

THE ACADIAN

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ST. FRANCIS (R.C.)—Rev. Mr. Kennedy, P. P.—Mass at 11 a. m. on the fourth Sunday of each month.

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mark here, and, as I have said, my very particular friend.

"That fellow turned up again," growled the colonel.

"I have something more to tell you of him," continued Dick, remorselessly. "I have reason to believe, as we say on the press when hard up for copy, that he is in love with Mary."

The colonel sprang from his seat. "Be calm," said Dick.

"I am calm," said the colonel, not saying another word, so fearful was he of what Dick might tell him next.

"That would not perhaps so much matter," Dick said, coming to rest at the back of a chair, "if it were not that Mary seems to have an equal regard for him."

Colonel Abinger's hands clutched the edge of the table, and it was not a look of love he cast at Dick.

"If this be true," he exclaimed, his voice breaking in agitation, "I shall never forgive you, Richard, never. But I don't believe it."

Dick felt sorry for his father.

"It is a fact that has to be faced," he said, more gently.

"Why, why, why, the man is a pauper!"

"Not a bit of it," said Dick. "He may be on the regular staff of the 'Wire' any day now."

"You dare to look me in the face, and tell me you have encouraged this, this—" cried the colonel, choking in a rush of words.

"Quite the contrary," Dick said; "I have done more than I had any right to do to put an end to it."

"Then is it ended?"

"I can't say."

"It shall be ended," shouted the colonel, making the table groan under his fist.

"In a manner," Dick said, "you are responsible for the whole affair. Do you remember when you were at Glen Quahary two or three years ago asking a parson called Horison, father of Horison the war correspondent, to use his son's press influence on behalf of a Thrumms man? Well, Angus is that man. Is it not strange how this has come about?"

"It is enough to make me hate myself," replied the irate colonel, though it had not quite such an effect as that.

When his father had subsided a little, Dick told him of what had been happening in England during the last month or two. There had been a change of Government, but the chief event was the audacity of a plebeian in casting his eyes on a patrician's daughter.

What are politics when the pipes in the bath-room burst?

"So you see," Dick said, in conclusion, "I have saved the part of the unrelenting parent fairly well, and I don't like it."

"Had I been in your place," replied the colonel, "I would have noted it a good deal better."

"You would have told Angus that you considered him, upon the whole, the most man that crawls, and that if he came within a radius of five miles of your daughter you would have the law of him? Yes; but that sort of trespassing is not actionable nowadays; and besides, I don't know what Mary might have said."

"Trespassing!" echoed the colonel. "I could have had the law of him for trespassing nearly a year ago."

"You mean the time you caught him fishing in the Dome? I only heard of that at second-hand, but I have at least no doubt that he fished to some effect."

"He can fish," admitted the colonel. "I should like to know what fish he used."

Dick laughed.

"Angus," he said, "is a man with a natural aptitude for things. He does not, I suspect, even make love like a beginner."

"You are on his side, Richard."

"It has not seemed like it so far, but I confess I have certainly had enough of bluffing."

"There will be no more bluffing," said the colonel, fiercely. "I shall see this man and tell him what I think of him. As for Mary—"

He paused.

"Yes," said Dick, "Mary is the difficulty. As present I cannot even tell you what she is thinking of it all, Mary is the one person I could never look in the face when I meditated an underhand action—I remember how that sense of honor of hers used to annoy me when I was a boy—and so I have not studied her countenance much of late."

"She shall marry Downton," said the colonel, decisively.

"It is probably a pity, but I don't think the will," replied Dick. "Of course you can prevent her marrying Angus by simply refusing your consent."

"Yes; and I shall refuse it."

"Though it should break her heart, she will never complain," said Dick; "but it does seem a little hard on Mary that we should mar her life rather than endure a disappointment ourselves."

"You don't look at it in the proper light," said the colonel, who, like most persons, made the proper light himself. "In saving her from this man, we do her the greatest kindness in our power."

"Um," said Dick, "of course. That was how I put it to myself; but just consider Angus calmly, and see what case we have against him."

"He is not a gentleman," said the colonel.

"He ought not to be, according to the proper light, but he is."

"Pshaw!" the colonel exclaimed pettishly. "He may have worked him self up into some sort of position, like

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other discontented men of his class but he never had a father."

"He says he had a very good one. Weigh him, if you like, against Downton, who is a good fellow in his way but never, so far as I know, did an honest day's work in his life. Downton's whole existence has been devoted to pleasure-seeking, while Angus has been climbing up ever since he was born, and with a heavy load on his back, too, most of the time. If he goes on as he is doing, he will have both a good income and a good position shortly."

"Downton's position is made," said the colonel.

