

# The Bloomfield Times.

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## The Bloomfield Times.

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## A Romantic Story.

A True Story of Life in New York.

A NEW YORK paper tells the following remarkable story of the doings of Alfred Eugene Lagrave, a man who has moved in the best society in that city.

While the business transactions of this man were of an extraordinary character and on an extensive scale, it was as a society man that he reached the limit of his greatest power. The story of his life is a romance, and the history of his marriages, while it stamps him as the possessor of extraordinary command over the sex, reveals him as a man of exquisite and devilish cruelty. With an attractive exterior, his heart was of iron, and his acts those of a fiend.

Many in New York were acquainted with the Beals family. Mr. Beals, who furnished the granite for the Capitol extension, is dead. Before coming to New York the Beals were a very respectable family, living in comfortable circumstances in Maine. While there Mr. Beals discovered the deposit of Granite on Shelter Island. It proved the best in the country, and there was great demand for it.

From moderate affluence the family sprang to immense wealth. After the acquirement of an enormous fortune they moved to New York, and bought an elegant house in twenty-third street, and there they lived in sumptuous style. They had three daughters, all beautiful, and all with good mental endowments. All the fashionables envied them. Circumstances compelled Mrs. Beals to seek a divorce from her husband, which she obtained. She afterward married Mr. William Mickell, the wedding being solemnized with *ecclat* in Calvary church. This marriage proved a very happy one. Despite their disparity in years, the couple were like lovers for the few years that Mr. Mickell lived.

After their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Mickell, with the Misses Beals, made the tour to Niagara, the Lakes and Saratoga. When returning from Saratoga they met Lagrave. He saw and admired Miss Evelyn Beals, the second daughter, who was then about seventeen years of age. She was a woman of much more than ordinary attractiveness. Neither blonde or brunette, her complexion was clear and bright, and red healthy blood shone through her cheeks. She had a profusion of beautiful dark hair, charming eyes, and delicate features. She was an intelligent and refined woman mentally, and she impressed all who met her with her great beauty and dashing grace.

After the Beals family returned to New York, Lagrave became a visitor at the Twenty-third street mansion. The family was living in magnificent style.

Lagrave was about five feet seven inches in height, rather slenderly built, but a straight, strong, virile-looking man. He was of dark, almost olive complexion, handsome, regular features and a fine, intellectual head and forehead. His hair was black or a very dark brown, and his moustache was of the same color. He had eyes such as are rarely met; dark brown, large and wonderfully expressive, and with long black lashes. His voice was clear, sonorous and pleasant to hear. He was apparently well educated, used excellent English, and conversed as fluently in French. In deportment he was gentle and courteous, always in good taste, never flippant, and inclined to be grave and quiet. He dressed with excellent judgment, and while he wore the best fabrics, and was never flashy, there was about him just enough of the natty to make him attractive. He talked little, but his manners were peculiarly agreeable.

Evelyn Beals was especially pleased with him, and Lagrave lost no time in paying his addresses to her. He saw at a glance the wealth by which she was surrounded.

Each of the ladies had a private carriage, and her slightest wish had ample means of gratification. Dress, jewels, money, whatever she desired, she had in abundance. Lagrave's advances were pleasant to Miss Beals, who had fallen deeply in love with him. They were soon betrothed.

Her family were opposed to the match. They thought that the handsome man might not be so eligible as he appeared. He was so nearly perfect, so different from the average man, that they almost doubted him, and inquiry failed to reveal his antecedents. They tried to persuade Evelyn not to marry him; but she loved him, and was determined. Her family finally consented to the marriage, and the ceremony was performed.

They made a bridal tour to Europe, Mrs. Lagrave paying all the expenses. On their return they took a flat in a brown stone house in Twenty-third street, near the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and began housekeeping. By this time the elegant man had been partially transformed into a devil. Preserving the same grave and polished exterior, he began to reveal the grosser characteristics which made up his nature, though at this time his wife had no knowledge of his true character. She loved and trusted him, while he had already begun to plunder her. He had charge of all the expenditures, and she responded without question to his calls for money. Whatever bills came in she paid gladly. She had plenty of money, and that was enough. Unknown to her he multiplied the amount of bills, paid the original and kept the rest for his own use. This practice he carried even to the hiring of the servants. If he hired a cook at twelve dollars a month he told his wife that it was twenty-four. It was paid, and half the amount went into his pocket.

