

The Diamond Coterie

By LAWRENCE M. LYNCH

(E. M. Van Deventer)

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

(Continued)

"Don't ask for reasons, don't; promise, promise, promise!" She was growing excited, and Constance hastened to say:— "You are laboring under some delusion, dear child; Frank has not offered himself to me."

surely were only numbering her when it so rep... "Sybil is half mad. I begin to think that you know why."

"I promise, Sybil." "You promise," she arose from her chair and came close to Constance; "you promise," she said, slowly, "never, never to marry Francis Lamotte?"

"Not yet. Constance, Constance! had you never any love for me? Is there no shadow of hope?" "At first," said Constance, coldly, "I liked you as Sybil's brother; later, I tolerated you; now you are teaching me to despise you."

"I swear it." A coarse laugh, a smothered oath; they both turn swiftly, and there, in the doorway, smelling of tobacco and brandy, and shaking with coarse laughter, is John Burrill, and beside him, with clenched hands, swollen temples, drawn white lips, stands Francis Lamotte, stands! No. He reels; he clings to the door-frame for support; his enemy is upon him.

"What do you expect? do you want my assurance that my promise to Sybil was made in good faith, and that I intend to keep it? If so, you have it." She went swiftly past him, with the last words on her lips. And again Frank Lamotte was the prey of his enemy; like a drunken man, he reeled back into the parlor, gnashing his teeth, cursing his fate, half mad and wholly desperate.

"Ha! ha! ha! Frank Lamotte, I have settled my account with you." Then turning swiftly upon Burrill, and with even fiercer fury she shrieks:—"Out, out, out of my sight! I am almost done with you, too. Go back to your wine and your wallowing in the gutter; your days are numbered."

Menwhile, above stairs, John Burrill was rehearsing to Evan, after his drunken fashion, the recent scene in Sybil's room, not even omitting his own expulsion by wily Mrs. Alliston. As he repeated, with wonderful accuracy, considering his condition, the wild words uttered by Sybil, his listener sat very erect, with wild staring eyes, and lips held tightly together, his teeth almost biting through them; with burning eyes, and quivering frame, and a strange fear at his heart.

The awful look upon her face, the defiant hatred in her voice, the sudden strength and firmness of her whole bearing, Constance shuddered at and never forgot, Frank Lamotte, making a monstrous effort for self-control, gasped, let go his hold on the door frame, lifted his hand to his temples, and came a few steps into the room. Outside, on the stairway, was the rustle of woman's garments, the light fall of swift feet. In other moment Mrs. Lamotte, followed by Mrs. Alliston, enters the room, pushing past the gaping and astonished Burrill with scant ceremony. Then, Sybil's strength deserts her as John Burrill, recalled to a sense of his own importance, advances and seems about to address her. She utters a cry of abhorrence and terror, and throwing out her hands to ward off his approach, reels, falls, and is caught in the supporting arms of Constance and Mrs. Lamotte.

"I'm to meet some fellows at Forty's," he said, thickly. "I'll stop with them a couple of hours, or three, maybe; after that—" and he winked significantly. "After that," repeated Evan, and winked in return.

While they are applying restraints, Frank sees the propriety of withdrawing from the scene, but no such motives of delicacy or decency ever find lodgment in the brain of John Burrill, and leaning with tipsy gravity, he presses close to the bedside and poisons the air with his reeking breath. Constance flushes with anger, and glances at Mrs. Lamotte. That lady looks up uneasily, and seems to hesitate, and then Mrs. Alliston rises to the occasion, and covers herself with glory.

"How is Sybil, mother?" "Quiet, but not rational. Doctor Heath has just gone. Evan, why! how badly you look!" "I feel badly. I'm going to bed; good night, mother."

CHAPTER XXV.

Looking blandly up into the man's face, she lays one fat, gloved hand upon his arm, and says, in a low, confidential tone:—"Come this way one moment, sir, if you please," and she fairly leads the wondering and unsuspecting victim from the room. A second later he is standing in the passage, the chamber door is shut swiftly and locked securely. John Burrill has been led out like a lamb, and the fat and smiling strategist comes back to the bedside.

At ten o'clock that night, business was running lively at the low ceiled, dingy, riverside saloon, that was most popular with the factory men, the colliers, the drovers, and the promiscuous roughs of W—, and that bears the dignified title of "Old Forty Rods."

Whatever he thought he kept to himself. After uttering a few curses he went below, "returned to his pipe and his bowl," and waited the dinner hour. "I shall send for Doctor Heath," said Mrs. Lamotte, as she bent above her daughter, who had slowly returned to consciousness, but lay passive, seeming not to see or know the friends who stood about her. "Sybil does not know us; I feel alarmed."

The saloon is well patronized to-night. At the upper end, nearest the door, "Old Forty" in person, is passing liquors across the bar, and bawling orders to a nimble assistant, while every now and then he addresses a coarse jest to some of the numerous loafers about the bar, mingling them strangely with his orders, and his calling of the drinks, as he passes them across the rail.

