

**THE LAW AND THE LADY:  
A NOVEL. IN THREE  
VOLUMES. VOL. III**

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The Law and the Lady: A Novel. In Three Volumes. Vol. III by Wilkie Collins

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**WILKIE COLLINS**

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# THE LAW & THE LADY

A NOVEL

BY

WILKIE COLLINS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.



London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1875

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## THE LAW *and* THE LADY.

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE INDICTMENT OF MRS. BEAULY.

I STARTED to my feet, and looked at Miserrimus Dexter. I was too much agitated to be able to speak to him.

My utmost expectations had not prepared me for the tone of absolute conviction in which he had spoken. At the best, I had anticipated that he might, by the barest chance, agree with me in suspecting Mrs. Beauly. And now, his own lips had said it, without hesitation or reserve! 'There isn't the shadow of a doubt; Mrs. Beauly poisoned her.'

'Sit down,' he said, quietly. 'There's nothing to be afraid of. Nobody can hear us in this room.'



I sat down again, and recovered myself a little.

'Have you never told anyone else what you have told me?' was the first question that I put to him.

'Never. No one else suspected her.'

'Not even the lawyers?'

'Not even the lawyers. There is no legal evidence against Mrs. Beaully. There is nothing but moral certainty.'

'Surely you might have found the evidence, if you had tried?'

He laughed at the idea.

'Look at me!' he said. 'How is a man to hunt up evidence who is tied to this chair? Besides, there were other difficulties in my way. I am not generally in the habit of needlessly betraying myself—I am a cautious man, though you may not have noticed it. But my immeasurable hatred of Mrs. Beaully was not to be concealed. If eyes can tell secrets, she must have discovered, in my eyes, that I hungered and thirsted to see her in the hangman's hands. From first to last, I tell you,

Mrs. Borgia-Beauly was on her guard against me. Can I describe her cunning? All my resources of language are not equal to the task. Take the degrees of comparison to give you a faint idea of it. I am positively cunning; the devil is comparatively cunning; Mrs. Beauly is superlatively cunning. No! no! If she is ever discovered, at this distance of time, it will not be done by a man—it will be done by a woman; a woman whom she doesn't suspect; a woman who can watch her with the patience of a tigress in a state of starvation——'

'Say a woman like Me!' I broke out. 'I am ready to try.'

His eyes glittered; his teeth showed themselves viciously under his moustache; he drummed fiercely with both hands on the arms of his chair.

'Do you really mean it?' he asked.

'Put me in your position,' I answered. 'Enlighten me with your moral certainty (as you call it)—and you shall see!'

'I'll do it!' he said. 'Tell me one

thing first. How did an outside stranger, like you, come to suspect her ?'

I set before him, to the best of my ability, the various elements of suspicion which I had collected from the evidence at the Trial ; and I laid especial stress on the fact (sworn to by the nurse) that Mrs. Beaulieu was missing, exactly at the time when Christina Ormsay had left Mrs. Eustace Macallan alone in her room.

'You have hit it!' cried Miserrimus Dexter. 'You are a wonderful woman! What was she doing on the morning of the day when Mrs. Eustace Macallan died poisoned? And where was she, during the dark hours of the night? I can tell you where she was *not* :—she was not in her own room.'

'Not in her own room?' I repeated. 'Are you really sure of that?'

'I am sure of everything that I say, when I am speaking of Mrs. Beaulieu. Mind that; and now listen! This is a drama; and I excel in dramatic narrative. You shall judge for yourself. Date, the