

THE MARATHON MYSTERY

A STORY OF MANHATTAN.

BY BURTON E. STEVENSON

Author of "The Holladay Case," "Cadets of Gascony," Etc.

She was standing by a window, looking out across the waters of the bay, and she did not turn for an instant—not, indeed, until Godfrey had closed the door carefully behind him. I have seen few women more regal, more magnificent, yet there was about her—in her face, in the droop of her figure—such an air of utter misery, of exquisite suffering, that, after the first moment, one forgot to admire her in the desire to be of service.

"You wish to see me?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Yes, Miss Croymond," replied Godfrey, more gently perhaps than he had intended to speak. "This is Mr. Lester," he added, "who has been engaged to defend Mr. Drysdale."

She acknowledged the introduction with the faintest of bows.

"I hope Mr. Lester will be successful," she said, in the coldest of tones. One would have thought her a mere chance acquaintance of my client.

I saw Godfrey looking at her with searching eyes, and his face hardened.

"We mean to be successful," he said curtly. "You may as well ask us to sit down, Miss Croymond, because our business here will take some time and I am sure it will try you to stand."

She raised her eyebrows with a little gesture of astonished disdain.

"Really," she began; then her eyes met his, burning with meaning. "Oh, very well," she said faintly, and sank into the chair nearest her.

I felt my cheeks flush with indignation at Godfrey's manner; surely this woman had enough to bear already! I opened my lips to protest, but she silenced me with a glance.

"Now, Miss Croymond," he continued, in the same coldly imperative tone, "I intend to speak to you bluntly and directly. We have beaten about the bush too long already. I see that you are not inclined to deal frankly with us—you have not been frank with us from the first—you have sought to blind us, to throw us off the track. Therefore I shall tell you what we already know, in order that you may realize how useless it is for you to try to hold us off. We're going to see that the guilty man is punished, not for this crime alone, but also for that other one at the Marathon, of which you were the only witness. You shall not be permitted to keep him from justice a day longer."

She raised her head and looked at him, her face white as marble and as immobile; but she did not speak. She grew livid and more livid as he continued, watching him with starting eyes, and at last, I thought, she would collapse; but I did not know her strength of will.

"In the first place," went on Godfrey evenly, never removing his eyes from hers, "we know that this man Tremaine inveigled your sister into a school-girl elopement and marriage; that she was rescued from him; she thought him dead; she married Delroy; came to New York; Tremaine followed her and attempted the extortion of blackmail; you met him at the Marathon; while you were talking Thompson interfered, and Tremaine killed him, escaping before the officers arrived. You did not know Thompson, but you saw Simmonds and me take out his pocketbook; you heard me read a line or two from one of a packet of clippings we found there, and while we were in the bedroom, you took those clippings from the body and hid them under the edge of the carpet."

She breathed a long sigh and sat erect again.

"Ah," she said with a little smile, "I was beginning to fear you, all that seemed so supernatural. But now I see where your information came from."

"It is correct, then?" asked Godfrey, a gleam of triumph flashing across his face.

She glanced at him in surprise.

"Oh, I understand; it was merely theorizing. Well, it was very cleverly done, Mr. Godfrey."

"And it is correct?" he persisted.

She hesitated yet a moment, but there was no denying the importunity of his gaze.

"Yes," she answered; "yes."

Godfrey leaned in his chair with a long sigh of relief. He had won the battle.

"Miss Croymond," he said, "I'm going to reward you for your frankness by telling you something which I had intended to keep secret, a while longer, just to punish you. Your sister never was the wife of Tremaine and has nothing whatever to fear from him; he has no hold on her at all. She has never been anybody's wife but Mr. Delroy's."

She was staring at him with widely opened eyes, her hands clasped above her heart.

"Oh, if it were really so!" she cried.

"It is so," he replied.

"If it is so," repeated Godfrey, and took a little yellow envelope from his pocket. "Read this," and he unfolded a sheet of paper and held it toward her.

She took it with trembling hand and read the message written upon it; but seemingly without understanding it.

"It's a cable," he explained, "from the Record's correspondent at Dieppe. Your pardon, Lester," he added with a fleeting smile; "I forgot to show it to you on the trip out. Please read it aloud, Miss Croymond."

"The widow of Victor Charente," she read in a low voice, "died here February 21, 1901. Had never married again. She looked up, her brows slightly knit.

"Well," said Godfrey, "Victor Charente is the real name of Tremaine. He married that girl many years before he met your sister. She was his legal wife. Your sister never was. She was never the legal wife of anyone except Richard Delroy."

