Rainforth's Strange Case.

By WILL LISENBEE.

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Con tinued from last week. CHAPTER IV.

GERALD RAINFORTH'S STORY CONTINUED, I shall never forget the moments that I sat there holding the hand of the unconscious woman while the tide of life slowly flowed back into her veins. The place and the hour, the solemn ruins towering above us, grim and spectral, the weird moonlight giving a ghastly pallor to every object, all served to lend an aspect of unspeakable grandeur and wild desolation to the scene, yet I was oblivious to everything save the unconscious form before me.

She lay limp and pallid in the damp grass, one hand resting in the soft folds of exquisite lace upon her breast, her clinging garments showing a form so perfect, so matchless that it might have served as a model for even Phidias. One hand I held in mine and chafed it while I watched the color come faintly into her cheeks. Then her eyes opened, but there was that in their depths that indicated that she was not yet conscious. For only a moment she stared vacantly at space. Then her eyes closed again, and she appeared to relapse into a kind of stupor.

I now woke to the realization that something must be done for her at once. It would not do to remain idle when every moment might be precious as life, Again I glanced about the place, but the nearest habitation to be seen was the villa on the hill. To this I was determined to carry her, for I could never bear to leave her there alone while I went for assistance.

I lifted her tenderly in my arms and bore her swiftly up the slope, my heart beating in a wild tumult of conflicting emotions. How I reached the place I never knew. Even now it all seems like permission to call again. a dream. On reaching the villa I called loudly to the inmates, at the same time beating upon the door like one bereft of

I heard a rustling within. Then there came a voice from the window overhead. 'Who is there?'' The voice was Engfish and a woman's. I thanked heaven

"Here is some one in distress," I replied. "It is a lady. She is seriously

hurt, I fear. For heaven's sake come as

quickly as you can!" . I heard surprised voices within, then hurrying footsteps, and then after what seemed to me an age of delay the door was thrown open, and a middle aged

woman appeared. I still held the senseless burden in my arms, and the woman uttered a cry of horror as she saw me.

"This lady is burt and needs your help. I said hastily. "She is doubtless a sleepwalker. She was down at the old ruin. She slipped and fell upon the rocks"

"My God, it is Miss Grace!" The woman uttered the exclamation as she came forward, and then she threw her arms about the unconscious form I supported. "My poor, poor darling! Oh, tell me—is she killed?" And her voice died in a choking sob.

"Only stunned," I replied. "Please show me where I shall take her, and a physician must be brought."

"Thank heaven she is not killed," cried the woman. Then, turning, she 'led the way through a dark hall and into a wide, airy room, lit only by the moonbeams that streamed brightly through a high open window. At one end of the room was a wide, curiously fashioned couch, and upon this I deposited my burden.

The woman hastily lighted a lamp, and as she came forward to the couch I said:

"Some water and a little spirits, if you have any in the house.

She disappeared to execute the order, calling loudly to some other inmates of the house as she did so. In a short time she returned with a pitcher of water and some brandy, and kneeling beside the couch she bathed the unconscious woman's head and forced some of the

spirits between her lips. There was a hasty step in the hall, and the next instant a girl of some 16 years of age entered, a frightened look upon her face.

"Your mistress is hurt badly," said the woman beside the couch. "Call Beppo and send him for the doctor!"

The girl uttered a sobbing cry and ran to the hall door.

"Beppet Beppot" she called in a frightened voice.

In a few moments an Italian lad of about 16 appeared at the door.

"Go for Dr. Barcago at once! Your mistress is very ill!" she said. With a bow the youth disappeared to

execute the order. 'Thank heaven she is recovering'" came from the woman beside the couch.

I turned to the girl. "I shall remain till after the doctor arrives," I said. "I should like to know

the extent of her injuries before I return to the city." I strolled out upon the porch, leaving the two to care for the patient. I felt bewildered and dizzy. out the cool night air revived me. It seemed like an age till the doctor

arrived, but when he at last came he found the patient fully restored to consciousness. He remained a half bour, and when he came out said:

She is asleep now and resting quietly. She is not seriously hurt and will recover in a few days.

