

THE MILL MYSTERY

BY ANNA KATHIRN GREEN

"I cannot return you your father's will," I declared, firmly.

He rose and approached me courteously. "You are doing what you consider to be your duty," said he. "In other words than my mother used, I simply add, on our heads must be the consequences."

"I am here at my mother's wish, and I bring you her apologies. Though you have done and are doing wrong by your persistence in carrying out my poor father's wishes to the detriment of his memory, my mother regrets that she spoke to you in the manner she did, and hopes you will not allow it to stand in the way of your conducting the funeral services."

"Mr. Pollard," I replied, "your father was my friend, and to no other man could I delegate the privilege of uttering prayers over his remains. But I would not be frank to you nor true to myself if I did not add that it will take more than an apology from your mother to convince me that she wishes me well, or, in deed, anything but the enemy her looks proclaimed her to be last night."

"I am sorry," he began, but meeting my eye, stopped. "You possess a moral courage which I envy you," he declared. And waving the subject of his mother, he proceeded to inform me concerning the funeral and the arrangements which had been made.

I listened calmly. In the presence of this man I felt strong. Though he knew the secret of my weakness, and possibly despised me for it, he also knew what indeed he had just acknowledged, that in some respects I was on a par with him.

The arrangements were soon made, and he took his leave without any further allusion to personal matters. But I noticed that at the door he stopped and cast a look of inquiry around the room. It disconcerted me somewhat; and while I found it difficult to express to myself the nature of the apprehensions which I caused, I inwardly resolved to rid myself as soon as possible of the responsibility of holding Mr. Pollard's will.

No occurrence worth mentioning followed this interview with Dwight Pollard. I conducted the services as I had promised, but found nothing to relate concerning them, save the fact that Mrs. Pollard was not present. She had been very much prostrated by her husband's death, and was not able to leave her room, or so it was said.

I mistook the truth of this, however, but must acknowledge I was glad to be relieved of a presence not only so obnoxious to myself, but so out of tune with the occasion. I could ignore Guy, subtle and secret as he was, but this woman could not be ignored. Where she was, there brooded something dark, mysterious, and threatening; and whether she smiled or frowned, the influence of her spirit was felt by a vague oppression at once impossible to analyze or escape from.

From the cemetery I went immediately to my house. The day was dreary one, and I felt chilled. The gray of the sky was in my spirit, and every thing seemed unreal and dark and strange. I was in a mood, I suppose, and, unlike myself on other similar occasions, did not feel that drawing towards the one dear heart which hitherto had afforded me solace and support. I had not got used to my new self yet, and till I did, the smile of her I loved was more of a reproach to me than consolation.

I was stopped at the gate by Mrs. Banks. She is my next-door neighbor, and in the absence of my landlady, who had gone to visit some friends, took charge of any message which might be left for me while I was out. She looked hurried and mysterious. "You have had a visitor," she announced.

I was struck, too, by the immovable determination to compass her own ends at any and every risk, which was manifested by this incident; and, wondering more and more as to what had been the nature of the offence for which Mr. Pollard sought to make reparation in his will, I only waited for a moment of leisure in order to make another effort at enlightenment by a second study of the prayer-book which my dying friend had placed so earnestly in my hands.

It came, as I supposed, about eight o'clock that evening. The special duties of the day were done, and I knew of nothing else that demanded my attention. I therefore took the book from my pocket, where I had fortunately kept it, and was on the point of opening its pages, when there came a ring at the door-bell below.

As I have said before, my landlady was away. I consequently went to the door myself, where I was met by an unexpected visitor in the shape of the idiot boy, Colwell. Somewhat disconcerted at the sight of a face so repugnant to me, I was still more thrown off my balance when I heard his errand. He had been sent, he said, by a man who had been thrown from his wagon on the north road, and was now lying in a dying condition inside the old mill, before which he was picked up. Would I come and see him? He had but an hour or so to live and wished very much for a clergyman's consolation.