She understood now, and the glad tears burst forth unrestrainedly. Indeed she made no effort to restrain them, but only rocked back and forth, pressing the message against her heart.

"Thank God!" she sobbed.

"God!" and then she started up from her chair. "I must tell her," she said, "at once. If you knew how she has suffered! She must not be left in that cruel position an instant longer."

"Very well," agreed Godfrey. "We will wait for you here."

She disappeared through a door at the farther end of the room, but in a moment came softly back again.

"She is asleep," she said. "I will wait until she wakes. What a joyful awakening it will be!" and she sat down again. She wiped away the tears, but her eyes were still shining. Godfrey gazed at her with a face full of emotion.

"Now, Miss Croymond," he began, "you've told me that my theory's correct, but there are three or four points I should like you to help me clear up, if you will."

"I shall be glad to if I can," she answered, and smiled at him, her eyes

brimming again. "You've lifted such a load from me, Mr. Godfrey, that I'd do almost anything to show my gratitude."

Why, looking at her, did his face change—softer, harder? Why did his hands tremble so? It was over in an instant; yet I had caught a glimpse of his secret, understood it.

"Now, Miss Croymond," he said, "I was glad to do it—I was deeply pleased when that message came this morning."

"You've been kinder to me than I deserved," she said; and I more than half agreed with her. How, with his eyes before her, could she fail to understand? Perhaps she did understand—I was never sure.

"In the first place, then, Miss Croymond, he went on, in a different tone, "how did your father succeed in getting your sister away from Tremaine?"

"They had gone to Paris," she answered, "and in two or three days Edith had awakened from her dream—she saw something in the man which terrified her, and she wrote a pitiful letter to her father, who went over to Paris at once, and finally succeeded in buying the man off. Father paid him 50,000 francs, I believe—perhaps it was the fact that he knew he was not really Edith's husband—that he himself had committed a crime—which made him take it. He agreed to leave the country, and in the following December he wrote father that he was about to sail for Martinique in a ship called the Centaur. He said he intended to buy a plantation in Martinique and make that his home. In February, we learned that the Centaur had been lost, with all on board. After eight years, it seemed certain that he was dead, and Edith felt free to marry again."

"Was Mr. Delroy informed of this?"

"Certainly not," he said, "as any good man would."

"Pardon me for asking the question, Miss Croymond; but it was necessary. When was it you first learned that Tremaine was still alive?"

"Well, you nearly two months ago, Edith brought him a letter to me. She was wild, distracted, ready to kill herself—that is what I have feared every day since. She loves Mr. Delroy, Mr. Godfrey, and yet she believed herself that she met him in that apartment house. I knew she could not hear such a meeting, and yet he must be seen. I offered to go in her stead; I had some wild idea of appealing to his better nature, of persuading him—"

She stopped, silenced by her own emotion.

"That, of course, would not have altered the fact that your sister was his wife," observed Godfrey.

"No; that was the terrible part of it; nothing could alter that. There must, of course, be a separation; but we thought we would settle that problem after we had settled the other. So I went. He opened the door to me, and I had never seen him, and I confess his appearance and manner were not at all what I expected. He did not look in the least like a scoundrel, nor did he act like one. He listened to me with attention and seeming respect. He even appeared moved. Oh, I know now what a hypocrite he was; I know that he was laughing at me; that he was planning something deeper, more villainous. I had brought \$1,200 with me—all that we could gather together at the moment—and I pressed it upon him, urging him to take it and go away and we would send him more. He pretended to refuse the money, to protest that it was not in the least what he wanted, but I compelled him to take it. And just as I was hoping that I prevailed with him, the door of the bedroom opened and a horrible drunken man staggered out."

"He struck at Tremaine again, but I later sprang away and in an instant he had brought the pipe down upon his head. Thompson fell like a man, then that fiendish look flashed into Tremaine's face a second time; he snatched out a revolver—I dimly understood what was coming—indeed, I had my own revolver in my hand—and I fired at him, but my shot went wild, while his—"

She stopped and buried her face in her hands, overcome for the moment by a terrible spectacle her words had evoked.

She controlled herself by an effort; took down her hands—

"He put his pistol away and stepped over very close to me.

"Why did you take the clippings, Miss Croymond?" asked Godfrey after a moment.

"From what you read of them, I suspected how vitally they concerned my sister. That was a secret, I felt, which must be kept at any hazard. It was done without consideration, on the spur of the moment, or I should never have had the courage to do it at all."

