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CHAPTER II.

BY J. H. HESELTINE.

"A beautiful old place," I exclaimed, when we came in sight of it, and then I stopped suddenly, glancing at Sir Tom's face to see whether he had noticed something which in my state of worked up anxiety, filled me with forebodings. If he did, he gave no sign, except that his pace increased almost to a run. He did not speak until we were standing in the porch, and a white-haired man servant had come to answer his impatient pull at the bell.

"Why are the blinds down, Wilson?" he asked, in a stern, curt voice, which I should not have recognized; and the old servant answered, quaveringly:

"Haven't you heard, Sir Tom? It is for the poor young mistress!"

"Miss Caryll is dead?" I asked, greatly shocked. I saw that the young baronet was trying to frame the question and could not. The old man looked at him, not me, when he answered:

"Yes, sir. She died on Tuesday morning and is to be buried tomorrow."

"Where is—Miss Caryll? In her room?" asked Sir Tom, quietly, and we both glanced at his face, wondering whether his anxiety had made him dazed and unable to understand.

"Miss Caryll's body," said the old servant, "is in the room that was her bedroom, Sir Tom," and he stepped aside, as without another word the poor fellow walked past him into the house and began to ascend the broad staircase. I stood in the hall, wondering whether I ought to follow him, my mind divided between respect for his great grief and anxiety for its effects upon him.

"It does not seem right that he should not have been told, does it, sir?" said Wilson, when he was gone. "If he had not happened to come down today, the poor young mistress would have been buried without his knowing a word about it."

"It seems incredible that Mr. Grendall could have been so heartless," I said. "Sir Tom is the first man in the world who ought to have been told."

"So I thought, sir," agreed the old man, "and I said as much to the master, and got a month's notice for saying it. He told me that she had broken off her engagement with Sir Tom, and that her death could be of no importance to him."

"And how did Miss Caryll meet her death?" I asked, my suspicions against her guardian increasing every moment, and the old man wiped his eyes.

"Dr. Tichelling called it heart disease, sir, but I do not think he understood what it was; and Mr. Grendall persuaded him to sign the death certificate to that effect, to avoid an inquest. We found her in Miss Grendall's room quite dead on Tuesday morning, lying just in front of her writing table."

As he was speaking, Sir Tom himself came down stairs, his face flushed, his eyes burning with excitement.

"It is a trance. I am sure that it is a trance," all a quiver with a fever of hope and fear and indignation, "and that fiend would have put her under the ground and

murdered her tomorrow if we had not come. Where is your master, Wilson?"

"Better not see him," I urged; "let us telegraph for Dallinger and not let Grendall know anything about it until he has given an opinion."

My advice came too late, however. Mr. Grendall must have heard his excited voice in the hall, for just as I spoke, a door opened, and Miss Caryll's guardian himself came out. I should have recognized him at once from the description which Sir Tom had given of him—a tall, lean man of about fifty, with stooping shoulders and a thin, selfish, crafty face.

"Ah! Sir Thomas Warburton," he said, holding out his long, bony hand, which the baronet ignored; "it is kind of you to come and condole with us in our trouble, although I am rather surprised, after the rupture of the engagement. I am afraid that there is no hope that this is a trance, as I heard you suggest. Dr. Tichelling's decision is very ephatic."

The young man was in no mood to answer quietly. His indignation had been raised to boiling point, and quite regardless of my warning glance, he blurted out the fact which I would rather have kept concealed:

"It is no use arguing about it," he said, hotly. "Decima shall not be buried till she has been seen by a specialist. We will telegraph for Dallinger at once. He is sure to come tonight when he knows."

He put his arm in mine abruptly as he spoke, and marched me towards the door. Mr. Grendall lost his self control for the first time.

"I shall not insult Dr. Tichelling by allowing any other physician to see the corpse," he said, raising his voice after us; but Sir Tom ignored him completely. I felt rather uneasy.

"You do not think that Grendall will try any tricks while we are away?" I asked, and I found that my friend had imagined the possibility.

"I have locked the door of Decima's room," he said, "and given the key to Mary Augard, Dessie's maid, in case her mistress wakes and wants assistance."

The natural manner in which he spoke of his fiancée waking from her trance, showed me that his belief was a real one, that she was still living, and not only a wild hope born of despair.

"The maid can be trusted?"

"Perfectly. The girl loves poor Dessie almost as much as I do; and is as suspicious as her master. He would have to kill Mary Augard, I think, to get possession of that key."

My mind was at ease at once, and I gave my thoughts to the composition of a message which would be sure to bring Dallinger to Lenton Abbey instantly.

After the telegram was dispatched, we walked over to the Angel Inn, the pretty little tavern where Warburton had stayed when he first made Decima Caryll's acquaintance. We made a pretence of having a lunch, but half way through it there was a knock at the door of old-fashioned inn parlor, where we were sitting, and the hostess of the Angel announced that Miss Grendall wished to speak to Sir Tom privately outside.

"Be careful what you tell her," I said. "If she is as scheming as

her father as you suggest, he may have sent her to find out exactly what investigation he has to fear from us."

But Warburton was already out of the room, and, looking through the window, I could see him meet Miss Grendall, a stylishly-dressed young lady, whose face, however, I was not able to see.

Relieved by my friend's absence from the necessity of pretending to eat, I rang the bell to inquire Dr. Tichelling's address. I had an impression that he had given the death certificate in total ignorance of the heiress' former trance, an impression which I found afterwards to be correct. At the time I had no means of ascertaining, for on interviewing the buxom landlady, I was disappointed to find that Dr. Tichelling had started that very morning for the Riviera, leaving his practice in the temporary charge of a stranger.

Sir Tom came in while the good lady was gossiping about the affair, and I could see by her face that he had received some news.

"Women are strange creatures," he said, as soon as we were alone.

"Well, what have you heard," I asked, impatiently.

"Only what the shock was which sent Dessie into her trance. Dallinger said a great emotional shock might do it, and Matilda Grendall's confession makes me feel more sure than ever that my darling is not dead."

"Miss Grendall has made a confession then?" I said. I was annoyed, after I had thrown my heart so entirely into his trouble, to find the baronet inclined to be reticent.

"She was more, less hysterical, so perhaps I ought to keep her confession to myself," he said, in a tone that would have ended my inquiries if I had not been so suspicious of the young lady's motives.

"Now that they are pitting their wits against ours, I think we ought to show no quarter," I said. "We ought to search together for a motive in every action and word of the Grendalls, father or daughter."

"I suppose so. Well, Miss Grendall confesses that she forged a letter apparently from myself to her, and sent Decima into her room with the direct intention of letting her see it on her desk. It was just in front of the desk that my poor darling was found lying."

TO BE CONTINUED.

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