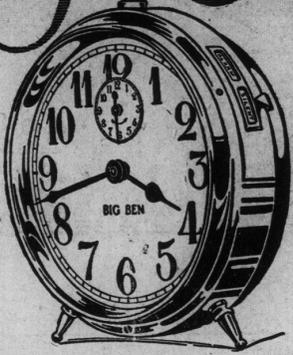


# Big Ben



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## Plot That Failed;

## Love That Would Not Be Denied.

CHAPTER I.

"What changed me? A mere bagatelle. A newspaper. A year-old newspaper, which that lot of a warder had dropped from his pocket. I snatched it up and hid it in my bosom. It would lighten many a hateful hour in that horrible cell. I opened it next morning, and the first words my eyes rested on were:

"Grand Fete at Mildmay Park, Penruddie—On the occasion of Miss Mildmay's sixteenth birthday a large party of personal friends and the tenants of the Mildmay estate was gathered at the Park, where most extensive preparations have been for some time in progress to insure success for the various festivities. In the morning the numerous gayly dressed visitors gave themselves with a zest to the enjoyment of archery, boating and the subtleties of croquet. In the evening the grand hall—which was decorated by Owen Jones—was opened for a ball to which invitations to the number of two hundred had been issued. It is needless to say that the whole affair was brilliantly successful, and that the twelfth of July will be a white stone in the lives of Miss Mildmay's tenants and those fortunate friends who were enabled to partake of her hospitality. Miss Mildmay is at present staying, in company with her aunt, Mrs. W. Mildmay, at her residence, Mildmay Park."

"That is something like it, Jem—all glitter and sparkle, diamonds and rubies. I swear, much as I revelled in that greasy paper's moment before, I could not read another line of it. Every time I tried my eyes looked back to Mildmay Park and the wealthy Miss Mildmay.

This Violet was to have been my ward, and Jack's money, his enormous estates, ay, the very diamonds she wore, were to have been under my charge. What an opportunity I had lost! With such a chance, what might I not have accomplished? I

might have feathered my nest, ay, have filled it even, with every penny of Jack's gold; for what was a puny little bit of a girl to count for?—if I had been free. Free! that was the word, and it haunted me. One day it rang in my ears, making a chorus to the grand doings at Mildmay Park, and at last I swore that I'd give this place the slip or die in the attempt. Once away from here—once in England, the way to Jack Mildmay's gold is as plain as the road to Rome. I am once more Captain Murpoint. I turn up, looking the gentleman that I am, at the park in the character of her father's friend. She knows all about me, remembers me almost as well as she does her father. Keeps all his letters, those letters in which he tells her that he is hunting, fighting, playing, or dining with his dear Murpoint, and she welcomes me to Mildmay Park with open arms and a shower of tears.

There was a moment's pause; Jem crept closer to the daring schemer.

"And me, captain? You won't forget me?"

"No; you go with me as my servant. No, thanks. I shouldn't take you if I didn't want you, my friend. I never did a generous action in my life, I leave that for idiots. I want you for a hundred things. I want a man who is completely under my thumb—in my power. You are in both those situations, so I help you to escape and take you with me. If you have any gratitude, keep it bottled up, don't let it evaporate in words. Well?"

The man mutters something faintly.

"But, captain, is that all the game? Don't we hold no more cards than that? It seems a chance, a regular change."

"And what else if life?" says the captain, with a short laugh of contempt. "But those are not all the cards. Even to you, my bosom friend, I do not choose to show my whole hand. Enough that I hold sufficient cards to play the game, and that I have sufficient brains to win it. You, my poor Jem, have neither cards nor brains! Stop! what's that?" and his low, subtle voice sinks to a sharp hiss.

"That's the light of the fishing smack," hoarsely returns his companion.

"Not that, idiot!" is the retort, in a sharper voice. "That up above. A thousand fends! It is the moon!"

A smothered cry breaks from the parched lips of the convict Jem. He springs to his feet, then falls to the ground with a quiver of excitement.

"Captain, we are lost! In two minutes it will be like day! The soldiers can see every speck on the water for a mile around!"

"Silence!" cries the captain, crouching so motionless that his gray clad figure looks part and parcel of the rock against which it presses. The tide is in. That is the smack before us. Swim like the fend! If we reach it we are safe. I have enough to bribe them. Swim for liberty and life—now!"

And, with the word, he rises to his feet, leaps over the patch of beach that intervenes between cliff and sea, and plunges into the foremost wave. His companion follows, and not a moment too soon.

The moon that had been battling with the dark mass of clouds, rises conqueror at last, and swims majestically into the clear heavens, lighting up the sea till it glows like a plain of diamonds.

Not a moment too soon, for the monotonous tramp, tramp of the nearest sentinel upon the ramparts above is suddenly broken, and his sharp voice gives the challenge:

"Who goes there?"

For answer the moon shoots a bright beam of light full upon the dark figures swimming toward the smack.

With a shout of alarm, the sentinel brings his musket to his shoulder.

"Dive!" hisses the white lips of the captain.

Crack! ping! and a bullet cleaves the air.

Another moment, and the rampart is alive.

