The Desire of His Life

BY

IAN GROSVENOR.

The closing of the hall door rang in Nancy's ears like the note of a funeral bell.

With wide-open eyes that mirrored a numbing terror gnawing at her heart, Nancy sat motionless as a figure carved in stone on the edge of the sofa. Speechless she had watched the detective remove her husband from the dainty room she used as her boudoir. In silence the girl-wife heard the grave accusation levelled at him. Dazed, almost uncomprehending, she had listened to his angry denial, and seen his frantic struggle with the men who had locked the shaming circlets of steel about his wrists. The whole incident had appeared to her unreal, intangible; more in the nature of some hideous nightmare to which wakefulness would bring an end than as a concrete fact.

The closing of the hall door awoke within her numbed brain a realisation that she was awake, not dreaming. In that awful moment she would have sought the natural relief of woman-tears. Instead she remained dry-eyed and trembling, haunted with the knowledge that she was the wife of James Hardy, arrested on the charge of Robert Cameron's murder.

Crouching amidst the cushions like some stricken animal, Nancy listened to the dull scrunching of gravel beneath the contact of retreating wheels; then, with a stifled moan, rose uncertainly to her feet.

"It's a lie," she whispered hoarsely, brushing the wayward curl with nervous fingers back from her throbbing temples. "Jim wouldn't hurt a fly! His innocence, however, has got to be proved. He must have the best counsel in London to clear his name before the eyes of the world in open court. He will—he shall be found innocent!"

Slipping out of the room with noiseless tread, Nancy cautiously descended the stairs. At that supreme moment she dreaded meeting curiosity in a servant's furtive glance, and, doing so, stole like a shadow to her husband's study. A pedestal telephone stood by the side of the rifled and yet open American desk, its level surface hideous with disordered papers. The detectives had been none too courteous in their treatment of Hardy's private documents. Torn from the drawers, they littered not only the massive bureau, but also the surrounding carpet. The sight struck her heart with a cruel stab, misting her eyes with a sudden rush of welcome tears.

Resting her arms on the top of the desk, Nancy surrendered herself to a sudden abandonment of grief; then, regaining self-possession, raised the telephone in her trembling fingers. Removing its receiver from the crutch she rang up the Exchange.

In Pump Court a clerk of Robert Kennedy, K.C., answered her call, with the information that his employer was at the Old Bailey, but would be at his chambers within an hour.

Unaware of what the future held in its train, Kennedy, flushed with success consequent on the gaining of a triumphant acquittal, passed out of the Central Criminal Court possessed of the flattering knowledge that he had made the speech of his life. The case he had so ably fought had on all sides been regarded as hopeless for his client. In the depths of his heart he had felt it so, yet the fierce power of the rhetoric, his shrewd and merciless driving home of the points of his defence, had brought in a verdict of "Not guilty," the unexpectedness of which had startled even the judge out of his accustomed urbanity of manner.

He had beaten all the lions of criminal prosecution. He had provided a sensation for the evening Press of London, and the latter, not slow to avail itself of the same, hurried editions on the excited streets.

Reaching Pump Court, Kennedy climbed the stairs to his chambers, to be welcomed on the threshold by his clerk.

"Congratulations, sir," said the man unctuously. "You've done to-day what no other counsel in London could have effected, I think. There is a lady waiting to see you in the inner room, sir. I said that it was after office hours, but she wouldn't take any denial. She won't give her name, but said she was sure you would see her—that she was an old friend."

Kennedy's brows lowered. Mentally he had arranged to have a quiet pipe and then indulge himself in a good dinner at the Savoy. This change in his arrangements annoyed him. For the moment he thought of refusing his visitor an audience, then, altering his mind, gave the clerk his hat and gloves. Tossing his stick into an umbrella stand, he crossed the room; then, opening the door at the farther end, entered the inner apartment.

"I understand you desire to see me—Nancy!"

The slight figure of a woman had risen to greet him on his entrance. In every line it was familiar with a recollection of the past that even the heavy veil failed to cloak. Standing with his back to the hastily-closed door, he stared at the girl before him, silent whilst his memory conjured anew to his mind scenes of Cornish fields through which once he had wandered by her side as accepted lover.

"Nancy—beg pardon, I should have said Mrs. Hardy," he stammered—"you are the last person I expected to see to-day. Why have you come? Your husband —"

"Has been arrested for murder. Need I say why I came"

Kennedy winced. Anew the brows lowered till they met in a straight line above his sharply-questioning eyes.

