

THE MYSTERY OF THE INN BY THE SHORE



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

CHAPTER XXIII

Continued.
"I'll go and sit with him, if he'll have me," said Clifford, who was remorseful, knowing that he had had suspicions of the father, and not of the daughter.

"Do, s'r," said the sergeant, who wanted a watch kept upon Miss Bostal's father, and was quite willing that it should be a friendly one.

So Clifford, not without diffidence, entered the house as the sergeant carried his bundle to the zig which was waiting for him at the old turnpike.

The Colonel heard the slow footsteps outside the dining-room door and called out:

"Who's that?"

Clifford stood in the doorway.

"It's I, Colonel. May I come in?"

The old man raised his head quickly, and gave him a little wan smile, as he held out his hand.

"Come in, come in; yes."

Then, having held the young man's warm hand in his own cold one for a few moments, he let it fall, and, inviting him, with a gesture, to be seated, relapsed into silence. Clifford asked him if he should make up the fire. It was a cold evening, and the draughts had been allowed to sweep through the house from open window to open door.

"Yes, yes, my lad; warm yourself if you can. It would take more fire than there is on earth to warm my old bones to-night."

The stern sadness of his tone sent a shiver through Clifford, who, indeed, had little comfort to give him. He had some difficulty in getting the fire to burn up, and when at last he succeeded he found that the coal-scuttle was empty.

"I will fetch you some coal," said the Colonel, who was proceeding to rise from his chair, when Clifford stopped him.

"No. Tell me where to get it," said he, quickly, snatching up the scuttle.

"Oh, well, if you will, you will find the lid of the water-but on the ground outside, at the back. If you lift it—but really I don't like to trouble you—you will find the entrance to the cellar underneath."

Following this rather curious direction Clifford went out by the back door of the house, lifted the lid, admiring the ingenuity by which the cellar was concealed, and began to descend the wooden steps into the darkness below. The Colonel had provided him with a candle, but this was suddenly extinguished as he reached the bottom step, and at the same moment he became aware that he was not alone.

Involuntarily he uttered a little cry. A hand, the little, soft and slender hand which he remembered so vividly, but which he had never before identified, was placed quickly on his mouth.

"Hello!" they heard a rough man's voice cry, muffled as it came down into the earth from the garden above.

And Clifford heard a soft whisper in his own ear:

"The policeman! Send him away on some pretext. I only want a moment, just one moment!"

The young man shuddered. Although he had no fear that Miss Bostal would do him any harm, there was something uncanny about the idea of being left alone with a murderer, deep down in the bowels of the earth, in the grasp of the little hands that had done such deadly work.

The policeman's voice startled them both. He flashed his lantern down into the cellar, but already Miss Bostal had released Clifford and hidden herself in the corner behind the steps.

"Hello! Who's that down there? Is it you, Mr. King?"

"Yes," said Clifford. "I'm getting some coal. Would you ask the Colonel for a scoop, or a shovel, or something to get it up by?"

The man flashed his lantern round the cellar once more, and answered:

"Well, s'r, I can't go in. But I'll call him."

He drew back, and the moment he did so, Miss Bostal, with amazing boldness and celerity, crept up the steps and out behind his back, as he called to Colonel Bostal from the back doorway.

Clifford stood still, with his heart in his mouth. He was intensely excited; he was listening with all his power. But he did not know whether he wanted the woman to escape or whether he wanted her to pay the penalty she so well deserved. All he knew was that the few moments of suspense seemed never-ending. Then the voice of the policeman, measured and calm, was heard again:

"All right, s'r. He's coming."

She had got away, then! After all, it was no more than what he expected of her superhuman cunning. And, in spite of himself, he felt an immense relief that he had helped her to escape. He could meet, if not the policeman, at least the Colonel, with a lighter heart. He took the shovel which was handed to him, and reappeared in the dining-room with the coal.

The Colonel looked at him keenly and shut the door.

"Did you see—her?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes. She got away," answered Clifford.

The Colonel gave a sigh of relief.

"The policeman gave a sigh of relief."

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"I knew, when you got the policeman to call me, that it was some ruse of hers," he said. "You see, Mr. King," he went on, as the young man reddened with surprise, "I know her tricks. I—I have waited for some such end as this—for twenty-five years."

