

# LADY DATON

"A place for everything, and everything in its place," observed my friend Basil Wyman, as he carefully put away a bundle of old magazines in a corner of the cabinet which seemed about four times too large for his small study.

He was just about to close the cabinet doors when I caught sight of a small open box divided into four compartments, in each of which reposed an article, the one which first caught my eye being the stump of a half smoked cigar.

"You are getting economical in your old age," I remarked, pointing to the fragmentary weed.

"Not exactly," he answered, with a smile. "There is a history attached to the contents of that box of especial interest to me, because it relates to an incident in my career when, in addition to my orthodox medical duties, I adopted those of a crime investigator." Scouting a story, I pressed for further details, providing there was no reason why they should not be told.

For answer, Wyman drew the box from its resting place, and put it on the table, and we filled our pipes and glasses preparatory to settling down in our dual position of narrator and listener.

"You will observe," commenced the doctor, "that the other three articles consist of a little wooden shoe such as ladies love to tie with gaily colored ribbon to their overmantels, a small blue vase also used for decorating purposes, and an ordinary violin string."

"Truly a heterogeneous collection," I murmured.

"Just so. Yet each had their appointed place in the unravelling of a crime, which would in all probability have remained a mystery for all time, had it not been for their assistance. Do you remember about five years back Society being astounded to hear that the Lady Mary Daton, one of its reigning queens, had been found dead in her boudoir? The shoe and vase belonged to her. The cigar stump was found beneath the chair in which she lay stiff and cold; the violin string was tightly clenched in her contracted fingers. But I must tell the events in their logical sequence if you are to understand the bearing each had on the story of how she met her death."

"Well, in the first place, my connection with the case was a very natural one, for ever since I had been in practice for myself I had been the family doctor to Lady Daton and most of her relatives. Consequently, when the poor lady's body was discovered, I naturally was sent for. My primary examination left little doubt that she had died from the effects of arsenical poisoning. A view which, anticipating matters somewhat, I may say was fully borne out by the subsequent post mortem."

"She had been dead some four or five hours when discovered and inquiries from her maid elicited the fact that she had retired to her boudoir, in the early part of the afternoon, giving instructions that on no account was she to be disturbed until she rang for the girl. Her instructions were followed out to the letter, although nothing was heard from her until it was time to dress for dinner, and then the disc in the servants' hall, which indicated that the electric bell in her room had been touched, fell; and the maid hastened up."

"She tapped at Lady Daton's door, but received no answer, and after knocking rather loudly with a similar result, ventured to enter."

"Her mistress was sitting in a chair—in the girl's own words—'crouched up all of a heap,' with a small phial labelled poison clasped in her right hand."

"For a few moments the girl failed to realize the full meaning of the scene, for she approached the unfortunate lady and put some question regarding the dress to be worn that night. There was no response and then a glimmering of the truth broke upon the maid, and she seized the hand which held the violin string, only to drop it again with a shriek, for it was limp and cold."

"Observe that at the very outset there was a mystery attached to the affair. I arrived on the scene within a quarter of an hour of the maid's discovery, and could certify beyond doubt that Lady Daton had been dead for some hours, yet the electric bell of her room had presumably been pressed by someone only twenty minutes before."

"Of course there was an inquest, and this point was raised. The explanation that either the maid was mistaken regarding the falling of the disc, or that the wire had got into contact with some other bell in the house was accepted by the coroner and jury, but did not satisfy me."

"In my evidence I also mentioned the stump of the cigar found beneath the chair; pointing out that its presence in a lady's boudoir was, to say the least of it, strange. Twentieth century representatives of the gentler sex are, I know, addicted to the practice of cigarette smoking in the privacy of their own rooms, but they draw the line at cigars. I may here say that the blue vase and ornamental shoe had either been dragged from their usual place on the mantelpiece or had fallen, for

they lay on the hearth-rug directly facing Lady Daton.

