

DRAGONS DRIVE YOU

CHAPTER IX—Continued

By EDWIN BALMER
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Some stared at her hostilely, as if she would cheat them of the death they desired for the girl in black before them; some thrust forward from the same seats as if they would surround and defend the prisoner—and her witness. Suddenly you saw faces. Mother's and Bee's; and two who had been in the papers: his first wife, with her daughter beside her. How did they feel, a few feet away from Myrtle? Did they want her killed too? Here was another face—an old face, a fine face. A little old woman who had lived a lot, and never let life beat her. Winnie, she was. Agnes never had seen so much as a likeness of her, but there was no missing her. When she looked at Martin O'Mara, she knew Winnie was his grandmother.

Agnes sank down upon the witness chair, and waited for Winnie's grandson's first questions.

"They were simple enough. What was her name?" "Where did she live?" "How old was she?" "Had she gone to Chicago on a certain day?" "Did she meet any one in Chicago?" "Then what did they do?" "After she had looked at the empty apartment and Mr. Braddon had left her, what did she do?"

"Now tell the jury in your own words what you did and what you saw and what you, yourself, heard after the door of the apartment, upon which Mr. Colver knocked, was opened."

"I saw," said Agnes, "a girl—a young woman—I had never seen before. That girl there." She looked at the prisoner, Myrtle Lorrie. "She was in negligee over underclothes and stockings. She was very excited and disheveled. She looked as if a good deal had just happened to her."

"I object," Mr. Nordell, for the State, was on his feet.

"Sustained," said the judge. "You must confine your statement to what you observed and heard; you must not give your inferences," he said kindly enough to Agnes.

"I know," she said. "I forgot. I can say I saw bruises and hurts on her. I did. I can say she was shaky. She was. She was holding to the door-knob with both hands. 'Who're you? Who're you?' she asked; but didn't wait for me to answer. She grabbed me and pulled me into the room. She said: 'Oh, God, I'm glad to see you—glad to see you!'"

"She pulled me down into a big, soft chair beside her. . . Mr. Colver, the agent, went to look for smelling-salts for her. . . I heard him call from down the hall: 'Mr. Lorrie! Mrs. Lorrie!' . . . He came back, and he could hardly speak. Finally he said to me: 'You know what we've walked in on? A killing! There's murder here. . . She shot him! . . . I had Mrs. Lorrie in my arms, then. I was holding her. She was lying limp across me.'"

Agnes had no idea how she looked as she related this. She was not thinking of herself on the witness-stand; she was seeing herself back in that room. But the judge, the jury and people crowding the benches were staring at her as she sat in the big witness chair, young and slight and fair, and so completely unaffected and forgetful of herself, indeed, and so honest-looking.

Cathal, standing before her, stepped back a little as though he dared not trust himself closer to the delight of her. What a start she was making—beyond what he had expected! He could not possibly have planned this.

"Then did you do anything?" he asked her very quietly.

Her blue eyes on his shortened their focus from the far-away room which Agnes had been seeing. For an instant, only, her retinas were aware of him; then she went back again.

"Yes, I tried to rouse her. I asked her: 'Did you do it?' She couldn't reply at first. She didn't seem to understand me. I kept shaking her. 'Maybe I did,' she finally said. 'Maybe I did.' I said: 'Maybe? Don't you know?' She didn't seem to know."

"I object!" Nordell protested.

"Sustained," said the judge.

"I'm sorry," said Agnes. "But she didn't."

"I object!"

"Sustained," said the judge, and told Agnes more sternly: "You must not give your opinions or inferences."

"I won't again," said Agnes. "Or I'll try not to. . . The phone rang pretty soon, then. I heard Mrs. Lorrie say: 'Oh, God, Bert.' Then I guess he talked to her. I mean," she caught herself, "Mrs. Lorrie waited and listened as if some one was talking to her. Then she said: 'Bert, something's happened. . . Charley died today!' Then Mr. Colver used the phone to call the police; and I, Mr. O'Mara, called you."

She stopped, aghast at herself and before Martin O'Mara. This was not at all as she had reviewed and prepared her evidence with him; she had said things she had never dreamed of uttering, and omitted a score of items she had promised to repeat. But he had no reproach for her.

