



The Strange Case of MARY PAGE

The Great McClure Mystery Story. Written by FREDERICK LEWIS in Collaboration With JOHN T. M'INTYRE. Author of the Ashton Kirk Detective Stories. Read the Story and See the Essayay Moving Pictures

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SYNOPSIS.

Mary Page, actress, is accused of the murder of James Pollock and is defended by her lover, Philip Langdon. Pollock was intoxicated. At Mary's trial she admits she had the revolver. Her maid testifies that Mary threatened Pollock with it previously and Mary's leading man implicates Langdon. How Mary disappeared from the scene of the crime is a mystery. Brandon tells of a strange hand print he saw on Mary's shoulder. Further evidence shows that horror of drink produces temporary insanity in Mary. The defense is "repressed psychosis." Witnesses described Mary's flight from her intoxicated father and her father's suicide. Nurse Walton describes the kidnapping of Mary by Pollock, and Amy Barton tells of Mary's struggles to become an actress, of Pollock's pursuit of her and of another occasion when the smell of liquor drove Mary insane.

A NEW CLEW.

NATURE with her prodigal creativeness sends every human being into the world differing in some fashion from his fellow men and women; not merely in feature but in emotion and character. Yet, taken in the aggregate, all these contrasting personalities may be swayed as one man.

It was not merely sympathy for Mary that swayed the crowd on this particular morning, however; it was expectancy—a psychic sense of something impending—and there was a whisper that might have been excitement or a mere composite, "I told you so," when Langdon, a bundle of papers in his hand, stepped forward and addressed the court.

"Your Honor and gentlemen of the jury," he said quietly, "it had been my intention to call upon Mr. Daniels, manager for the defendant, as my next witness. But"—he paused dramatically—"Mr. Daniels has disappeared! And in searching for him such important facts have come to light that I crave the indulgence of the court to recall some former witnesses in order to introduce fresh testimony for the defence. It has been learned that, unknown to Miss Page, James Pollock supplied the money to back 'The Seekers,' in which the defendant was starred, and there are such suspicious features connected with the partnership of Daniels and Pollock that I—

"I object!" interrupted the District Attorney hotly, leaping to his feet. "If there are suspicious features or new



"Mr. Daniels has disappeared!"

facts let Mr. Langdon introduce them as testimony. Your Honor, this is a palpable effort on the part of my learned opponent to mislead the jury."

"On the contrary," stormed Langdon, "I stand ready to bring out each one of these facts in the testimony of my witnesses."

Langdon turned to the bailiff with a smile of satisfaction.

"Call George Brennan," he said, and flashed a look of encouragement at Mary.

"Mr. Brennan," said Langdon, when the witness had given his age as thirty and his state as unmarried, "will you please tell the Court the result of your investigations into the disappearance of William Daniels?"

"I called at the Daniels apartment," said the detective quietly, "at Mr. Langdon's request. He wanted Mr. Daniels as a witness and also wanted him to call at his (Mr. Langdon's) office."

"Who was in the apartment when you called?"

"Mrs. Daniels and her daughter. A young girl of sixteen or seventeen."

"Did you notice anything unusual in their behavior?"

"Well, I don't know as I'd call it unusual, sir, in the circumstances, but they were terribly upset. Mrs. Daniels said that her husband had gone

out two days before and nobody had seen him since."

"Had she no inkling of his whereabouts?"

"No. She said he had left as usual to go to his office in the Covington Theatre and that was the last they had seen of him. Then I asked her if she had notified the police, and when she said, 'No,' I told her I was a detective, and had come seeking her husband as a witness in this trial. She said that he couldn't tell anything, she was sure, but that the murder of James Pollock had killed him too. 'I'm sure that it's just the murder and the trial that have driven him away,' she said. 'He's been almost insane ever since it happened.' With the help of Mrs. Daniels and the daughter I went through his papers there at the house, and then Mrs. Daniels and I went to the theatre and got the watchman to open his office for us."

"Did you find anything important among the papers in Mr. Daniels' desk?"

"Yes. In one of the drawers were some torn scraps of paper. Looked as if the drawer might have been open when the letter was torn up, and some of the scraps fell in it. I pieced them together and found they were part of a note from Mr. Daniels to Mr. Pollock."

"How did you know it was Mr. Daniels' handwriting?"

"His wife recognized it at once and told me."

"Can you remember the wording of that letter?"