"However, the jury did not think that the questions I had raised had any important bearing on the case. 'No doubt the startling piece of evidence which was adduced, to prove that Lady Daton was in the habit of taking small doses of arsenic for the benefit of her complexion, prevented their giving proper consideration to my minor points. 'A neighboring chemist swore he had personally served the deceased lady with the phial full of the poison that very morning, and that he had been in the habit of doing so once a week when she was in town. 'The result of the inquiry was that the jury found Lady Daton had died from an overdose of arsenic administered by herself. And in the absence of proof that the lady was in any mental or bodily trouble, they added a rider to the effect that to the best of their belief the unhappy event was the result of an accident.'"

Wyman paused for a moment and I filled up the blank by remarking that I had forgotten whether the Lady Mary Daton was married or not.

"No, old chap, she was 'The Lady' in her own right," he answered, "and as both her father and mother had pre-deceased her by six years and she had no brothers or sisters she came into all the property which was not entailed. Amongst it was the town house in Marbury Crescent, where she eventually met her death. When she entered society she was chaperoned by her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Radleigh, and these two lived together, of course, with a retinue of servants, spending the season in London and the remainder of the year either abroad or at Lady Daton's country house in Hampshire."

"I have already explained that I was by no means satisfied with the coroner's verdict, but apparently with the exception of Mrs. Radleigh I stood alone in my opinion."

"I had met Lady Daton a great deal socially as well as professionally, and had made somewhat of a study of her character. I have never met a clearer-headed or more business-like woman. She was only twenty-four when she died, but ever since she had come of age, she had managed her own affairs with conspicuous cleverness, and no steps were ever taken without she thoroughly mastered the details previously."

"Now I ask you, was it likely that a woman with that character would make the terrible mistake of taking an enormous overdose of arsenic by mistake?"

"I was not altogether surprised to hear that she was addicted to the arsenic habit. It is practiced more than is generally supposed—and Lady Daton had a naturally bad complexion, moreover was very sensitive regarding it. I felt sure that she would have thoroughly satisfied herself as to the dose she could take with safety, and would have been more than careful not to overstep the bounds."

"I discussed the question with Mrs. Radleigh, and found her opinion was in accordance with my own. Consequently she gave me full authority to take any further steps I deemed advisable and offered me any assistance she could give. You will remember that the violin string was found tightly clasped in the dead girl's hand."

"Now in the first place there was absolutely no reason why a violin string should be in the house. Lady Daton certainly did not play the instrument, nor, so far as we could ascertain, did any of the other inmates. We searched every room, but there was no trace of a violin or any parts appertaining to it, beyond that solitary string."

"I asked Mrs. Radleigh if to her knowledge any of Lady Daton's intimate friends had been violinists. For a long time she could think of none, then suddenly she ejaculated: 'Why, Reggie Marston!' adding a moment after, 'But that was years ago.'"

"I urged her to tell me about the person she referred to, explaining that however remote the acquaintance was, it might have an important bearing on the sad affair."

"In answer to my inquiries, I learnt that there had been some years before a boy and girl love affair between poor Lady Daton and the Reggie Marston alluded to. The lady's parents had objected on the grounds of their youth, and the fact that Marston was solely dependent upon his own efforts for a livelihood. The result usual in such cases followed. The lovers parted vowing eternal fidelity, and Marston, who was an officer in the Mercantile service, was drafted to a foreign station. His vows apparently worried him but little, for eighteen months later news arrived that he had married a rich woman in Ceylon and by that time Lady Daton had apparently got over her girlish predilection for him, for she received the intimation with some jesting remark about a sailor's love."

"As hinted by Mrs. Radleigh, this Marston had been a very capable performer upon the violin. The mention of Marston's profession caused me to prick up my ears, for I had already noted that the cigar end now before you was not of a type usually smoked in England. In my earlier days I travelled a good deal, as you know, and had met that stamp of 'smoke' in Gibraltar and there only. I knew that it was the sort that sailors usually got a stock of when calling at that port. You will see that it was possible that the two articles foreign to the room

were likely to be the property of a man of Marston's tastes."