Quite to the contrary! His own pulses were dancing with new and wanton pleasure. She delighted him, she delighted the jury-men—at least some of them. The judge was unsuccessful in his severity toward her. Three or four newspaper reporters reluctantly left the courtroom.

They carried the "heads" for the afternoon news. Agnes Gleneth had gone on for the defense, and was winning the courtroom.

Cathal, of course, brought her back

to the evidence she had omitted; she remembered the memorandum which she had made on the morning after the visit to the Lorrie apartment; and now, as Cathal questioned her, she read it and explained that she had written it, on that first morning, "because people were saying so many things different from what I'd seen." This helped; but already, by the unplanned ways of her own, Agnes had established the feeling essential to a favorable turn of the case. The jury, the judge, the courtroom had seen her and approved her; they believed and trusted what she said. It was perfectly plain that only accidentally had she become concerned with the case. Yet, having happened to be the first person to come in on Myrtle Lorrie after the shooting—and having been the person in best position to judge Mrs. Lorrie's physical and mental condition at the time when the crime had occurred—this girl had not turned against her but had set herself to help her; when the agent had sent for the police, Agnes Gleneth herself had summoned, for Mrs. Lorrie, a lawyer.

Agnes was almost the only person in the courtroom unaware of what she had accomplished; she believed she had bungled everything. She thought she had much more to do when, after she had described Myrtle's bruises and hurts as she had seen them, Cathal asked: "Now, at the time you first saw her and when you were in close contact with her, what was the general state of her mind? Did she show any clear recollection of what recently had happened?"

"No. She was both confused and contradictory. I found her in a state of—of shock. Of extreme—shock."

"Thank you," said Cathal. "That's all I need ask." He stepped back a little and turned to the table of the State.

"Your witness," he said to the attorneys charged with the prosecution. He retreated to his own table, that of the defense, whereat Mrs. Lorrie all the time had been seated, and he dropped upon a chair beside his client. Myrtle turned to him, and he nodded to her almost absently; he touched, reassuringly, the impulsive hand she stretched toward him; then turned and watched Nordell as he came to his feet for the cross-examination.

Cathal jerked forward to the edge of his chair; he kept his hands relaxed, but he felt as if with fists clenched ready to fight—fight as he had never fought before—if the prosecutor "tore into her" as he could.

Yet, while half of Cathal tingled and bristled thus for the fight, the cooler half, the professional half—the part of him which was a lawyer—hoped the State would "tear in."

What a mistake! What complete catastrophe if they attempted to sneer and jeer at this girl and "show her up!"

Nordell did not make that mistake. "You have said, Miss Gleneth," he began with careful courtesy, "that you happened to be in the building where Mrs. Lorrie lived, because you were looking at an apartment in it with Mr. Braddon."

"Yes," said Agnes.

"You were engaged to be married to him?"

Agnes hesitated for the first time. Engaged? Were they ever "engaged?" They had been looking at an apartment together; so she must have been then.

"Yes," she said. That was the honest answer.

"Are you engaged to him now?"

"No." There it was, out. That was honest, too.

"When did you break your engagement?"

"We didn't break it." What a thing to talk of before a courtroom full of people, and with reporters writing it all down!

"Then what did you do?" Nordell demanded.

Cathal was on his feet to help her; but, for the first time in this trial, he was confused. He did not know how to help her; this was all within Nordell's right.

"We—we decided not to be married; that's all."

"Who decided that—Mr. Braddon or you?"

"I object!" Cathal protested; but the judge, before ruling, looked to Nordell.

"Overruled," he said to Cathal. "Answer," he said to Agnes.

"I did."

"When?"

"It was when we were in the apartment upstairs. That was why Mr. Braddon left the building."

"What effect had this on you?"

"Effect?"

"I mean," Nordell explained, "after just having broken your engagement upstairs, did you enter the apartment downstairs in a calm and composed mental state? Was your own condition perfectly clear, or confused?"

"Clear," said Agnes. "I was perfectly clear in my mind," she repeated.