"I suppose he thought I would tell him a secret when I got him outside," she laughs, softly. Whatever he thought he kept to himself. After uttering a few curses he went below, "returned to his pipe and his bowl," and waited the dinner hour.

"Here's your beer, Lupin; Jack, half a dozen brandies for Mr. Burrill's party; Little, you are out on the brown horse—rum and water? Yes, sir, yes."

"I shall send for Doctor Heath," said Mrs. Lamotte, as she bent above her daughter, who had slowly returned to consciousness, but lay passive, seeming not to see or know the friends who stood about her. "Sybil does not know us; I feel alarmed."

"Of course, of course. Burrill don't forget old friends; Jack, bring the rum flask; they've been here a plum hour, their chaps, sir; ere's your punch, mister, and they keep the stuff runnin' down their throats, now I can tell you. Burrill foos the bill, of course; and they can do anything with that big chap when the wines get the upper hands of him. I'll be sworn, they're up to mischief to-night, for I see Rooney and Bob Giles, they delight in getting Burrill into scrapes, are drinking light, and plying him heavy," and "Forty" turned about to draw a glass of beer for a low-browed, roughly-dressed man who had just entered, and who was in fact, none other than the tramp who had feasted by the roadside, on the day before, and whom Mr. Belknap had called Roske.

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Roake drank his beer, and lounged over the bar for a short time, then called for a second glass, and after drinking it, went quietly out.

"I shall send for Doctor Heath," said Mrs. Lamotte, as she bent above her daughter, who had slowly returned to consciousness, but lay passive, seeming not to see or know the friends who stood about her. "Sybil does not know us; I feel alarmed."

At the lower end of the long saloon, several tables are scattered, and gathered about one of these we see the party spoken of as "Mr. Burrill's."

"I shall send for Doctor Heath," said Mrs. Lamotte, as she bent above her daughter, who had slowly returned to consciousness, but lay passive, seeming not to see or know the friends who stood about her. "Sybil does not know us; I feel alarmed."

Five men are grouped about the small table, and among these, John Burrill is conspicuous for being much better dressed, much louder in his laughter, and viler in his jests, and much drunker than are the other four.

"I shall send for Doctor Heath," said Mrs. Lamotte, as she bent above her daughter, who had slowly returned to consciousness, but lay passive, seeming not to see or know the friends who stood about her. "Sybil does not know us; I feel alarmed."

Since his change of fortune, these men have made capital of his weakness, and his purse has supplied their thirst, in

return for which he has been fawned upon, and flattered, during the earlier stages of his intoxication, and made a fool and a jest later.

"I mus' go home," articulated Burrill, drawing forth and consulting a showy gold repeater. "Folks' sick er home; mus' be good; take er nother drink, boys?"

"Folks sick, eh?" queried Rooney, winking behind his hand at the others, "wife, I 'spose?"

"Yes, wife I 'spose; wife 'n' brother-in-law, both sick; take er nother—"

"All right, old pard; but don't let a little sickness take you off so early; just let Heath take care of them; you're fond of Heath, too."

"Curse Heath!" roared out John Burrill; "what do you mean, I say, Roo-roo-ney?"

"Burrill," said Bob Giles, setting down his glass and speaking in a low, confidential tone; "what's this power you have over Heath? Don't you know he's afraid of you?"

"He—he zer 'fraid er me! an' so he better be—him un—"

"And yet there are two or three of the fellows that say you are the one that's afraid."

"Me afraid! I—John Burrill, I 'sraid. Boys, look, en I'll jus' tell you a s-secret. If I jus' opened my mouth, I could run that f-fellow out of the country; fact!" and he nodded sagaciously again and again.

"Then there ain't no truth in that story that you are the one that's afraid, and that you wouldn't dare go to Heath's office, not even if you wanted a doctor?"

"T-truth? By gad, sir, show me the man that says so; show 'im to me! By heavens, sir, I wouldn't be f-fraid to run him up the d-darkest night that ever blew, sir."

"Of course, no, we don't doubt that, but—there's them do. I'll tell you what it is, Burrill, the thing would be settled if you would just walk up to the doctor's cottage, tell him you are sick somewhere, and bring away a prescription; that would settle it."

A murmur of approval went round the table. Not a man was there among them who would not rejoice inwardly at the discomfiture of the arrogant, would-be aristocrat, who, while he was less than their equal in many things, had risen above them in fortune. He had reached that period of drunkenness, and it took a vast quantity of stout liquor to bring him up to it, where his voice began to grow hoarse, his ready tongue to trip, his brain to be most completely muddled, and his legs to be most unreliable instruments of locomotion. The men about the table nodded and winked to each other, under his very nose.

"Egg him on, Rooney," whispered Giles, "let's have the fun out." And they did.

