



CHAPTER XXXII

"Even now," Phyllis said, a trifle helplessly, "I don't understand a good deal of that."

"Nor I," Jimmy agreed. "Can you string things together, Mearcroft?"

"I can," was the grim response. "It's all quite simple—when one gets behind the scenes. Quite simple—and damnably cold-blooded."

It was the day following Terrivale Wake's dramatic plunge with Elise into the sea. Jimmy, Phyllis, and Tubby were closeted with the detective in the library at Manor House, and upstairs Mrs. Cartwright was making a brave and successful fight against the overwhelming shocks of the past few days.

"All along," Mearcroft resumed, "there was one person in possession of the secret—Alfred Jennings. Amongst his papers is a full account of matters as he understood them, and later, after confidence in some measure to Elise. It is mainly from this account, supplemented by what Elise told you, Miss Laleham, on the wreck, and the statements of Kelly and one of the Reynolds, that I have been able to piece the whole affair together."

"To make matters clearer I propose to go back to the very beginning, even if it means covering certain ground which is already familiar to you. Only by so doing can you see how everything dovetails in."

"One morning, just about a month ago, Terrivale Wake received a letter which caused him furiously to think. It was from your father, Miss Laleham, and stated that he was tired of his wandering life, and that he had a desire to see again the daughter he had not set eyes on since her infancy. After years of vicissitude he had managed to sell a mining claim he possessed at a profit of some ten thousand pounds, and this sum, together with certain other small savings, he sent to Wake in bearer securities, his reason being that he was associated with a pretty rough crowd who might attempt to rob him. The money, he stated, was to go to you, or, should you not be alive—he had not communicated with Wake for some time—to the lawyer himself, should your father die before him. He proposed to sail from Canada a few days later."

"What he did not know—what few people knew then—was that Terrivale Wake was an arrant scoundrel who would do anything for money. It struck him at once how easily this money might become his, and he commenced to lay his plans from the moment of reading the letter."

"Unfortunately for him, he was engaged in it one morning when his clerk, Alfred Jennings, ushered in Elise. The latter and Jennings were already in collusion—there is no doubt that they had been associated with Wake in more than one shady transaction in the past. Both marked his preoccupation over the letter, neither had any illusions regarding him, both possessed keys of his desk made from impressions obtained by Jennings, and both determined to find out the contents of the letter. This they did, and Terrivale Wake's jealously-guarded secret was, if he had only known it, a secret no longer."

"From that moment Alfred Jennings watched him as a cat watches a mouse. He saw him meet John Laleham at the docks, heard him arrange to take him down to see you at Roma Cleft, was behind their car on his motorcycle all the way."

"Wake acted in this connection with all the cunning he possessed. Pleading excess of work, he suggested motoring through at night, and thus giving Miss Laleham a joyful surprise at breakfast-time. Her father agreed. He had spent a rough life, and night travelling was no hardship to him. Thus you see, Wake ensured that no one at one inn, or anything of the kind, should see them together on their journey."

"Then, in the early hours of that misty morning, Wake's car suffered a convenient 'breakdown.' He left it in a deserted copse, the two men proceeded the last few miles on foot, with Jennings, invisible in the fog, still dogging their footsteps; and there on the lonely shore, while they rested under the upturned boat, Wake murdered his predestined victim, with Jennings stretched out motionless, a witness of the deed."

"Belton's boat, drawn up on the pebbles, next attracted Wake's attention. He launched it and rowed off, probably with the intention of casting suspicion upon the owner, and at what followed immediately we can only guess, though almost certainly correctly. Losing his bearings in the fog, he blundered into the wreck, and there, to his amazement, caught sight of Miss Laleham about to dive. It was an excellent opportunity for killing two birds with one stone. He struck her with an oar and made off, doubtless believing that he had now made that ten thousand pounds his own. Reaching the cliff at last, he clambered up the rocks, reached the car, and drove back to London—totally unaware of the man who saw."