"Perfectly clear?"

"Yes; for I had not cared—enough." Nordell stepped back. He hesitated; he had gained one effect; and he decided to rest on it. "That's all," he said suddenly, looking at Cathal.

"That's all," said Cathal. "You can step down, Miss Gleneth."

Agnes stepped down slowly, cautiously. Suddenly she had felt uncertain of her feet. She looked down at the floor, and a wave of faintness

passed over her. What had she just said of Jeb?

She halted for an instant. "Water," she heard some one say. She felt hands on her; strong, steady hands; Martin O'Mara's hands. He held her firmly and pleasantly. She felt that she could not possibly fall.

"Here's water, O'Mara," Mr. Nordell's voice said.

"Thanks," he said, and held the glass to her lips.

Agnes swallowed and looked up. "Sorry—sorry," she said.

Then her mother was there. "I'll take her," she said to Cathal.

"All right now?" Cathal asked Agnes.

She looked up at him. "Jeb," she said. "Mr. Braddon's back in that room? Take me back to him, please," she begged Cathal. "I want—I want to tell him myself what I said."

"I'll get him," Cathal offered. "I'm not calling him to the stand. There'll be no more court this afternoon, I think."

"Then," said Agnes, "tell him, please. I'll wait for him in the car."

Bailiffs opened the way for her mother and Bee and her. An elevator lowered them to the ground; they went out, through the breathless, hazy heat of mid-afternoon, to the hot and dusty car.

O'Mara went to Jeb in the witness-room. He was pleased, Jeb saw; the hour for him had come well.

"I'm not calling you today—or at all, Mr. Braddon," Cathal said. "I thank you for having been ready. But now I'll not need you. We're through with Miss Gleneth."

"Then where is Miss Gleneth?"

"She's gone out. She's waiting for you—with her mother and sister—at the car."

"All right," said Jeb; and demanded: "Well, what did she do on the stand?"

"She did it," Cathal told him. "She turned the case."

"For your rotten little murderer and you?"

Cathal drew back a little.

"You damned shyster!" Jeb whispered from his seat.

Cathal heard, and knew he was meant to hear; and he caught control of himself. He could not hate this man now; he could not envy him; to strike him, physically, would be silly surplusage. He would not let himself deliver the blow he could with a few words more. He said, as quietly as he might in the tension between them: "Some evidence came out in cross-examination which I neither knew nor expected."

"What evidence?"

"A statement she made—which she was forced to make by the State—concerning herself—and yourself."

"What did she say about us?"

"What," said Cathal, "she wishes to tell you herself!"

As Jeb stepped from the door to the Criminal Courts building, cameras clicked at him again; and the crowd turned. He heard his name passed, and he saw lips that passed it, smile. He straightened and faced them. Behind his back, somebody laughed. Jeb would have liked to turn and knock the idiot down. He would like, above all, to knock down O'Mara. Damn him!

Jeb recognized the Gleneth car; and he halted.

Agnes saw Jeb, and she knew that she had nothing left to tell him.

He came to the car, and Simmons opened the door for him.

"You'd better take her directly home," Jeb said, looking in. His eyes were upon Agnes, but they went at once to her mother, and he spoke to her. "I'm going to my office."

Cathal drove north alone at nine that evening. The roads were choked with cars, many of them parked, more of them barely rolling as their passengers sought the night and relief, in the little breezes of motion, from the dull and heavy heat.

Another day, whatever its triumphs and despairs, was done; its final pale flaunt was furled in the west. Darkness spread its treacherous shield to satisfactions of the longings of flesh for flesh. Self-sufficiency capitulated; one hungered for another; everywhere young people paired, arms about each other, lips together, careless what silhouettes the headlights surprised and betrayed.

Night. For day, the making of money, the struggle and the fight; for night, relaxation and love. Night, with Deneb, the bright star, low over the lake—as low, almost, as the masthead light of a little yacht drifting along.

Cathal was clear of the city. Thunder threatened, but from far away. Beside him, the street-lamps ceased; he followed the dark lines of cool country places.

