Rainforth's Strange Case.

By WILL LISENBEE.

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(Continued from last week)

GRACE DANGERFIELD'S STORY. The secrets and sorrows of my life I have thought never to reveal. It is othing I shrink from as from death, But to remain silent now would be to rease the weight of sorrow which I an already compelled to bear and work on injustice to others.

Is the hand that pens these lines guilty of murder? Heaven only knows! But I shall begin at the first and tell the whole story - and what a story of sorrow and anguish! Shall I ever recover from its effects? I hardly know how to begin, my brain is so bewildered. Perhaps I shall soon be insane. There are times when I almost hope that I the torturing memories that beset my brain. But let me come to my story.

I was born in Cuba of English parents. At the age of 10 I lost my mother. My father was a well to do merchant in Havana, but when I was 17 years of age he became hopelessly involved in debt, and ruin was inevitable. One of his largest creditors was a man of the name of Eugenio Sanchez, a merchant who had been a frequent guest at my father's house. He was a man of about 30, tall and dark and of winning manners, yet there was something about bim that impressed me unfavorably.

One evening my father called me to had proposed for my hand in marriage, and unless I consented to become his of doors as beggars. Don Engento, he said, would provide me with all the Juxuries wealth could afford; that I even marthat brief season of happiness. must accept him-it was our only

chance to avert rain. I was horrified at the very thought, and with a flood of tears and expostulations I implored my father to never mention the subject to me again. He he was deeply moved. In a week he again broached the subject to me, urging me to reconsider my hasty decision.

"I can never consent to become his wife," I replied, though it caused me great pain to disobey his will.
"Not even to save your old father

I made no reply, but wept in silence. I saw his face grow white. Then stooping to kiss me he left the room, reeling like one who has received a heavy blow. The look of utter despair upon his face frightened me. I arose and followed him to his room. I entered noiselessly, and as I did so I saw that he had a pis-

d threw my arms about him, and n, sobbing hysterically and hardly knowing what I did, I promised to be-



With an agonized cry I ran forward and threw my arms about him, me the wife of Don Eugenio—a promhe that was destined to blight my life and render me miserable the rest of my

In three months we were married and sailed for Europe, where we were to spend a year. On the very day that we sailed my father received notice that an uncle in New York had died, leaving him a large fortune. But it had come too late. The sacrifice had been made.

We went direct to Paris, where we were to spend the winter, and there for the first time I made the discovery that he whom I called my husband was a sambler and a dronkard. The discovery was a severe blow to me, but I bere it in allence. I also soon became aware that Don Eugenio was not as wealthy my father had supposed, and we had sot been in Paris three months when he announced that an unsuccessful speculation in some mines in Mexico had rendered him almost a beggar.

He now gambledand drank incessantby and associated with the vilest class. Our sportments at the Hotel Bristol had to be abandoned for cheaper quarters, and so matters went on from bad to worse. Den Eugenio was no longer the amooth tengued cavalier I had known him in Havana, but a cruel, exacting despetie tyrant. His treatment of me was cruel and heartless, and beaven only knows what I suffered, Every farthing we had to live upon now came from my father. As the days went by Den Eugenio grew more and mere eruel in his treatment of me and at last manded that I write to my father for \$10,000 with which he proposed to start a gambling device, and when I refused his request he flew into a violent rage

and struck me a cruel blow. I fell anconscious upon the floor, and when I recovered I found that he had shen all the money I had and left me. By disposing of some of my jewels I obed enough money to enable me to ave the hateful place, and I immedi-uly sailed for New York, where my or was now living. He was almost chen hearted at the cruel treatment -- sived, and he reproached himself

bringing it upon me.

On reaching my father's home I fell ill of a fever, and it was a month before I recovered. Then I learned that Don Eugenio had followed me from Paris, but the vessel in which he sailed had been lost at sea, and his name appeared among those who had gone down with the ill fated ship.