An exclamation, in which astonishment and sympathy were blended, escaped from Clifford's lips. Colonel Bostal rose from his chair, and unlocking a cupboard in the corner of the room, took from it an old desk, which he unlocked, and taking from it a bundle of cuttings from old newspapers, put them into Clifford's hands.

"They all referred to cases of 'kleptomaniacs' which had come before the West End magistrates from twenty-three to twenty-five years before, in which a 'ladylike young woman, of superior manner and address,' had been charged with 'hooplifting.'"

"They all refer to my daughter," said the Colonel, quietly. "And in all we managed to get her off, on the plea that she had suffered from hysteria. And that was true."

"Then she is not responsible for her actions?" suggested Clifford in a tone of relief.

"Frankly, my own belief is that she is fully responsible. She is a highly intelligent woman, and her astuteness and cunning are unsurpassable. There is some moral twist in her nature which causes her to love the excitement of crime. That is my own opinion. I took her away from London, but wherever we went she threatened to get herself and me into trouble, and at last I brought her here, where it seemed that she must be honest for want of opportunity to be anything else. And I thought, until a few weeks ago, that I had succeeded. I swear to you I never had a suspicion that she was mixed up with the thefts at the Blue Lion until the inquest on young Stickels. Then, when I saw that it lay between her and poor little Nell Claris, I knew who was the— the culprit. But how could I confess it? My heart bled for the poor girl, but I knew the truth must come out, and I had not the courage to hasten its coming."

For a long time there was silence in the little room. Then Clifford ventured to ask:

"Do you know where she has gone?"

"All I know is that whatever she has done is the best possible thing for her own safety. I can trust her for that."

Clifford was shocked. That the little, faded woman was a monster, an unnatural and depraved creature without moral sense, was clear. The Colonel rose again, locked up his desk and held out his hand to the young man.

"Go," said he, gravely, but kindly. "You have done all you could for me, for us, and I thank you. Now you must leave us to take our chance. And remember what I have said: There is very little cause to fear on my daughter's account."

Thus dismissed Clifford took leave of the old man reluctantly and started for the Courtstairs, where he easily found a lodging for the night.

On the following morning at day-break there arrived at the County Lunatic Asylum, sixteen miles from Stroan, a weird, wan object, shoeless, wild-eyed, voiceless with cold and with terror.

The creature cried when the porter came to her summons:

"Take me in, or I shall do myself some harm. Take me in! Take me in!"

It was Miss Theodora.

No lunatic who had ever been admitted within the walls of the asylum had looked half so mad as she did. The doctors saw her, and advised her detention. And when the storm broke over her, and the hue and cry reached the asylum, there was no doubt expressed by any of the doctors as to her insanity. She was duly brought up before the magistrates, remanded, brought up again; always with the same result. She smiled, she chattered; she appeared wholly unconscious of her position, wholly irresponsible. And at the last her trial for murder was avoided, the doctors all certifying that she was unfit to plead.

And when it was announced that Miss Theodora would be confined during Her Majesty's pleasure, every one concurred in the justice of the decision except Colonel Bostal, who said to Clifford, when they were alone:

"I told you she would get off! She is so clever."

Clifford himself did not know what to think. But then he had something so much pleasanter to think about. For Nell Claris was no longer able to say "No" to him. Instead of being a suspected criminal, she was now a heroine. It was honor and not disgrace that she could now bring to her husband.

One thing only Clifford had to wait for. Nell would not leave her uncle until his mind was quite restored. For months she watched the reawakening of his reason, tending him with loving care.

And when he was able to return to the Blue Lion in full possession of his reason, when the autumn tints were on the trees, Clifford took his pretty and gentle bride away from the inn by the shore.

EVERY TOOTH A SOUND ONE.



TARIFFS AND FARMERS

LANDS AND THEIR PRODUCTS ENHANCED IN VALUE.

The Prosperity Accompanying the Restoration of Protection Has Brought With It Higher Prices For Everything the Farmer Has to Sell.

