lovers looked at each other.

"Nell," asked Clifford in a whisper, when they had been alone and silent for some moments, "is it true that you fired it off?"

"Quite true. Now do you doubt me, too?"

"No, I swear I don't. But, Nell, my darling, I beg to trouble you for all the same."

The young man's voice shook. Nell gazed into his face in an agony of horror.

"If I knew anything I would tell it, but never happened," she cried, and, dazedly, "It is not fair that I should have to suffer like this."

Now this speech was perplexing to her listener, but she would give no explanation of it. She only told him that she wanted time to think, to consider. And on the following morning, soon after breakfast, she called the nurse out of the room to ask if she could go in and say good-bye to Mr. King.

Clifford stared at her in astonishment. She had on her hat and cloak, and was evidently ready for a journey.

"Didn't you know that I was going to London yesterday, to my aunt?" she asked. "They stopped me, to give evidence at the inquest. So I am going today, instead."

"But—Jorgan Clifford, and hesitated. "You think it looks bad for me to go away?" said she impatiently. "Well, people must think what they like. If the police want me, I dare say they will be able to find me out," she added lightly.

Clifford was shocked.

"Don't, child, don't speak like that."

"Well, sir, if I must say it—until Miss Charles comes back."

Clifford controlled the anger he felt, since an exhibition of it would only have closed the detective's lips more tightly.

"I should like you to make an experiment, though," said he. "Will you make it on my account? I want it very well done, no matter what it costs."

"You're throwing your money away, sir," replied Hemming civilly. "Still, if you wish it, and choose to pay for it, of course it can be done."

Clifford found a card, and gave it to the detective.

"There is my address," said he. "I rely upon you to do your best."

"And you won't be dissuaded, sir, from a useless expense?"

"No."

Before they parted, Clifford and the detective had arranged between them the details of a little plot which Clifford thought would certainly suffice to excite the appetite of the astute but daring thief who was at the bottom of all the mischief.

In the week following Clifford's departure, therefore, there arrived at the Blue Lion a rough-looking person who gave himself out as a successful emigrant, who had returned to his native land with his pockets full of money. The man stayed at the inn for several days, boasting openly in the bar of his luck, showing the results of it in a lavish "cravat" and in the apparently careless exhibition of handkerchiefs of gold.

But it was all in vain. Hemming had to report to Clifford, not without secret triumph, that the "wealthy emigrant" had been allowed, after a prolonged stay, to leave the inn without having received a visit from the midnight thief. Clifford was much disappointed, although he affirmed to think that it was only a common prejudice that the thief, on whom at least the suspicion of murder now hung, had grown more careful.

But when Hemming had left him, Clifford began to think out a new problem which this last occurrence had presented to him. Was Jean Sticks the thief?

But then it was certainly not Jean Sticks whose hand he had caught under his pillow. And a shiver passed through the young fellow's frame as he remembered the touch of the smooth skin of the little slender fingers.

It was not until the first day of March, on a blustering, stormy morning, that Nell, with her resolution broken down by a pathetic appeal from her uncle, came back to Strom.

George Clark met his niece at the station, and each was shocked at the changed appearance of the other. Nell seemed to have lost her beauty; her cheeks had lost their roundness which had been one of her greatest charms.

"Oh, uncle!" she cried softly, when she had received his silent kiss on her forehead, "you don't look the same!"

"What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Oh, we've been pottering along much in the same old way," answered the innkeeper, affecting an indifference which he was far from feeling.

Nell's lips quivered. In particular, she was looking at her uncle's face, which she had seen so often when she was a child, and which she had seen so often when she was a child.

"What's the reason why I can't," answered George Clark, hoarsely, "look how you are watched, wherever you go. They won't let you go away, I expect."

Nell said nothing, but got out of the inn with compressed lips and anxious eyes. Contrary to her own uncle's expectations but to her own, however, she was allowed to start on her journey without hindrance. When the train had steamed out of the little station, the innkeeper turned abruptly and defiantly to the policeman.

"Well," said he, roughly, "what do you want?"

"Nothing at present, Mr. Clark," answered the man. "When we do want anything, you know, we can always find it."

Whatever he thought of the truth of this statement, George Clark was prudent enough not to question it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the week which followed Nell's departure for London the spirits of her uncle declined day by day until the red-faced, genial innkeeper had become little more than the shadow of his former self.

He missed his niece more than he would admit even to himself. And although it is true that his mind had become calmer with the passage of time, and that he had been able to receive her back and to force the doubts which he could not wholly still, but Nell was disappointed enough to understand this state of feeling, as revealed to her unconsciously by her uncle in his letters. So she made excuses for remaining in London, and George Clark was left lonely.

