

# The Leading Lady

By GERALDINE BONNER

## CHAPTER VIII—Continued

"Time enough to draw a gun and back it up with a few sentences. It bears out what I've thought from the start—not an accidental meeting, but a date, to which the woman came unsuspecting and the other primed to kill."

"Then Mrs. Stokes got on to that date," said Williams, "and broke in on it. And there's only one person that date could have been with—Stokes."

Bassett's nerves were raw with strain and anxiety. This revelation of a rendezvous with Stokes maddened him:

"But it couldn't have been. I've told you. I knew Miss Saunders well. I know what she felt about the man, and besides I have the evidence of my own eyes that she avoided him in every way she could. Make an appointment to meet him alone! She'd as soon make an appointment with Satan."

Neither of the men answered him for a moment. Rawson was impressed; he had formed a high opinion of the director's candor and truthfulness and his words weighed with him:

"I go a good deal by what you say, Mr. Bassett, and as to this meeting of which I'm convinced—whom it was with I don't know. Williams here has made up his mind and worked out his case. I don't agree with him. I believe Mrs. Stokes is telling the truth. What she says hangs together all right. That she may know something is possible, but I don't think she's guilty."

"Then you must think it's Stokes," said Williams with some heat. "There's nobody else it could be."

Rawson considered before he spoke: "I don't see Stokes as deliberately murdering the woman he is in love with. That's generally an act of impulse, sudden desperation. And there was no impulse here. Careful premeditation—the stealing of the revolver, luring her to this summer house, the threats or rage when she got here that made her fly. It's more like the working out of revenge than the act of blind passion. Stokes doesn't look to me the kind of man that would kill so carefully. He's too soft."

"Then who is it?" Williams exclaimed. "Somebody killed her."

Rawson moved toward the doorway: "That's about all I'm willing to agree to at present. But I'd like to see Stokes again. He and his wife may know more than they say—I don't deny that—but she's got a better nerve than he has. We'll get him into the library and have a whack at him."

## CHAPTER IX

Bassett was detailed to find Stokes and bring him to the library. A summons from the director would have an air of informality which might put Stokes off his guard.

Bassett found Flora and Shine on the balcony and heard that Stokes had gone to his room to try to get some sleep. He knocked on the door and to a gruff "Come in" entered to find Stokes lying on the bed. He rose quickly, exhibiting the same alacrity his wife had shown earlier in the day.

"Of course," he said. "I'm ready to come whenever they want me. In fact I've been lying here expecting it, going back over last evening, trying to think of anything I may have overlooked that might help them."

There was a willing briskness in his manner, an almost hearty readiness to do what was asked of him that seemed not quite genuine, adopted, perhaps, to hide the natural nervousness of a person in his position. Seated in an easy chair before the two men, Bassett held them by the window, noticed that his hands were restless, smoothing and pulling at his clothes, settling his tie. Despite his disquiet he assumed an attitude of expectant attention, gravely awaiting their will, his eyes glancing from one to the other. He might readily have been a guilty man primed for attack, or an innocent one shaken by the untoward circumstances in which he found himself.

Rawson's manner was friendly and reassuring. They wanted to get all possible information on the movements of the company the evening before. They would like to know just what he had done from the time he entered the house to change his clothes to the time when he had heard the shot.

He answered promptly with businesslike directness. Went to his room, changed his clothes, laid on the bed, resting for a while, then sat on the balcony reading the paper.

While he was sitting there Miss Saunders must have passed the end of the balcony by the path that led to the Point.

She must have, but he had not seen her, being occupied with his paper.

Had he while in the house seen Miss Saunders or heard her voice?

He had not. He had no idea she had come in.

Had he seen his wife?

"My wife? Yes, I saw her for a moment. In the hall when I came out of our room after dressing."

"She said nothing to you about Miss Saunders being in the house?"

"Why no, she didn't know it. We didn't mention Miss Saunders at all."

"But she was—she had been—a fre-



"Just Leave Our Business to Us, Mr. Stokes."

quent subject of conversation between you?"

His eyes, looking at Rawson, seemed to harden and grow more fixed:

"We had talked of her—naturally, being in the same company."

"Your wife and Miss Saunders were not very friendly?"

A fierce light rose in the fixed eyes, the nostrils widened.

"What are you getting at, Mr. Rawson?"

