My dear Will

We have at length got an empty house again after 5 weeks of visitors, and I hope now to do some work on my new Ed[ition] n of [The] W[onderful] Century. I have just bought a book (for you) which I have been looking out for a long time, as it is out of print. It is Lewis Carroll' s "Tangled Tales." -- a lot of stories involving mathematical problems & puzzles. I want to let Mr. Casey have it to look through first & then I will send it to amuse you in the evenings. Some of it is very rich.

We have had a terrible tragedy & mystery here, about the most [2] unlikely thing to happen to any one we know that I could have conceived. Last Wednesday about 12.30 noon, a lady was found floating face downwards in the little decoy pond on the hill, by a labourer's man accidentally passing. He was frightened, went to call another man who came in about 5 minutes, got her out, apparently dead. Each went for a doctor & Dr. Brett & another from Upper Parkstone came in about ½ hour more, but she was quite dead, and it was Monica Briggs! She was fully dressed, & Dr. Brett declares there was no sign of any violence or struggle whatever. She had left her house a little after 12 to go for a walk, to be back to lunch at 1-- and go to Bournemouth [3] by an early afternoon time. All say she was as well and cheerful as ever. The Sunday before she was with us, and visited Ma & Dora to tea at their house on Thursday, begging them to come early. She was also preparing for a party in which she was much interested. The strange thing is that the day was...
a very cold one with strong east wind, and the time between her leaving house and being found, was so short that she could not have been in the water more than 10 minutes, or ½ hour. There was an inquest, & as there was no more evidence than I have stated the verdict was simply -- "found drowned". I saw Dr. Brett yesterday, & he is completely puzzled. He says it was either some kind of fit [[4]] which caused her to fall into the water, or the most deliberate suicide. The latter seemed altogether absurd, & the former hardly less so, as they say she had never been known even to faint. Dr. Brett says there ought to have been a [post mortem] on the body, but that was the Coroner ' s business. Dr. B. knew her well as he had attended her for a slight face eruption, & he is as puzzled as everybody -- so I fear it will remain an "unsolved enigma", a thing too improbable for a sensational novel!

"The Grange" is not yet sold and about 4 or 5 persons interested in the "Colony" have promised to inspect it, but none have gone yet the weather having been more utterly & continuously bad than I ever remember it. In the next few weeks I expect to hear something as 2.. [or] 3 of the people seem quite earnest.

Your affectionate Pa | Alfred R. Wallace [signature]

ENDNOTES


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