"Having deduced this you can guess my feelings when Mrs. Radleigh volunteered information that the ornamental shoe and blue vase which had been found on the hearth-rug had been his gifts to poor Lady Daton on returning home from a voyage."

"I examined the ribbon by which the shoe had been fastened to the overmantel and found that it was torn asunder as though the shoe had been dragged from its fastening by violence."

"Very shadowy grounds for suspecting a man of murder, you will say, old chap. But it is these very trifles which have brought criminals to the scaffold."

"Were there any letters or papers amongst your niece's effects which had any bearing upon her connection with young Marston?" I asked Mrs. Radleigh, suppressing the excitement I felt.

"I believe my unfortunate girl kept a diary at that period of her life," replied the old lady. "I will instruct one of the servants to get it for you."

"I turned the leaves with reverent and trembling hands when it arrived. It was pitiful, this record of a young girl's first love affair, when one remembered that only six years after she had met a violent and mysterious death. I will only give one extract. It detailed the parting of lovers, expressed her grief at the enforced commands of her parents and so on. But the lines that moved me most were, so far as I can remember, as follows: 'But he will return rich and famous to claim my promise some day, and should anything prevent his coming he will send as a love token by a trustworth messenger one of his beloved violin strings, two knots tied at one end.'"

"I closed the book and drew the violin string from my pocket, and knew beyond all doubt that Reggie Marston had encompassed Lady Daton's death, for there were two knots in the same position as those mentioned in the diary, tied in this one."

"I sat dazed for a few minutes, staggered by this terrible confirmation of my suspicions, and then recovering somewhat cabled to a friend in Ceylon: 'Require information regarding man named Reginald Marston, supposed to have married widow in Ceylon five years ago. Is he still in Ceylon?'"

"Whist! I was waiting for the reply I made a thorough examination of the room, and pieced together in my own mind the details of the crime. After events proved pretty conclusively that my conjectures were not far wrong."

"I came at them by noting a few facts connected with the room. In the first place Lady Daton had not changed her boudoir when her parents died. The window had been wide open on the fatal day—the weather being hot—and, what was still more important, it could not be seen from the road, nor was it overlooked by any other windows. When I also saw that a waterspout ran up alongside it, I had no longer any doubt as to the general correctness of my deductions."

"Within twenty-four hours I had a reply to the cablegram. It ran: 'Marston's wife died a year ago, husband having dissipated every penny of her money. He left here six months ago supposedly to take up previous profession. Police here would like news of him.'"

"I will not weary you with a description of how I tracked the murderer down. Let it suffice that I eventually ran him to earth in a common lodging house in Wapping."

"A glance at his face assured me that dissipation had brought him to death's door. Without any preamble I told him that I knew of his crime. He would have started to bluster, but I silenced him with the words: 'I will describe to you the exact events of that afternoon. You arrived in London the previous night and being desperate determined to appeal to your former sweetheart to keep her promise. There were reasons not altogether unconnected with the police of Ceylon which rendered it inadvisable that you should go openly to the front door and ask to see her; so you climbed up the waterspout to her boudoir window. She was in the room, and you claimed the redemption of her promise. 'She pointed out that your own action had annulled it. You attempted to appeal to her feelings by producing the violin string which was to have been your love token. This only amused her and aroused your anger. Seeing the blue vase and wooden shoe you had once given her, on the overmantel, you tore them down in your rage, and flung them at her feet. You had been drinking previous to your entry, to screw up your courage, and the spirit it began to take effect on you. 'Lady Daton ordered you to leave, and threatened to call for assistance, and that moment you flung her back in the chair and forced the poison which you had previously noticed on the table by her side, down her throat before she had realized your intention, holding her there until it had done its work. Something prevented you leaving for some hours afterwards, probably the gardener was at work below, but at last the coast was clear and you slipped out by the same way you entered. The time then was about 6.30. I can fix it because, al-

though you probably did not know it, you accidentally touched—the electric bell push—which was by the window—as you got out. One more point—you left behind the remains of a cigar. Here it is.'"