"Our business, Mr. Stokes. We're here to investigate a murder and we can't spare people's feelings or shut our eyes to disagreeable facts."

"Have I shown any signs of expecting that? I've put myself at your disposal, my wife has. We're ready to give you any help we can, but I'm not ready to back up any d-d suspicions that have been put into my mind."

"We're not asking you to," said Rawson. "But we know what was going on here before the shooting."

Bassett spoke up:

"I'm the person that told them, Aleck. It had to be done. They had to be acquainted with the whole situation, and they got it from me. But they heard no lies, no suppositions—you know you can trust me for that."

Stokes' glance shifted to him. Through its savage defiance Bassett could detect the torment of his soul, despairingly betrayed to the one person he knew would be just.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you," he answered. "You couldn't do anything else. And they can hear it all from me." He looked at the two men. "I'm willing to tell. I was in love with her, madly, like a fool, hounded her, dogged her footsteps. You've heard that. And my wife was jealous—so jealous they all could see. You've heard that, too."

"The confession of his passion, remorseless in its bitter revelation, was horrible, like the tearing aside of wrappings from a raw wound."

"Yes, we've heard it," muttered Williams.

"She hated me. I don't know whether you've heard that, too, but I'm telling you and perhaps you'll believe what I say if it's against myself. She hated me, and I wouldn't let her alone. My wife was jealous. Do you see—is it clear? Oh, we're in d-d bad, my wife and I, but we're not in so bad as you're trying to make out." He jumped to his feet, the shine of sweat on his forehead.

"I don't see, Mr. Stokes," said Rawson quietly, "where you get that. We haven't made out anything yet."

"Oh, I can see. We were the only people outside the house—that's enough to build a theory on. And motives—who had a motive? That's the way you go to work. Find a motive, fit someone to it. My wife had a motive, that's sufficient. Don't ask what kind of woman she is, don't look any further, you have to get someone and she's the easiest."

"Mr. Stokes, if you'd take this calmly—"

"Calmly! Seeing what you think and where you're trying to land us! But just let me ask you something. Do you happen to remember there were five hundred people on the island that afternoon? Any kind of person could have been here on any kind of errand."

Rawson answered with a slight show of impatience: "Just leave our business to us, Mr. Stokes. You're here to answer questions."

"Oh, that's plain—questions all pointing one way. But there were other people on the island besides that crowd—besides us—who might have had a motive. Isn't anger a motive?"

"Anger!" ejaculated Williams. "Where does that come in?"

"Here, on Gull Island. Oh, we've had more than jealousy. Rage and spite will go as far. Take your eyes off my wife and me for a moment—look somewhere else."

Rawson's face showed no surprise, blankly inscrutable, but Williams wheeled in his chair and turned an expression of startled inquiry on Bassett. Bassett, in his turn, was staring in astonishment at Stokes.

"What are you talking about?" he said. "Rage and spite—whom do you mean?"

"I mean Joe Tracy," was the answer.

"Joe Tracy?" exclaimed Williams, looking vaguely about in a baffled searching of memory. "Who's he?"

"Good God, Aleck!" Bassett made a step forward: "Get a hold on yourself—think of what you're saying. He wasn't here, he'd left the island before that."

Stokes paid no attention but went on, glaring into Rawson's expressionless face:

"A d-d devil of a boy with a record. Ask him," he pointed to Bassett, "ask any of them what kind he was and how he acted here. It isn't I alone that saw it. Yesterday morning at the rehearsal he'd have struck her if Bassett hadn't interfered. What was the matter—I don't know. I don't pretend to know everything, but I know rage and hate when I see them."

"Aleck, you're crazy," Bassett's voice was raised in exasperated insistence: "He'd gone."

"Couldn't he come back? Aren't there boats to be hired at Hayworth?" He turned to Rawson. "I don't accuse him, I'm not like you, I don't jump at conclusions, point and say. 'There's the murderer!' But I want a square deal and I won't get it till you've looked up Joe Tracy. Call your dogs back from the scent they're on and put them on his. Justice—that's all I ask for—justice for my wife. For myself—!" He stopped. His excitement seemed suddenly to die. He looked old and weary, his body relaxed, the fire in his sunken eyes extinguished in a profound gloom.

"It doesn't matter what happens to me. I've thrown everything away—and Sybil's dead."

There was a slight pause. Rawson broke it, clearing his throat and rising from his chair:

"That's enough for the time being, Mr. Stokes. You can go now, if you want you we'll call on you later!"