"Yes. It said, 'My dear Pollock: As lessee of this theatre, I, too, am financially interested in Miss Page. Should your persistent attentions cause her to withdraw from the cast after tonight's performance, I frankly warn you—The rest of the page was torn off. It bore the date of the opening of 'The Seekers.'"

"Was this the note?" Langdon's voice rang out triumphantly, as he held up before the witness a sheet on which some torn scraps of paper had been pasted, and when Brennan had identified them he turned to the jury, and cried:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I offer this threatening note written by Mr. Daniels to James Pollock, as an exhibit in the case of the defence."

The next witness was no other than Joe the bell-hop.

"Joe," Langdon began very gently, "you have already told us how Mr. Pollock gave you a message to take to Miss Page, and how upon receiving it she left the banquet in the Hotel Republic and went down the corridor with you and into the room where Mr. Pollock was waiting. What did you do then?"

"I started down the hall towards the stairs," said Joe in his boyish treble.

"Did you look back?"

"Yes; I was kind of curious about what was goin' on."

"Was there anyone in the hallway when you looked back?"

"Yes, the fat man who had been at the banquet, the one they called Mr. Daniels, was standing close to the door of the gray suite with his ear against it as if he wuz listenin'."

"Joe, do you recognize this picture?" Langdon's voice changed sharply and he thrust a photograph into the boy's hands. The latter nodded.

"Sure," he said. "That's him—Daniels. That's the feller I seen in the corridor all right."

But now the prosecutor was on his feet, and though his voice was just as friendly as Langdon's, the bell-boy eyed him with some trepidation as he asked suavely:

"Joe, how does it happen that you never told any of this before?"

"I forgot," said the boy sullenly.

"Well, we all forget sometimes," went on the District Attorney in that honest voice. "But I suppose you remembered it again when Mr. Langdon reminded you that you had seen Mr. Daniels. Wasn't that it?"

"Wot's eatin' you?" scoffed the boy heatedly. "How could Mr. Langdon remind me of suthin' he didn't know I'd seen, till I put him wise?"

"Well, suppose you tell us how you came to—er—put him wise."

"You see," he piped, "me and Mr. Langdon wuz talkin' things over. 'Cause you see I wuz right there when it all happened, and he says to me, he says, 'Joe, I'd like you to go over to the hotel with me, and let's take another look at that corridor.'"

"When we got there, we did everything all over just like it had happened, and then when I wuz comin' down the hall I looked back just like I did before, and Mr. Langdon says, 'Joe, when you looked back did you see anybody?' And I says, 'Only that fat guy, Daniels, and he says, 'Oh, you saw Daniels! Wot wuz he doin'?' And I says, 'Gettin' an earful at the door.' Then he says, 'Are you sure?' And I says, 'Yes,' and he says, 'I guess you better tell that in court.' And I says, 'I'm on,' and—that's all."

The prosecutor turned away with a shrug and a ripple of smothered mirth, and Langdon, laughing himself, patted the boy encouragingly on the shoulder as he sent him back to the witness room and called in his stead Randall Williams, the erstwhile leading man of Mary's ill-fated company.

"Mr. Williams, how long did you remain in the banquet room of the Hotel Republic on the night that Miss Page was sent for by James Pollock?" asked Langdon.

"Why, I was there from the beginning of the affair till just before we heard the sound of the shot."

"Did all the other guests remain except Miss Page?"

"Yes. That is, everybody except Daniels."

"Oh! Mr. Daniels left, did he? When?"

"A few minutes after Miss Page had gone. He said he was going to see

where she was, and would try to bring her back again."

"Where were you when you heard the shot?"

"Just outside the door of the banquet-room."

"What did you do?"

"I ran down the hall in the direction from which the sound came."

"Did you meet anyone?"

"Yes. I ran bang into Daniels at the corner where the corridor turned. I nearly upset him. I guess, for he caught at my arm and held on as if to steady himself."

"Did you say anything?"

"Yes. I said, 'Did you hear a shot? Somebody's killed.' And Daniels said, 'Oh, my God! I know it.'"

"Did he seem very much excited?"

"Yes—and sick. He was almost green, and he kept saying, 'God—God—I must pull myself together.' But for that matter we were all pretty much upset, and when we got to the door of—the gray suite he wasn't any more excited than the rest of us."

"That is all, thank you, Mr. Williams," said Langdon; but while the words were still on his lips the prosecutor was on his feet.

