

But even now there was no proof that these surmises were correct, and Rose couldn't leave the matter where it was.

"Mr. Yarborough," she said, "I am determined that I will find this actor who calls himself Wilson, and see for myself if he is my husband. I can't rest now until I know the truth, however terrible that truth may be."

Tom Yarborough went back to London; he had his business to attend to, but Rose went to the hotel and stayed in the little town. She determined to find out from the company and from the landlady of Mr. Wilson's lodgings what kind of man this Mr. Wilson was.

She went next day to the lodgings. The landlady could tell her very little. Might she see the rooms? Certainly.

They were poorly furnished, dull, uncomfortable-looking rooms—small parlors divided by a folding door. They were what is known in the profession as "theatrical diggings," and they changed their occupants almost week by week. Some of the tenants were careful, but some were not, and the general appearance of the apartments bespoke rough usage and neglect.

Rose looked about the rooms in vain for any sign or token by which she might know that the last occupant had been her husband. She didn't know what she had expected to find, but she had a vague idea that she might light upon a clew in some shape or form.

Finding nothing, Rose Smedley began to ask questions of the landlady. What sort of a looking man was Mr. Wilson? How old did he appear to be, etc., etc. The landlady couldn't say much about her last lodger. She had so many coming and going that they were pretty near all alike to her, and she saw very little of them. But she did notice Mrs. Wilson; she was a very pretty, rather delicate-looking lady; she noticed her particularly because when she came to pay the bill and to say they were going away, she seemed nervous and frightened and her manner attracted attention.

Rose felt a sharp pang of jealousy as she listened to the landlady's description of the young woman's personal attractions. For the first time it occurred to her that even if she traced her husband he was utterly lost to her. This girl, who called herself his wife, had usurped her place, and all that was left to her now was to prove the fact of her husband's treachery, sue for a divorce and be a free woman again.

Gradually she began to see that what she ought to do. Why should she spend the rest of her life bearing the name of a man who had treated her so infamously; who had committed a criminal act, and left her without a word, only to come back again after many years with another woman as his companion?

Yes, she had another motive in finding John Wilson, the actor, now. Love was dead, and revenge had taken its place.

But how was she to find the man? She had no clew, not a single thread to guide her. The man had left no address at the lodgings; no one there had the slightest idea as to where he was going when he left.

Rose went back to the theater and saw the manager. She explained that the Mr. Wilson who had so mysteriously disappeared was, she believed, a friend of her family's and she was very anxious to discover his whereabouts. The manager was polite, but he knew nothing of Wilson; he had engaged him for the tour, which commenced about a month previously. Wilson had answered an advertisement and had applied for himself and wife.

"Have you the letter?" said Rose. She thought to herself that she would recognize the handwriting, and that would set her doubts at rest.

The manager couldn't say; probably it was destroyed; but he would look among his papers and see. He was absent for about ten minutes, and then he returned.

"I can't find the letter," he said, "but I've found a photograph he sent with it."

"His photograph?" cried Rose. "Let me see it; I shall know it at once."

"No, not his photograph—the photograph of his wife."

He placed in Rose's hands the photograph of a young woman, and Rose looked at it with mingled feelings of curiosity and repugnance.

The landlady was right. The girl was certainly pretty. There was a look of delicacy and refinement in her features, and the eyes were very large and beautiful.

"May I—may I keep this?" gasped Rose, as with a deep sigh she lifted her eyes from her rival's face.

"Certainly, if you wish it. And now I must ask you to excuse me. We are playing a new piece to-night, and I'm wanted on the stage."

Rose thanked the manager and left the theater with the photograph of Mrs. Wilson in her pocket. She had made up her mind what to do. "I shall know this woman again," she said to herself, "wherever I see her, and when I do see her I shall not be long before I find out where this man is who passes as her husband."

Five minutes after Mrs. Smedley had left the theater a gentleman arrived and sent in his card. There were two words in the corner which procured him instant admission. Those two words were "Scotland Yard."

The gentleman explained his business in a few words. He wanted some information about a Mr. Wilson, an actor in the company.

"Why, there's just been a lady here on the same errand," said the astonished manager. "What's Wilson been doing?"

"A lady!" exclaimed the Scotland Yard gentleman. "What was she like?"

The manager told him.

"So," thought the detective, "Mrs. Smedley's heard of it, too. Well, between us I fancy we shall find him; but she mustn't know I'm going to help her, or it might upset the applecart."

Tom Yarborough had done a very foolish thing. He had gone back to the city and mentioned that he believed he had seen Jack Smedley acting at a theater.

