

# The Diamond Coterie

By LAWRENCE M. LYNCH  
(E. M. Van Deventer)

Author of "A Woman's Crims," "John Arthur's Ward," "The Lost Witness," "A Slender Clue," "Dangerous Ground," "Against Odds," Etc., Etc.

(Continued.)

She glanced at her from under his long lashes, and seemed to hesitate. He knew that Constance, in what he had sometimes termed her "imperative mood," was a difficult element to contend with. But he was not quite prepared to divulge just the precise thoughts that were in his mind.

"Con," he said, lowly, "do you think, if my sister came back very penitent, or very miserable, that my father would take her home?"

"I don't know, Evan."

"Well, that's another of the things that brought me to you. I was overwhelmed with misery, and my head was so sore I was wild to wreak vengeance upon that man, and filled with dread at the thought that Sybil might come back and meet with no welcome. I believe she will come. I know that man would not miss the triumph of bringing her back among us. Now, Con., my father thinks you infallible, and you can do anything

with Frank. I want you to see them, and make them take Sybil home, when she comes. Yes, and John Burrill, too, if she will have him."

"Why, Evan!" "Then, he went on, breathlessly, "the world must have a reason for this marriage, for not the greatest fool in W— will believe that Sybil freely chose that villain. Do you pave the way for Sybil's return; I will find a reason for the marriage—a bone to throw to the dogs. For, I tell you, Con., the true reason will never be told."

Thinking of Sybil's letter, Constance could but agree with him in this; and that letter, too, had caused her to think that Sybil had expected, or hoped, or feared, a return to W—; which, she could only guess.

"You will furnish a reason, Evan? You are mystifying me." "Never mind that, I, Evan Lamotte, worthless—black sheep—sot; I will find a reason, I tell you; one that will not be questioned, and that will spare Sybil."

"And what then?" "Then, aided by you, Sybil can come back to us. Aided by my new strong resolve, I will receive that Burrill—it nearly chokes me to speak his name—just as Sybil shall dictate; and then, aided by the old man's money, we may be able to lay him off and get him out of the country."

"Why, Evan Lamotte," cried Constance, with a burst of hopefulness, "you have actually evolved a practical scheme. I begin to feel less hopeless."

"Oh, I have a brain or two left, when a firm hand like yours, shakes me up, sets me straight, and gets me in running order. Will you help, Con.?" "Will I help! Sybil Lamotte, if she comes back, will be warmly welcomed by me, and by all W—, if I can bring it about."

He sprang to his feet and seized her hands. "Thank you, Conny," he cried; "my heart is lightened now; I can 'hide my time,' as the novels say. Only do your part, Con."

"Trust me for that. Now come to luncheon, Evan."

He dropped her hands, and turned away abruptly. "I won't! I can't," he said, almost gruffly. "Go in, Con., and be prepared to welcome Sybil back; and I," he added, moving away, and turning a wicked look over his shoulder, "will be prepared to welcome Burrill; a low, ironical laugh followed these words, and Evan Lamotte leaped the low garden palings, and went back as he had come, by the river way."

"What can that strange boy mean," thought Constance, gazing after him; "he makes me nervous, and yet he was reasonable after his fashion. Poor Evan, he is indeed unfortunate; here he has been breaking his heart over Sybil, and before night he may be singing in some salon, in a state of mad intoxication. Alas, they are a very uncomfortable pair to entertain in one half day, Frank and Evan Lamotte."

## CHAPTER XI.

Doctor Clifford Heath sat alone in his office at half-past eleven o'clock. His horse, "all saddled and bridled," stood below in the street, awaiting him. On a small stand, near the door, lay his hat, riding whip, gloves. On the desk beside him, lay a small pyramid of letters and papers, and these he was opening, and scanning in a careless, leisurely fashion, with his chair tilted back, his heels on high, his entire person very much at ease.

