

# THE PRES OF DENLEY WOLD

By Florence Warden

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## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Mrs. St. Quintin, a wealthy young Englishwoman, sees a beautiful young woman, Miss Denley at a party, and by a carefully designed accident, manages to meet her. She finds that she lives with her uncle and aunt, M. and Mrs. Leblanc, who are just then in France, and gets an invitation to their house, near London. In spite of the objection of her friend, James Ince, a lawyer, in whom she confides, St. Quintin visits her and finds her relatives are charming people. But just as she leaves the house she hears a muffled cry of "murder" and returns. Mr. Leblanc convinces her that there is no one in the room whose sound seemed to proceed, but later she learns that the doctor's solicitor has mysteriously disappeared, being last seen in the neighborhood of the Frenchman's home. St. Quintin, however, decides to follow up the mystery, but the pursuit is pleasantly interrupted by an unexpected opportunity to make love to Miss Denley, an opportunity that she promptly seizes. He learns that the girl regards him more highly than she is wont to do, and she is not ready to bind herself with an engagement, but she will consent to purchase a sitting suit for the woman of his heart. Then St. Quintin takes issue to the Leblancs and, in spite of the opposition of his hostess, obtains a promise of marriage from Miss Denley, Ince can find no fault with the people, but on the other hand, that one of their footmen is an ex-convict. The girl is forced to admit that the Leblancs are "crooks," but St. Quintin remains loyal to Miss Denley. Several days afterward they go to Leblanc's home and Ince makes a discovery that completely upsets him. The two men are afterward received by M. Leblanc, but see nothing of interest. On leaving, however, Ince falls his friend he is certain he saw a dead man's hand in a laboratory which M. Leblanc had fitted up, ostensibly for scientific experiments.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST)

## CHAPTER XV

OR a few seconds after James Ince had told his ghostly story, both he and St. Quintin maintained a dead silence. Then the younger man spoke.

"You're not sure of this?"

"Well, imagination does play tricks with one, but I could have sworn it—almost."

"Then you think—"

"I only wonder. Remember what you heard yourself. It's not more than a week ago. The man has disappeared—Burlock, I mean. And you heard cries of 'Help' and 'Murder.' Putting the two together, and collecting that was horrible, polluted atmosphere that was distinct and all-pervading, even with the windows wide open, one can only wonder whether this Leblanc is not a merely schemer, bent on getting all that he can out of everybody—but one of the vilest criminals of the century."

St. Quintin shuddered.

"One wouldn't like to think that."

"Of course not. I myself think from the thought, try to tell myself that I only imagined and did not see. And it's true that the very chest which I saw this moment empty was the one in which I saw, or thought I saw, human fingers—deadly fingers."

St. Quintin stared at him.

"The question is, did you see you looking in at the window?"

"He may have done. That's what I was not conscious of."

"They walked on a little way in silence. Then James Ince stopped short.

"Look here," he said, "was something to do. We must wait for the Darnall and compare notes with him."

"Wait for him?" echoed St. Quintin, in a threatening tone. "I don't want to speak to the fellow! A bouncer like that!"

"Come, you mustn't take that tone until you know something about the circumstances. Probably he's been deceived, like you and the rest."

"How have I been deceived?"

"Well, not extensively as yet, but dependent upon the old Leblanc is only waiting for an opportunity of putting the screw on."

"I don't think you ought to take so much for granted," protested St. Quintin, uneasily. "You see, we may be doing him an injustice all the time. As far as you saw, we both have to own we couldn't swear to it. And as for this Darnall paying her attention, and real of them—well, that Leblanc never made any secret of the fact that there are lots of men after her, has he? And one of them is her husband, and she's almost as open about his intentions of handing her over to the man who shows himself the most likely to be a generous husband."

"Or nephew," suggested Ince.

"But St. Quintin was determined to shut his eyes, if he could, to the possibility that he might be called upon to look upon Miss Denley's relations as rogues and swindlers.

"We shall only get snubbed by this fellow if we attempt to wray him," he said.

"You leave it to me, and I think we can avoid that. But mind, you mustn't be impatient until you have found out on what terms he stands, or supposes himself to stand, with the people. To my mind, the most probable thing is that he has been encouraged and led on, just as you have been."

"Not by Miss Denley," said St. Quintin, fiercely. "Surely you can't see death. It isn't her fault if her miserable old uncle keeps a dozen men on the hooks, dangling about her and hoping that the prize will fall into their mouth at last."

Ince hesitated.

"No doubt she likes a good-looking fellow like you better than others like Marbeau and this Darnall, for instance. But if I were you I shouldn't take anything on trust."

"I'll take her on trust. But as for her uncle and aunt, real or not, why, you may find encouraged you like about them and all the difference it will make to me is to increase my anxiety to take her away from them."

