

## The Cases of Alice Clement

True Stories of the World's Greatest Woman Sleuth as Told by Herself to Courtney Riley Cooper

### A Game of Hearts

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**T**HE divorce grist is still grinding on," I remarked as my glance traveled over the shoulder of the man ahead of me and saw by the paper he held that eighty separations had been achieved in one day of court. Miss Clement and myself were on a Ravinia train, bound for the concert, and were hurrying through Evanston. "It certainly gets me how anyone stays married nowadays," I continued. "But then, if people can't get along together, it's the best thing for them to get along away from each other."

"Yes," Miss Clement assented rather seriously. "But the trouble is that most persons don't have a chance to get along. Somebody is always mixing in, getting one or the other so wrought up about nothing that they finally get to thinking that there isn't any possibility of happiness. I ought to know," she added and then there came that glint into her eyes which always foreshadows one of her experiences. "I've patched up more than one divorce case when it looked helpless. And I've found this out: That half the time it isn't the fault of the man or the woman. They'd get along all right if other people would leave them alone. It isn't always the fault of the mother-in-law, although, goodness knows, no matter how kind they may try to be, they can cause more trouble than a regiment of infantry. But there's always somebody or a bunch of somebodies to cause trouble when it isn't any of their business."

The train stopped for a minute, then hurried on again. And with its start began Miss Clement's story.

"I've handled many a divorce case in my detective existence," she said, and then added with a little laugh, "and many times have I played some little trick that brought a man and a woman together again. It's queer, too, but just when you mentioned it, I was thinking of another time when I traveled on a train, with Cupid in my suitcase, and dissension bumping along behind on the ties, where the roadway was hardest. Of course, it wasn't what I had been paid to do—but then when everything was over, I felt a lot better than if I had followed orders, and I guess two other persons did, too."

"I wouldn't tell their real names, even to you, and just for the sake of reference we'll call them Mr. and Mrs. Douglas. The beginning was a coincidence."

"One morning I received a note, asking me to call at the office of Mr. Douglas. I went there, to find a rather young man, whose face seemed tired and worried. His office was not a big one, or a spacious one. I could see that whatever he had was gained through mighty hard work. And he had a story to tell."

"Miss Clement," he began, "I want you to get evidence for me in regard to a divorce case. Mrs. Douglas and I were married about two years ago. She's a pretty little girl—pretty enough to be dangerous—and I am acting on the advice of my friends in coming to a detective."

"I made no answer to that. If I had it would have been to say something about those lovable friends, for I had seen their work before. I allowed him to go on."

"For the first year we got along fairly well on what we had, and then Mrs. Douglas took a notion she wanted to earn a little home of her own. I was willing to do anything that could be done and I started to work with all my might. But getting ahead is a hard business. We had enough to make the first payment, but after that, things were harder. And I've been working my head off night and day to try to get ahead. It isn't that which hurts, Miss Clement. But it seems the harder I work the less Mrs. Douglas thinks of me. She acts queerly toward me as though she doesn't love me any more. I have not been having very good luck with my business, but I have been doing my best and my friends have seen that and they have pointed out to me the truth of everything. Mrs. Douglas never has cared for me, from what I can understand. She married me thinking there were great possibilities in me, and then when things went hard she just determined that she would get as much out of me as she could and then throw me over. Everything is hers, you see. The house is in her name and all that, and she's just trying to squeeze me for every cent she can. And I'm not going to let her. That's all."

"I made no remarks on the situation. Instead, I promised that I would let him know in a day or two whether or not I could find a way to prove his assertions. Then I went back to the office."

"And there on the desk was a dainty little envelope, addressed in a feminine hand. I opened it and with my eyes staring, and read:

"Dear Miss Clement:

"I have been referred to you as someone who can assist me in obtaining evidence upon which to base a divorce suit against my husband. Will you kindly call at your convenience?"

"Mrs. Jeanette Douglas."

ment of the Pullman I took a peek within. Then I smiled. A man was within, smoking and apparently nervous. At least a part of my scheme had worked. One by one the people entered, until every berth was full. I chanced to take a peek within the stateroom—just an accidental opening of the door, you know—and laughed to myself as I saw that the porter had done the work I had bribed him to do. There was a grin on his black face when I passed him in the passageway and he bowed his head.