Over one letter he seemed to ponder, blowing great clouds of smoke from the secret depths of a huge black Dutch pipe the while. Finally, he laid letter and pipe aside, lowered his feet, wheeled about in his chair, drev pen, ink, and paper before him on the desk, and began to write rapidly only a few lines, and the letter was done, and signed, and sealed, with grim satisfaction; then he gathered up his scattered missives, and locked them away carefully.

"I won't go back," he muttered, picking up his pipe once more. I wouldn't go now for a kingdom; I won't be put to rout by a woman, and that is just what it would amount to. I'll see the play played out, and I'll stay in W—."

Again the smoke puffed out from the black pipe; again the heels were elevated, and, drawing some papers toward him, Dr. Heath began to absorb the latest

news, looking as if he were like a jilted lover or a despairing swain, as possible.

Presently the office door opened to admit a tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed young man, of aristocratic bearing and handsome countenance, but looking extremely haggard and heavy eyed.

Doctor Heath turned his head lazily at the sound of the opening door, but seeing who his visitor was, he laid his pipe aside and arose with kindly alacrity.

"Come along, Ray, old fellow," he said cheerily, "why you look as if the witches had made your bed."

"It's about the way I feel, too," said the new comer, dropping wearily into the easy chair pushed toward him. "Heath, you are a good fellow, and I can't blame you for thinking me a cad. Don't stop your smoke."

"Why as to that," replied the doctor, easily, and taking a long pull at his pipe, "we are all cads, more or less, in certain emergencies, and yours was an unusually severe blow. We all have to take them in some shape or other, at one time, or another; these soft hands hit hard, but—it's the penalty we pay for being sons of Adam. Although now that I come to think of it, I can't recall that I ever insisted upon being a son of Adam."

"Why," said Raymond Vandeyck, opening his eyes in languid surprise, "you talk as if you had received one of those hard hits." "So I have, my boy; so I have," he replied debonairly. "If I were a woman I would get out a fresh handkerchief and tell you all about it. Being a man I—smoke."

Young Vandeyck sighed heavily, and picked up a newspaper, running his eye listlessly over the columns. Here was another upon whom the flight of Sybil Lamotte had fallen a heavy blow. He had loved Sybil since they were a boy and girl, and lately for a few short months they had been betrothed, then Sybil had asked to be released, and in such a manner that it left him no room for remembrance. The engagement had been broken, but the young man had not quite abandoned hope.

Now, however, hope had deserted him. Sybil was lost to him utterly, and hearing the news of her flight he had rushed into Doctor Heath's presence a temporary madman. He could not have found a wiser or more sympathetic friend and adviser, and he fully realized this fact. The doctor's patience, delicacy and discretion had screened him from the prying eyes and prating tongues of the curious ones, who were anxious to probe his wounds, and see how "Vandeyck would take it," and had made him his firm friend for always.

Ever since the advent of Doctor Heath, Vandeyck had been one of his warmest admirers, and this admiration had now ripened into a sincere and lasting friendship.

"You are a good fellow, Heath," said Vandeyck, suddenly throwing down his paper. "I want to tell you that I appreciate such kindness as you did me. I don't suppose you would ever go off your head like that. I shan't again." "No, I don't think you will," responded the doctor soberly. "As for going off my head, Lord bless you, man, it's in the temperament. I might never lose my head in just that way. We're not made alike, you see. Now I should be struck with a dumb devil, and grow surly and cynical as time went on, and of all contemptible men a cynic is the worst. You will have your burst of passion, and carry a tender spot to your grave, but you can't squeeze all the sunshine out of your soul, any more than out of your Saxon face."

Vandeyck laughed dismally. "It's hard lines, however," he said. "But I'm bound to face the music. Only—I wish I could understand it." "So do all her friends, Ray, let me give you a little advice."

"Well," "After a little, go call on Miss Wardour and talk with her about this affair. I think she knows as much as is known, and I am certain she has not lost her faith in her friend."