"But his alibi?" Jimmy interjected. "He proved that he was at Sheffield."

"He stated that a certain lawyer was prepared to vouch for his presence there," was the dry response. "I'm afraid he could have made it inconvenient for that lawyer to say otherwise. There are secrets in the lives of many respectable people they would not wish to be brought to light."

Jimmy nodded. "And then?" he breathed.

"And then, following your discovery of the body, I came upon the scene. One thing struck me at once, after I had interviewed Miss Laleham, her likeness to the dead man. That was why, having heard her story of her missing father, I asked her to identify the body. I did not know then that she had never even seen a photograph of him, and allowed myself to be misled badly. I'm afraid, when she stated that the man before her was an utter stranger to her. The miniature shown us both later on by Terrivale Wake was, of course, one of someone else, and deliberately designed to throw us off the scent. I had another moment of suspicion when Wake showed embarrassment on my hinting that his arrival in response to Miss Laleham's summons was not his first visit to the locality, but I'm afraid he succeeded in throwing dust in my eyes, as he had done in the eyes of many others. I was, in fact, only referring to having seen him at the Exeter Assizes on circuit some years ago."

"Cartwright, too, began to attract attention. He, too, seems to have been an old associate of Wake's, and it may be that he was picked upon as Miss Laleham's employer with an ulterior motive—that well which he undoubtedly designed to accomplish his wife's end might in certain circumstances have come in handy for his wife's companion. Immersed in his own affairs, though, he does not seem to have had any hand in the main plot. From Wake's point of view, however, he proved a most useful red herring drawn across the trail. I certainly pricked up my ears when I heard he had been seen up on the cliff at about the time of the murder, though I suspect that the true reason for his presence there was that he hoped to run across Miss Laleham. One way or another, though, he had become an object of suspicion."

"Wake, meanwhile, having found to his disgust that one of his intended victims was still alive, had to make other plans, and now for the first time he ran against Alfred Jennings and discovered that there was a witness to his crime. He had his suspicions at the inquest that the red-haired reporter was Jennings in disguise, and on getting back to town roundly accused him of the impersonation. The clerk admitted it. Moreover he cast his bombshell, telling his employer that he had seen him kill the murdered man."

"Wake bought his silence, paying him five hundred pounds in cash, with promise of more to come. But Jennings wasn't satisfied. It struck him that he might drive an even better bargain to Miss Laleham if he were to sell his information to her. The truth was, too, that he was afraid of Wake—and with good reason. He wanted to find himself independent of the lawyer, and the latter under lock and key."

"So he wrote the letter which brought her up to town. But Terrivale Wake knew his Jennings and suspected that he would try something of this sort. Pretending to be away from the town, he watched the wily little clerk in his turn, and when he saw you enter the office he knew that his suspicions were correct. He entered and neatly put a spoke in Jennings' wheel."

"But what made Jennings collapse like he did?" the girl asked. "He went down like a pricked balloon and said he had been telling lies."

Mearcroft laughed. "Because, he said grimly, 'he knew that Wake had a loaded pistol in his pocket and was desperate enough to use it. To say what he had been going to say was to commit suicide. That, and Terrivale Wake's sanity, were too much for him.'"

Remembering Wake's eyes at the time, Phyllis shivered. "I believe he would have shot us both, and himself as well, if the truth had come out then," she whispered.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Plants Love Kindly People Says Expert

Friendly People Make Flowers and Plants grow Better Suggests Horticulturalist.

(By Ruth Fisher Place)

Good gardening may go deeper than the soil. It may reach down into human behaviour.

We had been talking about the way plants grow for some persons and refuse to grow for others.

One of the group was a veteran plantsman. He knows plants and has grown them for years. He sat looking thoughtful and finally, with a half-smile of embarrassment, for fear his remark would bring a laugh, he said musingly:

"I have often thought that plants have their likes and dislikes. They seem to me to thrive only for good people, those with generous hearts and records of active friendliness."