The woman who had admitted me to the house came out as the dector de-

We are very grateful to you," she said. "How fortunate that you brought her here! This is her home. Poor darling! She has been walking in her sleep again. It always happens when she is in great trouble,

She was in great trouble then? The words troubled me deeply.
"I am happy to have been of service

to her," I said. "I shall take the liberty to call and inquire after her tomor-

row." I handed her my card as I spoke. "Miss Dangerfield would be glad to thank you for your kindness in person, she said.

Then I took my departure and walked the entire distance to my lodgings, happier than I had ever been before in my

On the following evening I called at the villa. Miss Dangerfield was almost entire, y recovered, the servant informed me. Sie was in the drawing room and

would se me. There was a strange fluttering of my heart as I was ushered into her presence. I shall never forget the picture she made as my eyes encountered her. The curtains were closely drawn save at the eastern window, and a mellow twilight pervaded the room. She sat half reclining in an easy chair, her pale clive cheek, touched with the faintest coloring, resting against the crimson cashion. A velvet wrapper of the palest gold enveloped ber form with its rich folds, while the loose flowing sleeves half disclosed her arms of ivory whiteness.

She arose as I entered and held out her hand to welcome me. The touch of her hand thrilled me with a strange delight.

"I want to thank you, Mr. Rainforth, for your kindness last night," she said in a low, melodious voice as she resumed her seat. "It was an unfortunate circumstance-you were very kind"-

She must have noticed the appealing look in my eyes, for she stopped abruptly, and for a moment a faint crimson tinged her checks.

"I-I hope you won't mention it," faltered, hardly knowing what I said. "I hope you are recovered."

"Almost," she replied. "I trust shall be as well as ever in a few days." And then the topic was changed. What I said and did during the few

minutes that I remained I can never tell. The magnetism of her presence made me forgetful of everything save that when I went away I had received

I shall not give in detail all the incidents that followed. Suffice it to say that I soon became a frequent visitor to the Villa del Bargacco-such was the name of the villa in which Miss Dangerfield resided-and I think I must have been the happiest man in all Rome. Miss Dangerfield, as I soon learned, hadlost her father only a week previous to my meeting with her at the ruin. Isaac Dangerfield-such was her father's

name-was a wealthy New York broker, who for several years had, owing to ill health, been compelled to live abroad. A year before my arrival in Rome he had come there with his daughter Grace and three servants and bired the Villa del Bargacco, intending to remain there for two or three years at least.

One evening he had been found dead a small bruise upon his left temple, but as this could not have caused death it was supposed to be the result of striking his head against a piece of furniture as he fell.

As the story was told to me it brought vividly to my mind the strange dream, or vision, that had visited me in the studio at that very time. Had it really transpired as I had seen it? Had some one entered the room and struck Isaac Dangerfield as had appeared in my dream? Had there been murder done? If so, who was the murderer? These thoughts and many others-came to my affair. mind as I reflected over the incident.

Having no living relative now, Miss Dangerfield cared little where she made her home. Her old and trusted servants were with her, and she had decided to spend a few months at the Villa del Bargacco, then return to New York.

As the days went by a great happiness came into my life. She whom I worshiped with my whole soul loved me -she had promised to be my wife! It seemed that the very heavens had been opened to me as the sweet words of confession came from her lips. How can I ever describe the happiness that was mine in the days that followed? Shall I ever be able to fathom the

mystery that surrounds the events that followed? Heaven only knows. But God grant that I may, and that the shadow may be lifted from her life. More than once she had told me of the black shadow that lay over her past life. She had made a solemn promise to her father to never reveal the secret to any one except the one she should call her husband. But what did I care for the past? Was it not enough that she was going to be mine-that deep in my soul I knew she could be guilty of no

She was alone in the world and bad yielded to my earnest pleadings for a speedy marriage. And just one week before the time set for the happy event something occurred which changed the

whole course of my life. I was strolling in the vicinity of the Vitta Borghere gardens. It was evening. and the yellow stars had just begun to twinkle through the purple dusk. Suddonly I became aware that I was being followed. I caught a glimpso of the figure of a man stealing after me the same figure, I thought, that had once degged my footsteps as I was returning from the Vitta del Bargacco. I turnes quickly about to confront the man, but he slunk away and disappeared among the trees.