"Hardy is, of course, innocent?" said he, groping for words. "I read the news of his arrest in the evening paper. I sympathise with you, Mrs. Hardy. You surely did not come here to tell me that?"

"I came to you, Dick"—unconsciously the old familiar name left her lips as Nancy raised her veil—"because if there is one man in England who can save my husband you are he. I want you to prove him innocent—to convince the jury of his innocence as you did in Harold Beecher's case to-day. You will not refuse me, Dick, if only for the sake of the dear old times!"

Kennedy's wince became more perceptible. Thrusting his hands into the depths of his pockets, he strode nervously across the room towards the window. For a moment he stood thus, staring down into the grey silence of the court beneath, then:

"The usual course to adopt in matters of this kind is to put the case in the hands of your solicitors. It is for them, not you, my dear Mrs. Hardy, to brief the defence."

"Dick, you surely are not going to beg the question?" The trembling accent vibrated across the stillness of the room, holding the echo of a sob in its train. "Give me your promise you will accept the brief if Hayes and Hayes offer it you. You won't—you can't say no to me in this. Dick, have you forgotten that you promised me that you would give me your aid if I ever came to you in trouble?"

The man's back proved expressionless. In silence he stared unseeingly down into the court beneath. It was the hour of his temptation and it found him weak. Loving Nancy as he did, it seemed to his heated imagination that fate had placed the game within his hands at last. For three years he had suffered, as a strong man alone knows how, tortured by the knowledge that the woman who held his heart had surrendered hers to another's keeping. Accused of murder on convincing if circumstantial evidence, the odds lay heavily in favour of a conviction. If that happens the way remained clear for him to urge his suit. To clear Hardy of the charges would require the negotiation of a master hand—the power of a facile tongue.

Why should he provide both?

"Dick"—the trembling voice vibrated anew through the stillness—"Dick, I have come to you in my trouble. Are you going to tell me that your protestation of friendship was a sham? Oh, you surely couldn't have the heart?"

Kennedy turned slowly round to face the speaker.

"Mrs. Hardy," said he in low accents, "I wonder if women ever realise how cruel they can be at times. You are asking me to save the man who stole you from me—asking me, of all people in this world! Why?"

"Because I love him, and you are the only man I have faith in to save him in the face of the circumstantial evidence arrayed against him."

Kennedy breathed hard. Unseen to the woman before him, the barrister's hands clenched beneath the sheltering cover of his pockets. "You are asking me to empty the sea with a colander," he snapped irritably. "In the face of the evidence the prosecution possessed it would be hopeless for any one man to attempt a defence. I have a reputation to preserve, Mrs. Hardy! To attempt to defend James Hardy would be to injure my reputation. Feeling as I do, I couldn't do justice to the case. I should fail!"

"You won for Harold Beecher a verdict of 'Not Guilty' only this afternoon," said Nancy. "Your speech is spoken of as a model of modern defending rhetoric. The 'Daily Signal' goes so far as to say that you hypnotised the jury with the vigour of your language and the magnetism of your personality. Beecher was guilty! In your heart of hearts you know it, as I do. If you can accomplish a miracle like this for a man who ought to hang, how much more can you do so for one who is innocent!"

"In Beecher's case I had no blood-stained knife identified as his property to contend with. In Beecher's case there was no knowledge that he had walked along the same road as the murdered man. Unlike your husband, he was not seen walking with him by a dozen witnesses. He was not known to be quarrelling with him. A coat belonging to him, and which he was known to have worn on the fatal night, was not stained with blood! Mrs. Hardy, the case is an impossible one for me to undertake. There is not a man in any jury who would possess your sublime faith in your husband's innocence! Try Sir Matthew Damer. He is spoken of as the coming Attorney-General. As a defending barrister, I don't suppose his equal is in the British Isles."

Kennedy spoke the words like a man in a dream. Low, rapid, and monotonous, they left his lips to fall on the ears of their hearer in a merciless rhythm, and doing so found her desperate.

"Dick," said she hoarsely, "I dare you to break your word to me! You offered me aid in any extremity three years ago; I hold you to your promise. Do you think it is nothing to me—that I should come to you to ask a favour? Only the direct extremity would have forced me to do this—so be merciful. I have no faith in Sir Matthew Damer or any other counsel of his kind. It is on you that I pin my trust! Ah! Dick you won't refuse, for—you loved me once."