It was a call anything but agreeable to me. I was tired; I was interested in the attempt which I was about to make to solve the mystery that was not altogether disconnected with my own personal welfare, and I let me acknowledge, since events have proved I had reason to fear his plot—I did not like the old mill. But I was far from conceiving what a wretched experience lay before me, nor did the fact that the unwelcome request came through the medium of an imbecile arouse any suspicion in my mind as to the truth of the message he brought. For, foolish as he is in some regards his reliability as an errand-boy is universal.

I had, then, nothing but my own disinclinations to contend with, and these, strong as they were, could not, at that time, and in the mood which my late experience had induced, long stand in the way of a duty so apparent.

I consequently testified my willingness to go to the mill, and in a few minutes later set out for that spot with a mind comparatively free from disagreeable forebodings. But as we approached the mill, and I caught a glimpse of its frowning walls glooming so darkly from out the cluster of trees that environed them, I own that a sensation akin to that which had been awakened in me by Mrs. Pollard's threats, and the portentous darkness of her sombre mansion, once again swept with its chilling effect over my nerves.

Shocked, disgusted with myself at the recollection of my weakness for which I had so little sympathy, I crushed down the feelings I experienced, and advanced at once to the door. A tall and slim figure met me, clothed in some dark enveloping garment, and carrying a lantern.

"The injured man is within," said he. Something in the voice made me look up. His face was entirely in shadow.

"Who are you?" I asked. "He did not reply." "Let us go in," he said. A week before I would have refused to do this without knowing more of my man. But the shame from which I had suffered for the last few days had made me so distrustful of myself that I was ready to impute to cowardice even the most ordinary instinct of self-preservation.

I accordingly followed the man, though with each step that I took I felt my apprehensions increase. To pierce in this manner a depth of sombre darkness, with only the dim outline of an unknown man moving silently before me, was anything but encouraging in itself. Then the way was too long, and the spot we sought too far from the door. A really injured man would not be carried beyond the first room, I thought, and we had already taken steps enough to be half-way through the building. At last I felt that even cowardice was excusable under these circumstances, and, putting out my hand, I touched the man before me on the shoulder.

At that word, uttered as it was in a tone inexpressible as fate, my last ray of hope went out. The voice was that of a woman.

I however, made a strong effort for the preservation of my dignity and person. And will Samuel Pollard's oldest and best-beloved son, the kind-hearted and honest Dwight, lend himself to a scheme of common fraud and violence?"

The reply came in his brother's most sarcastic tones. "Dwight has left us," he declared. "We have no need of honesty or kind-heartedness here. What we want for this business is an immovable determination."

Started, I looked up. The lantern which had hitherto swung from the hand of my guide stood on the floor. By its light three things were visible. First, that we stood at the head of a staircase descending into a depth of darkness which the eye could not pierce; secondly, that in all the area about me but two persons stood; and third, that of these two persons one of them was masked and clad in a long black garment, such as is worn at masquerade balls under the name of a domino. Struck with an icy chill, I looked down again. Why had I allowed myself to be caught in such a trap? Why had I not followed Mr. Nicholls immediately to Boston when I heard he was no longer in town? Or, better still, why had I not manufactured for myself a safeguard in the form of a letter to that gentleman, informing him of the important document which I held, and the danger in which it possibly stood from the family into whose hands I had now fallen? I could have cursed myself for my dereliction.

"David Barrows," came in imperative tones from the masked figure, "will you tell us where this will is?" "No," I returned. "Is it not on your person?" the inquisitorial voice pursued. "It is not," I answered, firmly, thankful that I spoke the truth in this. "It is in your rooms, then; in your desk, perhaps?" "I remained silent."

"Is it in your rooms?" the indomitable woman proceeded. "You who have been there should know," I replied, feeling my courage rise, as I considered that they could not assail my honor, while my life without my secret would benefit them so little that it might be said to stand in no danger.