"I pushed it towards him, but drew my hand back hastily for the shadow of the hangman's noose had been too much for his enfeebled nerves. He was dead."—Pearson's Weekly.

## FOREIGN LANDS IN LONDON

### AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD'S CAPITAL.

#### Quarter of a Million More Females Than Men.—A Million School Children.

Let me take you, in imagination, to a mighty street, down which stream the four and a half million men, women and children who make up the County of London. There would still be millions left in the suburbs, for Greater London has a population of considerably over six and a half millions of human beings, says a writer in Pearson's Weekly.

Look at them as they come, young and old, sound and halt, three-quarters of them are true Londoners, bred and born.

But look. What strikes you most? The women are in enormous excess. From a marrying point of view, London is not the place for women. Not only is the number of bachelors increasing at a rapid rate, but there are more than a quarter of a million more females than males. London's superfluous females could people a town as big as Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and yet leave enough over to fill Chester. Many of these women will have to migrate to find husbands. There is plenty of room for them in the colonies.

Look at the school children; there are nearly a million of them. And then the old people of over seventy-five; see, there is a band of them far over 50,000 strong, mostly women. They would fill Inverness and Perth, would these old Londoners.

Why, what a healthy place this enormous city must be, especially for women. London women live much longer than the men. Count how many people there are who have lived over a hundred long years. There are two dozen of them, and nineteen are women.

Most of those babies you see are boys. It is only at ages above five years that the

#### FEMALES EXCEED THE MALES.

These facts make you anxious to know how many of these people who rush by are married. Well more than a third are married. The widowed alone number 270,000. However, these young men you see are not so anxious to get married as were their fathers; they prefer single bliss as they would term it.

Some of these people who pass by us have married young enough in all conscience. Why, ten of those girls of fifteen are wives. More remarkable still there are two widows of sixteen; one lives in Bermondsey, and the other in Westminster. London has only three boy-husbands under seventeen.

Who have those fifteen-year-old wives married? Well, one has married a boy of twenty; two have married men of between twenty-five and thirty; while the other seven are not living with their husbands.

How do all these people make a living? Their businesses are numberless. There are even twenty-eight female blacksmiths, of whom eleven are single women.

Their occupations are constantly undergoing a change. The biggest alteration during the last ten years has been an increase of over 180 per cent. in the number of female clerks; that is, exactly ten times as big an increase as in male clerks.

The next biggest increase is in the number of men employed in the electrical trades, an increase of nearly 170 per cent. There has also been a vast increase in the number of actors male and female—mostly male, although there are more females on the stage.

Amongst these people there are many more artists than literary workers. This is especially true with respect to the females, for there are only 666 women journalists while there are 1,414 unmarried women artists, not to mention 264 married.

The number of foreign born people who pass us would almost fill Cardiff, seeing that

#### THERE ARE OVER 161,000.

The Russians take the lead with 38,000, followed by 27,000 Germans. Germans do not appear to be particularly fond of London, as there are not many more of them than there were ten years ago, and the same observation applies to the French. The contrary is true of the Italians, who have more than doubled, and the Russians, who have far more than trebled. Stepany is the great foreign colony; in fact, a fifth of its inhabitants are foreigners.

We shall not see anything like the same number of Asiatics or Africans that we should have done a decade ago. There are only twenty-three Chinese women in all London, and when we have counted every foreigner from the East the total will be 420. Asiatics are far rarer in London than most people imagine.

The favorite district for Americans is Westminster. By far the greater portion are people without occupation, though the chief occupation is that of play-acting. There are 103

male, and 108 female actors, while there are also seventy male and sixteen female journalists.