He did it innocently. He had quite forgotten that the reward of £1,000 for Smedley's apprehension, which was issued at the

time his frauds were discovered, had never been withdrawn, and that the warrant was still in the hands of the police.

Some one who owed Smedley a grudge in the city—a former clerk of the firm he had robbed—heard the news and went straight away to Scotland Yard with it, and a detective went down at once to the town where Yarborough thought he had seen the culprit at the theater. And so it came about that after a lapse of years, during which Jack Smedley's crime and his mysterious flight had almost dropped out of remembrance, Tom Yarborough's chance visit to a little provincial theater suddenly set the hounds of justice once more on his track.

Rose Smedley, convinced that the man who was acting with a provincial company under the name of Wilson was her missing husband, went back to London with the photograph of the woman who called herself Mrs. Wilson in her pocket.

The photograph was the clew by which she hoped to trace the man. She thought all the circumstances over, and made up her mind that her husband, alarmed at being recognized by Yarborough, would not risk a public appearance again yet awhile, but the woman would probably get another engagement. They were evidently poor and would have to live on her salary.

Mrs. Smedley's first visit was to a big theatrical agency near the Strand—an agency through which managers all over the country engage their companies. She pretended that she was in search of a young friend, an actress, whose whereabouts she had lost sight of for some time. The agent might be able to give her some information. Rose showed him the photograph, but he didn't recognize it. He explained that he had such an enormous number of clients it was quite impossible that he should remember them all. Many of them he did not even see, but obtained their engagements by correspondence. However, if she would leave the photograph with him he would make inquiries and he might be able to let her know something. She might call again in a day or two if she liked.

Mrs. Smedley allowed a week to pass, and then she called upon the agent again. The clerk took in her name and came back with the answer that Mr. ——— was very busy; would she kindly excuse him not seeing her? He had no information to give her.

Rose was disappointed, although she had hardly hoped for anything better.

"Thank you," she said, "I'm sorry to have given Mr. ——— so much trouble. Will you kindly ask him to let me have the photograph I left with him?"

The clerk went into the private room and presently returned with a photograph which he handed to Rose.

Rose was just going when the agent came hastily out of his room.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I've given you the wrong photograph."

"Oh, no," replied Rose, "this is the one I left."

The agent looked at it.

"That's curious," he said, "for I've another on my desk now. I didn't look closely at what I was giving my clerk, and I fancied that I must have made a mistake. Wait a moment."

He went into his room and returned with a letter.

"I see how it's happened," he said. "The photograph I have come this morning in a letter which my clerk opened and put with a number of others on my desk."

"A letter from Mrs. Wilson?"

"No, it is from a Miss Elmore, but this is the photograph, because my clerk endorsed it with the name and address after taking it out of the envelope."

He showed Rose a photograph. It was a fellow one to the photograph she held in her hand. Both were photographs of the same woman.

"I've advertised for a lady and gentleman to go out with a company to the Cape," said the agent, "and this is in reply to it. Miss Elmore is evidently your missing friend. She is anxious to secure an engagement for herself and husband. She does not enclose his photograph, but says he will call upon me by appointment, if the vacancy is not already filled."

"Oh," exclaimed Rose, endeavoring to appear calm, "how fortunate; will you kindly give me Miss Elmore's address?"

The agent hesitated. There was a look in Mrs. Smedley's face that made him do so. He was a man of the world, and he had known instances before in which one lady wanted another lady's private address for the purpose of a friendly greeting.

"It's hardly the thing," he said, "for me to do without Miss Elmore's permission; but as the engagement is still open and I think she will just suit the part, judging by her appearance and the press notices she encloses, I shall write to her to come and see me, and then I'll give her your address if you will leave it. That will answer the same purpose, I presume?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Rose, biting her lips with disappointment. "I'll—I'll send a letter here for her which you can give her or forward to her."

"Certainly. Good morning."

The agent disappeared into his private room again, and Rose went out into the street fully determined what she would do.

She hadn't the slightest intention of writing to Miss Elmore or of leaving her address for her. That would have put the young lady on her guard and have spoiled the little plot which Rose was carefully thinking out for her rival's discomfiture.

As it was, she was afraid that the agent merely telling the actress that a lady had been asking for her might arouse her suspicions. She didn't think they would remember her name at the office. She had not written it down or left a card. Even if they did, the girl might not think it of any serious import. It was quite likely that she did not know what Wilson's real name was or that he had a wife in London. He had probably told her that he did not want his friends to recognize him for some family reason, and that had caused the girl's agitation after the visit of Tom Yarborough, as described by the landlady.