Ere long, John Burrill, staggering under the additional cargo of drinks

imbibed as toasts to the undertaking, and again, as draughts of defiance to the enemy who would dare question his courage, buttoned his coat about him, and, boasting, cursing, and swaggering, reeled out into the night. Out into the night that swallowed him up forever.

"Let's follow him, said one of the plotters, starting up as the door closed behind him.

But this proposition met with no favor. The night was very dark, and the wind blowing in fierce gusts; the saloon was warm and inviting, and their victim had ordered their grog, until he should return.

"Let's drink the good liquor he has paid for," said Rooney, with a wink, "then we will let some more of the boys into the secret, and start out in a gang and gather him up. Heath will kick him out sure enough, and if we follow too close we might be discovered. Not by Burrill but by the doctor. We will bring Burrill back here and two more drinks will make him tell the whole story."

They did not agree with Rooney on all points of his argument; but they had played a coarse, practical joke upon a man, who sometimes "took on airs" and vaunted himself as their patron; he who had been only their equal once. It was only a joke, a witless, mirthless, coarse saloon joke, and they drank on and grew hilariously, never dreaming that they had sent one man to his grave, and another to the foot of the scaffold.

As John Burrill came forth from the saloon and turned his face toward Doctor Heath's cottage, a lithe form emerged from amidst the darkness and paused for a moment just outside the saloon door, seeming to hesitate.

"He's goin' home, in course," muttered the man. "I'll jest light out and come in ahead." And he plunged down a by street and went swiftly over the bridge; but not alone.

A second dark form had been lurking in the vicinity of "Old Forty's" the form of a boy, who glided through the dark, at the heels of the other, like a spirit.

"He is going wrong," thought this shadow, discontentedly. "Somehow I'm sure of it; I'm shadowing the wrong party; but—I'm obeying instructions." And pursued and pursuer crossed the bridge and turned their steps toward Mapleton.

Meantime, John Burrill, reeling, singing snatches of low songs, and stopping sometimes to rest and assure himself that all the landmarks are there, pursues his way toward Doctor Heath's cottage.

It is situated on the outskirts of the town; the way is long, the night dark, the wind boisterous, and the way lonely. It is after ten o'clock.

Later—nearly two hours later, Frank Lamotte, driven by his demon of unrest, is pacing his room, feverish and fierce, when his door opens softly, a white, haggard face looks in, a hoarse voice articulates,

"Frank, for God's sake, for your own sake, come with me quick!"

Frank Lamotte turns swiftly, angrily. He is about to speak, when something catches his eye, fixes it in horror, and causes him to gasp out, pointing with one shaking finger.

"Ah-h-h! what is that?"

"It is the Family Honor!" came the hissing answer. "Come, I tell you."

And like a man in a nightmare, Frank Lamotte obeys.

(To be Continued.)

LAFAYETTE'S FAMOUS VISIT.

There Was Great Excitement Over His Trip to the United States.

Jean Fraley Hallowell, who writes in The Ladies' Home Journal of "When Lafayette Rode Into Philadelphia," says that "it is difficult to understand at this late day what a furor of excitement passed over this country when Lafayette arrived once more in America. The visit is a historic event to be remembered while memory endures. During President Monroe's second administration the United States extended its invitation to Lafayette. He arrived at Staten Island on Aug. 15 (Sunday), 1824, accompanied by his son, George Washington Lafayette, and also by his son-in-law. A formal reception took place on the following day, the first fruits of the most abundant harvest of welcome which Lafayette was to receive during his year of travel through the United States.

"Lafayette was 67 years old when he visited America as the nation's guest and carried his years lightly. His head was shaped like that of Burns. He had a high forehead, long, aquiline nose and a rather thin face. His hair was sandy and quite plentiful. His eyes were dark gray, restless and twinkling, his eyebrows light in color, but heavily marked. His mouth was firm, and his lips smiled courteously at the holiday crowd assembled to do him honor. The general was not very tall, but well made. His face was distinctly pleasant, and its expression was an odd mixture of shrewdness, decision and gay good humor. His costume was a swallow-tailed coat and trousers of dark brown, with a great display of white waistcoat and neckcloth. A bunch of seals hung from a broad black ribbon at his waist. Over his shoulders hung a cloth riding cloak, greenish blue in color and lined with red."

Oliver Optic's Will.

There were no public bequests in the will of William T. Adams (Oliver Optic). It was very brief and was written in the author's own hand, under date of April 21, 1885. "As a simple token of my high esteem and regard, to my son-in-law, Sol Smith Russell and George W. White, I give \$1,000 each." All the remainder of his estate, including his copyrights and other literary property, he bequeaths to his daughter, Mrs. Alice Adams Russell, the wife of Sol Smith Russell.

Sovereign Coca Wine is pleasant to take in cases of loss of sleep and enervation.

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