What do all these foreigners do? Well, most of the Russians are tailors, though a goodly few are boot makers, and cabinet-makers. The Germans go in for baking, waiting, tailoring, hair-dressing and office work. France furnishes most cooks, and next favors office work. Italy comes next to Germany in the number of waiters, and next to France in the number of cooks. It has a clear lead in the costermonger business, in fact, over a thousand hawkers are Italians. It also furnishes the majority of organ grinders in the Metropolis.

#### JOYOUS CROWDS.

#### The Man in the Asylum and in the Street Compared.

The London Lancet seriously discusses the psychology of jubilation. After referring to the shouting, the bell ringing, the feather-ticking, and so on it proceeds:

"Of course, such exuberance is an insanity of the moment. When it is over we make excuses and look sheep-faced when brought to reflection; but we are able to settle down to our prosaic existence much more quickly than would have been possible if we had fought against the volcanic explosion of feeling and endeavored to cool ourselves by more gradual and rational methods."

"In these public outbursts of enthusiasm in the night time, which sees the culmination of the seismic disturbance because inhibition is then at its lowest ebb and the light of day is gone, we must have more light so we flout the quiet heavens with artificial fire. The silence of night is oppressive and we must have a soothing noise. So we shout and then laugh and sing until the lava of jubilation has run out and we can rest lapped in the peace that follows an irrefragable letting-go."

"So might argue the crowds filling our streets on Mafeking and peace nights and the affinity of this frame of mind to madness must strike observant men. The essential difference between the madness of a man inside an asylum and the insanity of a man outside is that the former has his failure of inhibition at times when there is no excuse except his own personal morbid condition. When, therefore, the rest of society is unprepared it resorts to the forcible exhibition of what is against its feeling of the moment. The latter's outburst exactly represents that feeling and the sanity of what is really a manifestation of insanity is accepted by all."

The Lancet argues that these ebullitions are good for the community, though it says: "We feel that this is tantamount to confessing that the march to civilization has not modified human nature so much as might be believed. The world is very much as it was long ago. There is still the same tendency toward explosiveness, mind storms, and loss of inhibition, and it takes very little to seduce the sedate citizen into the destructiveness of the child, the 'rag' of the university student or the 'hooliganism' of the man in the street. Habit may do much. The events of the last three years have been in the nature of a new experience. There was no preparation and no gradual adaptation to new conditions, while everything that argued for explosiveness was provided."

#### GAMES OF TAG.

#### Lively Pastimes in Favor Among Children in Switzerland.

Swiss children make believe that the pursuer in the game of chase or tag is invested with an imaginary evil spirit, whose power is subject to certain charms. For instance, if they touch cold iron, a gate-latch, a horseshoe or an iron nail the power of the demon is broken. Sometimes they make gold or silver their charm.

They play cross-chase, in which the runner who darts across the patch between the pursued and the pursuer becomes the object of the catcher, and the former one goes free. Again, if the runner squats he is free, or he may squat three times, and after that the charm is lost. The chaser often disguises himself, and unless the captives can guess who he is the captive is banished from the game. They also play turn-cup—the chaser wearing his cap with the lining outside.

Another Swiss game is called pot of gold. One of the swiftest runners takes a stick and pretends to dig for a pot of gold. He works away for a few minutes, then cries out "I've found it," and runs away with it at the top of his speed. He has the advantage of a few paces at the start, for while he is digging the other players are grouped behind him at least one rod distant. The player who catches him gets the pot of gold and becomes in turn subject to robbers. This keeps every player on the chase continually.

#### AS MUCH PARCHMENT AS LAND.

A piece of land which they have purchased for £25 has cost the Pontefract Rural District Council £21 for conveyance from the landowner, Mr. Sotheron-Estcourt. The clerk to the council remarked at a meeting that it seemed to him the land transferred right almost covered by the four square yards of parchment which the conveyance occupied.