Finally she learned that the man she loved cared nothing for her. Her love he repaid with contumely, and what she had thought the pleasant dream of a satisfied life became a terrible nightmare which never deserted her. By this time he had gotten from her all her ready money on one pretext another, either by begging or by fraud. Her life was embittered, but she did not turn from him.

She had many thousands of dollars in bonds. These he wanted. He would confine her in her room and not release her until she had met his demands. His persecutions finally resulted in open violence. During this terrible trial Mrs. Lagrave had but one consolation. She had a sympathetic friend in a lady who was a constant visitor at her house. To her Mrs. Lagrave opened her heart and confided her trouble, finding some relief in sharing the story of her sorrows with another.

After their return from Europe Mrs. Lagrave had a child, a beautiful boy, the image of his father. The babe proved no defense for her. The unnatural father had even then no instinct which answered the maternal craving for love, and there was no change in his manner toward her.

His cruelty, his insatiate avarice, his cold-blooded stoicism, finally drove her to sickness. He was the same to her in sickness and in health. While she lay upon her bed he would stretch himself upon a sofa, and look at her with his lustrous eyes fastened on her like a grim, dread fate, until the sensitive woman was hounded to the verge of insanity. She would turn her face to the wall to escape, and if after minutes which seemed hours, she looked again in hope that her tormentor had tired, she saw him in the same position, lounging with his head resting on his hand, and his baleful eyes remorselessly fixed. Then he would threaten her; call her foul names; fasten his terrible presence upon her, and cling like a leech until she complied with his demands. She had when married many valuable diamonds. One by one they disappeared. Now a necklace, then a brooch, a ring, and so on, were carried off by the man she had loved.

He pretended that he wanted the money for the business that he was engaged in on Broadway, and he doubtless did use some in that way; but there is reason to believe that he converted the bulk of the money into portable property, and that he was ready at any moment to fly, and always possessed of large amounts of funds. He was rigidly penurious, never spending his own money. He dined in a modest French restaurant not far from Union Square, where he usually paid eighty-five cents for a *table d'hôte* dinner, which included half a bottle of wine. He never drank to excess, smoked in moderation, and was temperate in all things except ferocity towards those whom he tortured.

The wife had finally given up all her bonds and diamonds. Then he began to

rob her of her income. Her family, without knowing of all her sufferings, tried to induce her to abandon her husband and return to them, but she would not. She had contracted the marriage despite their remonstrance, and she was too proud to go back.

For years she suffered constant torment. He beat her until she feared he would murder her, and at times others in the house interfered to save her. Being of a delicate and sensitive mind, she was keenly alive to mental suffering, and he had a fit subject on which to exercise his devilish power.

Lagrave was a man whom God seemed to have endowed with every perfect mental and physical attribute, and yet left him without soul or heart; for never a shadow of compassion or one jot of mercy stirred in his inhuman bosom. He was a very demon. He seemed never to sleep. He was always awake. At dead of night he would pace the room. Did his wife awake, it was to find herself constantly watched by the alert fiend, who never ceased his persecutions. Yet he was the same trim, natty man, and to those outside the same elegant serpent. His outward semblance of perfection never deserted him.

At last he maltreated the child—the beautiful boy in whom was stored all the hope that was left the mother. In his quiet, cold way he kicked it, threw it about the room, and thus found new delight in torturing her. This drove the mother nearly crazy, and she suffered outrages which only a woman could receive, and brutality without end.

One night unusual sounds were heard in the Lagraves' room, and the servant rushed to the apartments of the neighbors who lived on the flat above, and told them that Mr. Lagrave had threatened to murder his wife. With a natural desire to avoid interference between man and wife, the one appealed to paid no attention to the call. He supposed it no more than a threat. The servant was frightened, and she listened at the door.

Lagrave wanted his wife's jewel case. She had refused it. He beat the boy, and Mrs. Lagrave screamed. He demanded the jewels, and threatened to kill her if she did not give them up; and he assured her that if she made the least noise he would put her to death by a slower and more excruciating means. He would torture her. She held out stoutly, and he persisted and finally grappled her, and a fierce struggle ensued. Managing to free herself, she seized the boy and fled screaming from the room, and locked herself in a rear apartment with her servant. Lagrave followed and demanded entrance. It was refused. He sought to force the door. Stepping back, he sprang against it like a tiger again and again, while the house resounded with the screams of the terrified woman.