Looking on the brass plate outside the

agent's door, Rose saw that the business hours were from 11 to 4, except on Saturdays, when they were 11 to 2. She calculated that the agent would write to Miss Elmore that afternoon and make an appointment for the next day or the day after. On one of these two days, between the hours of 11 and 4, Miss Elmore would enter that office and leave again and return to the place where she was living. She might come alone, she might come with "Mr. Wilson."

Under any circumstances Rose would be there. The street was a wide and a busy one. She would easily be able to keep the agent's front door in observation without being noticed herself. With her veil down and her parasol up "Mr. Wilson" could hardly recognize her, and Miss Elmore didn't know her.

The only difficulty was about following her, but it would be time enough to get over that when the time came. The girl was probably hard up and wouldn't take a hansom; she would either walk or go by 'bus, and in either case Rose could be her traveling companion without exciting suspicion.

If Jack came the case would be different. She should go up straight to him, confront him, and ask for the pleasure of a few moments' conversation with him. All that evening and far into the night Rose thought over the scene that she might have to take part in on the morrow. She rehearsed it to herself and spoke her speeches aloud as she lay tossing from side to side, waiting for the dawn. She was too feverish and excited to sleep. She was not going to be violent or make a scene. She had a few words of withering sarcasm ready for Miss Elmore, who would probably stare to see a strange lady accost Mr. Wilson rather unceremoniously and insist upon a private interview, but with Jack she was going to be calm, cold and dignified. But she was going to let him understand that he would have to answer for his wicked, heartless conduct, and that Nemesis had overtaken him at last.

And, crushing her recalcitrant husband with words of dignified scorn, Rose fell asleep at last, and woke so late that by the time she had had her breakfast and reached the side street off the Strand in which the agent's office was situated, it was on the stroke of eleven.

As she got out of the 'bus she noticed a gentleman who got down from outside the same conveyance look at her rather curiously, and she wondered where she had seen him before. She thought it must be some one she had been introduced to, and so she bowed slightly, but the gentleman took no notice of her salutation, but looked deliberately the other way.

Rose knew then that she must have made a mistake and she colored slightly at the idea of having bowed to a strange man who had stared at her. This little circumstance set her thinking of the man as she walked up the street, and she gave quite a little start when a quarter of an hour later, as she was loitering near the office, she saw this same man come along on the opposite side and enter a public-house.

She watched for him to come out, but he didn't do so, and so she decided he must be the landlord, and then she fixed her attention on the agent's doorway, and forgot all about the stranger to whom she had bowed in mistake.

For two hours Rose watched the agency without any result. Plenty of ladies and gentlemen went up and came down the big stone staircase—actors and actresses most of them, she could tell by their style—but nobody in the slightest way resembling the photograph of Miss Elmore, and certainly no one in the slightest degree like Jack Smedley.

Once she had a false alarm. A lady and gentleman came along from the top of the street; the man was just Jack's height and build, but when he came nearer she saw that he was a man with gray hair, and Jack's was as black as night. He was an actor, she thought, because of his shaven face, but when they got to the agent's door he left the lady, who went in alone, while he went over the road to the public-house.

He was in there about a quarter of an hour, and when he came out Rose thought he looked at her rather hard. But she was a pretty little woman still, and had a slim, graceful figure, and when ladies with slim, graceful figures go about closely veiled there is nothing in gentlemen looking at them, as though they would like to see what sort of a face that tantalizing veil is hiding.

It must have been really two o'clock, and Rose was thinking that she should have to find out some place where she could sit down, for she was getting terribly tired, when a tall, thin girl, plainly, almost shabbily dressed, came up the street, looking up at the number as she walked along.

This action it was which first attracted Rose's attention, and then in a moment, instinctively, and before she was near enough for Rose to recognize her features, the deserted wife knew that she and her rival were about to meet.

It was Miss Elmore. There was no doubt of that. Rose soon forgot her caution in her excitement, and stood still and let the girl pass her so closely that their dresses touched. Miss Elmore evidently suspected nothing. She said, "I beg your pardon," as she accidentally touched Rose, but only gave her a passing glance.

The hot blood rushed to Mrs. Smedley's face, and a hard, cruel look came into her eyes. It was fortunate that her veil was down and that it was thick. Otherwise she would undoubtedly have attracted attention.

The face of her rival was a beautiful one—so beautiful it made Rose hate her all the more. But it was very pale, and there was a melancholy look in the large lustrous eyes which told even Rose, blinded as she was with jealousy and passion, that her rival had suffered, and was suffering still, mentally as well as physically.