A half hour later as I was returning to my lodging some one suddenly leape; upon me from behind and struck me a blow with a knife, Though sorely wounded, I turned and grappled with the would be assassin, but seeing an officer approaching he slipped from my clutches and made his escape. Only a common robber, the officer said. The wound I received kept me confined to my room for two days, and then I went to the Vills del Bargacco. The house was closed. She whom I loved was gone-gone without a word to me-no

and, Beppo, and he could tell me notn-

The blow fell on me with crushing force. If I had been suddenly condemned to death, I could not have experienced a more hopeless despair. For days I went about as one in a dream, hardly caring whether I lived or died.

All that I could learn was that she had left of her own free will, taking her servants with her. She had not thought it proper to enlighten me, yet I was resolved to see her again-to hear from her own lips the sentence of my banishment.

By the aid of detectives I managed to trace her to Nice, then to Geneva and finally to Paris, where all trace was lost. For two years I searched for her, but in vain. Then I came to New York. There I learned that the former residence of Isaac Dangerfield in that city had been leased for a number of years, but that he had owned a country seat at Mayburg. I next came here, but learned that the place had never been occupied by its owner. I decided to remain in Mayburg for some time, hoping that she for whom I had vainly searched so long might come to the place to make it her

On the evening of Sept. 10 I received a cipher dispatch from a New York detective, whom I had employed, stating at Darkwood Hall.

That very evening I visited the hall and met Miss Dangerfield face to face. I shall never forget the look of speechless agony upon her face as I stood be-

fore her. She became as white as death and clutched the back of a chair for support. I held out my hand to her, but she drew back with a low, agonized

to stone.

"Grace, Grace, in the name of God, what does this mean?" I cried when I leave me without one word? Why do you shrink from me now?

My whole being shook with emotion as I spoke, and the ungovernable pulsing of passion within me fired my soul with frenzy. Her white face, with its lines of suf-

fering, her quick, gasping breath and citnched hands told me plainly of the agony within. There was a moment of Bot, then, there is her confession, and deathly silence, and then she spoke, "I will tell you," she said, her voice

from you at Rome because -- because I cidedly strange." had deceived you-because I was then

and am still the wife of another!" Then, like one who reels under a

heavy load, she staggered from the room, leaving me alone. Just how I made my way from the house I never knew. She was another's

Like one who has heard his death sen-During the remainder of the night I never closed my eyes in sleep. The next morning I learned that a murder bad been committed near Darkwood Hall. Later I was arrested, accused of committing the crime. Of the man who was murdered or the one who murdered him I know nothing. What evidence is to be brought against me I do not know. Shall I be made to suffer for another's crime? Despair has made me indifferent to life, yet something tells me that I shall yet be the means of clearing up the mystery that surrounds the dark

Here ended abruptly the manuscript Gerald Rainforth had given me.

CHAPTER V.

The contents of the manuscript I had just read impressed mestrangely. Sarely the young artist's experiences had been as strange as they were romantic. The object of his visit to Darkwood Hall on that fatal night was fully explained, yet the revelation he had made only served to deepen the veil of mystery that enshrouded the fair young mistress of the hall. Had she really committed the murder? No. I could not believe her capable of crime, set had sits not confessed to it in the epen court?

As I reflected over the matter the find ing of the human finger in the murdered man's valise and my subsequent discovery that a corresponding member was missing from the self accused's hand came foreibly to my mind.

As soon as I had finished reading the manuscript I went to visit the young artist in his cell at the jail. He was strangely moody and had little to say. Presently his manner changed.

"You have read the manuscript I gave you?" he asked. 'Yes," I replied.

"Can you believe that she ever committed the murder?"

"I cannot. There is a great mistake -a great mystery somewhere.'