Lagrave was watched from above by a man who longed to come down and kill him. Presently the door began to weaken, and the man leaped down the stairs. Lagrave heard him and fled to his room, followed by the man, who seized him by the throat and pinned him to the wall.

"You devil!" I should dash you from the window!"

In the back room Mrs. Lagrave was found trembling with terror. She returned to her husband and the next day they were out riding together, for he had again fascinated her; but she never ceased to fear him after his attempt on her life. He tortured her more terribly than ever. Finally they removed from Twenty-third street and took apartments at the St. James Hotel. Here she felt that unless relief came or she abandoned her husband, she must go mad. She went to the Metropolitan Hotel. He followed her.

She felt the dread spell of his repulsive presence, and so one day when the monster was away she took her boy in her arms and fled to her mother's home.

During her absence there had been great changes in her family. Her step father had died in Europe. His wife mourned his death bitterly, for she had loved her youthful husband. His remains were brought to this country and interred in Greenwood; the spot being covered by one of the most splendid and expensive of the many costly memorials in that city of the dead.

Mrs. Lagrave's elder sister had married a very wealthy man who was very popular and well known in the city. Her younger sister had been married to an Italian prince. The granite mine was still more fruitful, its product was in great demand, and the family had as much money as ever.

Mrs. Lagrave's family listened to her story with horror. She did not know until

after she had left Lagrave how much he had stolen from her. The child had received a ten thousand dollar bond as a present from its grandmother. This Lagrave had stolen, as well as all her jewels and bonds. Mrs. Lagrave had sold a house for \$32,000, receiving checks for \$14,000 in part payment. Having stolen this check, he forged her endorsement and drew the money.

On inquiry at her banker's she learned he had drawn a check against her account until it had been exhausted. Her silver, which he had once tried to beat her into giving up, she had sent to the State Deposit Company, and that was saved; and that was all. She had been robbed of \$70,000. She afterwards learned that her wedding ring had been her own property before her marriage, and that Lagrave had stolen it and had the stone reset, giving it back as a wedding gift. She also heard of losses of diamonds by others which she now had reason to suppose had been stolen by the same fiend with whom she had lived. Under advice of her brother-in-law, she began proceedings for a divorce, Mr. John Graham being retained as counsel.

The lawyer set to work for points on which to ground his suit for a divorce. Detectives hunted proof, and the suit was begun. The proceedings were placed in charge of a referee, who began taking testimony. Meanwhile the detectives kept at work, and they learned that Lagrave had been married before. The clue was traced back to the record of marriage, and following it the detectives learned that the first wife was living. Little by little the story unfolded itself, and when put to gether ran thus:

The first wife was Miss Kitty Bird, daughter of J. D. Bird, the Broadway hatter. Lagrave became acquainted with her, captivated and secretly married her. He persuaded her to keep the fact from her parents, and she did so. She lived at home, and though she was his wife, she never gave up the secret, for she adored her husband and blindly obeyed him. When Lagrave married Miss Bird he expected to gain a fortune. This he failed to do, for her property was so placed that he could not command it.

It was some time after this that he met Evelyn Beals. He was struck with her beauty and covetous of her wealth. He resolved to marry her. He presented himself as a single man, and the success of his suit has already been told. To accomplish his purpose he must be divorced from his wife, and he at once proposed to her a separation. She would not listen to him. She loved him and could not give him up.

He persisted in his request with cold-blooded pertinacity. Miss Bird was an estimable woman, but Lagrave's influence over her was so great that she dared not reveal the situation to her parents, and so she suffered in silence. At last the day appointed for his marriage to Miss Beals being near at hand, he forced his lawful wife to consent to the separation and to begin proceedings for a divorce from him on the ground of adultery. A divorce was obtained, and Lagrave married Evelyn Beals a few days after the entry of the decree.

Here is revealed one of the most inhuman acts in the villain's career. Miss Bird still loved him. She was a weak woman, he was a powerful man, and she blindly did his bidding. After his marriage to Evelyn Beals, Lagrave brought about an acquaintance between her and Miss Bird. What object could have served is unknown. More likely the act was prompted by the innate devilishness of the man. Miss Bird visited often at Lagrave's house. Evelyn liked her, and the two soon became intimate.

