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IN THE SHADOW OF SHAME

By Fitzgerald Molloy

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Synopsis of Preceding Chapters. Olive Dumbarton, after the legal separation from her brutal husband, becomes a successful authoress and lives quietly with her daughter, Valerie, in the quiet suburb of St. John's Wood, London.

On regaining the consciousness which her cousin's words had caused her to lose, Olive Dumbarton's distress was pitiful to witness. One thing alone served after awhile to rouse her thoughts and stir her energies.

The man who loved her must not be allowed to die under the imputation of a crime, to which she felt sure he had falsely confessed. He must learn while yet there was time that she would not accept this sacrifice of him; or, if, indeed, time was already a thing of the past for him, then his memory must be cleared, his innocence vindicated before the world, and the less delay there was made in the undertaking such a mission the more readily might it be effected.

Mackworth was the man who best could help her in this task, which she foresaw would be difficult to accomplish; for if the effort to prove her own blamelessness had hitherto been unsuccessful, how much more impossible might it be to establish the innocence of one who had confessed to guilt.

However, an effort in this direction was made, and accordingly she sent to the inspector her own temporary strength, and when Mackworth was announced she rose from the sofa where she had lain since her recovery, and prepared to meet him.

"I have heard of Mr. Bostock's danger," she said feverishly. "How is he? Have you heard any news since?"

"Since his confession?" the inspector said, supplying the word she found it difficult to employ. "No, madam; I have heard nothing since."

"Is there no hope?" "I fear not." She sat down and pointed to a chair near her, which he took, and then, when she had cleared the tears from her eyes and braced herself, she began, in a nervous, agitated manner:

"There's been a great mistake—of that I am sure." "How?" Mackworth asked, his mobile face assuming an air of surprise.

"In Mr. Bostock's confessing to a crime of which he never was guilty." "Not guilty!" exclaimed the inspector, still more amazed.

"I am certain he is innocent," she replied hurriedly. "But what proof have you, madam?" "I have no ab initio proof."

Mackworth looked at her eager, flushed face, with its earnest, pitiful expression. "I have none," she repeated, aware of the little impression she made on him and desperately anxious he should believe her. "But I feel confident he, who is one of the kindest, the most honorable of men, would never commit such a crime. Knowing his life is drawing to an end, he has made this confession to save me. That is all. He is innocent."

"Then," asked Mackworth, as his eyes met hers in a steady, searching stare, "if he is innocent, who is guilty?" She read the thought which flashed across his mind the thought which seared and made her tremble.

"I cannot say," she replied hurriedly, "but I know he is not." "May I ask, madam, how you know?" "My heart tells me he is not," she answered, realizing how important was her argument.

"Such things will weigh hardly against his own confession." She saw the force of his words, and knowing she had no reason to combat it, her misery increased, the while he watched her silently new suggestions arising in his mind.

Presently she burst: "Why not continue your investigations as if he had never made this confession?" "Because his confession has justified and brought my investigations to an end."

"I don't understand," she answered, fear chilling her blood. "Because, madam, I have suspected and been watching him for some time," Mackworth said.

"Suspected him—impossible!" she cried out. "I assure you it is true." "On what grounds?" "Those which I thought sufficient; I cannot now enter into details," he replied, anxious to spare her feelings by withholding from her the motive which he considered led Bostock to the crime.

"I am sure that one day you will find that you are wrong," she said, her anxiety visible in her eyes. "But is there nothing that can be done meanwhile—nothing that will disprove his statements?" "Nothing," answered Mackworth, as he rose to leave, "nothing."

She did not seek to prolong an interview which had not only grievously disappointed her, but filled her with despair. "Nothing?" she repeated, and then added, in a voice so low and broken that the words seemed spoken to herself rather than addressed to her hearer: "God will protect the innocent."

Mackworth bowed and softly quitted the room, leaving her more hopelessly crushed by sorrow than when he had entered. But on regaining his home and enjoying the welcome of Shawn, and the warmth of his fire, at which he held his feet by turns before making himself ready for supper, the questions which had persistently presented them-

watched meanwhile." And when the next day came the great surgeon was able to assure himself that his hopes were realized, that his operation had been beyond all doubt successful.