"I joy in no one's death," said my father, "but I thank heaven that you are now free from one who was a monster and a very devil." Then he told me that he had recently discovered that Don Eugenio had been connected with a band of smugglers in Havana and New Orleans, and that a price had been set upon his head. My father felt keenly the disgrace my marriage with such a man would reflect upon us, and he begged me to keep the matter forever a secret and to assume my maiden name. My father's health was now very badheart disease, the doctors said-and he was advised to go abroad-to Italy or to

We spent the next two years in Venchall. Anything would be preferable to ice, and I began to feel almost happy again. Then we took a tour through Belgium, finally returning to Italy and leasing the Villa del Bargacco at Rome. But a great sorrow soon came to me, for here it was that my father died. We found him lying in the parlor dead one evening, just after I had left his side. The blow was a terrible one to me, for I was now left utterly alone in the world, with no one to care for me. I think I should have soon died of wretchedness, but shortly after this I met him who awakened in me for the first time a love that filled my whole soul. From my first meeting with Gerald Rainforth a strange new life seemed awakened in Mim and told me that Eugenio Sanchez me. I speak of this plainly and candidly now, as one should who may be near to death and desires to conceal nothing. wife we should be speedily turned out How happy I was in the weeks that followed! It seems strange now that the black shadow of coming sorrow did not

We were to be married in March, and now it was the last of February. Yet 1 had not told him of the dark secret that hung over my past life. Why have I put off telling him? Heaven only knows. I did not intend to deceive him. I had said nothing in reply, but I saw that made up my mind to tell him the whole story when he came again, but just then the blow fell.

One evening about 9 o'clock as I was sitting alone in my room the figure of a man suddenly entered and came and stood before me. I arose, startled, and was about to cry out in alarm, but the from ruin and utter beggary?" he asked. cry died upon my lips. I stood as if I made no reply, but wept in silence. frozen to the spot. The intruder was Don Eugenio Sanchez, my husband!

CHAPTER VI.

GRACE DANGERFIELD'S STORY CONCLUDED. As I stood there facing the man who had caused me all the wretchedness I had ever seen, and who had now reto in his hand. He quickly concealed turned as one from the dead to complete as he saw me enter, but I knew in an the destruction of my life's happiness, I and I fied from the room.

look with a bitter, speering laugh that went like a knife to my very soul.

"You are not glad to see your dear husband return from a watery grave?" he said in a sarcastic tone, seeming to revel in my agony. "I did not perish at sea, as was reported, but was picked up by a passing vessel and taken to New Zealand, but I have managed to get back. I know it was very unobliging in me not to have gone to the bottom of the sea, but I have never been noted for my obliging ways. I traced you to this place several months ago, but when I came here I found your father alone, and he received me in a very bad manner and tried to force me to leave the house. I struck him, and he felt down dead upon the floor, but it was not the blow that killed him." A cry of agony escaped my lips, and

I clutched a chair for support. But he only smiled at my agitation.

"I then went away," continued my persecutor, "for I did not know but I might be accused of having committed | the house. murder. But I have returned, you see, and just in time to prevent you from committing bigamy by marrying another. I know you will thank me for this, but let me come to the object of my visit. I don't suppose that after the little trouble we had we could ever live in harmony together, but I must have money, and you must get it for me. This wild goose chase you have led me has about exhausted my supply of the needful. Come, now, I must have \$1,-000 at least. That will do for the present, and if you give it to me I'll not bother you with my presence, but refuse, and I'll claim you as my wife"

He paused abruptly and stood looking at me, a smile of evil triumph apon his

Despair, repulsion and indignation swelled in turn in my bosom. With a mighty effort I found my voice.

"Leave my presence at once and for-ever!" I cried. "You seem to forget that you are an outlaw as well as a heartless villain! Leave this house this very moment, or I will ring the bell for my servants and have you handed over to

The smile faded from his face, giving

place to a look of furious rage, "Ah, that is your game, is it?" he hissed. "If you dare to make the slightest attempt to summon the servants, I'll strike you dead at my feet!"