Miss Bird dared not tell who she was and if had dared, her love for her husband and her desire to shield him would doubtless have sealed her lips. Evelyn had no secrets. She was an impulsive woman, and in trouble. A friend was a boon to her and this was the woman to whom she poured out her sorrows. She never dreamed that Miss Bird was married, much less that she was the wife of her tormentor.

In this way the drama was played through all the acts of the dreary years; and it was not until the separation from Lagrave that Evelyn knew that her companion and confidant had been the wife of the man who tortured her. The shock was too much for her, and with shattered health she went abroad with her mother to seek rest and new life in Europe.

When her counsel learned of the existence of the first wife, he saw, of course, that the second marriage was illegal; for the laws of New York provide that where man and wife are divorced on the ground

of adultery, the guilty partner may not marry again during the lifetime of the innocent partner.

The counsel now sued for the separation of Mrs. Lagrave from her husband, on the ground that Lagrave effected the marriage by fraud, since he had been prohibited by law from marrying when he wedded Miss Beals. The judgment roll was entered in December, 1870, and special acts relating to the case were passed by the Legislature in 1871.

Mrs. Lagrave's family at first proposed to prosecute Lagrave for forgery, which would have insured him a term in State Prison, some trivial punishment for the misery of which he had been the author. No action was taken, however, for the brother-in-law objected. He said that they had an abundance of money, that they did not need the sum which Lagrave had stolen, and that now that they had shaken him off it would be better not to make the story public property.

Meantime Mrs. Lagrave had been telegraphed to return to New York, as her presence was needed in some of the legal proceedings. It is said that Lagrave intercepted the dispatch, or that he had spies in Europe who informed him of Mrs. Lagrave's contemplated return. Lagrave knew by what steamer she started, and he laid plans to capture the child, hoping thereby to regain his old mastery over the mother. The brother-in-law feared that Lagrave might try some means again to get Mrs. Lagrave in his clutches, and so he made arrangements at the telegraph office to be informed at the earliest moment of the steamer's arrival. As the time approached he kept his carriage at his door, ready to hurry to the wharf whenever the telegraph indicated the proper time.

Lagrave learned what move was on foot, and he went to the telegraph office and said:

"You have received instruction to telegraph the arrival of Mrs. Lagrave to—street. I am Mr. Lagrave. I have changed my mind, and I shall not be there. Please send the telegram to my place of business.

He indicated the place, and the unsuspecting clerk sent him the dispatch.

While crossing the water, Mrs. Lagrave became acquainted with a very estimable gentleman and his wife, who had treated her kindly. She was with this couple when the steamer arrived.

While her brother-in-law and his family were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the dispatch, Lagrave and his partner Otis, and one or two others, were on the wharf with a carriage. Lagrave kept out of sight and sent Otis to find his wife, and if possible, entice the child to the wharf. Mrs. Lagrave was on deck looking for her sister. The child had been sick during the latter part of the voyage, and was then below with the nurse. Otis briefly conversed with Mrs. Lagrave, who knew him as her husband's partner, and suspected a plot. Not seeing the child, Otis requested Mrs. Lagrave to take his carriage, which was on the wharf, as he would like a few minutes' conversation with her before she went to her friends. He thought that this would bring the child. Mrs. Lagrave began to be frightened. She turned to her lady friend, who was standing near, and begged her to stay close to her.

Lagrave saw that the plot had miscarried, and he went on deck to meet his wife. She saw him with horror. She had told some portion of her story to her companion and now she turned and implored her:

"For God's sake, take care of my child. That man is Lagrave, and he has come for my boy."

To Lagrave his wife denied the presence of the boy. Lagrave would hear no denial. He made a movement to seize her. She retreated across the deck. He drew a pistol and followed her. She tripped and fell, and Lagrave, in eager haste, approached and threatened to kill her.

The husband of the lady friend witnessed the scene. He sprang upon Lagrave and knocked him down. A struggle on the deck ensued. Lagrave was disarmed and handed over to the police.

Lagrave's terror-stricken wife was now doubly alarmed by the non-appearance of her relatives. Finally she took her child and baggage and went with her steamer friends to the Brevoort House, whence she sent word to her sister. She begged her friends to stay with her and watch over her till her brother came, which they did; and then she was taken to a place of safety. And after she reached home, the excitement which had sustained her having passed, she again broke down, and it was weeks before she recovered from Lagrave's last attack.

Not long after the separation was completed Lagrave was again married and this time to a celebrated Opera singer, Miss Sophia Schmetterer.