"And why did you hide them under the carpet?"

She laughed outright—"The load was lifted—she was fast becoming her usual self."

"I had a wild idea that you were going to search me. I saw that loose

place in the carpet the instant I arose with the clippings in my hand. Once I had put them there, I had no chance at all to get them again."

Godfrey nodded.

"You tried to get them the day after the inquest, didn't you?"

"Yes; but the janitor was so afraid of me that he wouldn't even let me go up there."

"And there weren't any papers?"

"No; that was a lie. I saw I must invent one—that I must offer some explanation of my presence there."

Did Tremaine keep his promise?

"No; to bother my sister? Yes; he mentioned it again only to assure me that the past was dead—that he would never revive it."

"But how could you admit his presence here?"

"He would prevent it? It was Mr. Delroy who brought him. We weren't strong enough to tell him the whole story."

"You mean you told him part of it?"

"There has been a virtual separation ever since Mr. Tremaine appeared."

Godfrey paused reflectively.

"Why were you so agitated," he continued finally, "when you were asked to identify Jimmy the dude, at the inquest?"

"Because I did identify him."

"You did?"

"Yes—as the man I had seen talking to the janitor in the lower hall. Let me explain, Mr. Godfrey. When I was asked suddenly for a description of the murderer, I was taken aback; I endeavored to think, to collect myself—and I remembered the man I had passed in the hall. Without stopping to consider—wishing only to disarm suspicion—I described him roughly as I remembered him. When I was confronted with him at the inquest next day, I instantly realized what I had done—I had implicated an innocent man—and it turned me a little faint for a moment."

"Had you ever met him?"

"Met him?" she repeated in surprise. "Why, no."

"But he seemed to know you."

"Oh!" and she laughed again. "I had a letter from him next day—a letter full of gratitude—touching even. It seems that my sister and I had helped his family—a mother and sister—without knowing it, while he was away—"

"At Sing Sing—he's the most expert burglar in New York, but he's got his good points," he said, "I was taking Thompson home that night."

"Yes—he wanted to do anything he could to help me. I intend to look up Jimmy."

"Do—if you can reform him, the New York police force will be mighty grateful."

"I'm going to try," she said, and I rather envied Jimmy.

Godfrey leaned back in his chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

"It clears up that affair pretty well," he said; "and that brings us to the second and more serious one. And first, Miss Croymond, I want to ask you if you think it was just the right thing to let them march Jack Drysdale to prison when a single word from you might have saved him?"

CHAPTER II.

A GATHERING OF THREADS.

"From me?" repeated Miss Croymond blankly. "A single word from me? I do not understand you, Mr. Godfrey."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Godfrey with emphasis, "that you do not know where Mr. Drysdale was Monday night; that you were not yourself the cause of his leaving the house?"

She was staring at him with distended eyes.

"I think!" she repeated hoarsely, after a moment. "Mr. Godfrey, I will tell you something of which I had deep regrets, when 'Bang! Bang!' went the house that evening, he deliberately broke an appointment he had made with me—an appointment which he had prayed for. He had happened to hear Mr. Tremaine make certain proposals to me—in short, she hesitated, and then proceeded steadily, with raised head—I may as well tell the whole truth—since the evening of the first tragedy, Mr. Tremaine has been persecuting me with his attentions. At the time, I thought he merely insulting—I see now that he may have been in earnest."

"I don't in the least doubt that he was in earnest," agreed Godfrey. "Mr. Drysdale, then, overheard him ask you to let him have a chance to prove it."

"Yes—just that."

"But he also heard you refuse, no doubt?"

"Oh, yes," she said, smiling and coloring a little; "he heard me refuse in the most emphatic manner. My refusal provoked Mr. Tremaine to an interminable parade of language which Mr. Drysdale resented and which he thought I should have resented, too. He demanded that I explain to him Mr. Tremaine's position, and I picked up a piece of pipe that lay beside the radiator. Thompson saw the action and lurched heavily toward him."

"Goin' to use that on me, Vic?" he asked. "You'd better try it, and he made a pass at Tremaine and tried to snatch the pipe away. You try it on an I'll blow your game like I did once before down at Sydney."

"He struck at Tremaine again, but I later sprang away and in an instant he had brought the pipe down upon his head. Thompson fell like a man, then that fiendish look flashed into Tremaine's face a second time; he snatched out a revolver—I dimly understood what was coming—indeed, I had my own revolver in my hand—and I fired at him, but my shot went wild, while his—"

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"I never did believe in ghosts, Uncle Jerry, but they say you've seen them many a time in the White House, and nobody doubts your word."

