

# THE OLD MILL MYSTERY.

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## PROLOGUE.

"But don't you mean the woman must be discharged, doctor?"

"Yes; that's exactly what I do mean. There's no alternative."

"Well, but she's just as mad as when she first came into the asylum," exclaimed the first speaker, Mrs. Hoyle, the matron of the female side of Wadsworth lunatic asylum.

"Yes; I know that as well as you do," returned Dr. Batley; "but here's the order from the commissioners for her release, and we've neither the right to question it nor the power to detain the woman."

"But she's not fit to be at large. She's a murderer—nothing more or nothing less," cried the matron, indignantly.

"That may be," answered the doctor, dryly, "but the commissioners can't be expected to set up the question of a patient's sanity against a rule of red-tape. What has happened is this: The certificate on which this woman, Lucy Howell, has been brought in is invalid; the new certificate was to have been here, and hasn't come; consequently she will have to be set at liberty."

"What if she kills the first person she meets?"

"So much the worse for the first person and the commissioners," replied the doctor, with a short cynical laugh. "But no blame can be attached to us."

"But Dr. Accring declares that hers is a subtle form of mania that is absolutely incurable. She has all the fancies of a murderer, and all the crochets of a madwoman, hidden away under her gentle ways and soft speech."

"Well, we can't help that. She'll have to go, and we may as well tell her at once."

"Then there'll be murder done before she comes back, and come back she certainly will," said the matron, as she left the room to fetch the woman of whom the two had been speaking.

She returned in a few minutes bringing with her a tall, handsome woman of about four or five and twenty, whose finely developed figure was rather set off than concealed by the somber dress which she wore.

When the doctor spoke her name she looked at him closely and answered in a low, clear and rather sweet voice:

"You want me, sir?"

"Yes; I sent for you to tell you you are to be discharged from here."

"I am glad you see at last that I'm not mad," was the reply, calmly spoken and with a confident smile.

"I did not say I saw that," answered the doctor, dryly.

"Well, so long as somebody sees it, and I am liberated, I am satisfied. I ought never to have been brought with the doctor."

"You will now be able to do what you wish to do, Miss Howell," said the matron, interchanging a rapid glance with the doctor.

In an instant a light flashed into the woman's eyes as she looked up and cried, with a touch of eager passion:

"Yes, I'll—" But, catching the expression on the others' faces, she stopped as suddenly, and changed her tone with her look, adding: "Yes, I shall be glad to be at liberty again."

The change in her manner had been startling in its abruptness; and in the moment of excitement she had looked dangerous enough to suggest hidden depths of intense passion.

"When shall you try and seek out the people who are following you about with knives?" asked the matron again.

"That dark, good looking young villain, who was your lover and deceived you, that you told me about?"

But this time the reference to her craze had no rousing effect. She had obtained complete self-mastery and answered quietly:

"I am sorry I have made such mistakes. I suppose that, being in a place like this, where everyone has fancies, I frightened myself. But, now I am going away, I shall leave them."

"Where are you going?" asked the doctor, disregarding her gesture.

Lucy Howell replied for a moment, hesitating in her reply, and then she said:

"Where I came from, sir—Mireley."

"What are you?"

"A silk weaver," said the woman.

"There are no sheds at Mireley," returned the doctor, quickly and suspiciously.

"I am not bound to go back to weaving, am I?" was the reply, flashed back in half anger; and then in a much milder tone she added: "I shall want a rest, sir, after the life here; besides, I have friends at Mireley, and I—they will want me."

"Well, you are to go out at two o'clock this afternoon and the man who brought you here will come for you at that time. You had better be ready."

"Thank you, sir," said the woman. Without looking again at the doctor she turned and left the room, followed by the matron.

"She seems sensible enough, Mrs. Hoyle," he said, when the latter returned. "But, sensible or not sensible, she has to go."

"Oh, she's as sensible as I am, and a precious sight more cunning. But if murder don't come of this business—well, it'll be a marvel to me."

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROPOSAL.

"Miss Ashworth—Mary."

A dark, pretty girl, dressed in black, who stood leaning upon a gate just inside the mill village of Walkden

seen—you must have seen—the hold you have over me. I've made no secret that I love you. You can do with me what you will, for I'm a fool in your hands. But take care, my girl; such power as yours over me don't go without responsibility. It's a power that can move me for good or spoil me for life. With such as me there's no middle course; and you can do what you will; and, by—, if you fool me now for another man there won't be room for us both on this earth. That I swear," and he clenched his fist and brought it down heavily on the gate in front of them.