Kennedy's eyes blazed beneath their beetling brows. "Once!" he echoed fiercely. "Heavens! Nancy, do you think I don't do so still? Look into my eyes, and tell me if you see hatred lurking in their depths. Love! Woman, you don't realise all you are to me; you never will. But because you are what you are, I will agree to defend this hopeless case of yours if you can induce Hayes and Hayes to brief me." He paused, breathing heavily as a wrestler might have done in a breakaway, then added, "If Hardy is to be saved, I will do it, if I have to talk myself mute to accomplish the same. Good-night, Mrs. Hardy."

Without favouring his visitor with a backward glance, he strode from the room and, oblivious to every rule of courtesy, allowed Nancy to take her departure as best she could.

Twenty minutes later Mr. Robert Hayes, chief of the firm of that ilk, arrived at the barrister's chambers.

"I am led to believe by my client, Mrs. Hardy," said he by way of introduction, "that you are willing to be briefed for the defence of James Hardy v. The King. I have come in person to acquaint you with the details of a most intricate case—always providing that my client has not misled me. Mrs. Hardy gave me to understand you were a friend of hers."

Kennedy smiled, whimsically.

"Let us say, rather, a passing acquaintance, Mr. Hayes," said he, dryly. "Friendship with Mrs. Hardy is an honour I hardly dare aspire to. Doubtless you misunderstood the remark. So far as the brief is concerned, however, I am perfectly willing to accept it."

"The fees——"

"In this case there will be no fees, my dear Mr. Hayes," said Kennedy grimly. "I am undertaking it in the nature of an experiment. Personally, I believe Hardy to be innocent. The case against him, however, appears too desperately black to permit of much whitewashing on my part. I will do my best, but I will take no fees."

Waiving aside the solicitor's objections to this line of action, Kennedy plunged into a discussion of the case, then, wishing his visitor good-bye, proceeded to master the details of his brief. Midnight found him still poring over the points of his case, nor did he seek his bed till dawn had coloured the east in a crimson flurry of cirrus vapour. He did so with a smile of triumph illuminating the depths of his sunken eyes. Kennedy had discovered a point which might prove the loophole of escape for his client.

With Kennedy such a discovery, as an invariable rule, meant acquittal. On the other hand no case of his had appeared so hopeless. Already prejudged in the sensational columns of the daily Press, Kennedy felt that the freely bandied comments must influence the minds of any jurymen who chose to read.

"All juries ought to be illiterate," he remarked savagely to himself. "If they couldn't read the preliminary remarks at the opening of the trial they might be more unbiassed, and evince a more hearty belief than they sometimes do in the accuracy of my statements and deductions."

The day of the trial found the court crowded to suffocation.

The Hardy case, under the able stage managership of the London Press, had developed itself into a cause célèbre. As a sensation it had arrived at a moment when interesting news had been at a premium; as a consequence the journals had done their duty in fanning the popular excitement to fever pitch. As a result, money and influence had been brought to bear in every likely quarter to secure seats within the narrow confines of the court.

For three days the case dragged on its weary way. For three days Kennedy fought the prosecution tooth and nail with an energy peculiarly his own. For three days he bullied the discredited witnesses, making mountains out of insignificant legal molehills in his fierce, uphill fight. As a struggle, his effort was magnificent, if at times pitiable from its very hopelessness. The prosecution, firmly entrenched behind the weight of their damning circumstantial evidence, slowly but surely dragged the meshes of the law's net round the prisoner at the bar.

On the fourth day Kennedy's chance arrived, and availing himself of it the barrister allowed his passionate rhetoric full vent. If his defence of Harold Beecher had been masterly, that of James Hardy was magnificent. Leaning across his desk, he faced alike judge and jury, driving his facts home with the force of a battering ram. Holding them spellbound by the magnetism of his fierce flow of oratory, he swayed his hearers as no other man living could have done. Beneath the fiery storm of his invective the case for the prosecution crumbled—it became effaced in the minds of his hearers.

For an hour he spoke like a man inspired, then resumed his seat amid a burst of applause which was promptly hushed by the judge.

"Unless this unseemly expression of feeling is suppressed, I shall have the court cleared," remarked the presiding justice, sternly.

Then once again silence reigned, broken only by the low voice of the counsel for the Crown, which was followed by the low, monotonous voice of the judge as he briefly yet succinctly summed up the case from the prosecuting and defending points of view. As a conclusion to the case it deserved to stand as a monument of impartiality. It was received with a murmur of applause, which, as on the previous occasion, was suppressed.