Without a word Stokes turned and left the room. When the door had closed on him Bassett said:

"He's out of his mind—Joe Tracy—when he knows he wasn't here."

Williams gave a bearish shrug: "Oh, pshaw, what's the matter with him's easy to size up. Breaking down, losing his nerve. Whether he knows his wife did it or not he sees everything points there and he's just laying hold of anything to mark time. They go like that—I've seen 'em before."

Rawson, who had been standing with his hands deep in his pockets and his eyes fixed on the floor, moved to the chair:

"Let's hear about this boy, Mr. Bassett—all this anger and hate business he's been buzzing round."

He sat down and lit a cigar. Through the smoke he watched Bassett with a narrowed glance as the director unfolded the story of Joe, the quarrel and Sybil's accusation.

When it was over Rawson knocked the ash from his cigar, meditatively looking at the crumbling gray heap:

"Are you under the impression, Mr. Bassett, that her story was true—that the boy had been spying on her?"

"I don't know. Of course she was in a high-keyed emotional state that might engender unjust suspicions. On the other hand you couldn't trust his word, and there was big money offered."

"And when you returned to New York you would have found it out."

"Yes, I told him that."

"And he would have realized that it would go hard with him, where you were concerned, and with the rest of the profession?"

"Yes, he'd know. She was very popular and there was a general sympathy for her."

"Williams stretched and rose from his chair:

"Well, it's all right to gather up everything, but it doesn't get us any further. If the boy'd been here, seeing what he was and how he felt, there might be something in it. But as he got out before the shooting it leaves us just where we were before. What do you think about going up and looking over that top story—routine business we ought to get through."

"Not now," Rawson moved to the door. "I'm going across to the mainland."

"Mainland—what's that for?"

"Look up some things—that boy's movements, for one. I'll take Patrick and the launch and send him right back. Come down to the dock with me, Mr. Bassett, and tell me which way Tracy was going."

Bassett went with him feeling for the first time that he could give information with the tranquillizing assurance it would react on nobody. When he left Rawson at the dock he went to look for Arne.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Plant Enemies

According to pathologists of the United States Department of Agriculture there are 30 diseases that may attack rose bushes. The wheat crop too, has its worries, being liable to 31 ailments. The corn plant has 28 and the tomato 42, while the apple has to contend with 65 possible maladies.

## Uncertainty

"No one can know anything for certain," says the pessimist. "All you can do is to think." And half of us don't even go so far as that.

## Harder to Do Right

There never has been an age where it was not harder to do right than to do wrong, just as there has never been a time when it was not harder to swim upstream than down.—Herald of Gospel Liberty.

## Let Your Light Shine

A light under a bushel, besides being hid, will go out in a short time for want of air. Unless our lights shine for others, they will soon perish in ourselves.—Herald of Gospel Liberty.

## Improved Uniform International Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean of the Evening School, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)  
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### Lesson for March 27

#### REVIEW—STUDIES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

GOLDEN TEXT—If ye love Me keep My commandments.—John 14:15.  
PRIMARY TOPIC—What Jesus Wants Us to Do.  
JUNIOR TOPIC—The Christian Way of Living.  
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—What It Means to Be a Christian.  
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Marks of a True Christian.

The following methods of review are suggested:

#### I. A Descriptive Essay Method.

Each member of the class should be assigned to the task a week ahead of the preparation of an essay on the topics involved in the quarterly lessons, as for example: What constitutes a true Christian. Following Christ. The prayer life of a Christian. The Christian and his Bible. The home life of a Christian. Christian stewardship. The Christian and the missionary obligation.

#### II. The Question Review Method.

The teacher will prepare a list of questions dealing with the various phases of the quarter's lessons. These will be written on slips of paper and the members of the class will draw them. As examples of questions note the following: What does following Christ involve? What is the Christian's responsibility as to his Bible? What is the Christian's obligation as to stewardship? What are the duties of the members of the home? What is the Christian's obligation as to the evangelization of the world? What is the Christian's hope? Is Christ coming again? Will there be a resurrection of the body?

#### III. The Summary Method.

This method can always be used to good advantage with the advanced classes. The outstanding fact or facts should be grasped and the principal teaching of the quarter's lessons stated. Suggestions:

#### Lesson for January 2.

Jesus first calls men to be His disciples. He then calls them to have fellowship in His service. Those who receive this two-fold call will walk as He walked.