"I do not understand you," the icy voice declared; while Guy, stepping forward, placed his hand firmly on my shoulder and said: "Wherever it is, it shall be delivered to our keeping to-night. We are in no mood for dalliance. Either you will give us your solemn promise to obtain this will, and hand it over to us without delay and without scandal, or the free light of heaven is shut out from you forever. You shall never see this will."

"But," I faltered, striving in vain to throw off the incubus of horror which his words invoked, "what good would my death do you? Could it put Mr. Pollard's will in your hands?" "Yes," was the brief and decided reply, "it is anywhere in your rooms."

"It was a word that struck home. The will was in my rooms, and I already saw it, in my imagination, torn from its hiding-place by the unscrupulous hand that held me. Mastering my emotion with what spirit I could, I looked quickly about me. Was there no means of escape? I saw none. In the remote and solitary place which they had chosen for this desperate attempt, a cry would be but waste of breath, even if it were that part of the mill which looked toward the road. But we were not; and the contrary, I could see by the aid of the faint glimmer which the lantern sent forth, that the room in which we had halted was as far

JANETVILLE. Local to The Warrier. L.O.L. No. 64.—The following were elected officers of L.O.L. No. 64, Janetville, for the ensuing year at the last regular meeting:—R. J. O'Garra, W. M.; J. Armstrong, D. M.; John M. O'Connell, J. H. Barry, R. S.; Robinson Magill, R. S.; Wm. A. Burns, T. A.; Joseph Magill, D. I. O.; Francis Fannon, Lect.; James Howe, Samuel M. Hill, Christy Armstrong, D. O'Garra and Robert McDowell, committee. Lodge meets on first Thursday of each month, except for the year eight.

VALENTIA. Personal.—Mr. James M. Swain and Frank Emerson, two of our most respected citizens, have returned after nearly a year's absence in the Northwest. They look as if they had visited the coast or the great mineral springs of Banff, they look a hale and hearty. We understand they have purchased farms and intend to make life pleasant. Now girls you must be careful how you wear your cap. They report crops a fair average and prices nearly as good as in Lindsay.

TEMPERANCE.—Mr. Editor, if I was permitted to express my opinion I would say that the school law is not the shadow of a shadow in Valentia, and the surrounding neighbourhood, big and little, great and small, have fallen into line on the temperance question. We are informed that the society are abolished here number early sixty. May the efforts put forth to reclaim the erring ones be like the tide east upon the waters gathered in a pool.

Local Obituary.—Log No. 510, held a special meeting last Saturday evening. W. W. Spittal Master, Mr. David J. Sharp, occupied the chair, there was a good attendance of the members, the object of this meeting was to finish up the business of the year and to confer dues.

Sale of a Valuable Farm.—Auction Sale of Valuable FARM PROPERTY. In the Township of Eldon, in the County of Victoria. There will be offered or see by Public Auction at the HOTEL, ARGYLE, ONT., on Tuesday, 31st day of December, A. D. 1889, at the hour of 12 o'clock, noon, by Elias Bower, Auctioneer.

Assignee's Notice. In the matter of SOOTERAN & Co. of Lindsay. This is to give notice that all parties indebted to the above, either by note or book account, are to pay the same forthwith to my agent, Mr. PETER MITCHELL, who is to be found at the premises lately occupied by Sooteran & Co., Lindsay. All notes and accounts tendered at once will be placed in court for collection.

Trent Valley Canal. The Commission appointed by the Dominion Government will meet in the Council Chamber at Lindsay, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th January next.

Presents for Everybody. Jewelry, Watch Chains, Watches, Charms, Rings, Accordions, Certificates, Violins, Boxes Cigars, Meerschaum and Briar Pipes, Cigar Cases, Cigar and Cigarette Holders, or a nice Singing Bird.

FOR THE CHILDREN. Toys, Dolls, Sleighs in great variety AT J. RIGGS, Lindsay.

LITTLE BRITAIN. ANOTHER BIG DROP. Now is the time to secure Bargains in Glassware and Crockery AT WELDON'S. As the hard times and low prices of grain are pressing upon us, we have decided to give our customers a treat by disposing of our entire stock of Glassware and Crockery at cost for cash. We are also determined to give the TAILORING A BOOM FOR NEXT 4 WEEKS, and are prepared to make Tweed Suits to order from \$8 upwards. A trial solicited. J.B. WELDON.