It is some years now since the free-trader has abandoned his wallings over the abandoned farms of New England and elsewhere. Under the most beneficent influences of the Dingley law, farm lands all over the entire country have been increasing in value, and, according to inquiries recently made by the American Agriculturist, the prices of farms throughout New England and the East have advanced from fifteen to twenty per cent. over the value of five years ago. In almost every State where investigations were made throughout New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland, the reports show an upward average tendency of about twenty per cent., and in single instances for more. In no case was any decline in values found, and although in a few cases the reports showed no particular change in value, yet in most cases there were evidences of a gain in the price of good average farms of five, ten, fifteen and twenty per cent., and in a few instances running considerably higher. In Delaware the upward tendency has almost reached the nature of a boom.

It has always been one of the principal tenets of the protectionist that the value of farm lands and farm products are enhanced according to their proximity to a manufacturing centre. The closeness to a manufacturing town is, of course, of no value unless the inhabitants of that community are earning good and continued wages. This has been the condition now for several years under our present protective tariff, and in consequence farmers have gotten better prices for their products, and their lands have enhanced in value proportionally.

The Eastern farmer cannot, of course, compete with the Western agriculturist in the great crops, but when the factory hands of the New England and Middle States are fully employed there is always a demand for farm produce which come under the head of "truck farming," fully equal to the productive ability of the entire farming community of these Eastern States. In fact, the only difficulty which the New England farmer has experienced during the past two or three years has been the same as that of the Western agriculturist—namely, inability to get sufficient help to enable him to produce and harvest his products. Says the American Agriculturist of July 25:

"Slowly but surely the values of farm lands in the Eastern and New England States are improving. The evidences arrayed in the American Agriculturist's special investigation should make an impress for the betterment of the farmer's financial standing. Granted that the splendid agricultural lands of the West are most attractive propositions, yet there is no reason why the progressive farmers of the Middle and Eastern States should not be accorded due consideration from banks and business interests generally, when loans are sought for the further improvement of the farms. The testimony of our correspondents on the higher trend of values should inspire greater confidence than ever before in the merits of Eastern farming, where we have the best cash markets in the world at our doors. Land in some of our Eastern and New England States is now relatively among the best business propositions in the country."

We fully agree with the above, that the Eastern farmer is entitled to every consideration at the hands of the banks. Twenty years ago he was lending his money to build up the agricultural lands of the West. A few years of protection has enabled the Western agriculturist to either pay off his mortgage entirely, or reduce it most materially, and now the farmers of the West have money to loan, and their banks are bulging not only with the necessary currency needed in the moving of crops, but to loan on good security, to even the East if it should be wanted. But our New England banks, too, and those of the Middle States are bulging with the savings of the working classes, and there is plenty of money to loan at five per cent. on satisfactory security.

Thus it is that protection helps the financial situation, at the same time that it defends our industries and enables our great mass of citizens, gathered at work on the farm or in

the factory, to become independent and well-to-do. It must ever be one of the greatest reasons given in favor of a continuation of our protective policy, that the benefits it bestows are widespread and universal. There is not a building up in one State or one section of the country; there is no benefit to be bestowed upon any one branch of industry; all share and share alike, and each helps the other in one great independent endless chain of communication. So it is that when we have work for all, then the months are filled, and the bodies are clothed, and the houses are built, and the luxuries are consumed, taxing every productive institution in the country; taxing our transportation facilities to the utmost, and keeping busy our avenue of distribution and calling into employment our great body of clerical laborers, all, in turn, contributing by their consuming power and purchasing ability to the common weal of all. Surely such a policy, such a condition should be let alone as long as prosperity and employment continue to be at the highest level ever known, not only in this, but any other country.

Prosperity Rampant.

From every section of the country, from every industry comes the one and only cry, Prosperity. A census of the leading bankers reveals a state of confidence and stability never before known. The farmers are rejoicing over the splendid outlook for good, if not unusual, harvests. The manufacturers were never so busy. The August buying was never before equaled, and the transportation companies are being taxed to their utmost facilities. Every man who wants work can have it. What a grand consummation! What a perfection of protection! What a vindication of Republican financial and tariff legislation! Revise such conditions. Impossible. Can the cloudless sky be made clearer? We want no tinkering of the tariff. We want no free trade, we want no reciprocity. Let well enough alone. By all means stand pat.

The Reason For Tariff Wars.