They had stopped and turned back.



"I think Marie Denley is worth any sacrifice."

and were strolling in a leisurely way within sight of the garden gates of Briar Lodge. They waited and watched a long time, and began to fear that Captain Darnall might have been invited to stay to dinner, when a smart motor car drove up to the gates, and the chauffeur, who was the sole occupant, turned into the drive and drew up to the side door of the house.

The two young men took this for conclusive evidence that it was Captain Darnall's car, and that it was waiting for its owner. Their task of stopping it became more difficult, but James Ince was determined and would not despair. Taking their stand "like a couple of detectives," as St. Quintin said uneasily, within a few yards of the gate, but out of sight of the house, they waited, not for long.

In about ten minutes the car came slowly out, with the captain himself at the wheel.

James stepped forward the moment the car had turned into the straight, and, raising his hat, said:

"Captain Darnall, may we speak to you a moment?"

The captain stared at him through the goggles he was wearing, and evidently recognizing him without enthusiasm, said in an off-hand tone:

"Oh, certainly, what do you want?"

James Ince came nearer, and spoke lower, so that his words only reached the ear of the man to whom they were addressed.

"We want to know whether you are one of the men whom Monsieur Leblanc is marrying to his niece."

Captain Darnall leaped out of his car and confronted Ince with a stare of amazement, perplexity and indignation. Ince stood his ground and gave him look for look.

"Eh! What the devil are you talking about?" he said, after a moment's silent contemplation of his interlocutor.

"My friend has been provisionally accepted by the Leblancs and by Miss Denley as her future husband, and it occurred to us to wonder whether you had not been accepted on the same terms," said Ince, quietly.

St. Quintin, who had heard the last few words, now came forward.

Captain Darnall changed color a little.

"Impossible," said he, shortly.

James Ince, who dropped any sort of enunciation between these two, interposed his person between his friend and the indignant Captain Darnall, just as St. Quintin was about to make an injudicious remark.

"You can see," he said, "that we have done the best thing we could for you as well as ourselves, in telling you at once what his position is, so that you can compare notes with your people. They seem to have eccentric ways of treating the suitors for their niece and we thought it fairer to you to let you know our experience, hoping that you will in return tell us yours."

Now, although Captain Darnall did not look very intelligent, and was inclined to put on lofty airs of superiority, the tone and manner of James Ince were so quiet and impressive that he decided to hear all that there was to be said. He, therefore, after a short pause, said:

"What is the name of your friend?"

"Of course, he knew very well, having been introduced to St. Quintin by the

Leblancs. However, James Ince, keeping a steady hand upon his friend's arm, gave him again the information he had just given, and made sure of the lady without any assistance. If it were allowed old Leblanc to let you in, why I'm sorry for you, you know, but you have only yourself to thank for it. You should have done as I did, and not let yourself be caught without something definite as a quid pro quo."

"I never proposed to bargain for a wife when I wanted one!" said St. Quintin, coldly. "Instead of trying to find out whether Miss Denley's property was real or not, I've been thinking how best to act so as to free her from the degrading necessity of being hawked about by these people and offered, without her consent or even knowledge, to the highest bidder."

This speech, which he delivered with all the fire and passion which had been smoldering within him from the first moment of their meeting, struck both his hearers into astonishment and a sort of consternation. The captain could not help feeling that he had a real live rival in the quiet-mannered young man with the almost boyish face and figure.

While James Ince, though he admired his friend's spirit, regretted the friction which must result from his fiery speech, between two men whom he would have liked to see acting together for their common good and the exposure of the Frenchman, whom he believed to be no better than an arch-swindler, if not a dangerous and treacherous criminal of a worse sort.

There was a short, embarrassed pause, and then Captain Darnall said, with some show of impatience:

"If you have reason to think you're better off than you are, why don't you withdraw and have done with them? I don't see Leblanc is anything but an artful customer; so, if you don't feel yourself to be artful enough to deal with him, I should advise you not to turn up at Briar Lodge again."

With that he turned sharply, went back to his car, got in and drove off at a furious pace, leaving the two young men to go to the station with a very uneasy feeling in their minds.

It was not till they had reached St. Quintin's rooms that the all-absorbing topic of Briar Lodge and its mysteries was broached again. Then James Ince, when they had both been smoking silently for some time, said in a persuasive tone:

"I say, old chap, do you think it's worth it?"

"What?" asked St. Quintin, fiercely, though he understood the other very well.

"Well, do you think, if I must say it boldly, that any girl in the world is worth the awful risks you're running in dealing with a man like Leblanc, whom you must know to be a consummate rogue?"