Following the departure of the jury, the judge, briefly arranging the papers on his desk, retired. Immediately a subdued hum of conversation broke out in the stuffy court. Craning forward, the people in the gallery followed the exit of the prisoner, then turned their gaze on Kennedy. The man of the moment, he became the cynosure of all eyes, as, leaning back in his seat exhausted from his recent passionate outburst in defence of his client, he sat with closed eyes awaiting the return of the jury.

The minutes sped by on leaden wings. A quarter of an hour passed, half—an hour—yet still Kennedy sat like a figure carved in stone till, some ten minutes later, a buzz of excitement pervaded the court as the judge resumed his seat. On the instant Kennedy gained his feet. Leaning forward on his desk, he glanced in the direction of the door through which Hardy passed on his way to the dock. White, haggard, and trembling now with an ill-concealed nervousness, the prisoner was escorted to his place in the dock. To the most ignorant eye it was patent the man verged on collapse. A warder noticed this, giving the prisoner a glass of water, which he greedily drank. Revived, Hardy, gripping the rail before him, awaited the verdict.

He had not to do so for long, for the judge, turning towards the jury, posed its foreman the usual formula.

"Not guilty, my lord" replied the foreman, in accents that rang out clearly above the almost unnatural silence of the court.

Kennedy swung round sharply on his heel to dart a glance of triumph at Hardy. He had won. For the moment he was tasting the sweets of victory. In the excitement of his mind the buzz of surprised comment on every hand left him unmoved. Perhaps on no face in court was mirrored greater surprise than on that of the prisoner himself. If the foreman of the jury had provided an unexpected sensation to his audience it was left to the prisoner to make a greater.

For a moment he stood passing an arid tongue across his parched lips, then jerking up his hands, tore frantically at his throat.

The unexpectedness of the act held the court spellbound, the tension being only broken when the warders sprang forward to Hardy's assistance. Ashen, he fell heavily backwards in their grip, then voicing a scream of anguish remained motionless in their hold.

It needed no doctor to inform the startled court that Death had entered its precincts. The sagging head, the closed eyes, the significant limpness of the body being so swiftly hurried out of the dock told their tale but too well. Hardy was dead. Every spectator realised the fact, whilst from the well of the court a woman's cry of anguish told Kennedy that Nancy had realised it as well.

Taking a handkerchief from his pocket Kennedy passed it over his brow.

"Poor little Nance!" he muttered. "The fight after all has been in vain." Then a strange feeling of elation possessed him. He had done his duty as a man and as a friend! Had Hardy's death been ordained—in order that he might obtain the accomplishment of the greatest desire in his life? It seemed so.

* * * * *

More than a year elapsed before Nancy Hardy returned to England. Broken by the anxiety of the trouble and the dramatic shock which had brought the trial to so sensational a conclusion, the young widow had been ordered to the South of France for a recouping of her shattered health.

Her first visit was to Kennedy. Its object was to give a verbal answer to a question contained in his final letter. He met her in the doorway, his face expressing the surprise he felt at her unexpected advent.

"I have returned a week earlier than I expected," said she. "Your letter perhaps decided me to do so. Before I answer it, I want to ask your legal advice on a certain matter."

Kennedy laughed happily.

"My services are always at your disposal," said he. "What is the subject you desire counsel's opinion on?"

"I wanted to know," said she, raising her eyes to his demurely, "whether the wife of a man who had been arraigned on any charge should marry the counsel who defended him?"

"If the wife's name should be Nancy Hardy, and the counsel's Richard Kennedy, by all means," said he briskly. "That is to say, provided the said woman loves the barrister in question."

Nancy laid a trembling hand on his arm.

"Then as the woman in question loves this barrister very dearly, there would be no impediment to their marriage. Dick, do you know she is very happy at the thought?"

Kennedy swept her up in his arms.

"And the barrister," said he, jokingly, "is just off his head with joy."

ART TREASURES STOLEN.

Antique jewels which formed part of a famous collection were stolen from Bath House, Piccadilly, London, the residence of Lady Ludlow. The collection was made by the late Sir Julius C. Wernher, Lady Ludlow's first husband, and the articles stolen—exquisite antiques of the 15th and 16th centuries—cannot be replaced. In the open market they might fetch £100,000 or more. The thieves, who seem to have been themselves art experts, selected the best specimens from the glass cases in which the collection is displayed. They left the house by the fire escape, and the crime was not discovered till one of the maids went into the room.

PORK AND BACON.