The innkeeper, although he did not share Clifford's entire confidence in Nell, was grateful to the young barrister for it. But he said that Nell had forbidden him to divulge her address, and Mr. King was waiting for the girl's own time for making it known to him.

Just before Clifford left reluctantly for London, he had another interview with the detective Hemming, who, after having disappeared for a fortnight, had returned to the scene of his investigation.

Hemming was reticent, but gave the impression that he was more strongly convinced than ever that he was on the right track as to the perpetrator of the murder and of the robbery.

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Clifford impatiently. "Are you going to set another dog to work?"

Hemming looked at him severely.

"It won't be any use," answered he, dryly, "until—"

"Until what?"

A lot of the most expensive people in the world are in jail.

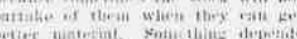
AGRICULTURAL.

Destroying Weeds.

Many farmers do not feed turnips because sometimes the stock will not partake of them when they can get better material. Some things depend upon the manner in which the turnips are fed. No animal cares for a hard, woody or frozen turnip, nor should the roots be fed without some preparation. The better method is to steam them and add ground grain, but the majority of farmers object to the labor of such proceeding. A food-stuff, however, may be used by which the turnips may be sliced. They should then be covered with water over night, sprinkled with meal and salt the next morning and fed. They are, of course, not as valuable as hay, corn fodder or grain, but they serve an excellent dietary purpose, increasing the appetite and assisting to keep the animals in good condition.

Drinking Fountain.

The illustration shows a very handy form of drinking fountain for young chicks. This may also be used as a feed trough, for which it has no equal. In order to use it fill a small tin can



TOILET DRINKING FOUNTAIN.

with water or feed, lay it on two pieces of R. B. R. flat iron, and on these put a lot of a large can. Invert the whole quickly and the flat will remain full with water till the can is empty. Richard Schellner, in Orange Journal Farmer.

Prepared Seed Pot.

Most of us understand that in order to get the best results from a crop we must start right, yet the tendency is to get the seed into the soil as quickly as possible in the spring and take chances on the result. In view of the fact that we are wholly dependent upon weather conditions as to results, we are unjust to ourselves if we leave anything that will enable us to cope with abnormal conditions.

This is especially the case when we are in a hurry to get the seed into the soil. It is a pity that we are so hasty, for the seed is the most important part of the crop, and it is the most vulnerable part of the crop.

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Hold up each end between the sun and your finger and examine it. If it is perfectly round, it is a good one. If it is not perfectly round, it is a bad one. If it is not perfectly round, it is a bad one. If it is not perfectly round, it is a bad one.

On the nineteenth day I put the eggs in water as warm as the hand can comfortably bear. This softens the shell, making it easier for the chick to pick its way out. As fast as the chicks are hatched I take them from the hen, wrap them in flannel in a basket, and keep them in a warm place until all are hatched. Then I feed the hen well and give her the chicks. Cecilia Steel in New England Homestead.

Green Food for Pigs.

No one is in a position to grow pigs with profit unless he can provide pasture or green fodder of some kind for his animals. They need this from spring to autumn, and then they go to grain for finishing. In this connection the following experiment is interesting, the aim being to see whether a portion of the grass or clover food fed in conjunction with corn meal was not more profitable and profitable than the meal without any other admixture. Taking a litter of six pigs, five weeks old, it was divided into two lots as nearly equal in weight and kind as possible.

One lot was kept in a pen and fed upon corn meal cooked in water twelve hours. The other lot was kept in a pen, above and fed upon green clover, cut short and mixed with corn meal. At first only one quart of this cut clover was fed each day, with all the meal they would eat. This meal being mixed with clover, the pigs were separated, and when eaten went to the trough in a steady condition, so that the green food could be measured. This food being able to come in contact with all the food very quickly, digestion was soon accomplished.

This lot of pigs, with less clover and meal, were able to eat more food than the other lot, while the other lot, with meal alone, were gradually for a few days, showing a feverish state of the system, continuing themselves for a few meals with water, until, by fasting, they got over their indigestion, and went on feeding again. This was repeated many times during the five months that the experiment lasted. At the end of the time the two lots were weighed.

The lot fed on meal alone shed 170 pounds each, the other lot 240 pounds each, or forty per cent more for each pig. The green food was found to be a most successful fattening agent. Each pig consumed the same amount of meal.

The clover in this case was given in small quantities, and increased slowly to act as a digestive for the meal. The amount never exceeded two quarts of cut clover at a meal. American Cultivator.

Loco Weed.

A time to such-weeds is an immense trouble to the farmer, because they are so common, and they are so hard to get rid of. They are so common, and they are so hard to get rid of. They are so common, and they are so hard to get rid of.

The loco weed is a very common weed, and it is so hard to get rid of. It is so common, and it is so hard to get rid of. It is so common, and it is so hard to get rid of.

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