St. Quintin did not fly into a passion as his friend expected. He did something more helplessly convincing still. Rising to his feet, and leaning over the table toward his friend, he said in a low, steady voice:

"I think Marie Denley is worth any sacrifice, any risk; and I'm not going to stick at anything in my determination to get her out of this nest of harpies—and into perfect safety—as my wife."

James Ince said nothing to this; indeed, there was nothing to be said.

## CHAPTER XVI

THE worst of it was that St. Quintin, with all the goodwill in the world, was utterly ignorant how to set about fulfilling his heart's desire. Knowing, as he did, that Miss Denley was entirely under the influence of the Leblancs, who might or might not be her relations, it was whom she certainly looked upon not only in that character, but as her best friend, he felt sure that, if he were to write her such a letter as his heart dictated, she would feel bound in duty to submit it to them before replying.

And if he were to express in his letter his mistrust of her guardians, it seemed more than probable that she would resent the accusation, and perhaps refuse to see him again.

While he was torturing himself with doubts and questionings, however, and feeling sure that the Leblancs wished to throw him over altogether in favor of Captain Darnall, who had shown such a much higher degree of "generosity" than he, St. Quintin was surprised and overjoyed to receive a letter from Madame Leblanc inviting him to dinner on the Saturday evening.

For one moment he debated whether he should consult Ince before accepting the invitation. But common sense told him that his friend would strongly urge him to take no notice of the invitation, would talk about putting himself again into the lion's clutches and say other things unpleasant to hear.

So St. Quintin said nothing about it, and went down to Briar Lodge on the day named, after accepting the invitation with alacrity. He had provided himself with a bouquet of chocolates from Fuller's and with a bouquet of flowers that looked just like artificial ones from Gerard's, so that Monsieur Leblanc might not reproach him with coming empty-handed to the shrine.

To his great delight, he once more had a chance of a tête-à-tête with Miss Denley, who was very pale, and seemed timid and miserable, and though she let him kiss her, he felt that she did it under protest, and wondered what orders she had received from headquarters as to her treatment of him.

He soon found out.

"Mr. St. Quintin," she said, "I've been very unhappy on your account since you were here last."

"Well, and I?" retorted he, "have been very unhappy on yours. When I saw you monopolized by that fellow Darnall, I couldn't understand it. I wondered whether you were nothing but a flirt after all."

"I hate him," said she, sharply.

"Then it's not true you're going to marry him? That's what he says."

"Of course it's not true! How could you think I should marry him when—"

"Well, you know you accepted me. But your uncle quibbled and wobbled so much, and Captain Darnall was so certain that he was the man whom your people had chosen for you, that I began to think—well, all sort of things that I hope aren't true."

Miss Denley, who looked years older than she had looked before, as if, indeed, she had been very much worried and distressed since he had seen her, looked up earnestly into his face.

"I can't help what he thinks," she said, "and you ought not to believe any love me as much as you say you do. But I know who it is that has prejudiced over them, something indefinable which neither care to try to analyze, yet, on the whole, they were happy, trusting each other at least, in their first doubts and fears about

either which she dared not openly discuss.

St. Quintin was rather anxious to note what sort of reception he should have to endure at the hands of her uncle and aunt. But he was reassured when he met nothing but smiling faces, and found himself treated with even more affectionate consideration than ever before. Indeed, but for what he had learnt from Captain Darnall, and his other quarters, he might have felt secure in the belief that he was indeed the favored suitor, as certainly with the elders as with Miss Denley herself.

After dinner, instead of leaving the dining room all together, as was usually the custom at Briar Lodge, they broke up in the English fashion, Monsieur Leblanc pleasantly suggesting to Madame that they should follow the custom of Mr. St. Quintin's country, in order that they might have a little talk together.

St. Quintin hailed the opportunity with delight.

But it was with still greater satisfaction that he received the first announcement made by his coat when the ladies had left the room.

"Mr. St. Quintin," he said, "I have done something yesterday which ought, if all you have told me is true—as I believe it to be—to cause you the greatest joy."

"Indeed, monsieur, then I can guess the sort of news you have for me," said the young man at once.

His host smiled a little, but rather ruefully.

"It has been done at a heavy cost," he went on in a grave and slow tone. "But there was no help for it. I wished to leave the matter of my niece's marriage open until the arrival in London of her other guardian, as you know. But Marie took such a decided stand in your favor that I have been forced to write to Captain Darnall, and to tell him he must retire from the contest—in your favor."

"Indeed, that is good news!" cried St. Quintin, in delighted excitement. "Then there is no longer any obstacle to our marrying?"

Monsieur shook his head dubiously.

"Well, there is one difficulty," he said. "The fact is, Captain Darnall lent me £2000 to pay off a mortgage on my niece's property, and he at once wrote back to demand the repayment of the loan."

The Frenchman's manner was so bland and so convincing that St. Quintin, even while he felt that he was doing a foolish thing, at once offered to find the money.