"I petition the Court," he cried in ringing tones, "to have all the foregoing testimony, together with that of the detective Brennan and the boy Joe Murphy, stricken out as irrelevant. All this is wasting the time of your honor and the gentlemen of the jury. It is not what this man Daniels did but what Mary Page did on the night that James Pollock was brutally murdered with which we are concerned. The State has proved that this woman, Mary Page, entered the room where James Pollock awaited her. That a shot and a scream came from that room, and that the defendant was found in the room with the dead body!"

"And I say," stormed Langdon in response, "that Mary Page neither saw nor heard what occurred in the gray suite that night. And if it please your Honor, I will call as my next witness, Dr. Foster—to testify to the inability of the defendant to understand events that were happening."

"I see no objection to SUCH testimony," said the Judge thoughtfully.

There was a breathless tension in the room when Langdon, addressing his new witness, said vibrantly:

"Dr. Foster, you have told the court that the defendant, Mary Page, is a victim of attacks of 'repressed psychosis,' superinduced by the sight of intoxication, and the smell of alcoholic concoctions. When suffering from such an attack would the patient be conscious of what went on about her?"

"Certainly not. No more than a person in delirium."

A long, quivering gasp of ineffable

relief floated from Mary's pale lips at the words, and two little flames of hope and excitement leapt into her eyes.

Even Langdon had seemed at times to cherish vague doubts and had pressed her cruelly to try to remember—even hazily—the events that were a blank to her; and in consequence the words of the great alienist were balm to her aching heart and seemed in truth a wondrous vindication.

Langdon, watching her in amazed concern, saw her slender body shake like a reed in a storm of emotion, and reading in it not the breaking of the icy fetters of immobile despair, but the shattering of a wonderful self-control, hastened to her side, with an admonitory and reassuring whisper of encouragement. To his surprise she smiled at him through the unshed tears and caught his hand for an instant in a feverish grip as she murmured tremulously,

"There's nothing the matter, Phil. I—I—am just hopeful."

"I may have to call you to the stand for a little," he went on anxiously. "Do you think you—you—will be able to?"

"Why, of course," she answered, with such a surprised note in her voice that Langdon was perforce reassured, and turned his attention again towards Dr. Foster, who was flushing angrily under the badgering of the prosecutor.

"What you tell us is very interesting," the latter was saying sarcastically. "And so you followed the life of the defendant, or let us say you traced her life back year by year. And did you decide which event was the direct cause of her—er—peculiar mental breakdowns?"

"I did."

"What was it?"

"Her father's brutality on the night she fled from the house in wild terror. Miss Page had suffered from her horror of alcohol from a baby."

"Then it was her father's treatment, rather than his intoxicated condition, that drove her insane?" persisted the prosecutor; but Dr. Foster saw the drift of the question and shook his head emphatically.

"It was not. It was the sight of his intoxication, and the reek of the whiskey on his breath. The pain of his brutal grip on her shoulder, and the sight of his ill-treatment of her mother naturally had their effect—but they were not the main causes of her delirium."

"How do you know that Mr. Page gripped her shoulder brutally? Isn't that merely hearsay evidence?"

"No. The marks of the hand were plainly visible on the shoulder of Miss Page when she was brought to me. These heavy bruises overlay a curious birthmark that came and went, and the nails of Mr. Page's hand had dug such furrows into the flesh that the scars still remain."

"I have here a copy of this morning's News which has an article in it entitled, 'What Is Repressed Psychosis?' by Dr. Foster. Is that your brochure?"

"It is."

"In it you say, 'The cruel grip of Mary Page's drunken father left its mark indelibly upon her shoulder, for under the stress of intense excitement that mark reappears.' Is that hearsay—or have you seen it?"

"I have seen it."

With a sneer that brought a hot flush of anger surging into the doctor's face, the prosecutor turned and handed the paper that he held to the foreman of the jury saying slurringly:

"Gentlemen of the jury, in this newspaper which I offer as an exhibit for the state, you will find a long article by the learned witness, which is palpably an effort to rouse cheap sympathy for the prisoner. In it he says substantially what he has said in court."

but in both instances, gentlemen, he has failed to prove the truth of what he says."

"My unsupported word has been taken in the court room without question before this," thundered Dr. Foster. "What I have written and said would be accepted before any medical board in the world!"