In 1923 in Chicago 53,333,708 pigs were slaughtered for food. Thus 1,000,000 pigs a week were killed as a trifling contribution to the appetites of mankind. To continue arithmetically, 1,998,113,000lbs. of pork were exported from the United States last year. Even this was by no means a record; the 1919 aggregate was 2,659,722,000lbs.

Describing confetti as horrible stuff, a Northumberland clergyman has forbidden its use at weddings.

Mr. Alfred M. Williams, of Launceston, was chosen as prospective Conservative candidate for North Cornwall.

The Reading Town Council, at a cost of £2,700, have provided a paddling pond for the children of the Borough.

NEWS NOTES.

Not only the good name, but the very existence of trade unions as we know them is threatened by the kind of unofficial strikes which have recently dislocated London's tube railways. Although it was a blow aimed at the authority of the unions concerned, inspired, we shrewdly suspect, by Communistic motives, the public, which suffers a gross inconvenience from such an occurrence is inclined to say "a plague on both your houses," and to bring trade unionism into general condemnation. Just because this unofficial strike seems to have become the acknowledged weapon of near-sighted and unscrupulous men, it becomes all the more necessary that the accredited trade union authorities should take drastic steps to secure discipline, and to punish indiscipline. Unless this is done, a strong Fascisti movement is bound to arise in this country, and it would grow in strength as the power of orthodox trade unionism declined.

FRANCE AND EUROPE.

It is not generally realised that the late President of the French Republic, M. Millerand, was the inspirer of M. Poincaré's intransigent policy. The fate which overtook him seems to be due to a tardy awakening on the part of the French people to the fact that that policy is a manifest failure. Our Gallic neighbours realise at last that you cannot get both beef and milk from a cow, however bitter the hate toward that quadruped and keen the desire to make it serve the dual purpose. Europe needs pacification, a complete burying of the hatchets. Nothing approaching the normal conditions of pre-war times can be secured until all the component parts of Europe are working harmoniously together.

THE LEAGUE OF SERVICE.

An appeal to the generosity of the public is made by the League of Service which provides canteens for the unemployed. It is pointed out that "the statistics which we have collected during the past year's work have revealed a sad and startling fact. Over 68 per cent. of the men who attend the canteens are without the 'dole,' all being single ex-Service men living in hostels when they can earn the shilling necessary to provide a bed—homeless, friendless, down and out. To such as these, men who fought for the country with the hope of a return to a prosperous civil life, our canteens come as a godsend. Not only can the men get really good, nourishing food at a price lower than at any other place in London, but they also find sympathy and kindness from the ladies who are there daily to wait on them. Newspapers and magazines are provided, cases of extreme destitution are taken up and helped, and a clothing department, to which our subscribers send cast-off clothes, has fitted out many a ragged man and helped him to find work." The League is under exceptional patronage.

A CHILD CONDUCTOR.

When the Halle Orchestra and its conductor, Hamilton Harty, were on tour recently in Ireland, a little girl and her mother occupied a box overlooking the orchestra at the Theatre Royal, Dublin. During one of the performances the child suddenly got up and began conducting the band with her hands, at the same time accompanying her movements by singing a little song in her high treble voice. The mother instantly removed the tiny enthusiast, but the retreating strains of the song could be heard as the two left the theatre. The conductor in embryo was Harty's niece, which surely is an argument in favour of heredity. At the same concert a lady was heard to remark to a friend: "That's a nice young lad, that Harty, anyway! I wonder did he gather them players himself, or is it permanent like, mebbe?"

IT MAKES US PHILOSOPHIC.

The most unpopular writings of the period have undoubtedly been those of the meteorological experts, who have done nothing but increase our pessimism, instead of removing it. To account for the execrable weather, they have talked of "depression" off the Atlantic, but depression is very much nearer home than that. People who succumbed to the persuasion of the railway companies to take early holiday wish they had not done so. The fact that no one understands why we have had such bad weather is poor consolation, and we can hardly think that any satisfaction could be derived from knowing the exact why and wherefore of such unseasonable conditions. Still, it always has been a Briton's privilege to grin and bear it, and we have had an extensive practice in this direction.

FIRST AID FOR 'BUSES.

One notes with satisfaction that with a view to accelerating the process of lifting motor-'buses after accidents, arrangements are being made by the London General Omnibus Company to instal the necessary apparatus in every main thoroughfare in London, where their road staff will be able to obtain it within a few minutes. This consists of a jack, wood blocks, and lifting tackle. Arrangements are being made for jacks to be kept at suitable points even on country roads, a very sensible precaution in view of the country trips that are now so popular.