Lights flash and fro, showing up for a moment the excited faces of the soldiers.

Shouts of warning and anger break through the silence and affright the sea-gulls.

Then an officer's voice rises above the din.

"There they are, close by the smack! Ready—present—fire!"

Crack! crack! crack!

"Ah! that's got them! There they go—eh, what? couldn't see them?" says the commandant, angrily, repeating the hesitating suggestion of a subordinate that the moon was obscured and that he couldn't see the men as he fired. "Nonsense! You winged them right enough. Anyway, we must say we did. There have been too many escapes lately to allow of any more. We shall have the authorities down upon us for negligence.

It's a singular thing that I can't run down to the town to get a rubber at whist but that somebody must go to sleep. It isn't often I take a little pleasure, but sure as I leave my post for an hour or two some foolhardy or sleepy-headed worder lets one of those vermin get away. There's warder No. 24 got his back broken, and the Lord Harry knows what. Serves him right! It must be hushed up, mind! There have been too many escapes lately by far. If there's any inquiring, mind you winged them twice, and they are dead as nails at the bottom of the sea."

The sentinels give the salute, and the officer starts off to finish the interrupted rubber.

Next morning the official whose business it was to draw up such statements reported that convicts Nos. 108 and 99 had attempted escape, but were shot down by the sentinel while swimming toward a fishing smack.

CHAPTER II.

In the drawing-room at Mildmay Park, was seated, in her own particular easy chair, Mrs. Henry Mildmay.

Mrs. Henry Mildmay was a lady of that good old sort of whom our modern demosciesles are rather tired of receiving as models for imitation. Herself ladylike and distingue in feature, dress and manner, slight of figure, nerve, she was deeply imbued with a delicate of hand and more delicate of

love of good birth, elegant manners and a large income, all of which she possessed in a fair and comfortable degree.

Mrs. Mildmay was John Mildmay's only sister, and at his death she had undertaken the sole charge of his daughter Violet, whom she loved as a daughter, and by whom she was beloved in return as a mother, with just this difference, that, whereas, the dear old lady was rather afraid of her beautiful, high-spirited ward, the girl was as fearless as a lioness, and gave her love unalloyed and unshadowed.

Violet Mildmay had inherited the brave, simple nature of the merchant prince and was a realization of that most glorious ideal—a pure-minded tender-hearted English girl.

Mrs. Mildmay was knitting—a favorite amusement, or occupation, as she would have dignified it, for the results of her pastime were distributed among the Penruddie poor—and sinking into a comfortable doze, from which the sharp striking of an ornolou clock aroused her.

"Dear me!" she murmured, placidly smiling; "dear me, Violet, I was nearly asleep."

The remark finding no answer, the old lady turned in her chair, and found the handsomely furnished room was empty.

"Violet, where are you, my dear? What a restless girl she is. She was here five minutes ago, and now she has gone. Just like poor John, never still ten minutes together."

At that moment the conservatory door was thrown open with a suddenness that made the old lady drop her needle, and a sweet, but full, voice immediately behind her said:

"Whom am I like, auntie?"

"No one in particular, my dear," faltered the old lady, with a pleasant smile and a "Thank you" for the needle, which the owner of the voice had sprung forward to recover before the old lady could stoop.

"Where have you been, my dear? I did not know you had left the room."

"No?—Only on the lawn. It was so hot in here, and you were falling so comfortably asleep that I thought I would creep away before it was too late, for I know I frighten you if I move when you are fast asleep, auntie mine. Am I not careful now? Am I not improving?"

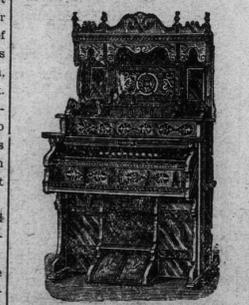
"You are everything that is good and dear, Violet," said the old lady, stroking the girl's head, as it leaned itself to a level with her white hand.

"But don't sit on the floor, my love, you will crease that pretty muslin."

"Shall I?" said the sweet voice, absently, and Violet sprang to her feet.

(To be Continued.)

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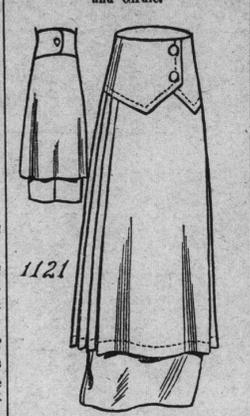
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This style shows a tunic with plaits at the sides, and a girdler with front and back edges lapped. The style is fine for remodelling and if the plaited portions are made of contrasting material together with girdler and underskirt, the effect will be very stylish. One could have serge and plaid woolen with the plaid for contrast. Or if made of cashmere, crepe or silbustross, the underskirt and girdler with plaits could be of charmeuse or satin. The design is also good for velvet, broad cloth, duvety, wool mixtures and novelty weaves. The Pattern is cut in 5 sizes: 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 inches waist measure. It requires 2 3/4 yards of 36 inch material for the skirt, and 4 5/8 yards for tunic and girdler for a 34 inch size. The Skirt measures about 2 yards at the foot.

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