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Saved From Drug Slavery By a London "Bobby's" Hand

How the Officer's Grip on Cissie Loftus' Trembling Shoulder Cleared Her Brain of the Fogs of Delirium and Gave Her the Courage to Make a Winning Fight for Freedom



"God bless the 'bobby' who arrested me that night in London" says Cissie Loftus. "The grip of that of that policeman's hand on my quivering, drug-tortured flesh seemed to clear the fogs of delirium from my brain. As it tightened on my shoulder, I felt something like my old strength of will surging through me and giving me a new and unbeatable courage. 'Come with me,' he said, and I went gladly, for even in the disgrace of my arrest I was supremely sure that at last I was on the way to freedom."

"What has become of Cissie Loftus?" That was a question frequently asked both in England and America a little more than ten years ago, when the talented and charming actress suddenly and mysteriously dropped from the public's view.

Her disappearance came just when she was being carried swiftly to the crest of the wave of popular favor. After a brilliant career on the professional stage in support of such well known stars as E. H. Solhern and William Faversham, she had gone into vaudeville and achieved an even greater success there with her mimicry of famous actresses.

The public was delighted with her imitations of Sarah Barnhardt, Ellen Terry and Yvette Guilbert and some enthusiasts declared them even more fascinating than the original performances of these women.

Than all at once, without any warning or explanation, Cissie Loftus's name ceased to appear on the theater programs and in the twinkling electric signs. There was no announcement of continued ill health or of her permanent retirement from the stage. Even her manager and close friends in the theatrical world did not know where she had gone or what had become of her.

It was a puzzling mystery, and so it remained for nearly ten years.

The first light on it came less than a year ago, when the cables from England flashed the news that Cissie Loftus had been arrested in a London street—arrested on a charge of having in her possession narcotic drugs.

Sweet-faced, gentle Cissie Loftus in jail! The talented actress a drug peddler, or, worse still, herself a drug fiend. Her friends and admirers in this country hardly could credit the truth of what they read in the newspapers.

But it was only the truth, as later dispatches from London proved.

"Yes," Cissie Loftus sobbing admitted when arraigned in court, "I had morphine in my possession. For years now I have never been without it. If I could not get it I should die.

She stood before the judge a pallid, trembling shadow of her once rosy, vivacious and well-poised self, and told a story that is being heard with alarming frequency in the courts nowadays.

There had been a serious illness. The hospital nurse had given her more morphine than she needed to ease the pain and bring sleep. By the time the disease was conquered Cissie Loftus found herself conquered by a still more terrible foe—the morphine habit.

The doses the conscienceless or unthinking nurse had given her had implanted a craving that could be satisfied only with

more and more of the drug. She was a confirmed morphine fiend.

In court that morning, after her arrest like any outcast creature of the streets, she pleaded for just one more chance—one more opportunity to try to shake off the shackles which had forged themselves so tightly about her wrists. The judge was touched by her pleas and, after hearing the testimony of her friends, he suspended sentence and paroled her in their custody.

All this the admirers of Cissie Loftus read with dismay and grief. This, then was the sad explanation of her mysterious disappearance from the public's view. They feared that the humiliation of her arrest marked the beginning of the end. It seemed incredible that, after these years of addiction, anything her will power or the loving help of her friends or the skillful advice of physicians could do could free her from her pitiable slavery to drugs.

It was, as everybody sadly thought, goodbye forever to Cissie Loftus, the charm of her personality and the magic of her art.

But it was not goodbye, as Cissie Loftus herself proved just the other day when she landed in New York—once more a free woman, escaped from the cruel slave master that had so nearly ruined her in mind and body and brought her to the brink of the grave.

Cissie Loftus has made the fight nobody thought she had the strength to make—and she has won. Deep lines in her face remain to tell of the suffering she had undergone in gaining her hard-fought freedom, but otherwise, for the first time in nearly ten years, she is her old buoyant magnetic self.

Now she is eager to make up for all the happiness and success she missed during those awful years when she was submerged in the depths that yawn for victims of the drug habit. Also, she wants to lend a helping hand to others who are enslaved as she was by the craving for morphine or cocaine or other narcotic drugs.

"The cure for the drug habit must come from within," says Cissie Loftus. "Physicians and friends and other things may help, but complete freedom from the slavery can be won only through one's own soul.

"God bless the 'bobby' who arrested me that night in London! The touch of his hand on my shoulder stirred for the first time within me confidence that I could strike off the shackles of the morphine habit.

"The grip of his hand on my quivering, drug-tortured flesh seemed to clear the fogs of delirium from my brain. I realized as I never had before in all those dreadful years the depths to which I had sunk, the wreck I had made of my life, the joy I had missed, the sorrow I had caused my friends.

"His hand tightened on my shoulder and as it did I felt something like my old strength of will surging through me and giving me an unbeatable courage.