THESE DEMOCRATIC DAYS.

The process of the Royal Family identifying itself with the ordinary interests and affairs of the day is going on apace. We all have in mind the little differences made in Court functions by the occupation by the Labour Party of the political seats of the mighty, and how well the occupants of those seats have acquitted themselves on ceremonious occasions. Scarcely any limit can be put to the leavening process, for has not Princess Mary followed the example of her infant son by becoming an Oddfellow—a member of the Harmony Lodge, Knaresborough? The example of Her Royal Highness should be of great assistance in calling attention to the moral and material benefits to be derived through this great friendly society.

BRITISH MUSEUM'S RECORD.

The introduction of more modern and up-to-date methods of management have borne fruit in a largely increased attendance of the public at the British Museum, where the service of guides, for instance, is an appreciated convenience. Admissions for 1923 totalled 1,095,353, of which 67,323 were on Sundays, as compared with 979,297 in 1922. These attendances were the largest since 1851, the year of the Exhibition, when the total was 2,527,216. Between 1851 and 1923 the annual totals never passed a million. Everything points to the attendances this year being larger than ever.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLF.

Whether one believes in him or not, Lord Birkenhead is a challenging figure, and everything he says is entitled to serious consideration. His new book of essays, "America Revisited," is packed full of thought-provoking material. On the lighter side one naturally singles out for notice the way in which Lord Birkenhead traces the cause of the improved outlook on life on the part of the American business man to golf. He says: "Golf has helped Midas to become prosperous in spite of his gold by keeping him fit. He sees no limit to the stupendous wealth which is the American heritage, but he is rejoiced to see that in the new age there is a realisation that "life is short, health vital, dollars incapable of transfer to the next world, and that, therefore, there is much to be said for a reasonable enjoyment of life in this."

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GOVERNMENT DEFEATED

LONDON TRAFFIC BILL.

In the House of Commons the Government had an unfortunate experience during the debate on the London Traffic Bill. The figures of a vote showed 189 against the Government and 126 in their favour. Mr. Clynes made it immediately clear that the Government did not regard this reverse as a defeat of first-class importance.

A motion by Mr. P. Harris brought about the incident. This sought to prevent the Traffic Combine extending its control over London traffic by working through a number of small omnibus companies, and the object of the amendment was to provide that the proprietor of an omnibus when applying for a licence should supply the Minister with particulars of any agreement he had entered into with any other company. Mr. Gosling, the Transport Minister, thought that if they were to deal with trusts they ought to deal with them in a comprehensive Bill. He claimed that he possessed powers to guard against the danger referred to, but if the House thought he ought to be invested with additional powers he preferred a Labour clause standing in the name of Mr. Barnes, the Socialist member for East Ham, to that of the Liberals. He therefore offered the House a free vote on the Labour amendment, but said the Government would resist the Liberal amendment.

The Government put their whips against the Liberal amendment, and found that the Conservatives joined forces with the Liberals. When the clause was carried by a majority of 63, there were cries of "Resign," and "the new Coalition." Mr. Pringle immediately suggested that further discussion of the Bill should be suspended to give time to consider the situation, but opposition being forthcoming from Sir William Joynson Hicks and others, he did not persist in his motion. In the discussion on the Liberal clause, Mr. H. Morrison protested against Lord Ashfield being given the monopoly for which he had been fighting.

HOTEL CASHIER CHARGED.

At Westminster Police Court, London, Clifford Herbert Falla, of West Kensington Mansions, was charged with stealing £1,530 received by him in the capacity of cashier at the Grosvenor Hotel, Buckingham Palace-road. Falla was said to have reported that his cash-box, which was kept in the strong-room, had been opened with a false key. Detectives who were called in were not satisfied with that story, and after investigations Falla was arrested.

A remand on bail was granted.

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WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

A CURIOUS CASE.

The case of G. W. Beechner v. Green a[nd] Silley Weir was heard in the City of L[on]don Court, before Judge Shewell Coo[per] and a jury. The plaintiff was a plat[er's] helper in the employ of Messrs. Green [and] Silley Weir, and made a claim under [the] Employers' Liability Act in respect o[f in]juries to his leg. At the time of the [acci]dent the plaintiff was working at a [hori]zontal press, and his claim was based o[n] an alleged defective condition of [the] machine and upon the alleged negli[gence] of the defendant's foreman and pla[ter in] charge of the operation. After hear[ing a] number of witnesses on either side, a[nd be]ing addressed by counsel for both pa[rties,] the jury returned a verdict in favour o[f the] defendants.