"Pass the loan on to me, monsieur," said he, "and the thing is done. I will instruct my solicitor to meet yours, and the matter can be arranged without delay."

Monsieur smiled approvingly.

"Unhappily," said he, "I cannot do that. I should have to disclose to your solicitor the fact that I had borrowed the money from the bank. Darnall, and he would at once warn you not to have anything to do with the matter. He would say: 'You will embroil yourself with Darnall, by withdrawing the matter; allow let him marry Miss Denley. Now would he not?'"

"Well, yes, I daresay he would. But I shouldn't mind that. All I want is to marry your niece as quickly as I can, and I don't care what the conditions are."

The Frenchman smiled benignly.

"Ah! There is the real, high-spirited English lover, in whose disinterestedness we more prudent Frenchmen find it so hard to believe!" said he. "Well, my dear Mr. St. Quintin, if you really care to do such a thing, and choose to advance the money on your own responsibility, without consulting your more prudent friends, you shall do so."

"And you'll agree to let me marry Marie at once, without any more delay?"

"I will take upon myself that responsibility. In the circumstances I could not refuse."

"You must give me a day or two to realize," said St. Quintin. "I haven't so much money lying at my banker's at the moment."

"Oh, certainly, certainly. There is no hurry. And see, Mr. St. Quintin, we have to do everything in order. You shall not advance one penny till I have seen the estate."

"Oh, I don't want—"

"I insist. On Tuesday I take the ladies, my wife and my niece and her governess, to Denley Wold for change of air. You shall accompany us there. And it is there that my solicitor shall come to us, and, after you have seen the property, and learnt the particulars, if you have brought the money with you, and choose to carry this through, you shall have your own way. It is a bargain."

"Indeed it is," said St. Quintin, trying to look entirely happy, as he rose with a light heart from the table, for he was not such a fool as to ignore the dangers of the course he had bound himself to pursue. Not only was he going to advance £2000 without taking advice on his side, but he was alive to the fact that it was odd to hear of this apparently rich family being pressed for what he would have thought they looked upon as a small sum.

He saw, too, that to trust himself, with a sum of £2000 in cash or securities about him, in the society of so dubious a person as Monsieur Leblanc, was a hazardous proceeding.

But he was young, spirited; it was an adventure, and it was worth the risk to be taken. There was also a great prize to be gained.

(CONTINUED NEXT)

## THIRTY P

### Scott Govern Peculiar stituency

The Election bill seats in the next follows:

1. Carnduff district south east corner of eastern boundary of the southern boundary southeast corner of the far north of town west to the second line. There it jogs ship and runs west 5 to range 4 w Range 4 is followed ternational line. Th in this district are her, Alameda, Ox Carievale and Gas population is placed is part of the old S
2. The Arcola disty above Carnduff dely in townships. Manitoba line is th east. Westward th to range 7 and no ship 9. Towns tak Carlyle, Kistly, M The population is 8 trict is part of S ton.
3. Windthorst is t in the new district ner. The district st dary at township 8 to the 2nd meridian north to township westward to range north and westwa township 14 range 2 from there the dist east along township meridian. It goes meridian to townsh east to the bounda is traversed by the branch of the C.P. part of the Grenfell Cannington districts constituted. The timed at 7,137.
4. Moosomin dist same as formerly. dary is the provincial ship 11. It starts at the second meridian township 19 and e dary. It includes W ction, Moosomin and t 7,962.
5. Wolesey, Gre wood are included sion No. 5. Its sou township 14 and it ary the Qu'Appelle east it commences a cipal meridian agd to Range 10. Popul ship 11. It starts at the main line dary is the Qu'App east boundary com on principal meri 21. A jog of the township 23 and th range 8. Range 8 ward to the banks population 7,081.
7. Abernethy is line district, in N It commences on 22 and is bounded the Qu'Appelle. township 24 and on ton. Balcarres and population is 6,633
8. Indian Head is which was former and south Qu'Appe as far north as th and its south line starts on the east runs west to rang included are Indian Sinitulata and Mel ton is 8,293.
9. The constituent one of the Sanges is bounded in the 'Appelle Valley an township 15. Its 23 and its eastern cluded in this dist ed Police Barrack ment buildings sit is 8,082 and the p Lumsten, Pense, Balgonie.
10. The Strassb northern end of th constituency. It 'Appelle Valley to east boundary is west boundary is population is 7,11
11. Estevan is cy in the sixth of Its east line is r north along that these west to ran north to township this line to ran range 10 is follo township 4 where west to range 13 boundary. Estev town in this divi tion is placed at
12. Weyburn is shaped district dently with a vic vote of the dis South Qu'Appell 13 and runs no From township to range 10 at township 8, fro north and west