" 'Come with me,' he said, and I went gladly, for even in the disgrace of my arrest, I was supremely sure that at last I was on my way to freedom."

From the courtroom Cissie Loftus was taken to the light and cheer and restful quiet of a country cottage. Kindly hands and sane reason surrounded her, but it was the will power to which the touch of the policeman's hand had given a new birth that finally won the battle.

It was made all the harder by the excruciating pains that seized her. Brain and nerves were crying out in agony for another dose of the drug to which they had so long been accustomed.

But Cissie Loftus, fighting in what she now knew was the last ditch, steadfastly refused to heed their insistent demands.

"Morphine is not a real need," she kept repeating to herself. "This craving is a false and perverse appetite, and if I ever gratify it again it will put me in my grave. I MUST get along without it, and I WILL!"

When brain and nerves and the whole body machinery finally began slowly to return to normal the pains steadily grew less, and as they did, so did the craving for the drug. Weeks later Cissie Loftus awoke one morning after the first night of refreshing sleep she had had in years, to find the gnawing desire for morphine completely gone.

But it took still more weeks of rest and food and invigorating air to fill out the hollows in her cheeks, restore the roses to them and bring back to mind and body the strength which her years of slavery had robbed them of.

"Like being chained to a nightmare," is Cissie Loftus's vivid description of the horrors a slave to the drug habit knows. Yet in the beginning it seems like no nightmare at all, but a radiantly golden dream—a dream so entrancingly blissful that the mind is numbed to the realization of what its end must be.

Days when she was sunk into a heavy lethargy alternated with days when she was lifted to planes of wild ecstasy. At

other times came a depression weighing so heavily on her spirit that not even death seemed a way to escape.

The drug freed her from all the inhibitions which normal persons know and obey—all the inhibitions which mind and body, education and environment have set up as safeguards for us. She found herself doing queer, ecstatic things. She often felt as if she were dismembered—an eternal spirit, a thing supreme, apart, having nothing in common with the world about her.

As the drug broke down, one by one, her inhibitions she became absolutely reckless of facts, consequences, everything to which sane minds give heed. Although, as her mirror and the wondering eyes of friends plainly told her, she was pale, haggard and wild eyed, she felt bounding with health and bubbling with high spirits.

Yet with this strange excitement that thrilled every fiber of her being she seemed to view the world of reality with a profound and superior calm—form her detachment she looked, for instance, with deepest contempt on persons who had the coarseness to stuff themselves with rich foods or drink to excess.

She was carried out of herself, lifted into such regions as are described by Aleister Crowley in his "Diary of a Drug Fiend." The hero has fallen in love with a young and charming drug slave and they go to Paris and Italy on a honeymoon that is one long drug debauch.

"She spoke to me for the first time. Her voice thrilled dark unfathomable deeps of being. I tingled in every fiber. And what she said was this: 'Your kiss is bitter with cocaine.'

"It was a boiling cauldron of wickedness that had suddenly bubbled over. Her voice rang rich with hellish glee. It stimulated me to male intensity. I caught her in my arms more fiercely. The world went black before my eyes. I perceived nothing any more. I can hardly even say I felt.

"At that moment she threw me off as if I had been a feather. I felt myself all of a sudden no more good. Quite unaccountably I had collapsed and I found myself, to my amazement, knocking out a pile of cocaine from a ten-gramme bottle which had been in my trouser's pocket, on to my hand and sniffing it up into my nostrils with greedy relish."

The heroine describes her experiences—the terrible struggle to obtain drugs and always at the same time the dull hope of fighting off the craving once and for all:

"We walked on aimlessly in silence. A taxi offered itself. We climbed into it listlessly and drove back. We threw ourselves on our beds. The idea of lunch was disgusting. We were too weak to do anything. I found myself on fire with a passionate determination to fight heroin and cocaine to a finish; and my hands were tied behind my back, my feet were fettered by a ball and chain.

"I went to the glass to take my hat off. I didn't know who I was. There is no flesh on my face. My complexion's entirely gone. My hair is lusterless and dry, and it's coming out in handfuls. I think I must be ill. I've a good mind to send for a doctor. But I daren't. It has been a frightful shock! . . .

"And in these hideous hours of helplessness we drifted down the dark and sluggish river of inertia toward the stagnant and stinking morass of insanity. We were obsessed by the certainty that we could never pull through. We said nothing at first. We were sunk in solemn stupor. When it found voice at last it was to whimper the surrender."

It was when Cissie Loftus had reached such a state, when there seemed no possibility of escape, that she was got on the road to freedom by the touch of a policeman's hand.

The story of how her arrest galvanized her will power into action and enabled her to make her winning fight for freedom and life itself is one she is now glad to tell, in the hope that it may help other victims to escape from the cruel bondage into which they have been cast by their craving for morphine and other narcotic drugs.



Miss Cissie Loftus, who has amazed and delighted her friends by conquering the morphine habit to which she so long was a slave.