"Ah's done got everything arranged," he said.

"Shh-h-h!" I warned him hastily. We were near the smoking compartment.

"For an hour nothing happened. My seat was near the smoker end of the car and my eyes were continually on the passageway, for I was fearful that he would tire of his job of staying within the compartment. But he obeyed my orders.

"Joliet!" called the porter and I felt something creepy begin to spring up within me. Now was to be the beginning of the working out of my plan. I heard a feminine voice outside and then the voice of the porter.

"Ah'll done bring de grip in a minute; yo' state room's right straight down de aisle."

"I turned my head to the window so that she would not notice me. Then, when she had passed, I hurriedly turned and watched. I saw her open the door of the stateroom, start back down the aisle and then jump back again. She had caught sight of her badge issuing from the passageway. He had not seen her.

"He came straight on down the aisle, neither looking to the right nor to the left and headed for the stateroom door. I didn't tell you that I had gotten the tickets for the same stateroom, did I?" Miss Clement asked with that noncomparable, mischievous little smile of hers. "Well, I did. That was a part of my little game, and let me tell you, as I watched Mr. Douglas going down the aisle toward the door, my heart was thumping mighty hard, and I was wondering what he would say when he got in there, found his wife and everything else I had arranged for him. The temptation was strong within me to follow him, and I did. It was not a second after he had opened the door and closed it behind him that I was standing by the little window in the passageway, where by leaning close, I could hear what went on within. The curtain shielded me from the rest of the car. I knew I had no one to fear except the porter, and I had paid him enough money and told him enough of the situation to make him my ally."

"For a second there was a 'deep silence from within the room. I knew just what was happening. They were standing there, staring at each other, looking at the decorations on the walls, at the signs I had arranged there, wondering what it all meant and what on earth I had been up to. At least, in my guilty little way, I felt that they were suspecting me. I was hoping though, for the sake of the scheme that I had fostered, that they were not. At last came a voice."

"Jeanette."

"Well?" answered the voice of the woman. "I don't see what right you have in here."

"I might say the same thing in regard to you. But I assure you I have no desire to intrude. I shall go into the smoker until we reach the next town and then get off the train."

"Very well," answered Mrs. Douglas in a matter of fact way. There came the voice of the husband. I could feel pique in it. He felt that in some way he had blundered and that the best way to do would be to stir up some kind of a quarrel that he might leave the train. And Mrs. Douglas, in the light of the fact that she was there to find evidence against her husband, felt the same way. Yet neither of them knew exactly what to do. If the husband left the train, Mrs. Douglas was sure that the evidence she sought was lost. On his side, Mr. Douglas believed in some vague way that I had known Mrs. Douglas was to be on the train and that I had arranged some kind of a trap for her, which he had bungled. And so he hesitated by the door.

"Might I ask," he demanded, "what you are doing in a stateroom with white ribbons hung all around, with rice and old shoes on the floor and with signs proclaiming the fact that someone has just been married?"

"You said you had a ticket for this stateroom and so I can ask you the same question," came the voice of the wife. "Perhaps you've turned bigamist."

"Ten minutes later I was alone with the little girl. I took from my pocket railroad ticket and a stateroom reservation.

"Here," I said, "I have found the way to get some evidence as regards your husband. The moment he leaves the house tomorrow morning, hurry for a train and go to Joliet. Then, in the afternoon, take the flyer and go right to your stateroom. I want no one on the train to see you, if possible. Do you understand?"

"No," she answered frankly.

"You will later," I told her. "I will see that you have more information by the time you reach St. Louis. Now, I believe you will do as you say."

"I will," she coincided, and I left her to go to my apartment, snuggle my little kiddie up against my breast, and spend more than one hour in planning ahead and smiling to myself.

"What's the matter, Mama?" Baby asked me. "What do you see that's funny?"

"A lot of things, Honey," I murmured, "just a whole lot of things."

"The next afternoon at 5 o'clock, I boarded the train for St. Louis and as I walked past the smoking compartment



"I Have Had Faith Enough In Both of You to Go to This Expense."

"What do you mean by giving us this stateroom?" he demanded.

"Cause hit's yours, that's why," the negro answered with a grin.

"Mine—ours?" They both spoke at once. "Why, we've been married for two years."