"I have listened to you too long," said the girl. "When you talk to me about 'fooling you' I see how stupid I have been."

"I'm sorry, I am; I swear I am; I didn't mean what I said. Ah, Mary, don't turn away like that. I'll go away if you wish it. But I can't trust myself when I think of losing you. Tell me I've no reason to think that."

"I've told you that I can never marry you; and I deny you have a right to put such a question to me."

"I have the right that love gives me," he burst out vehemently again. "Now, I believe there is somebody. But you shall never marry anyone, if you don't marry me; that I swear on my soul," he exclaimed, passionately. "And you know whether I'm a man to keep my word."

Then, as the girl was turning away, he went quickly to her and seized her arm rather roughly.

"Will you swear to me that you care for no one more than for me?" he asked, angrily.

"Let me go, Mr. Gorringe; how dare you hold me like that?" she cried, angrily and excitedly, her face flushing with feeling.

"You shall have no answer from me," she replied.

"Then I'll watch you till I find out," he said, and then they walked on in silence.

Suddenly as they turned a sharp curve in the road the man saw his companion start, and a troubled look came over her face; and then he noticed the color rise in her cheeks and deepen as a tall, upstanding, handsome young fellow approached.

"Why, Mary, what's the matter?" cried the newcomer, stopping in front of them. "Good evening, Mr. Gorringe," he added, turning for a moment to the latter.

"Matter, Tom? Why, nothing, of course," answered the girl.

"Good evening, Roylance," said Reuben Gorringe; "there's nothing more the matter than that Miss Ashworth—Mary, that is—and I have been for a walk together, and have had an interesting little talk. That's all." And while he was speaking, and after he had finished, he looked curiously from one to the other.

"Indeed," said Tom Roylance, coolly.

"Then, as Mary and I have an appointment it's my turn to go for a walk with her, and to 'have an interesting talk'; and as I had fixed in the other direction for the walk we won't trouble you to turn back," and without saying anything more he took the girl's hand, tucked it into his arm and walked away with her.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SHADOW OF TROUBLE.

"Has the boss been saying anything to worry you, Mary?" asked Tom Roylance, when the two had been some little time alone. "He looked black enough when I came up," and his young fellow laughed.

The question was a somewhat awkward one for Mary. She did not wish to make mischief between the two men. "Oh, no; only some nonsense or other has in his head," she answered.

"Well, so long as he doesn't think too much about you I don't care. What did he mean by having an interesting talk with you?"

"I was waiting for you at the gate where we generally meet when he came up and began to talk about one thing and another."

"Do you like Reuben Gorringe, Mary?" he asked, turning and looking sharply into her face.

"Like him?" she echoed, laughing, not quite at her ease. "What can it matter what a girl at the looms thinks of the manager of the mill?"

"Yes, that's all very well, if you don't want to answer the question," said Tom Roylance, with more than a touch of jealous suspicion. "But if you do, I don't; and for half-an-inch of yarn I'll tell him what I think. I know too much about Mister Reuben Gorringe. He's a clever chap, no doubt about that; but he's just a baby in some things. He's an ugly customer till he gets his way, though, and no mistake."

Tom Roylance was a lighthearted, careless, rather thoughtless young fellow, clever enough to have made rapid progress in his work, but, like many another, content to like fortune as it came, and lacking the strong determination to forego the pleasure of the moment in order to secure success. He was quick and shrewd, a good workman, steady and reliable, and capable, in the face of any great emergency, of showing plenty of free character. He was a general favorite both in and out of the mill, and Reuben Gorringe himself had taken to him. But he could not help meeting all the bothers of life with a laugh and a jest. He was careless enough to be his own enemy; but too straight and true to be an enemy of anyone else.

His relations with Mary Ashworth were characteristic. They had been together in the village from the time they were children; and there was a sort of tacit understanding between them that each belonged to the other, and that they were to be married some day; but nothing had ever been spoken openly about marriage. There were, indeed, hindrances to a marriage. Tom's father was alive, too crippled up to work, and thus dependent upon him; while Mary's mother forced the girl to maintain her, being herself idle, thrifless, and given to occasional wild fits of drinking.

"Do you think I'm a man to be fooled lightly?" he asked, in a quick, stern tone. Then he changed again, and spoke quietly, without giving the girl time to reply: "There's no need for pretense between us two. You've

The two discussed all their plans, troubles, worries and hopes together in the frankest way. The man turned to the girl for advice in many matters; while there was not an act of life in which Mary did not try to act as she judged Tom would have wished her. She had never thought of any man as a possible lover but Tom Roylance, and shaped all her life to accord with the idea that when he thought the time fitting, he would arrange for their marriage.