You are right," he answered, "and I am going to'selve that mystery. know she is innecent. Look at this and tell me what you think of it." Here he produced a piece of paper about 8 inches square on which a drawing had been recently made. It was a pen drawingan excellent piece of work-showing t scene by moonlight. A icw, well trimmed hedge and a grove of trees. formed a shadowy background. In the foreground, the moonlight plainly revealing their features, Wers two mens one slightly behind the other, an updite ed knife in his hand. As I looked closet at the picture I started violently as I recognized the features of the one in advance as belonging to the man who had been so mysteriously murdered near Darkwood Han. The other, who held the uplifted knife, showed a man of about 50 years of age, with a short, stubby beard and dressed as a taborer.

"What does this mean?" I asked, turning to tierald in astonishment. Do you recognize either of the faces in the picture?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "One has the face servants with her—all save the Italian and form of the man who was mur-

"You are sure of it?" "Yes.

A bright light gleamed in the young artist's eve. "You knew the deceased then?" asked.

"No." "You have seen him"---

"Never."

"Yet you drew this picture?"
"Yes." "I don't understand-surely"-He interrupted me with a wave of his

"Listen," he said. "I will explain. I said that I would solve the mysterywould discover the real murderer, for whose crime I have been arrested. This is his picture!" As he spoke he placed his finger upon the picture of the man with the uplifted knife in the drawing. I looked at the speaker in amazement: Had he taken leave of his senses?

He saw the astonishment upon my

face and continued hastily: "I see you are surprised-I am often surprised at it myself—it is remething I cannot explain, but the scene you see on this paper came to me in the middle of the night following that on which the murder was committed. It has twice ment of all business. been repeated. Call it dream, vision or what you will, it so stamped itself upon my brain that I was able to reproduce it in the drawing as accurately as if it that Miss Grace Dangerfield had come had actually transpired before my very to Mayburg and would take up her abode eyes. Photographs of this drawing are I have hopes that the murderer will

soon be caught." I could not help but be impressed with the sanguine manner of the young artist; yet, being very skeptical, I could regard the matter in no other light than that of an illusion or the product of an excited imagination. But there was the likeness of the murdered man-that was I stood looking at her like one turned something that set my whole reasoning faculties into a tangle.

'Believing that Grace Dangerfield is fanocent, how do you account for her could find my speech. "Why did you confessing to have committed the

crime?" I asked. "It is all very strunge," he answered after a pause. "Why, it is absurd to think she is guilty, for as near as I care judge by the evidence in the case I must have been with her at the very moment that the murder was committed. I remember that the clock struck 8 just as I came through the hall after I left her. in addition to that there is the mystery of the missing finger. All taken tosinking almost to a whisper. "I fled gether makes the whole afair seem de-

"Have you ever thought that she might be laboring under a spell of temporary insanity?" I asked. "I have known in my own practice patients that labored under hallusinations of almost similar character."

"I have thought of that," he replied, and your words strengthen the belief

that such may prove to be the case." his old malady—the doctors said, had caused his death. There was, however, through the caused his death. There was, however, through the caused his death. Miss-Dangerfield, who was still lying in an unconscious condition at the meriff's home. I found a little change in her FAILURE. condition for the better.

So the days went by till a week had passed. Gence Dangerfield had recovered her consciousness, but wes-very weak. As yet she had spoken to no one regarding the musder, and I had given orders that she must not be allowed totalk on any subject till she was stronger. It was two weeks later before Grace

leave her bed! Then she was taken to the jail. whera she was confined in social to awarmthe sitting of the court. One evening about a week later Gerald sent for me and handed me meelegram dated att New York city and

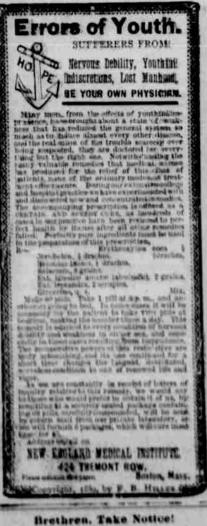
Dangerfield recovered sufficiently to

which contained the words: I have the man. Willing there at 4:30.

RAWSON "This is from my detective," said: Gerald, "and he has captured the murderer. But this is not all the good news I have to telli you." he continued. "Grace less just sent me this. Read it it will explain many things that have puzzled us both."

As he spoke he handed me some sheets of paper closely written in sine, round hand. Unfolding the manuscript, I read as-follows:

(To be continued.)



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