"Oh, yes, senator. Sperrits has always lived here!"

Uncle Jerry has been a favorite and trusted member of the White House family for more than 20 years. His fine, tall figure, dark shining face and merry eyes are as familiar as the old portico pillars of the executive mansion.

Charles Sumner called him "Our Lord Chesterfield," in honor of his distinguished and courtly ways. The children flock around him, and he is loved and respected by all who meet him.

Ghosts are his specialty. Sperrits are sacred and the jokes played on him by "unbelievers" are serious things. He says that "warning" is roughly as everything. The Washington monument was dedicated February 22, 1885. It was a day of great excitement and interest. From the south windows of the White House the waving of banners

for the trunks. It was after dark, and but few times had Jerry climbed the narrow stairway to the attic at night.

Colonel Dinsmore shouted: "Come, Jerry, time for the madame's trunks!"

"But, cunnel, you couldn't think of sending Jerry alone up there! Up in that old region of darkness!"

"Go on, Jerry, don't be a baby!" laughed the colonel.

"I tell you, Cunnel, I-is—not—goin' alone—not for all the madames in this world!"

Colonel Dinsmore could never tell this story without roars of laughter. He said: "So I went along with the big lantern, walking ahead to the big pile of trunks and bags in one corner. By the light of my lantern Jerry grasped with his long arms and hands a great trunk; when just opposite him, slowly rose two fierce red eyes. They gleamed in the darkness and turned from side to side, glaring full upon Jerry. Before I could speak Jerry gave one leap into the air. Down came the trunk as Jerry stumbled and fell into

the glass shades, all in a heap. Crash! went the glass. Jerry shrieked: "Oh, the devil! The evil eye! The devil himself!" And that was the last I saw of Uncle Jerry that day.

Beautiful Mrs. Hayes was again the restorer of peace, but I don't think she ever quite knew who carried the bull's-eye lantern to the attic when Uncle Jerry went after her trunks.

Nellie Grant was a rosy little maid when she first went to the White House, and Jerry was footman, and Albert Hawkins the coachman. They were devotedly fond of the Grants, and his "little Miss Nellie" was their ideal mistress.

"Grandpa Dent has lots of treasures up in the parrot. Let's go up and play," Nellie said to her little guests one day. "Get the lantern quick, Jerry! We're goin' to play dress-up and party."

"Oh, Miss Nellie! Don't kerry them little missuses up there! You children is not able to stand all the kerry-ons up there. I must keep you from fear—an evil!"

But the persistency of the president's little daughter took them up the narrow stairway.

"Oh, Jerry, what a dark place!"

"Come down, little Missy, I—beg—of—you!"

"Jerry, what's that funny noise?"

"Chile! come down! It's the sperrits I told you of."

Fles of old papers rustled; an old chair rocked itself. The sound of little feet pattered across the floor. Little cries and squeaks came from behind Grandpa Dent's boxes, and the children huddled close to Uncle Jerry and whispered:

"Take us down, quick!"

Pell mell! Jerry, lantern and little Miss Nellie's party went tumbling down the stairs, perfectly satisfied with Jerry's wondrous stories of "ghosts and sperrits."

Jerry said: "Land, I've glad to get down with them precious little missuses safe an' alive!"

The rats and mice roam no longer in the old garret.

A Gentle Hint.

"I got a neat rebuke for my curiosity once," said a well-known Baltimore man, "and it was administered to me by a native of the Cheat river region in West Virginia."

"I had stopped over night in the district in question, and in the morning was strolling about the place, asking all sorts of questions. Presently I met a lanky mountaineer, who greeted me with 'Howdy' and passed the time of day most pleasantly. Seeing that he was barefooted, a circumstance, it seemed to me, quite odd in a mountainous region, I asked:

"Is it the custom of this country for the men to go without shoes?"

"Waal, the native drawed, 'some on us do, but most on us awen't to our own business.'"

The Worst Load.

From the Christian World.

The worst load a man can carry is that of habits begotten of evil passions—that growing pile of sensuous deeds, which, in their accumulation, cohere finally into mass, devil possessed, which sits between his shoulders, overwhelming all else in kind, and driving him ruthlessly, fatefully on the road downward.

From the Washington Star.

"Was that picture you just sold a genuine work of art?"

"No," answered the dealer, "but the story I told about it was."