Neither spoke for a minute or two after Tom's last speech; he had no wish to carry the topic further, while Mary was anxious to get away from subject of Reuben Gorringe altogether; and when they spoke again it was of other matters, until the girl, thinking she could detect some symptoms of restlessness about her companion, began to question him.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## SAXON SWORDS.

Weapons That Are Always Found When a Saxon Grave Mound Is Opened.

Arms seem to have been borne almost universally by the Saxons—that is, by the freemen; serfs are believed not to have been allowed this privilege, which was held in some sort to be a badge of freedom, though no doubt they had rude arms served out to them during war; but if they returned home alive it is probable these arms had to be given over into the keeping of their lord until they were next required, says the Westminster Review.

We judge that personal weapons must have been very numerous, because it is seldom that a Saxon grave mound is opened without their being discovered; the things most commonly found are the heads of spears and a kind of javelin. They vary much in size and also in shape. There is the leaf-shaped, the lozenge, the barbed and the four-edged, all of which have been found in the grave mounds scattered over various parts of Europe.

The blades are of iron, and the length

as a rule, varies from ten to fifteen

inches; but they were found at Ozin-

gel, in Kent, twenty-one inches in

length; swords are much more rarely

found than spears, and axes are even

less often to be met with.

In the illuminated Saxon manuscripts the barbed spear is often to be seen, but it is very rarely found in the graves. There is a very curious one in Copenhagen, being only barbed upon one side and being leaf-shaped upon the other. The shafts appear to have been usually made of ash. The spearhead is usually found lying beside the skull, so often as to induce the belief that this was the recognized position in which to place it with regard to its departed owner; bosses of shields are frequently found upon the breasts of the dead; these bosses are generally conical in shape, and often have the handle yet remaining across the inner side.

The shield itself is rarely found, the wood having, as a rule, molded away. Most likely the reason that swords are so seldom found is because they were regarded as in some sort heirlooms, and passed from father to son; they would, therefore, be but very infrequently interred with the other weapons.

## Practical Magic.

Two queer-looking creatures sat at a table sipping their coffee. One of them, while talking, played carelessly with his spoon—a silver spoon. He turned it over and over, dropped it, picked it up again, and, last of all, when he thought nobody was looking, he stuck it into the shaft of his boot. But the other man saw it, and then, delicately lifting a spoon in his turn, he said:

"Gentlemen, shall I show you a pretty conjuring trick? I bet that I will place this spoon in my pocket (he suits the action to the word) and will take it out of this gentleman's boot." This he does. Whereupon he gravely took up his hat, bowed to the company and walked off.—N. Y. World.

Her First Thought.

A woman whose only son is about sixteen months old lives not far from a big mill in which there was a serious explosion a few days ago. A gentlewoman, calling upon her shortly afterward, inquired about her experience.

"Did you really feel the shock?" said he.

"Yes, indeed!" she replied. "It shook the house from cellar to garret."

"And what did you think was the matter?"

"I thought the baby had fallen out of bed," was the unexpected answer.—Minneapolis Tribune.

## Hospitality Overdone.

King Oscar of Sweden once passed through a little town which was festively decorated for the occasion.

Among the rest a huge transparency, affixed to a gloomy-looking edifice, attracted his attention. It bore the inscription: "Welcome to Your Majesty!" in gigantic characters. "What building is that?" the king inquired.

"That is the county prison, your majesty," replied one of the aldermen.

The king laughed, and was heard to observe: "That is carrying matters a little too far!"

## Sentiment.

"What's the matter wid yer, any how?" said Meandering Mike. "Yer acts like yer was goin' ter cry."

"I d'no," replied Plodding Pete. "Maybe I am. I've been thinking uv my wasted life, an' I'm homesick."

"Homesick! Well, I don't know but what it's natural. I'm gittin' kind o' that way myself. We hain't neither uv us been inside uv a jail for more'n six months."—Washington Star.

## The Requisite Qualifications.

"Sis, I think you had better shine my shoes, and wash the dishes," said a wealthy New Yorker to his sister, who moves in aristocratic circles.

"What do you mean by such non sense?" she asked.

"No nonsense about it. I see you are flirting with an Italian count. If you are going to marry him you ought to be sitting yourself for the position."

—Times-Sentinel.

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