"But this," interrupted the prosecutor suavely, "is not a medical board. This is a court of law; and I petition your honor to strike out the evidence advanced regarding this mental state of the prisoner. I contend that unless the facts can be PROVED before his honor and the gentlemen of the jury that the entire testimony is most questionable—and of no value."

With a little moaning gasp of dismay Mary half rose from her chair, her lips forming a mute appeal against

this drastic threat. Those who were watching her saw in the movement no more than a hysterical impulse, born of the legal wrangling, but it was something far deeper and greater. For to Mary, Dr. Foster stood as the key-stone of her proof of innocence. He believed her—and to strike out his evidence meant that there was no one—no one left who—understood.

Langdon, knowing that he must call her to the stand next, was agitated at her agitation and, fearing a general breakdown, sent the bailiff for smelling salts and a glass of water. He had no fears that the evidence of the alienist would be stricken out, but he was nevertheless racking his brains for some method of proving the recurrence of that strange bruise upon Mary's shoulder when, with the abruptness that characterized him, the District Attorney dismissed the witness.

And now it was Mary whose name was called by the bailiff, and the little quickening stir of interest and sympathy that never failed to greet her swept through the room and seemed to give her a momentary strength. But her face was so white and her hands so unsteady that the bailiff, without waiting for another order from Langdon, hurried after the smelling salts, his exit through the door into the prison letting in an incongruous burst of hilarity that brought an angry frown to the Judge's face.

He was, however, the only one who noticed it, for the attention of everyone else was fixed upon Mary, who stood swaying in the witness box, her eyes turned appealingly toward Langdon. But though he read their mute prayer correctly he dared not hesitate, and the very first question was the one she had been dreading.

"Miss Page, will you try to tell the Court as fully as possible exactly what occurred on the night when you left the banquet and joined James Pollock in the Hotel Republic?"

It swept away all her new found hope and plunged her dizzily down into despair. To her it seemed to prove that even Langdon placed little or no credence upon the words of Dr. Foster, and she had a feeling of being suddenly isolated—alone—in a world of hostile faces. A sob caught in her throat and the room grew black before her, and when she spoke her words came slowly—one at a time, and sounded strange to her own ears—as though coming from a great distance.

"I left—the banquet—room—and went—into—that—other—room. Mr. Pollock—was—there. He wouldn't—let—me—leave. He—he—tried—to—kiss—me. Then he threatened me. He—had—a glass of whiskey. I—saw him—coming towards me—and—that's all—I can remember." Her voice rose shrilly on the last words, and she repeated them, the tears running down her cheeks. "That's all—oh, you KNOW that is all—that I—remember!"

Startled by her outburst and her pallor, Langdon went quickly to her side and laid his hand on hers.

"Of course I know," he said reassuringly. "I just wanted you to repeat it to the court. That was all—and I won't ask any more questions now."

"But I have one or two to ask," broke in the prosecutor, exultant over the opportunity to cross-examine Mary now that her composure had given way. And, in spite of the whispers of "Shame! He's no right to torture her now," that drifted from the spectators and brought a warning rap from the Judge's gavel, he stepped briskly forward and asked:

"Miss Page, Dr. Foster has told a remarkable story of your strange susceptibility to the smell of alcohol. Can you yourself tell of any definite occasion other than the two that have been mentioned—when you were overcome in this—well, very peculiar manner?"

The biting sarcasm of his rasping voice acted upon Mary like a dash of ice water. She straightened up haughtily and her voice was so cool and quiet that the bailiff, who was handing Langdon the smelling salts, made a comic face as if mocking their precaution.

"I have been overcome in that 'peculiar' manner on several occasions."

"Will you name one?"

"Yes. If you will look through the files of the Rochester papers of two summers ago, you will find that I had—an attack while playing in stock in that city."

"Will you describe the circumstances, please?"

"There was a big supper scene in the play which dealt with city life. The company were supposed to be drunken revelers, and I was to join them and drink too. As usual, I had expected to find cold tea in my glass—but for a joke—real champagne had been substituted. I remember only a sickening rush of horror as of some awful impending disaster. I know I screamed—but the next thing I remember was being home in bed. They told me I had rushed from the stage like a madwoman. That of course can be verified by the papers or by any member of that company."

The prosecutor laughed insultingly.

"And you," he taunted, "you who go mad at the smell of alcohol are yet sufficiently familiar with it, to recognize real champagne—the moment you lift your glass!"