"I have seen two people, living side by side, buy and plant roses from the identical lot. The roses die for one gardener. They bloom for the other."

"It certainly was true that the man whose roses did not grow was an unfriendly fellow, a little too shrewd in a bargain, inclined to let you down in a pinch."

"The good rosarian, as it happened, too, was a real friend. You could count on him. You could bank on his fairness. He had a streak of generosity about him. You know, a decent chap."

"Gardens that are planted just to make a show, because it is sometimes considered a mark of social or financial arrival to have a garden, those gardens seldom are beautiful. They never are unless someone is paid to care for them who has the genuine love of plants, who is a good man."

Nobody laughed. We were all thinking of the roses that clamber in jets of yellow bloom over the little house of some kindly, unschooled woman whose cookies have nourished the children of two generations."

We were thinking of some fuchsias on a farm porch, throwing out their fountains of rose and purple."

A bed of petunias in a city garden, above which many a disheartened soul had talked over his desperate problems and gone away with courage restored."

We thought of all the good gardeners we had known."

We mentioned all the sensible explanations. "Nobody cultivates the acquaintance of a curmudgeon. None strikes up a conversation on matters of concern to the gardening fraternity with a sour, selfish, crabbed old miser. We don't know those gardeners, and they may be the creators of gardens that would make the finest efforts of the good citizen look like thirteen cents."

We stoutly reasoned that all a garden needs is good soil, and so on."

But when we had been just as convincing as we could manage, a doubt remained."

There may be something in the idea, after all. Perhaps they know our natures better than we do theirs."

It is a disconcerting idea. But the next time my fox-gloves freeze up through the winter, and my neighbour's come through with no more favouring conditions that I can detect, I am going to examine my conscience, instead of my garden."

Looks Like a Provincial Election This Year or Next

In a recent address Hon. Earl Rowe, Conservative leader in Ontario, warned his hearers to be ready for an election in the province in the next couple of months. He advised all interested to be prepared for an appeal at any time now to the public by the Hepburn government. Hon. Earl Rowe's idea seemed to be that the longer the election was delayed the greater disfavor the Hepburn party would have to endure, and that the premier knew this and was casting about for any good excuse to get the election over, so that there would be some chance for the election of his party.

The remarks of Hon. Earl Rowe apparently stirred up official circles at Queen's Park. Last week a despatch from Toronto says that "an Ontario Cabinet spokesman" made a statement to the effect that there will be no election until next year at least. There seems to be reason for believing that unless something unexpected develops the Ontario government will not go to the people this year, but that 1937 will likely see the election, though the government according to law might take a couple more years of office.

Three Essentials in Growing of Lilies

Good Drainage, Good Bulbs and Some Care in Planting, the Main Things, Says Expert.

Lilies, Dr. Frank B. MacMullen of Detroit finds, have the same general requirements, whatever their variety. An enthusiastic amateur grower, Dr. MacMullen follows a few rules in his lily fields near Clarkston, Michigan, substituting a simple cultural programme for the elaborate and complicated instructions frequently offered to new gardeners.

He puts first among his rules, good drainage.

His second essential is good bulbs; his third, reasonable care in planting. With these three points in mind, the lover of lilies need worry no more than about any plant he is trying to grow successfully.

Good drainage may be secured in various ways. A piece of sloping ground may be chosen. In fact, the worst location for lilies is in the bottom of a low spot where excess water naturally collects.

In heavy or clay ground the character of the soil should be carefully changed by the addition of sand or cinders.

Tall Story A reader reports that lilies had always failed in his garden. Finally he dug them up and threw on the ash pile, heaping over them the garden waste. The following spring they were growing like cedars of Lebanon. That may be a tall story but it certainly illustrates what lilies like—drainage, mulch, cool roots.

Dr. MacMullen gives this advice on planting: Tight-scaled bulbs, such as the regales, upright; loose-scaled bulbs, such as the Candida (Madonna) on their side.