He came toward me as he spoke, his face white with rage, I drow back with a shudder and attempted to fly from the room, but he caught me in a grasp of his hand over my mouth. I struggled in that state. Then she may be laborviolently for a few moments, and then I | ing under some peculiar hallucination,

When I recovered consciousness, I was lying in bed, with the servants and a tell me about the real criminal being doctor bending over me. There was a | caught? Do you really believe that such smell of chloroform in the room, I knew then that Don Eugenio had chloroformed me, and, oh, beavens! the finger on which I had worn a diamond ringthe gift of my mother—had been cut from my hand! The flond—for if ever thang was a floud in human shape it was | that subject, but when I offered \$5,000

bitterly for the part he had taken in Don Eugenio-had taken nearly \$1,000 reward for the arrest of the man corfrom a bureau, where I had placed it on less been unable to remove the ring from my finger and had removed the member

"It was the work of a robber," I said, and that was all I told. My wounded hand was dressed, and the following day I took two of my servants and fled from Rome. I could never dare to meet him again now, and in my misery and de-



"PU see you again, my little wildcat." spair I wanted to escape forever from the parts of the world that had known me before. I went to Nice, then to Geneva, from there to Paris, and from there to Switzerland, where I spent two years in an obscure Alpine village. Then I came to New York and direct to Darkwood Hall-a country seat my father had purchased some years before-and here I thought to make my home.

But on the very next day after my arrival the evil genius of my life, Don Eugenio, made his appearance at the hall. It was about dark, and I was in the grounds cutting some flowers from the shrubbery when he suddenly came and stood before me.

"We meet again after a long separation," he said. "Have you no welcome for your long absent husband?"

He advanced toward me. The sight of his swarthy, evil face filled me with of Grace Dangerfield and sailed for aversion and desperation. He should Europe to be gone for years. I returned never lay his hands upon me again-I was determined on that point-I would take his life first. I raised the stiletto with which I had been cutting the flowers as he advanced. There was murder in my soul, and for a moment I think I was very near insanity.

He must have divined what was in my soul, for he drew back with a low, bitter laugh.

"I'll see you again, my little wildcat," he said and slunk away through the shrubbery. Just then a dizziness came over me, and I staggered into the house and threw myself upon a lounge. It all seems like a dream now. But the next thing I remember was that Gerald Rainforth stood before me, and then I told him the secret that I should have told him years before. He did not speak, hand I waited for him to return. Pres-

Then a sudden wild and insane thought came to me-I would kill Don Eugenio! Yes, I would kill him-heaven would forgive me the act-and then-I arose and groped about the dark room till I found the dagger which had fallen from my hand. Then I threw myself upon a couch and tried to think coherently. Was I becoming insane? Yes, I should soon be mad now! The thought brought a kind of triumph to my soul. How my brain throbbed! Strange lights seemed into the weeds close by and burried dancing before my vision, and thenwas it a stupor that overcame me? There was a short space of oblivion following. How long I remained in that state I do not know. In a dream I thought I had stabbed Don Engenio, and he lay dead at my feet! Was it a dream? I woke with a cry of terror. I was standing in the darkness outside the gate, the dagger clasped in my hand. Had I already committed murder? I stood for a moment stupefied with horror. Then I threw the knife from me and fled into

The next morning the incidents of the night all appeared like some troubled dream. Then came the horrifying news that a man had been found murderedstabbed to death-near Darkwood Hall! Had I committed the deed? Was it Don Eugenio who had been murdered? I must know the truth and at once. I disguised myself in a suit of the coachman's clothes and went to the place where they had taken the murdered man. One glance told me that it was Don Eugenio. Then I was his murderess! How I managed to get away from the place and return home I never knew. For the next few days I remember little that transpired. When at last I heard that another had been arrested, suspected of having committed the crime, I hastened to the court to make a confes-

This is my story. Am I guilty of murder? God only knows! But I cannot suffer much langer. It is more than I can bear.