"I didn't KNOW it was champagne," she protested. "I merely knew it was wine of some kind. It's—it's the smell!"

"The bouquet is the term more frequently used," badgered the prosecutor. "And can you tell us some other occasions, Miss Page, when you drank in that perfume and—were overcome?"

The sneer in his voice was becoming a torture to Mary. She felt like one beating herself against a stone wall. She was bruised and weary, and her agony found vent in a sudden pathetic little cry:

"He—had—a glass of whiskey."

torturing Mary herself upon the witness-stand to prove the truth of the statements of the alienist.

Halfway to his seat, however, he was arrested by a long, low wailing scream that echoed and throbbled through the stone-walled corridor.

Twice it came—the horrible scream of a woman in mortal agony or in the throes of delirium. The Judge—halted midway as he was leaving court—stood as if frozen, and even the prosecutor dropped the papers that he held and stared horrified at the door to the prison, which was suddenly flung violently open, revealing Mary struggling in the grasp of the bailiff. Her face was livid, her eyes wide, and her hands were clutching, clawing and beating at the stronger ones that held her. Then again she screamed and wrenching loose, took two or three lurching steps forward, panting like one whose breath is almost spent.

With a hoarse roar of excited horror the spectators sprang to their feet and surged forward; but Langdon was quicker than they, and in three strides was beside her, his arms around her, calling her name with a poignant agony that filled the courtroom and echoed for days in the memory of those who heard it.

It even pierced the mists of delirium in which Mary's tortured soul was sunk, and for a moment she lay quiet, supine, in his arms, moaning softly.

In the instant silence which fell over the room, two voices in the corridor rose with unexpected shrillness.

"I didn't mean no harm!" cried one hotly. "I saw the lady was faint like and I thought a bit of liquor would pull her round. That's all, so help me Gawd, and the minute I puts the bottle in front of her—it happened."

With sudden harshness his honor, stepping back to the bench, said:

"Bring in those men from the hall. And let everyone in the room be seated immediately."

Awed by his tone, the spectators slunk back, while two of the court officers hurried into the hall, returning with a pair of sheepish policemen, one of whom was hastily thrusting a bottle of whiskey into his breast pocket.

At the sight Langdon gave a cry of triumph.

"Your honor—that man has a bottle of whiskey. What is more—he is drunk—and his presence in the corridor through which the defendant had to pass, explains—her condition. That, your honor, and gentlemen of the jury, is surely proof enough of the truth of the statements made by Dr. Foster!"

The Judge, obviously impressed, frowned down at the policeman, whose flushed and unsteady gait made his condition impossible to disguise.

"Were you in the corridor when the prisoner was led from court?" he asked sternly.

"Yes, your honor," stammered the policeman.

"Did you speak to her?"

"Yes, sir. I—I—seen she wuz faint like, and I says, says I, a nip will do 'er good. So I jhush—offered her a bit, and she screams and flies at me like a wil' cat."

As if to illustrate his words he went towards Mary and gestured as if again offering her the bottle, and instantly that wailing cry rang out again, and, struggling desperately, Mary twisted herself in the grip of the kindly hands that held her. The grasp of one bailiff was indeed too kindly, being no more than a hold upon the thin silk of her blouse, and as she twisted the stuff gave way and tore—leaving the whiteness of her shoulder exposed. At the sight the prosecutor suddenly gave a hoarse cry and pointed at it. For there against the pale satiny tint of the skin lay a hideous bruise—the shadow of a man's hand, with livid scars where the nails cut cruelly into the delicate flesh.

[To be continued.]

"What is the use of my telling you? You won't believe me!"

"What I believe has nothing to do with the matter," cried the prosecutor. "You must answer the questions put to you while you are on that stand."

"I tell you"—began Mary. Then, with a little choked exclamation she caught at the rail with groping hands. "Philip!" she called. "Philip!" And as he sprang to her side, she collapsed half fainting into his arms, shuddering and sobbing in such obvious hysteria that it did not need Langdon's plea for a short recess to make the Judge say briefly:

"Court will adjourn for fifteen minutes—or until such time as Miss Page is in a condition to be brought back to the stand."

With a grateful glance at his honor, Langdon half carried, half led Mary toward the prison door. Then, as the bailiff came forward to relieve him, he turned sadly back toward his table to try again to think of some new witness, or some method other than by

relief floated from Mary's pale lips at the words, and two little flames of hope and excitement leapt into her eyes.

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