The pale face, the sorrowful eyes, the shabby dress, the thin frame, all told a tale to one who can read a life story in the crowded street.

Such a one would have looked after the tall, beautiful girl and have said, "That girl is ill and unhappy." Rose only thought

of her as the woman who had usurped her place by her husband's side and had been his companion in the misfortunes she had not been allowed to share. She was glad in her heart of hearts that her rival looked ill, more glad that she looked unhappy. She never stopped to ask herself whether this girl might not be in utter ignorance of the true story of Mr. Wilson's "life," utterly innocent of the knowledge that she was injuring any one but herself.

Rose watched her enter the doorway and go up the stone steps that led to the agent's office. Then she went a little way down the street and stood just where a building, jutting out, hid her from the sight of any one coming out of the house which she was watching. She kept her eyes fixed upon the doorway so eagerly, so steadfastly, that the strain made her eyelids ache. She was terrified lest she should not detect Miss Elmore the first moment she emerged, and so let her mix with the crowd and get away ere she had time to follow her.

Her attention was so fixed on this one particular point that she did not notice the gentleman to whom she had bowed in the morning come quietly to the public-house door, look up and down the street, catch sight of her and then go in again quickly.

The time passed slowly as Rose stood and watched. When a quarter of an hour had passed it seemed to her that Miss Elmore had been with the agent an hour. She had never taken her eyes from the doorway, and yet she found herself fearing that the girl might have come out into the street again and got away unobserved. But just as Rose had worked herself up into a fever of suspense a lady emerged from the doorway and walked rapidly away in the direction of the Strand.

It was Miss Elmore.

An instant afterwards another lady, the lady who had parted with the gray-haired man at the door, came out too. Rose darted forward almost with a run in her eagerness not to lose sight of Miss Elmore now, but quickly checking herself, she crossed the road and walked rapidly till she was on a level with the girl, the roadway dividing them.

Miss Elmore turned down into the Strand and walked along until she came to Southampton Street, then she crossed the road and made for Waterloo Bridge.

Rose followed this time keeping on the same side of the road, but a little way behind. It was not an hour when the Bridge was crowded and it was quite easy to keep any one in view.

"The girl is either going to walk home or to take the train to Waterloo," thought Rose. "Whichever it is, I have her safe now. I shall find out where she is lodging and then I believe I shall find my husband."

Suddenly a shriek rang out just behind Rose. Everybody instantly turned to see what was the matter, Rose among them. A little boy had run across the road and fallen just as an omnibus was coming rapidly on to him. It was a woman who had seen the occurrence who uttered the cry. The driver pulled up and the boy was saved. Then everybody went on their way again.

But in the second that Rose turned her head she had seen something that astonished her. Close behind her was the woman who had come out of the agent's immediately after Miss Elmore. And on the opposite side of the road was the gentleman she had bowed to in mistake, and who had gone into the public-house opposite the agent's office.

Swift as lightning a suspicion of truth flashed across Mrs. Smedley's brain.

She was being followed herself. She and Miss Elmore too.

The woman was following Miss Elmore, the man was following her. He had evidently followed her from her house that morning, taken the same 'bus as herself, and watched her while she watched the agent's office.

She saw it in a moment, and she knew by a flash of inspiration what it meant.

Some one else beside herself had a suspicion that Jack Smedley had returned to London. And they had been watching her, his wife, believing that she would know of it, and communicate with him.

The part of his story which she had for the time forgotten came back to her at once. She was trying to find him to reproach him for his offenses against her. But these people were trying to find him to make him answer for his offenses against the law.

The warrant which had been issued for John Smedley's arrest was still in force. She and the girl were being followed by police agents, and together John Smedley's wife and his mistress were guiding them to their prey.

Instantly Rose felt a revulsion of feeling. All the wife in her rose up against the idea of seeing the man she had once loved stand in the felon's dock.

She would have punished him herself, but she would protect him from others.

In a moment she had made up her mind what to do. Quickening her pace, she caught up with Miss Elmore.

As she came level with her, without looking at her she said in an undertone, "Don't look at me. You are being followed."

The girl gave a little start and turned her head toward the person who had addressed her.

"Hush!" whispered Rose; "take no notice of me. But don't go home, I tell you, you are followed."

Rose could see that Miss Elmore's face was now more deadly pale than ever and her lips trembled.

"What shall I do?" she said.

"Anything—but don't go home."

At that moment an omnibus passed them. The conductor held up his hand. "Room for two inside, ladies," he shouted.

"Yes. Get in," said Rose.

Miss Elmore, trembling and almost speechless with agitation, obeyed. She was too bewildered to think for herself.

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