"There came a laugh from the car and Douglas and his wife swept an angry glance around. They saw that no one believed them. Their faces grew redder than ever.

"What names was this stateroom taken out in?" Brent asked.

"Mr. and Mrs. Douglas," the porter answered. "That's you, ain't it?"

"Yes," they admitted dazedly. "But there's a mistake somewhere—there's got to be a mistake."

"No, they ain't," the porter answered.

"For just a minute they both stood there as angry as they could be. Then, little by little, the humor of the situation began to break in on them. I don't know what it is, but there is something about weddings and honeymoons that gets into the heart of everyone. And even Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, much as they believed they wanted to be separated from each other, were affected. I saw Mr. Douglas smile a bit—and his wife smiled too. Then he turned to her.

"Well, Jeanette," he said, "I don't think there's anything for us to do until the train stops the next time, and then we can get off. I guess we've got to be honeymooners until then."

"She laughed a bit. She looked at him, and he looked at her. I could see that in their minds there was flooding forth the memories of another time in the past when there had been white ribbons and old shoes and rice—and happiness. And I knew that sooner or later, left to themselves, those memories would overwhelm the things that had come between them in the last two years—the gradual breaking away, the influence of friends and of the mother-in-law. I listened to them as they went back into the stateroom and I waited for them to speak.

"Maybe we'd better take this stuff down; what do you think?" Brent asked after a pause. "No, I don't think so, after all. What do you suppose this means, Jeanette?"

"I guess it just means that there were two staterooms reserved on two trains for two Mr. and Mrs. Douglas," she said, and the friends of the other couple became mixed up and decorated the wrong place. Either that or—"

"But how could that be, when I didn't know you were going to get on the train and when you didn't know I was going to be on the train?" Brent asked suddenly. "By the way, might I inquire where you were going?"

"I might be going down to St. Louis—to see my aunt there."

"Didn't you have an aunt?"

"Didn't you? Might I ask where you were going?"

"I—" Brent hesitated, "I—I was going down to St. Louis on some business."

"Oh," said Jeanette, "I didn't know you had any business."

"Then there was a long, long silence, in which I knew that each was studying the other, that each was wondering what other one was up to. I worried then for that was the crucial moment. If suspicion was stronger than memories, then my plan had failed. But if the environment of the stateroom, the fact that everybody in the car took them to be a young married couple, if all these things could work harder than the new things which had been born in the minds—and which I had forgotten to foresee at all—then my plan would work. And minute after minute I waited there, while from within there came only silence.

"It is true I did have a ticket for this stateroom, but I assure you I know nothing of the newly-wed decorations. It may be there has been some mistake. If you'll allow me, I'll find out for you and see that you are put in your proper stateroom before I leave the train."

"That is very kind of you," she said somewhat coldly. I heard him turn the key of the door and open it. Then I pulled a string that I had paid more good money to the porter to conceal. An outpouring of rice fell upon the shoulders of Brent Douglas as he walked from the stateroom door. His wife was behind and she got it, too. For a moment, they stared in consternation then anger flared in the faces of both of them as they looked at the laughing passengers. Mr. Douglas reached to a window and pushed the button for a porter viciously.

"Brent, tell me," came at last in the voice of the wife, "were you really going to St. Louis on business—or was it something else?"

"He waited a moment before he replied.

"No, I wasn't," he said. "I was going down there for something I can't tell you about, but something I want you to know was not dishonorable nor unfaithful. Somehow or other, Jeanette, since I've been sitting here looking at you, and thinking—well, thinking about another time when you

and I were like this—well, I've made up my mind to try something again and to see if—oh, I can't tell you what it is, but—"

"Do you mean—" she began, and stopped. I could imagine the look on her face.

"I cannot tell you what I mean," he answered. "Only I have had my reasons for believing it a long, long time. And now—"

"'Oh,' she said, half to herself. Then came that which I was waiting for. She attempted to change the subject. She believed that she had almost trod on dangerous ground, that he had almost confessed to her that he really did care for another woman, and it hurt. 'That ribbon is pretty, isn't it?' she asked. 'Something like the one that Mary tied on our suitcase the night we were married.'

"'Yes,' he answered—I thought I detected a little catch in his voice—it is, isn't it?"

