

THE TEMPLE of BEAUTY

Adventures of CLARE KENDALL Woman Detective

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BILLY, I WISH you'd tell me what's in that."

Clare Kendall laid a half-smoked, gold-tipped cigarette on the table of Dr. Lawson's laboratory.

Lawson looked at her a moment quizzically.

"So," he smiled half in mockery, "is this the latest?"

"Don't worry, my dear boy," returned Clare ignoring his banter, "I can smoke a cigarette, if I want to—only not this kind. Tell me what is in it; then I'll tell you how I got it. A great deal hangs on what is in that cigarette—perhaps the life and certainly the reputation—Oh, well, tell me first what's in it, Billy, and I'll introduce you to a mystery that involves debutantes and debauches, tangos and trots, a *thé dansant*, a cabaret, a beauty parlor—Oh, my head's in a whirl from it all, yet. Let me rest here in this easy chair while you make the analysis."

Clare looked fagged as she pressed her fingers on the big blue veins that stood out on her temples and smoothed back a few stray wisps of hair.

"Going in for the white lights? You'll be investigated—or else you are an investigator—which?"

There was just a trace of disapproval in his tone, for Dr. Lawson, like most men, was inclined to the puritanical where a girl for whom he really cared was concerned.

"Billy," Clare confided, "I've gone as far in this case as I dare, alone. I can trust you and you will have to help me with the rest of it. Won't you hurry with the analysis?"

She was leaning forward, speaking earnestly. "Norma Moore, the beauty and heiress, has disappeared. Her family has engaged me to find her with as little publicity and scandal as possible. Now will you hurry?"

"Norma Moore!" incredulously.

"Yes," cried Clare with impatience, "and while you're standing there—Oh, men never have time to gossip, do they?—any of a thousand things may be happening. Please hurry."

While Lawson was busy with test tubes and beakers, Bunsen burners and glass-stoppered bottles, Clare with half-closed eyes strove to collect herself and to retrace in her mind the bewildering phantasmagoria of the events of the past few hours.

IT BEGAN with her own cosy little office downtown.

A very much worried, middle-aged couple were seated beside her desk, brought there, as they lost no time in saying, by the mysterious vanishing of their daughter after the Charity Ball of the night before. The Landon Moores, like many other wealthy people, had first sought a private detective, rather than the police and therefore the newspapers.

"Do you think it can be a case of aphasia or amnesia, or whatever they call it—Norma wandering about somewhere, perhaps not remembering even her own name?" Mrs. Moore asked anxiously.

"It's possible," Clare nodded noncommittally.

She had found it best never to alarm a client needlessly and Mrs. Moore's own suggestion had been quite sufficiently alarming.

"Let me see," repeated Clare. "It was about one o'clock and you thought she was sitting out the

dance. Some one has told you she left in a taxicab, but her wraps were still with the maid. Now, that, I understand, is not uncommon when the younger set find dancing too slow at society functions. They run off for a tango or two at a nearby cabaret. An escort's opera coat, a cab, back again, and no one is the wiser. Only Norma did not come back."

"A friend has told us," ventured Mr. Moore, "that she was at the Montmartre with three others, two young men and another woman. But I can't say that we recognized any of the others from the meagre description."

"**T**HE Montmartre!" exclaimed Clare in surprise at the mention of the famous all-night restaurant.

"Yes, but we are not at all sure of it. It is only a rumor. This friend told us that he and his wife had stopped there to see how bad it was, according to all this agitation now. They thought they saw some one who looked very much like Norma—that is all."

"You have no other clew?"

"Not even a hint at one."

"Had Norma any love affair?" inquired Clare, casually, adding, "Anything that preyed on her mind, that—er—antagonized her at home?"

Mrs. Moore answered quickly. "Merely, no—no

belong to the younger set or the smart set—I call it the old fast set. No, I don't see how that could have had anything to do with it, for she had n't seen him since we went abroad last season."

"She had made no preparation for leaving home?" queried Clare.

"None whatever and she has sent no word to us."

"You don't think—she could have been kidnapped—by those white slavers?" broke in Mrs. Moore tremulously.

"I can't express any opinion, yet," replied Clare. "Is that all you can think of?"

"All," repeated Mr. Moore sadly.

"Then," Clare rose and went with them to the door, "I shall let you know the moment I discover anything, and I will start on the case at once."

Clare sat down to think. It was evidently one of those mysterious disappearances such as now and then agitate the public and baffle the police, disappearances which are sudden, inexplicable, and lacking in purpose. Ruling out the usual cause of disappearance, the commission of a crime, she made mental note of five possible explanations—elopement, suicide, accident, murder and kidnapping. Which was the explanation of the sinister mystery? What way led to breaking this silence, inexplicable as death?

She knew that already she had the assistance of the most efficient detective force in the world, the inquisitive public. Try as they would, the Moores could never keep the disappearance a secret. Could Norma?

Clare had not reckoned wrongly. Within an hour a quick series of telephone calls had developed at least a starting point. It was an easy matter to find the taxicab in which the party had left the ball.

IMEDIATELY Clare hurried up to the company's garage.

"Four people left the ball, you say," she noted as the driver told his story.

"Yes'm. They asked me to wait."

Clare was peering inside the car. On the floor was a large cocoa mat. Evidently it was too early in the morning to clean it, or it had escaped attention, at least. There, in the mat were trodden several ends of cigarettes. Clare reached down and picked them up. Perhaps they might lead to something.

"They asked you to wait. After that where did you go?"

"I had n't long to wait. In about fifteen minutes they came out of the Montmartre. Then they separated, one couple, the older woman and the young fellow with the dark hair, went in my

cab. I don't know where the other fellow and girl went. They hailed another cab that was passing. No, I don't know the number. There is n't much chance of finding out, either."

"Where did your party go?"

"They did n't go back to the ball. I set them down on Forty-sixth street, near Fifth avenue. That's all I know."

There was no use in pursuing the inquiry in this direction further. Without waiting Clare hurried over to the office of the society paper, *Gossip*.

Within another hour, after a talk with the editor, she had a pretty clear idea that the other at least of the young men was Sinclair Lyons, a friend of Delroy, while the woman seemed to tally best with the



It was that disguised voice on the other side of the partition at the beauty parlor

indeed! Norma always made a confidante of me."

"But, Julia," put in Mr. Moore, "there was that young Delroy—"

"Oh, Landon," frowned his wife, "that was nothing! Besides, that was over a year ago."

"Delroy—Jack Delroy?" prompted Clare, recognizing the name of a well-known clubman and man about town. "Tell me about it. Nothing that you may think too trivial may not be of value."

"Why, she was almost engaged to him a year ago," replied Mrs. Moore slowly, "but we opposed the match and—Oh, there was nothing to it! She was just out of school then and Mr. Delroy appealed to—to a sort of sense of romance, I suppose. But he is ten or fifteen years older than she. He does n't