After leaving his cousin's house on the evening when, overcome by jealous fury, he had insinuated that her love for George Bostock was responsible for her husband's murder, Valerie had walked about the neighborhood heedless of where he went, so long as he avoided crowds and traffic, his mind in a state of fierce rebellion against the woman whose presence he had quitted, against the man for whom she had confessed her love.

All the affection Valerie had felt for her throughout his life turned to bitterness at the avowal she had made; the dislike he had ever entertained toward Bostock had deepened to hate. For the publisher had succeeded in gaining what he, Valerie, had from boyhood sought in vain to win. That she had denied to him was freely given to one, who, by comparison, was a stranger.

With a rapid pace he traversed winding roads and long avenues, now almost deserted, dead leaves from the rapidly falling branches fluttering in his face, the sharp ring of his footsteps on the frosty paths audible at long distances, his thoughts in wild disorder his face distorted by passion, his feelings outraged, jealousy stinging him to madness.

Not until a couple of hours had passed did he, without becoming conscious of the fact, slacken his pace through sheer weariness, and his emotions having meanwhile reached their highest pitch of fury, now began to subside. Then he reflected on the part he had recently played, his thoughts coming to the subject casually and flittingly at first, afterward with steady persistence that was all the more welcome, because it served to inflame upon him fresh pain, more acute than he had yet felt.

The insolence, the bitterness, the cruelty of his words stood out before him in their true colors, and he reviewed and realized the cowardice, the inhumanity, the injustice of his bearing toward her he had ever loved, whom he loved now more than ever. And as he viewed his conduct in this light, his contempt and loathing for himself were only equalled by his compassion and affection for her.

To strike her down with such a weapon as he had used, such a time as he had sought, was to have behaved as a despicable scoundrel, as an unmanly wretch. What words of his could now take from her the pain he had inflicted, which must rankle in her mind and poison her peace for many a day to come?

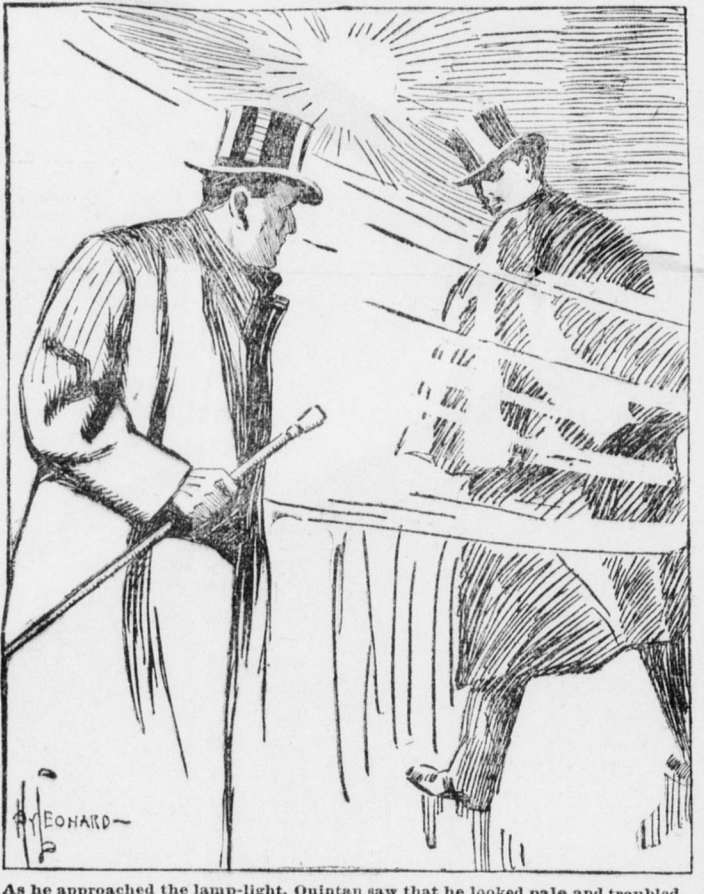
"I see," replied Quinton, who had as yet been unable to overcome his amazement or to recover from his sense of mystery with which this meeting inspired him.

If Valerie saw this his behavior betrayed no sign of his perception. Judging from his manner, there was nothing more unusual in this encounter than if it had happened at midday instead of at midnight and been the result of expectation instead of the cause of surprise.

"And now," he said, "that I have satisfied myself on grounds for uneasiness exist, I will go; I dare say I shall find a cab as I walk homeward."