#### Lesson for January 9.

The one who really follows Christ shall be hated and opposed. Having fellowship with Christ, he will love his enemies, do good to those who hate him, bless them that curse him, pray for those which despitefully use him.

#### Lesson for January 16.

The Bible furnishes the Christian with full knowledge of God and man's obligation to Him. The only way to be able to stand firm and true in the coming perilous times is to be thoroughly grounded in the knowledge of the Scriptures.

#### Lesson for January 23.

Jesus, though divine, resorted much to prayer. If he needed this fellowship, how much more do His followers need it.

#### Lesson for January 30.

Followers of Jesus may expect temptations, but divine help is available for every need.

#### Lesson for February 6.

To every believer has been given certain talents such as gifts for service, knowledge, time, money, to be used for the honor of His Lord. A time of reckoning is coming at which reward will be given for fidelity, and judgment meted out for infidelity.

#### Lesson for February 13.

The home is the oldest and most important institution in the world. The most effective way of making strong and pure the church, society and the nation is to make the home Christian.

#### Lesson for February 20.

The subject of the Kingdom is under solemn obligation to permeate society and let his light shine so that the heavenly father may be glorified.

#### Lesson for February 27.

Every believer has two natures—the flesh and the spirit. The only way to overcome the flesh is to be filled with the Spirit.

#### Lesson for March 6.

The Lord permitted persecution to fall upon the church to cause the disciples to be scattered in order for the widening of the testimony.

#### Lesson for March 13.

Christ has imposed upon every disciple the obligation of witnessing for Him to all the nations of the world.

#### Lesson for March 20.

The Christian's hope is the personal return of Jesus Christ to take him to His heavenly home. When Christ comes, the body of the believer who has fallen asleep will be resurrected and living believers will be caught up into glory with Christ.

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#### Let Your Light Shine

A light under a bushel, besides being hid, will go out in a short time for want of air. Unless our lights shine for others, they will soon perish in ourselves.—Herald of Gospel Liberty.

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Fishing above tidewater on the Umpqua river was closed by the Fish Commission of Oregon, meeting in Portland.

Rufus A. Farrens, prominent farmer living 16 miles southwest of Ione, was killed on the Gooseberry market road near Ione when his automobile left the highway and overturned, pinning his body beneath the car.

Operations of Oregon's state government in the fiscal year ending September 30, 1926, cost \$19,692,423, or \$12.23 per capita, according to a summary compiled by the United States department of commerce.

Discontinuance of three of the five remaining federal land offices in Oregon, leaving only those at Roseburg and The Dalles, has been recommended to Secretary Work by William Spry, commissioner of the general land office.

Monmouth is now a full-fledged city, the postoffice department has decided. Department officials notified Representative Hawley of Salem that they have ordered the village delivery service now in effect at Monmouth changed to city service.

Tentative approval of Portland's plans for the change of the harbor line in connection with the \$2,000,000 unit of the Laursgard waterfront development project has been given by the war department, Senator McNary notified city officials.

Patrons of mail order insurance companies, which have been flooding Oregon with circulars bidding for business, patronize such concerns at their own risk, Clara A. Lee, state insurance commissioner, warned in a bulletin issued at Salem.

Beekeepers of the Hermiston-Starfield district decided at a meeting attended by C. J. Hurd, Oregon Agricultural college specialist, and Walter Holt, Umatilla county agent, to form a co-operative association for the marketing of their product.

Pauline Looney, who was born April 9, 1845, died at her home in Jefferson. She was the daughter of Jesse and Ruby Looney, pioneers of 1843, and the first child born to them on their donation claim at Looney Butte, where she lived for many years.

Under an ordinance passed by the Salem city council for the protection of radio listeners operators of electrical apparatus generating or causing high frequency oscillations which interfere with radio broadcast transmitting or receiving, must take out permits.

Bids for the first seven miles of the canal for the Vale project now are being advertised by the government and drainage work has started. It is expected that the surveying will be completed in time for advertising the 25 miles of railroad construction to the Owyhee dam by April 1.

The relief fund, created by the state of Oregon to assist in reconstructing public property destroyed by the Astoria fire disaster of 1922, this year will pay 10 per cent of the cost of the projects which benefit from this relief fund. This will bring the amount paid by the state to 54.3 per cent.