"Thank you, Heath; I will." Just here the office door admitted another visitor in the form of Francis Lamotte.

He, too, looked pale and worn, but he carried his head erect, if not with some defiance. "Do, Heath, Morning, Vandeyck," he mumbled, flinging himself upon a settee with scant ceremony. "You will excuse me from asking 'what's the news?'"

"I should ask what's the matter?" retorted Clifford Heath, eyeing him closely. "Fix me up one of your potions, Heath," replied Francis, drawing a hard breath. "I've had another of those cursed attacks."

Dr. Heath arose and went slowly toward a cabinet, slowly unlocked it and then turned and surveyed his patient. "Another attack," he said somewhat severely, "the second one in three days, and not a light one, if I can judge. Let me tell you, Lamotte, you must not have a third of these attacks for some time to come."

"I won't," replied Lamotte, with a nervous laugh. "This one has done me up; I feel weak as a kitten, meek as a lamb."

"Humph," this from Doctor Heath, who proceeded to drop into a drug-gist's glass, sundry globules of dark liquid, which he qualified with other globules

from another bottle, and then half filling the glass with some pale brandy, handed it to Lamotte who drained it off eagerly. "Physician, heal thyself," quoted Raymond Vandeyck, watching the patient with some interest. "Why don't you do your own dosing, Lamotte?"

"I'm shaky," replied Lamotte, lifting an unsteady hand. "And then we are advised to have faith in our physician. I should swallow my own mixture with fear and trembling."

"And pour it down your neighbor's throat with entire satisfaction," interpolated Doctor Heath. "Precisely, just as you pour this stuff down mine. Thanks, Heath," handing back the glass. "Now then, we are all friends here, and you two know what I wish to learn, Heath," shading his eyes with his hand as he reclined on the settee. "I came back, from a two day's tramp about the country in search of Miss Wardour's robbers, or traces of them, this morning. Let that pass, I called at Wardour Place first of all, have just come from there in fact—and Constance tells me—"

(To be Continued.)

### Dangerous Waters.

The most dangerous waters in the world for the passage of ships lie off the east coast of England, Cape Ushant, in France and Cape Finisterre in Spain.

Corsican women are models of queenly grace, and the reason is plain. They have a curious custom of carrying burdens, waterpots, etc., on their heads.

The prison population of India, large as it is, is only 38 per 100,000 inhabitants, or less than half the proportion that prevails in Great Britain.

### The Curse of Officeholding.

In every town there are broad shouldered, stalwart men leading idle lives and complaining that they can get nothing to do. Their ruin dates back from a little federal office, which unfitted them for useful work. They lost their places and will stand around for the remainder of their lives, living on their friends and waiting for an appointment. —Atlanta Sun.

It is stated that since trees have been extensively planted in southern California the rainfall of the region has become much more uniform and favorable to agriculture. But there are other parts of the state in which the sawmills are wiping out the forests.

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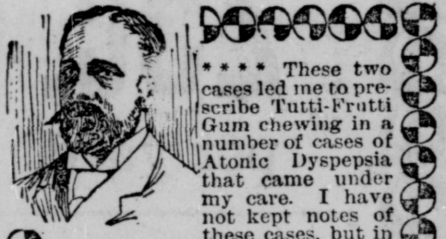
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BLACK DRESS BENGALINE SILK, \$1.30 quality for 90c. \$2.10 heavy for \$1.45 \$1.65 for 1.10.  
BLACK SATINS at 49c, 75c and 89c, Gass & Co., price 75c, \$1.10 and \$1.45.  
BLACK SURAHs at 49c, 65c, and 70c. regular 68c to 1.25 per yard, and Surahs Chinas fancy pongee blouse trimming silks, etc., etc.  
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Suitable for Church or Hall, and odds and ends of Carpets.

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\$3.00 for \$1.95; \$2.60 for \$1.75.

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