Judge Shewell Cooper thereupon [dis]missed the action, with costs, re[marking] that it was a case which should never [have] been brought under the Employers' L[ia]bility Act, and that the plaintiff's re[] course was to have made a claim under [the] Workmen's Compensation Act.

MYSTERY OF SINGER'S DEAT[H]

Mystery surrounds the sudden de[ath of] Miss Alexandrina Stringer, a Lond[on con]tralto known on the concert plat[form as] Drina Strange. She was 22, the y[oungest] daughter of Mr. and Mrs. String[er, of] Links-road, Tooting Junction. He[r father] is a police pensioner from Birming[ham].

Miss Stringer went out with a [] friend, and on reaching home sud[denly be]came ill with vomiting, and died [within] five minutes. Her body was t[aken to] Mitcham mortuary to await an [inquest] and a post-mortem examination w[]

Trained at the Trinity College of [Music,] London, Miss Stringer carried o[ff many] honours, including seven prizes. [She] sung at Queen's Hall and the [] Hall, and recently had many eng[agements] in London.

CZAR'S DEATH TRAGEDY

A report from Paris states tha[t it has] been revealed that the ashes and [other] relics of the late Czar and other [members] of the Russian Imperial family, [found] at Ekaterinoslav, were brought t[o] in 1920, and handed over to th[e Grand] Duke Nicholas. The bearer was [General] Janin, formerly head of the Frenc[h] in Siberia.

The bodies of the Emperor and and the other Imperial victims w[ere,] known, taken out of the town t[] and were there undressed and burned. The remains and relics, later and placed in a box, consi[sting] most part of jewellery and rem[nants of] clothing.

Entrusted to General Janin by Diderichs and M. Gilliard, the Czarvitch's tutor, the box was han[ded to] Giers, formerly Russian Amba[ssador to] Italy, at Grenoble in October, 1[] General himself visited Ekaterin[burg and] also Alapaevsk, a few kilomet[res] where other members of the Imper[ial family] were done to death and thrown in[to a] shaft. The bodies were recovered[] General says, were transported [] and buried in the Orthodox ce[metery at] Pekin.

CURIOUS TERMINATION OF CASE.

Several doctors differed in Hu[] Court as to whether George [] youth, was still suffering from [] of an accident. His spine was [] his being crushed by a lorry. T[] of the lad in the judge's arms [] question. At the conclusion of t[he] evidence the judge asked for th[e] be called, and had him place[d] Bench. Brown answered several [] and then collapsed, the judge [] him falling to the floor. He w[] to the judge's room, where [] under treatment.

His Honour promptly dism[issed the] application which Brown's emp[loyers were] making for the termination of t[he compen]sation agreement on the ground [that he] was able to resume work. Brow[n] was a bundle of nerves.

FLAG DAY COLLECTOR CHARGED

May Battie, married, of Fins[bury] was, at North London Po[lice Court] charged with being drunk and [] Holloway-road, where she was [] have been acting as collector in [] with a flag day for Dr. Barnard[o's].

A policeman alleged that [] rolled from one side of the foot[way to the] other, and threw her flag day e[] the street. Accused denied th[] on oath. She said she was the [] holder at the Nag's Head.

The Magistrate: Why not the chapel instead of the Nag's He[ad]?

The case was adjourned, ba[il] allowed.

THE HAL[L]

By

Author of "A Marri[]

CHAPTER XVII.

SENSATIONAL EVIDENCE.

The court was crowded upon t[] March morning to which Daphne [had] long looked forward. Now that [it] had come, a sense of unreality [] everything else. She hardly saw [the im]posing array of counsel representi[ng] the parties concerned, and she ce[rtainly had] no idea that as many of the [] London world as could possibly [] entrance, either through the aid [] friends, or their own importa[nce] crowding up every available inch [] for the high rank of the man wh[ose] history was about to be sifted in [] his well-known personality, mad[e] topic of the hour.

Sympathies were entirely with [] earl, who sat only divided by h[] and theirs, from the claimant [] daughter; and there was no do[ubt in the] mind of any of the smart ladies p[] Parsons had emphatically [] written all over him.

His grey hair, his shabby dres[s] tive manner in which he glanced [] court, gave an unfavourable imp[ression] once, but the beauty of his dau[ghter] in for much whispered comment.