He had moved forward as he spoke, and as he approached the lamplight Quinton saw that he looked pale and troubled. And when they had said "good-night" and parted, Quinton, standing at the entrance to the garden fronting his father's house, watched Valerie as his figure disappeared down the road and into the darkness, a puzzled look upon the young man's face, perplexing thoughts rising in his mind, a sense of something ominous chilling his blood.

(To be continued.)



As he approached the lamp-light, Quinton saw that he looked pale and troubled.

With mingled feelings of relief and regret he saw that the moment of the meeting must be postponed; but he was in no hurry to quit the spot, fatigued from his long walk, weariness from the conflict of his thoughts and the action of his excitement set in upon him, and he rested there against the wall which faced the house, satisfied to wait until chance should send in his way a passing cab that would drive him home.

And as he lingered there, his thoughts full of Olive Dumbarton, the chill which follows on inaction after exercise struck him again, the more readily that he was clad in evening dress, whereupon he wrapped the heavy folds of his Inverness cape around his chest and throat. Then, feeling more comfortable, he fell into a reverie, from which he was eventually aroused by a hand being pressed upon his right arm, when, recovering himself with a start, he gazed at the man before and recognized the anxious, frightened face of Quinton Quate.

"It's you, Mr. Galbraith," he said, in almost breathless wonder. "Valerius, waking from his reverie, returned his gaze, and in a quiet voice, like that of one not yet aroused from sleep, replied, 'Yes, it is I.'"

Quinton withdrew a step, not knowing what to say or how to explain his conduct; then, without pausing to consider his words, he remarked: "I was quite startled at first by seeing you here."

"Indeed—May I ask why?" Valerius coolly asked. "Well, I could have sworn, and yet could swear, it was you I saw here on the night Dumbarton was killed; that is, if I didn't know you were then in Paris."

"That shows how readily you might be mistaken, and how easily you could bear false witness," answered Valerius, in the same deadly calm and emphatic manner he had assumed from the first. "I suppose it does; and yet—"

"Well?" Galbraith said, as Quinton hesitated and stared. "The likeness between you and him seems remarkable."

"Yet you see how you have blinded me here." "Of course," replied Quinton, but his voice failed to express the conviction of his error.

"Why you see me here to-night," Valerius explained, "is because I am anxious about my cousin. When I brought her news of Bostock's confession she naturally received a great shock, from which she had not recovered before I left. When I was able I returned to make inquiries, and found, as it was later than I thought, that the house was in darkness. I therefore remained here a few minutes to make sure all was quite well."

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A Chronicle of the Rear Guard.

By LEO CRANE. (Copyrighted.)

The old man, bent and showing plainly the touch of age in his dragging step, plodded along contentedly, tapping the staff upon the crisp and hardened earth, and occasionally resting in the fence corners to view the stretches of hilly country. Upon a distant rise a line of shadowy trees were gauntly silhouetted against the steel blue of the fall sky, their branches an endless tangle of black and rustling arms.

Here and there a blotch of vivid crimson shone in the painted glare of the evening sun, a token that the sacrifice of browned leaves to the falling year had not yet ceased. They crisply crackled in the chilling breath of the coming night wind. In the dim distance a thin wreath of smoke whirled lazily and disappeared, showing where a forest fire smouldered, and adding a bleak touch to the drawing of early winter.

A flock of dirty sheep huddled together in the half twilight of the lonely road. A few straggled alone, now rustling knee deep in leafy billows of russet red and gold, now trampling down the last patch of bright-hued flowers in a desert waste of their dried fellows. A boy, young, tousle-haired and tattered, followed at their heels, whistling and waving a garbled stick vigorously, now calling in a fresh and shrilly voice at the laggards.

"How are ye, sonny?" greeted the old man kindly. "Pretty well, sir, I thank ye," returned the boy. "Likely lot o' sheep," ventured the man, plodding in step with the boy and urging on a stubborn animal.

"Middlin' fair," acquiesced the boy, glancing at him curiously. "Yonder's one that belongs to me," he said proudly, "that young one. Pap give him to me last year. His name's Dan, same's mine."

This information was given with an air of quiet importance and a shy glance to notice the effect. There was a brief silence. "Ye ain't from these parts," stated the boy, half inquiringly. "No—ain't been here fur nigh forty year. Long time that. \* \* \* Don't s'pose ye remember back that far, sonny? Last time I was here I got a drink of water from the well just around the bend. Live at the house, sonny?"