Royal Canadian Insurance Co. HEAD OFFICE—MONTREAL. ANDREW ROBERTSON, Esq., PRESIDENT. MANAGER—GEO. H. MCHEFFEY. Total Cash Assets \$744,901.

The following figures, taken from the latest Blue Book, page 127, show how much each of the six companies named by the Dominion Government received at the close of 1888 for each \$100 insured:— British America \$1.39

Estate of the Late George Laidlaw. Auction Sale of Valuable FARM PROPERTY. In the Township of Eldon, in the County of Victoria. There will be offered or see by Public Auction at the HOTEL, ARGYLE, ONT., on Tuesday, 31st day of December, A. D. 1889, at the hour of 12 o'clock, noon, by Elias Bower, Auctioneer.

Valuable Farm. In the Township of Mariposa in the County of Victoria, by tender. We have received instructions from the administrator of the Estate of Angus McDowd, late of the Township of Mariposa, in the County of Victoria, to sell, in parcels, or in whole, by tender, the following valuable farm property.

MORTGAGE SALE. Of Valuable Hotel Property and Stores. In the VILLAGE OF CANNINGTON, in the County of Ontario. Under and by virtue of the Power of Sale contained in a certain Mortgage dated the 29th day of January, 1887, and registered in the Registry Office for the County of Ontario as No. 438, and which mortgage will be produced at the time of sale, there will be offered for sale by public auction at the QUEEN'S HOTEL, in the VILLAGE OF CANNINGTON, in the County of Ontario, at the hour of 12 o'clock, noon, on

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Old English Condition Powder. TESTED AND TRIED by all the best horse owners and breeders in the country.

A. HIGINBOTHAM, Druggist. Manufacturers of and Wholesale Dealers in the following specials: Lardine, Cylinder, Red Engine OILS. Wool, Bolt Cutting, Eureka OILS.

McCOLL BROS. & CO., Toronto. Manufacturers of and Wholesale Dealers in the following specials: Lardine, Cylinder, Red Engine OILS. Wool, Bolt Cutting, Eureka OILS.

City Harness Shop, Lindsay. JAMES LITTLE, PROPRIETOR. Having extended my business, the last move being to purchase from MR. JAMES LOVELL his entire stock and the goods will be sold at a low price, I am prepared to give all my old customers, and as many new ones as favors me with their patronage, satisfaction in all orders which may be entrusted.

Sign of the Mill Saw, South side Kent st. Powder, Shot, Shells, Apple Parers, Plaster Paris, Curtain Poles, Carpet Sweepers, Mixed Paints, White Lead, Brushes, Lanterns, Clothes Wringers, Belting and Mill Supplies, and all kinds of Shelf and Heavy Hardware; also the celebrated

SCRANTON COAL delivered, at lowest prices. McLENNAN & CO. FOR Cheap FURNITURE GO TO ANDERSON, NUGENT, & Co. KENT STREET, LINDSAY.

Undertakers and Cabinet Makers. Call and see our stock. No trouble to show it. ANDERSON, NUGENT & CO. Builders' Interests Looked After DRY KILN

Now in full blast, and dry. Doors, Sash, Blinds, Mouldings, &c., guaranteed, with prices right. Parties intending to build should call and inspect our work before buying elsewhere, and we will convince them that they will save money by doing so.

INGLE & RILEY, Corner Cambridge and Wellington Streets. WE EXTEND TO ALL OUR CUSTOMERS A Merry Christmas AND A Happy New Year

And desire to thank our many friends for the patronage and support received in the past and to assure them our best attention in the future. Our stock will always be found well assorted in all the various lines handled by us and prices reasonable as any.

HIGG BROS., OAKWOOD. Highest Prices Paid for Alsike and Red Clover, Barley, Wheat, Peas, Oats.