



Woman AGAINST Woman

BY MRS. MARY E. HOLMES.

Author of "A Woman's Love," "The Wife's Secret," "A Heartless Woman," "Her Fatal Sin," "A Wife's Peril," "A Desperate Woman."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Woman, what do you mean?" Valerie's eyes flashed with the fire that was burning in her veins.

"What I say—search outside the window," cried Davis angrily; "you'll find I'm right."

Valerie made a move towards the window.

"Give me your lantern," she said to the policeman, who was gazing with admiration at her beauty. "I will show you how false this woman's words are!"

She grasped the lantern, and held it up high, then beckoned the men out.

Paul Ross drew back farther and farther; he could see the policeman's face, but he drew himself behind a slight curve in the masonry, and escap-

ed their eyes. Not so Davis, who was peering out.

"Look!" she cried suddenly; "behind there—he is there!"

She was roughly pushed aside—the light was suddenly extinguished by Valerie, and mingled with Davis' exclamations and the murmurs of servants, came the sound of a groan, a sort of shriek, then the noise as of something clutched and falling—then all was still.

"What is it?" muttered the policeman.

They hastily lit the lantern and stepped out—nothing was to be seen. The veranda came to a sudden break beyond the curve, and the tall, beautiful woman, who stood pale as death and transfixed with sudden horror, knew that her wretched brother, had gone from her side forever—from the hands of justice; gone with all the crimes unpardoned on his soul—gone to his death.

In one second she realized this, and with a sort of broken shriek she staggered back, and before they could assist her, fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

As the earl, with Geoffrey Armistead, Frank Meredith, and the detective, rode into Moreton they soon discovered that some great excitement prevailed, and after a little questioning, learned that a woman had been shot in the railway station early that morning, and that the man had escaped.

Mr. Newton at once went to the small police station, and, to the astonishment of his employers, asked full particulars about the case, and finished by demanding to see the wounded woman at once.

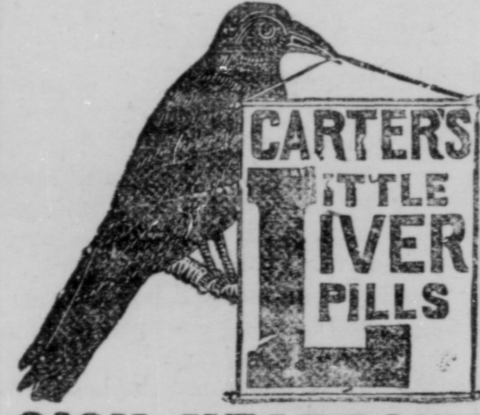
Roy felt inclined to be annoyed. What had this affair to do with the search he had on hand?

The detective soon explained. He saw Myra, who was unable to speak, but had sufficient strength to nod her head to his questions, and by this means he discovered that the man who had sent her to her death was the man they sought.

The earl was frantic. The thought of Alice in the grasp of this unscrupulous villain maddened him, and the delay, while the detective sought the traces necessary to following him, was almost more than he could bear.

The guard of the train had returned from London, and gave his evidence; and now all was known, except the exact destination of Count Jura and his victim.

Once again the detective used his brains. A special train was ordered.



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The three gentlemen with the guard traveled to the very spot where Jura had alighted that morning, and, when there, they went to the handful of cottages to make inquiries.

No one could tell them anything; but, eliciting the name of the nearest town, they borrowed the only vehicle to be found—a large market-cart—and started along the same route that poor Alice had been carried, the earl's heart growing more wretched every minute.

They could only travel slowly, and the night was falling as they reached the town. As luck would have it, they met the same policeman who had directed Jura, and at once from him learned the name of the hotel to which he had gone.

The earl, white and breathless, rushed into the hall.

"Where is the lady who was brought here this morning by a dark gentleman?" he demanded eagerly.

The landlord shook his head and called his wife.

"Do you mean the mad lady, sir?" she asked.

The men looked at one another.

"A slender, fair-haired, pretty girl," cried Frank Meredith quickly.

"Yes, sir—that's her. I couldn't believe as how she were mad like. But her husband said she was."

"Her husband?" gasped Roy, sinking into a chair.

The detective put his hand on the earl's shoulder.

"Pardon me, my lord," he said quietly; "leave it in my hands. Now, my good woman, answer my questions. Where is this young lady?"

"I don't know, sir," the landlady replied, looking a little frightened; "she was taken away by the gentleman about half an hour ago; he said they was going to Bornchester by the express. Lor, sir, I hope there ain't nothing wrong! She looked so ill, poor thing!"

"She is no more mad than you or I. She is the wife of this gentleman—the Earl of Darrell. Ah, you have heard of her disappearance, of course. That man had abducted her. She must be rescued at once."

"Great Heavens! if I'd only known!" cried the woman, overcome with alarm.

"Oh, my lord, I wish I'd known, he should not have taken her. I begged him to wait till to-morrow, but he wouldn't hear nothing, and she looked fit to die at any moment. She'd no count where she was—her mind seemed gone."

"On the verge of brain fever, no doubt," said Geoffrey Armistead quietly.

"Now, Newton, what's to be done?"

"The station to make enquiry; the earl had better stay here."

"No, no!" cried Roy, starting to his feet; "I must go! I should go mad if I stayed here an instant!"

"Come, then; there is not a moment to lose."

They hurried across to the station.

"Remain here," whispered Mr. Newton as they entered it; "I will speak first."

He touched a porter on the shoulder.

"Has the express to Bornchester gone, my man?" he asked.

"Gone? Yes, sir, half an hour ago."

"How tiresome! I must have made a mistake; I thought it went at seven-fifty."

"No, sir; seven twenty."

"Hum! it's a great nuisance. I was to have met a friend here, and gone by the same train. You didn't happen to see then, perhaps—a gentleman and his wife, a pretty, fair-haired lady?"

The porter shook his head.

"No, sir; I weren't here, it was my tea-time, but perhaps Bill did. Here, Bill, gentleman wants to ask you a question."

"What is it, sir?" demanded the other porter civilly. "A lady and gentleman, very pretty, with lots of yellow hair; lor, yes, she was took fearfully ill, fopped off in a faint, just as she was getting into the train; your friend was in a fearful way. They've gone to a hotel in the town sir—I can't tell you which."

"Thanks," the detective slipped some money into the other's hand. "My poor friend—I must try to find him at once."

He approached the others.

"They are in the town. Now to find where that's the next thing. We must get the police to help us."

In a few minutes they had separated, all going in different directions except Geoffrey Armistead and Roy, who went off together.

An hour slipped by.

They drove all around the town, and could discover nothing, and then went back to the station to wait for Frank and the detective.

They had not long to wait. Frank soon rushed in, with a face white with excitement.

"They are found! Newton has got the house surrounded—he can't escape! She is down with brain fever!"

Roy uttered no word, but followed the other two out of the station, down one or two narrow streets, until they approached a low looking public house.

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