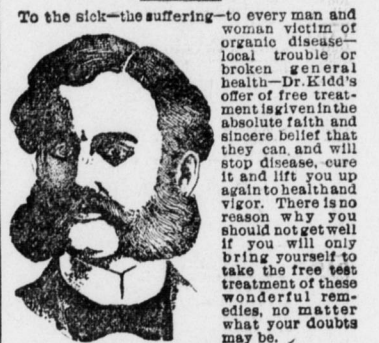
"Why, ye mean Jim Potter's. He's a mean cuss. Forty year—why, that must hev' been durin' the war, he?" "Yes," acknowledged the man, "that was durin' the war. There was Billy Martin an' Sam Woodward an' Jim Lock in our company. We all stopped at the next house an' got a drink o' well water—remember it just like yesterday. Billy, he were killed at the last Wilderness fight; Sam Woodward, he pegged out at Richmond, an' Lock, Lemme see—Lock finished at Beaver Dam Creek. All gone, them fellers—all gone."

"What were ye asked the boy, looking at him suspiciously through half closed eyes. 'What were ye?' "Johnny Reb," said the man quietly. "S'pose I'm one of the rearguard now. \* \* \* Yes, they're most all gone. My company's all gone but me."

"Say, you come home with me an' git that drink o' well water. Pap'll be glad to see ye, an' s'ides, if I do say it m'self, he's a greebler man than Jim Potter, an' s'ides, the water's better."

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the boy, astonished that he had discovered another wonderful happening in which this great old man figured.

"Yes, I heard old Bobby Lee say them very words." "The man nodded his head slowly. "Gee!" whispered the boy faintly, in a tone of half adoration. He shifted his seat on the stone so as to get a better view of the man who had once heard Bobby Lee speak words.

"Pap often told me 'bout Bobby Lee, but pap never heard him talk. This man had heard the very words; this man had heard Larkin's swear; this man was, therefore, something beyond the ordinary, a wonder out of another age.

"That was forty years ago," mused the man softly; "forty years ago you were unthought of. \* \* \* How old are ye yet? Ten? Thirty year before ye were born. Place looked much the same then; no doubt it'll look much the same after ye're forgotten."

The thought, expressed in such a matter-of-fact style, made the boy shudder. It was the first time he had heard of things remaining after he had departed; it really was the first time his departure had occurred to him; he could not fully appreciate its importance.

The steady chop of the axes had nearly cut the bread of life from the pine. Occasionally it had cracked and moaned as if in protest. Now it cracked ominously and tottered, swayed. "Look out!" yelled the foresters. "Look out! She's a-comin'!"

Over it bent, farther, farther, and with a loud, swishing sound, settled with a crash. A shower of dust arose. "Many a man fell on this yer hill in the same fashion, though some of 'em didn't make so much noise," commented the old fellow.

"Look here, ole man, what's this?" asked the man who had helped in the felling. "Well, by all," said the veteran, in an excited tone, "that's a shell. Gum! It's been here since the war."

"No!" exclaimed the chopper. "Forty year," whispered the boy. "Chop it out," said the man. They picked it from the ground and examined it closely, while the boy peered into the jagged hole of the trunk in search of anything else dating from the war.

"It's a Union shell. They were thick as comes 'round yer in them days. An' it ain't gone off yet. Let's see." The old man took three steps forward and tossed the iron missile into the smouldering fire of leaves some ten yards away. The action was that of a child, and he waited with a smile for the result. A blinding flame sprang upward, and the hills echoed with a rending, stupefying report. A cloud of choking smoke flooded skyward.

"What a fool trick!" muttered the woodchopper, half in anger. "Hurt ye, boy? Hurt ye, Sam? Gawd, it's hurt him!" They ran to the man sprawled upon the ground. "It waited fur me forty year," he gasped painfully. "Forty year a-waitin' fur me. They all said the war was over, but I knew better. This is the last action, an' the rearguard is peggin' out. Mac's a-rushin' 'n troops, but Bobby Lee'll make 'em think yet. That's him over there with Larkin, an' Larkin says, 'D—n 'em, we'll hold 'em.' It's been a long war—forty year!"

His head went back on the dingy red ground. "The rearguard has pegged out," said the chopper solemnly.

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