Most lilies are planted, says the garden dictionary, in an article by Helen Morghentau Fox, three times as deep as the height of the bulb. A bulb two inches deep is planted six inches below the level of the ground.

An exception to this rule, Miss Fox continues, is Candidum, the Madonna lily, with its relative, Testaceum. These should be planted very shallow, covered with not more than an inch and a half of soil. Giganteum is allowed to

remain partly above ground, the upper surface of the bulb exposed.

Time of Planting In moving lilies, one should observe the root growth. Some lilies produce stem-roots, roots appearing above the bulb along the stalk. These must be set deep enough to allow the stem roots space to develop, sometimes as much as 10 to 14 inches.

The time of planting or transplanting lilies depends on their season of flowering, and also on the date of arrival. They are moved best when the flower has disappeared and the plant is resting, that is, between October and December. Candidum may be planted earlier, August or September. Dr. MacMullen thinks that most lilies will stand spring planting but are now subject to the season of importation. At any rate, the beginner will do well to heed the accepted time and plant in the late summer and in the fall.

Shade Sometimes bulbs make no growth the first season after the shock of planting and moving. Testaceum is subject to this reluctance, as well as pardalium, martagon and monadelphum. In general, lilies will remain a number of seasons without thinning. They seem in the experience of most gardeners, to do better when they have multiplied into thick clumps, so unless it is desirable to fill them into empty spaces in the garden, they should have a permanent location and be allowed to get acclimatized.

Some shade is welcomed by most varieties, but trees are likely to draw too much of the moisture and nourishment from the soil. Tall perennials, shrubs, or vine-covered trellises shadow them more satisfactorily without depriving them of their nourishment.

Either ground cover that harmonizes with the foliage and colour of the flower, or a mulch of leaves, or of pratt moss, serves to keep the roots cool.

Some lilies are tolerant of lime, but it is of doubtful help to most of them, for, as a general thing, lilies like a neutral soil, slightful tending toward acidulous.

Fertilizer Manure is injurious as fertilizer. Bone meal is commonly used with the balanced plant foods everywhere available.

Again, quoting from Dr. MacMullen, it is noted that the advantage of preparing the lily bed in advance by sowing a cover crop of alfalfa, winter rye, soy beans or clover, and digging in the crop while it is still young and green,

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But this excellent method of providing humidity is not restricted to lilies.

Plant each bulb in a pocket of sand; that is, fill the excavation partly full of sand, set the bulb at the required depth and then cover it with sand before filling the excavation with soil.

During the winter, lilies should be lightly strewn with soil, then covered two inches deep with straw, peat, or light branches.

Protection for Police Essential to Uphold Law

At police court at Kirkland Lake last week two young men were fined \$100 and costs each for interfering with the police. It seems from the evidence that the police were raiding a Kirkland Lake house on the belief that liquor was sold there. The two young men in question were in the house at the time and held back the police by force while the liquor in the house was being poured away or otherwise disposed of. Mel G. Hunt, counsel for the defence, argued that no particular harm had been occasioned, but that the action of the two men was more foolish than criminal.

"There must be some protection for the police," the magistrate said, addressing himself to defence counsel. "I am taking into consideration the good record of your clients. If I was not doing so I would send them to jail. That has been the usual sentence for this offence."

Following the court session Crown Attorney Jack Robinson of New Liskeard, who said in argument that "this is a type of offence which must be checked," pointed out that another claim that "police should be able to look after themselves" is not a good one.

"If you set out that police must 'look after themselves' there are usually complaints of people being manhandled," the crown attorney said. "It is better

that such cases should come to court for the Bench to decide. Neither the private citizen nor the constable has a right to take the law into his own hands."

Huntingdon Gleaner.—Straying from home, Don, a black retriever, owned by Mrs. J. F. Clarke of Honiton, England, was found by the police, and at the owner's request fed and taken home seven miles by taxicab. Now Don has developed the habit of becoming "lost" and enjoys his feed and cab ride.

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