" Didn't they have fun with us, though?"

"Then there came a silence that was longer than ever. Waiting outside, trembling in the anticipation of the working out of my plans, I believe I prayed a little that one or the other would find a way of telling what was in their minds, that they would have it out and then settle things forever. But no word came from within; they perhaps were sitting there, thinking sadly of the happy days of the past, inwardly blaming each other for the fact that those happy days were apparently over, and sure, each of them, that the other was to blame. I stood as long as I could, and then—well, then I walked to the door of the stateroom, found that the catch turned, and walked within. They started at the sight of me. Their faces seemed to grow pale.

"'You!' they both gasped. 'You planned this?'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'I planned it. Mr. Douglas, I was hired by your wife to get divorce evidence on you. Mrs. Douglas, I was hired by your husband to get the same thing on you. Don't answer me. I have a few things to say that I want to get off my mind. I know that right now you are thinking that I tricked both of you some way. I did. I tricked you into a situation where you could see yourself as you were before you let outsiders come between you. You've both been foolish. You have allowed those who have not one millionth the interest in you that you should have in yourselves to make you believe a lot of things that are not true, that have never been true and will never be true. As you are now, you are turning back two years to when you were first married. Why not wipe out the past, start right where you started once and make life over again?' Mrs. Douglas, you are foolish for listening to the advice of your mother. There is nothing wrong with your husband, except that he is working his life out for you. Mr. Douglas, you are an idiot for listening to your so-called friends. Should what you planned have come to pass, they would have been the first to condemn you. All your wife needs is a little of the petting and happiness that you once gave her before you tried to make a human machine of yourself. Now, you are in a stateroom that is arranged as for a bride and groom. Do you want to play the part, just for old time's sake? Or are you going to leave the train at the next station and make yourselves miserable for the rest of your life? I have had faith enough in you both to go to this expense, feeling that I would be reimbursed. But if I am not—I spread my hand—I am game enough to lose on a case I had a lot of interest in!'

"I stopped and looked at them. Long the surprise showed in their faces; they merely gazed at me out of wide eyes. Then, slowly, Brent Douglas turned and held forth his arms to his wife. She smiled at him. He clasped her to him, tightly and forever. That's about all of the story."

"No," I said as the hurry of the coach told me we were nearing Ravinia, "there's a little more. That night, a certain little woman I know went out to her apartment, took her kiddie on her knee and whispered to her that it is a whole lot better to create a little happiness in this world than to own a thousand fortunes as great as those of Croesus. Isn't that right?"

Miss Clement looked at me with twinkling eyes.

"How did you know?" she asked.

ALWAYS WORN AS A SYMBOL

In All Epochs of History the Veil Has Had a Characteristic At-tribute.

The veil as a portion of feminine attire is almost symbolic in its character. The bridal veil is an interesting survival of the ancient custom of holding a canopy over the bride at her wedding, a ceremony still observed at Jewish marriages. Many families hold the bridal veil as one of the most precious of heirlooms, to be handed down from generation to generation and to be guarded with the utmost care and reverence.

Simpler in character but no less beautiful in effect is the veil of the young girl worn at her confirmation, symbolizing as it does the modesty and simplicity of the maiden about to enter on the responsibilities of maturity. These charming veils, generally of fine French net, hand made but devoid of ornamentation save for the broad hemstitched border, are often kept by the wearers to be used when later on they become wives and mothers as the christening veil for their baby. Although modern science is averse to the constant use of a veil by young children, the custom still survives at christenings, and we should be loath indeed to see it disappear.

In the veil of the novice we find a survival of the wimple of the Norman ladies, while certain orders of nuns, such as the Kilburn Sisters, follow faithfully the fashion of the early Plantagenet court in the way in which they pin the veil to the sides of their linen caps. In just such a fashion was the Plantagenet wimple fastened to the chin band.

Although the veil has to some extent lost its significance in England as a symbol of mourning, it is still used on the Continent in this connection with great circumstance and ceremony. Not only does a widow envelop herself for a lengthy period in a veil of amazing length and opaqueness, but every relative of the deceased assumes a similar dreary symbol of regret, its size and thickness varying with nice discrimination according to the exact degree of relationship. In fact, a Briton visiting France or Italy for the first time is often astonished at the number of apparent widows he is