It was unlike Cathal to falter before a determination he had taken; yet he passed the gateposts of the Gleneths and drove a mile beyond before he turned back and entered their road. It was ten o'clock, but he saw that doors and windows of the lower rooms were open; shaded lights burned within. The family had not gone to bed.

Cathal rang, and he said to Cravath, who recognized him: "Ask Mrs. Gleneth if I may have a few minutes—no more—with Miss Gleneth."

Cravath left him outside and with the screen door closed. Mrs. Gleneth came, with Cravath, to the screen, and spoke to Cathal through it.

"What is it, Mr. O'Mara? Aren't you through with us? Does the law let you ask something more of my daughter?"

"Not the law," said Cathal, holding his hat. "It's I that do."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Problems of Parents— Should a Woman Spank Her Eighteen-Year-Old Son in Jail?

"WHAT do you think of the woman who spans her eighteen-year-old son in jail?"

"This is what the papers say: 'Mrs. — went to the city jail today and administered a spanking to her eighteen-year-old son, who was arrested for stealing. Mrs. — walked into the police station and asked permission to give him a good spanking. The police were agreeable and she went to his cell, took his belt and swung it at least fifty times. The son said he ran away from home two days ago because of previous spanking.'"

"It seems to me its rather late in the day for her to start spanking. What do you say to it—?"

This question was put to a well-known writer on subjects pertaining to women, who answers as follows:

I always hesitate to speak arbitrarily about the problems of any parent, knowing, as we usually do so little of the real truth of what they may have to contend with. And even in the case of the obviously misguided mother of which our friend writes, my first impulse is one of sympathy—the thought of how much she must have gone through with this son to so make her lose all balance. For that she certainly has. Even if her son were a character (and they are very rare, mothers), who seemed to require physical force as a last resort to his discipline, its failure to the age of eighteen proves quite obviously its uselessness in his case. I do not believe in spanking—at any age. I believe that given normal mentality and ordinarily decent character leanings, a child can be best disciplined by appealing to his finer qualities.

Children, like grown-ups, appreciate respect and try to be worthy of it. They are sensitive to reputation and try to live up to it. Many a black sheep was not born of a black but made black by being painted so. And many a fine character has been developed and strengthened by confidence and belief in him.

Certainly children need punishment. But the most efficacious punishment is not that administered in a spirit of revenge or parental spite for the annoyance caused by the child; it is the punishment administered in the spirit of necessity, to "help you to remember" that that particular temptation is an enemy. A woman I know made a practice of consulting her four or five-year-old son as to the punishment suitable for certain misdemeanors—that is one he would feel sufficiently to help him to remember. And that child has developed the ability for self-discipline which will make parental chastisement unnecessary long before he is eighteen.

The same mother seemed to have extreme ideas of appealing to the child's strength. The day he first entered school she spoke to him like this: "I am doing my best to help you to live up to the fine qualities in you. If you do anything to be ashamed of I shall feel a shortcoming in myself. But I know you won't; I know I can trust you. Always remember that you are strong in body, strong in mind and strong in character, and it is up to you to live up to those gifts of God by setting a good example." So far the boy has done that. And I know of no better advice to give any parent.

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The Mind Meter

By LOWELL HENDERSON
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The Completion Test

In this test eight incomplete statements are made. Each one can be completed by adding one of the four suggestions given. Underline the correct one.

1. The most populous country of South America is—Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Paraguay.
2. The leading corn producing state is — Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois.
3. "La Tosca" was composed by — Verdi, Puccini, Beethoven, Liszt.
4. The popular name for Nebraskans is—Wolverines, Gophers, Corn Huskers, Hawkeys.
5. The sixteenth President of the United States was — Grant, Tyler, Buchanan, Lincoln.
6. The River Jordan flows into the—Gulf of Ob, Bering sea, Dead sea, Indian ocean.
7. "Childe Harold" was written by — Robert Burns, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, William Shakespeare.
8. Columbia is the capital of—Oregon, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia.

Answers

1. Brazil.
5. Lincoln.
2. Iowa.
6. Dead sea.
3. Puccini.
7. Lord Byron.
4. Corn Huskers.
8. South Carolina.

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