The Missionaries' Literature association of England, now in its fourteenth year, has sent over 450,000 periodicals to the foreign field in that time.

The average length of life of a tradesman is two-thirds that of a farmer.

Michigan has spent \$42,241,121.79 for its schools in 68 years.

Another Mark Twain Story.

From January Harper's.

On the way across the Atlantic last summer, Mark Twain was asked his opinion of prohibition, by a woman passenger. The reply was characteristically humorous, though somewhat evasive. He said:

"I am a friend of temperance, and want it to succeed, but I don't think prohibition is practical. I am sorry to learn that they have just invented a method of making brandy out of sawdust. Now what chance will prohibition have when a man can take a rip saw and go out and get drunk with a fence rail? What is the good of prohibition if a man is able to make brimstone smash out of the shingles on his roof, or if he can get delirium tremens by drinking the legs of the kitchen chairs?"

Ink for rubber stamps is made of aniline dye mixed with glycerine. The dyes can be obtained at druggists' shops.

FOR SALE or exchange, horses, cattle, wagons, harnesses, buggies, hay, city property and farm lands. Will sell any of the above property on weekly or monthly payments. J. Mulhall, Sioux City, Ia.

A pencil is often hard pushed to tell the truth.

FILES CURED IN 6 TO 14 DAYS.

PAZO OINTMENT is guaranteed to cure any case of Itching, Blind, Bleeding or Proltruding Piles in 6 to 14 days or money refunded, 50c.

A Joke on Vanderbilt.

From the Philadelphia Bulletin.

"An amusing, but nasty trick was played in the early autumn at George W. Vanderbilt's Biltmore estate near Asheville," said a Pittsburg florist. "A friend of mine, one of the Biltmore gardeners, wrote and told me about it the other day."

"It seems that at the entrance to Biltmore, there was a sign that read: 'Please do not pick the flowers without leave.'"

"Well, one visitors' day some joker added an 's' to the sign's last word. As a result, every visitor left Biltmore that day with a delightful smile and an enormous bouquet."

How to Do It.

From the Washington Star.

F. Augustus Heinze, in the course of a dinner on board his yacht Revolution, said of a certain mooted mining reform:

"Oh, yes, it would be a good thing if it could be done, but there is no possible way to do it. Ask these reformers how they are going to put their ideas in operation, and they give you answers that are about as practical as the little boy's method of catching a mule."

"There was once, you know, a mule in a large field that refused to be caught by its owner. Round and round the field the mule galloped. The owner tore along behind, red and angry, swinging a halter in his hand and sweating passionately. The mule would let him draw near, almost near enough to throw the halter over his head; then it would kick up its legs merrily and run away like the wind. A boy, his yearling in his arms, followed the unequal chase for an hour or so. Then he entered the field and said:

"I'll tell you how to catch that mule, mister, if you give me a nickel."

"All right," panted the man; "here's your nickel. Now tell me."

"Get behind that thick hedge over there," said the boy, "and make a noise like a carrot."

BANISHED.

Coffee Finally Had to Go.

The way some persons cling to coffee even after they know it is doing them harm, is a puzzler. But it is an easy matter to give it up for good, when Postum Food Coffee is properly made and used instead.

A girl writes: "Mother had been suffering with nervous headaches for seven weary years, but kept drinking coffee."

"One day I asked her why she did not give up coffee, as a cousin of mine had done who had taken to Postum. But Mother was such a slave to coffee she thought it would be terrible to give it up."

"Finally, one day, she made the change to Postum, and quickly her headaches disappeared. One morning while she was drinking Postum so freely and with such relish, I asked for a taste.

"That started me on Postum and I now drink it more freely than I did coffee, which never comes into our house now."

"A girl friend of mine, one day, saw me drinking Postum and asked if it was coffee. I told her it was Postum and gave her some to take home, but forgot to tell her how to make it.

"The next day she said she did not see how I could drink Postum. I found she had made it like ordinary coffee. So I told her how to make it right and gave her a cupful I made, after boiling it fifteen minutes. She said she never drank any coffee that tasted as good, and now coffee is banished from both our homes." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Michigan.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Philadelphia Record.

You never hear a married man boast that he never made a mistake in his life.

Carrying coals to Newcastle is a good bit like giving nerve tonic to a book agent.

A man doesn't have to take his wife out in an automobile to get a good blowing up.

Because love is blind is no reason why a lover should make a spectacle of himself.

The more children a woman has the less time she has to attend mothers' meetings.

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