She was dressed entirely in blac[k] reporters noticed that she was [] Lord St. Osryth with marked c[] her arrival. "One of those littl[e] touches," one wrote with a pen [] zeal, "that show us the best side [] nature. It is highly improbable [] noble earl had ever seen, much [] with, the persons who were e[] to effect so mighty a change in h[] but it is very certain that be [] with a marked bow, to which M[] merely responded, while his [] acknowledged it with rising c[] whatever may be the result of [] which is still in progress—the [] many softened to the young m[] manly beauty, representative of [] type of English aristocracy, add[] to his curious position."

Nothing could stop his pen, bu[] [pa]pers in court were very soon h[] silence by a stern reproof, and [] with breathless interest, listened [] man in wig and gown, with a [] face and nothing about him [] piercing eyes to suggest that he [] the cleverest advocates at the Bar.

Slowly and clearly he unfolde[d] of Mr. Parsons' claim, first co[] himself and the jury on the fact [] were face to face with no compli[] often made a claim of this ki[nd] [intri]cate web of conflicting facts [] cleverest brains in England co[] solve.

"A beginner," he said, raising [] "a tyro, practically unversed in [] had almost said a child—could la[] before you."

He asked them to carry their [] to a period of over seventy year[s] events which had drawn them to[] day took place before railways h[] firm hold on life and utterl[] human existence. There were ra[] in the remote part of Ame[rica] little drama took place.

It was most important to re[] difficulties of communication, and [] impossibility of correcting any [] identification that might arise.

To a remote village in Americ[a] scion of a noble house, who [] moment of madness falsified the [] some money entrusted to him for [] uses. Such an action, then as [] visited with condign punishment; [] matters had gone too far the [] of high persons was called in, [] practically obliged to fly the co[untry] ing a dying mother, an honour[] and a younger brother to mour[n] and to look upon him hencefor[th as] dead.

"Imagine," said counsel, "the [] the man, dead to the world he [] and to his own life! Born and [] the purple, yet forced to wor[k] bread; his father's heir, yet una[] for in the land of his inheritan[ce] the wonder if his thoughts were [] prisoner, barred in the condemned [] own making?

"Yet even prisoners have foun[d] comfort them—a flower, the song [] anything that speaks of the [] purity and joy long departed. To Lord Aloysius Gardewell, comfor[t came in] another guise—in the old, famili[ar] loved, he was loved in return. [] he proved himself as honourab[le] temptation of money had found h[] weak.

"There is no possible doubt th[at he mar]ried the lady of his choice, and t[here is no] reason for doubt. It was not [the] happiest thing, it was the be[st] thing that he could do, and he di[d it, taking] her name and sinking his own fo[r ever.] [They] were married on July [] and their marriage certificate is [] seen of their descendants. I[] heard, no doubt, that his fathe[r was be]coming feeble, for the newspaper[s of the] day had paragraphs relating to [the] illness of this prominent man. I[t took long] for the news to filter through to [the prodi]gal son in his far-off home, bu[t there is] little doubt that it was the know[ledge of his] father's failing strength that [] him to endeavour to erase his [] among those of the living, and [] he took was simple—being merely [the inser]tion of a false paragraph, the [] which could easily have been [] question.

"Perfunctory inquiries were [] made, and we have proved that [] answered by a brother-in-law of [] practising as an attorney. Why [he con]nived at the plot is somewhat of [] but very probably it had been [] him how much depended upon [] possible that Gardewell ma[] the secret of his right of suc[cession] himself off as the younger broth[er].

"The family into which he h[ad married] appear to have been unworldly t[o an] extent, but how far this may [] from ignorance of the true posi[tion of the] case it is almost impossible to te[ll].

"One thing remains as a cer[tainty — the] firm resolve of this self-made o[utcast not] to take up his rank and position[] the more surprising when the de[ath of his] father followed a year later.

"Yet I ask you to believe tha[t he] who was undoubtedly Lord St. [] only renounced all this for hims[elf] but so imbued his wife wit[h his] view of the desirability of silenc[e that she] not only never made the slighte[st attempt] to reverse his decision, but tha[t she re]mained silent as he until her own [death in] 185[].

"Whether the son realised the [] the case, it is impossible to say[] likely that he did, and thr[ough want of] initiative and fear of publici[ty did not] press his claim, although he [] sealed it to his son, the presen[t claimant.] He sits before you, gentlemen [] [simp]le and quiet exterior in no [] remarkable ability and [] [woul]d have taken steps immed[iately]