"Exactly," said Dick, "and Angus is making his for himself. Whatever other distinction we draw between them is a selfish one, and I question if it does us much credit."

"I have no doubt," said the colonel, "that Mary's pride will make her see this matter as I do."

"It will at least make her sacrifice herself for our pride, if you insist on that."

Mary's father loved her as he had loved her mother, though he liked to have his own way with both of them. His voice broke a little as he answered Dick.

"You have a poor opinion of your father, my boy," he said. "I think I would endure a good deal if Mary were to be the happier for it."

Dick felt a little ashamed of himself.

"Whatever I may say," he answered, "I have at least acted much as you would have done yourself. Forgive me, father."

The colonel looked up with a wan smile.

"Let us talk of your affairs, father, Richard," he said. "I have at least nothing to say against Miss Meredith."

Dick moved uncomfortably in his chair and then stood up, thinking he heard a knock at the door.

"Are you there, Abinger?" some one called out. "I have something very extraordinary to tell you."

Dick looked at his father, and hesitated. "It is Angus," he said.

"Let him in," said the colonel.

CHAPTER XVI.

Rob started when he saw Mary's father.

"We have met before, Mr Angus," said the colonel, courteously.

"Yes," answered Rob, without a tremor; "at Dome Castle, was it not?"

This was the Angus who had once been unable to salute anybody without wondering what on earth he ought to say next. This was the colonel whose hand had gasped five minutes before for Rob's throat. The frown on the face of Mary's father was only a protest against her lover's improved appearance. Rob was no longer the hobbled fellow of last Christmas. He was rather particular about the cut of his coat. He had forgotten that he was not a colonel's social equal. In short, when he entered a room now he knew what to do with his hat. They had now the two men measuring each other. Dick never smiled, but sometimes his mouth twitched, as now.

"You had something special to tell me, had you not?" he asked Rob.

"Well," Rob replied, with hesitation, "I have something for you in my rooms."

"Suppose my father—" began Dick, meaning to invite the colonel up stairs, but passing as he saw Rob's brow contract. The colonel saw too, and rejected it. No man likes to be left on the outskirts of a secret.

"Run up yourself, Abinger," Rob said, seating himself near Mary's father; "and stop, here are my keys I locked it in."

"Why," asked Dick, while his father also looked up, "have you some savage animal up there?"

"No," said Rob, "it is very tame. Dick climbed the stair, after casting a quizzical look behind him, which meant that he wondered how long the colonel and Rob would last in a small room together. He unlocked the door of Rob's chambers more quickly than he opened it, for he had no notion of what might be caged up inside, and as soon as he had entered he stopped, amazed. All men of course are amazed once in their lives—when they can get a girl to look at them. This was Dick's second time.

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It was the hour of the evening when another ten minutes can be stolen from the day by a readjustment of one's window-curtains. Rob's blind, however, had given way in the cord, and instead of being pulled up was twisted into two triangles. Just sufficient light struggled through the window to let Dick see the man who was standing on the hearth-rug looking stullenly at his boots. There was a smell of oil in the room.

"Downton!" Dick exclaimed; "what masquerade is this?"

The other put up his elbow, as if to ward off a blow, and then Dick opened the eyes of anger.

"Oh," he said, "it is you, is it?"

They stood looking at each other in silence.

"Just stand there, my fine fellow," Dick said, "until I light the gas. I must have a better look at you."

The stranger turned longing eyes on the door as the light struck him.

"Not a single step in that direction," said Dick, "unless you want to go over the balusters."

Abinger came closer to the man who was Sir Clement Downton's double, and looked him over. He wore a white linen jacket, and an apron to match, and it would have been less easy to mistake him for a baronet aping the barber than it had been for the barber to ape the baronet.

"Your name?" asked Dick.

"Joseph," the other mumbled.

"You are a barber, I presume?"

"I follow the profession of hair-dressing," replied Joseph, with his first show of spirit.

Had Dick not possessed an inscrutable face, Joseph would have known that his inquirer was suffering from a sense of the ludicrous. Dick had just remembered that his father was downstairs.

"Well, Joseph, I shall have to hand you over to the police."

"I think not," said Joseph, in his gentlemanly voice.

"Why not?" asked Dick.

"Because then it would all come out."

"What would all come out?"

"The way your father was deceived. The society papers would make a great deal of it, and he would not like that."

Dick groaned, though the other did not hear him.

"You read the society journals, Joseph?"

"Rather!" said Joseph.

"Perhaps you write for them?"

Joseph did not say.

"Well, how were you brought here?" Dick asked.

"Your friend," said Joseph, sulkily, "came into our place of business in Southampton Row half an hour ago, and saw me. He insisted on bringing me here at once in a cab. I wanted to put on a black coat, but he would not hear of it."

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