Here ended the lines she had written. As I laid the manuscript aside Gerald

cast an eager grance at my face. "You do not think her guity?" he anked.

"No-never!" "Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently, chaping my hand warmly in his own. "It must have been hours after the murder was committed before she left the house," I replied. "Hers was simply a somnambulistic state brought on by overexcitament, and it is impossible I tried to cry out, but he pressed | that she could have committed the deed

> ts the case, and what did the detectives say regarding the picture?" "Of course they smiled at me when told them of the picture and explain.d how it had been produced, and it was plain that they considered me insane on

which will pass away when her health

is fully restored. But what is this you

responding with the picture they agreed that very day, and fied. He had doubt- to commence the search. Yes, I think they have caught the murderer. Thank beaven, this mystery may yet be cleared

After an hour's conversation with the prisoner I quitted the jail.

That evening Detective Rawson returned with the strange man he had taken. But while on the way to Mayburg the prisoner had attempted to escape by leaping from the moving train and had been hadly injured. He was brought to the Redfield inn in a dying condition. He was a man of about 50, with a short, stubby beard, and bore a perfect resemblance to the picture drawn by Gerald Rainforth. At first he was silent and would say nothing, but at last, knowing he could live but a short time, he made a confession.

His confession was taken before a notary and three witnesses and was as fol-

"My name is Mark Leon. Most of my life has been passed in New Orleans. I am a stone cutter and am a poor man. Ten years ago my wife died, leaving me an only child-a daughter 16 years old. I had managed to give her a good education in spite of the fact that I had nothing save what I carned by working at my trade. At the age of 18 she went to live with a family of the name of Bentley, where she had accepted a situation as governess. While there she made the acquaintance of Don Eugenio Sanchez, a rather dissipated young man, but wealthy. He succeeded in winning her affections and induced her to elope with him. A bogus marriage ceremony was performed, and they left for New York, where they lived for six months under an assumed name.

"He treated her cruelly, and finally

telling her of the duplicity he had practiced he left her and went to Cuba. My daughter returned home broken hearted, and in three weeks she died. I then swore to kill Don Eugenio should I ever lay eyes upon him. I sold all the property I had and went to Havana in search of the villain, but learned that he had just been married to a lady of the name to New Orleans and from there came to New York city, where I was employed by the Excelsior Building company at stone cutting. About two months ago I was sent by the company to the Bedford quarries, two miles from this place. On the evening of the 10th of September I was coming to Mayburg on foot. I had stopped to rest in the shade of a tree near the road when I saw a man pass by carrying a valise. I recognized him as Don Eugenio Sanchez, and I followed him, determined to be revenged upon him. He did not see me, and about sunset he came to Darkwood Hall and entered the grounds. I hid in the shrubbery close to the road and waited for him. I had no weapon but a large pocketknife, but taking this in my left him and hid myself in the bushes for a short time; then seeing no one near I walked on to Mayburg, avoiding the road. As I was leaving the town and just as I was passing the Redfield inn I heard voices behind me, and fearing that it was some one coming to arrest me I stepped into the shadows of the house. The men entered the inn, and then remembering that I still had the bloody knife in my possession I threw it

"I at first thought of quitting the place, but seeing that such an action might create suspicion I returned to the quarries. A few days later the company for which I worked sent for me to return to the city. I went immediately and remained there till I was arrested. I am not sorry that I committed the deed. It was, in my opinion, only an act of justice."

Such was the confession of Mark Leon. The next morning at 8 o'clock he died. So the great Mayburg murder

mystery was solved at last. Gerald and Grace have been married several years as I write these pages, and the joys that now glorify their lives are more than a compensation for the suffering they both endured in the dark days of the past.

My story is done. It is a strange story, but who can penetrate the veil of mystery that surrounds our very exist-

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