Protection is held responsible for tariff wars, but the action of France in imposing discriminating duties on American meats because the manufacturers of that country wish to force upon us wares which we do not want, shows where the responsibility lies. Tariff wars are entirely chargeable to the desire to push upon other people what cannot be consumed at home. Protection only aims at self-sufficiency. When that idea is strictly adhered to no one has a right to take offense. It is as illogical for a nation to find fault with another nation because it refuses to buy goods from it as it would be for a Kearny street shopkeeper to call people who refused to buy from him hard names.—San Francisco Chronicle.

General Prosperity Untouched.

Notwithstanding the feverish condition of Wall Street, the next six months gives indication of a firm continuance of national prosperity. The wheat crop, according to all estimates, will be enormous, probably a record-breaker; the cotton crop will be eleven million bales, or more than three-quarters of the world's output; the corn crop will likely reach 2,500,000,000 bushels, and the manufacturing and mining output promises to keep even with the highest figures. The actual prosperity of the country is unchecked, and it goes to show that, after all, Wall Street is far from being the whole thing.—Oswego Times.

Guilty!

The Springfield Republican thinks the "high tariff is now on trial, as never before, as the great causative and saving factor in the business prosperity of the nation."

The verdict will be "Guilty." The high tariff is, without question or extenuating circumstances, "the causative and saving factor in the business prosperity of the nation."

Tried and Failed.

The Democrats are getting into a useless sweat over the tariff. When it needs reforming the people will let the Republicans have control of the job. The Democrats have been tried—with free soup, Coxeey armies and such like results.—Valley Mills (Tex.) Protectionist.

Visible Proof.

Sinking—"It is reported that De Blank is leading a double life."

Timkins—"The report is correct. I was one of the witnesses to his marriage."

A SWEET STORY.

OUR REGULAR SUNDAY SERMON.

The Beautiful Story of Esther

Delineated in An Attractive Style

By An Eloquent Preacher.

NEW YORK CITY.—Sunday morning the Rev. Cornelius Woolfkin, minister of the Greene Avenue Baptist Church, had for his subject "A Supreme Opportunity." He chose as his text Esther iv: 14: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mr. Woolfkin said:

The history of Esther is a fascinating romance. Every changing scene in the panorama is a graphic illustration of the providence of God. It traces the transition from obscurity to prominence; from weakness to power. The scene opens showing Esther an orphan girl belonging to a captive and despised race. Naturally, every door of influence would be closed to her. In the world, dependent upon a cousin's bounty, the horizon of her life was limited. Her chief endowment was beauty, and that, as the world goes, is more likely to become a snare of evil than a benediction of good. Behind this humble, modest life there is working the might, wisdom and love of God. The Queen's throne is empty. The royal crown is waiting some one to wear it. You see the mood of the King. Thousands of gentle blood dream of the Queen's place as the acme of all ambition. But the providence of Jehovah has reserved the place for Esther, the orphaned Jewish girl.

This same divine power seeks to mold every life. The circumstances and conditions that environ us may not seem promising. But what are these? They are the strength is made perfect in weakness. The vast majority of men and women who have made the molds of history were those whom God's providence brought from obscurity and lowly conditions. You see, not a lid held vacant for your filling. That place is as honored and dignified as any royal throne, because it is divinely appointed. The steps leading to it seem to be contingencies, accidents, fortuitous chances, and through the moods of other persons. But if there be the spirit of faith to trust Him, diligence to discover His will and readiness to obey it, He will bring us to the place and position most suited for our eternal profit and glory. No one else may step into our place, until we, through unbelief and disobedience, have forfeited the privilege of its occupancy.

Every life has its own unique endowment. Success or failure depends upon the manner in which we hold these possessions. But what are these? They are ourselves withal, they turn into corruption. But if they be held in trust as a sacred stewardship, used for the furtherance of His purpose and the bringing of His kingdom, they will turn our earthly treasures. Our temptation is to discredit our possessions and opportunities. But we may not despise the day of small things.

Esther had only personal beauty to commend her at first. This is not a gift despised by Satan in his attempt to ruin a soul; then why should it be discredited as a power for good? The lad had only five loaves and two fishes, but he trusted to His service, they fed the multitude and more. It all turns upon whether we are using our endowments in the interest of self and by the energy of self, or whether we are living and working for God, and with Him and for His glory. The form of a life will vary. God does not duplicate and make all lives to conform to a like pattern. There were vast differences between the captive maid that served in Naaman's home and the orphan captive who mounted the Persian throne but it was the same God who worked in each.

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