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Stella Mordant
—OR—
The Cruise of the "Kingfisher."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I beg your pardon," murmured Lisle to Rath. "I hope you will enjoy your visit."

"Help him to do so. Come and dine with us, Lisle!" exclaimed Edward.

Lisle shook his head.

"I'm sorry. But I'm leaving London, and have only time to catch my train."

Edward walked with him to the door.

"How—how are they all at home?" he asked in his casual way with which a man masks his eagerness and anxiety.

"Lady Cecilia—and—and my people, and—Lady Mary? All well, I hope, Lisle?"

Lisle nodded and looked down at the pavement. Should he tell Bryan that the girl he loved was engaged to marry another man—Lord Ratton? He had only a moment in which to decide in the negative. There was no time to break the news—his cab was waiting—and to deliver it like a knockout blow was impossible.

"They are all well," he replied. "You are going down—"

"At once—to-morrow," said Edward, his eyes sparkling. "I'm simply counting the hours."

Lisle looked at him rather wistfully and sadly, and Edward felt constrained to notice his altered appearance.

"But I say, Lisle—excuse me—but you don't look in your old form. Have you been seedy?"

"No," said Lisle. "That is—yes. No, no! I have been well enough; but I've had something to worry me—I can't tell you—there isn't time. I shall see you down at home in a day or two. Good-bye!"

He hurried into his cab, and was driven off, and Edward went back to Rath and took his arm again.

"The luck is still running strong—for me, at any rate, Rath. I've just heard from that old friend of mine that they are all well at home. Now, if there had been anything amiss with Mary he would have told me. So much for dreams! I never did take much stock in them, and I shall take less for the future!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Edward was too restless to spend the evening in the smoking-room of the hotel, and, seeing that Rath was brooding over Stella, he took him off to the Empire. It would be interesting to discover what Rath thought of that beautiful place and the entertainment provided by the liberal manager; that he must have been astounded is certain, but his face ex-

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Rath's surprise, the rough—a villainous-looking fellow—sprang up, uttered an oath, and struck out at him half fearfully. Then, as he saw that the disturber of his peace was not that natural foe, a policeman, he swore again by way of apology.

"Here's some money—I suppose you want it—don't lie there," said Rath, throwing him half a crown. The man caught the coin dexterously, and stared after Rath as he walked on again. As Rath did so, he saw a gentleman step out from the shadow of one of the deep embrasures and come towards him, and evidently lost in thought, and as he drew nearer, Rath was astonished to see that he was the Lord Lisle to whom Edward had introduced him that afternoon.

Lord Lisle seemed lost in thought, and Rath was too shy to stop and speak to him; so the two men passed each other. Rath walked on, and paused in the shadow from which Lisle had just emerged, and, naturally, looked after him. At the moment of his turning, he saw Lord Lisle pass the steps on which Rath had interviewed the sleeping rough, and saw the man come crouching up the steps, look round eagerly, and then, as Lord Lisle turned and paced back, sink down out of sight.

Rath, unsuspectingly, wondered what the man was after; but he was not left in doubt long; for, just as Lisle passed him, where he stood in the shadow, the footpad sprang after Lisle noiselessly, got close behind him, and raised what looked like a short stick—it was really an iron "jemmy"—in the very act of striking Lisle on the back of the head.

Rath made one spring; the man, overwhelmed by Rath's vast bulk, swerved aside, and the iron jemmy fell slantwise on Lisle's shoulder. Lisle turned in amazement, an amazement which paralyzed him, as he saw Rath deal the man a cuff on the head, then force him backwards to the stone wall of the Embankment, hoist him, as if he were a bag of flour, and drop him over into the river. Then, before Lisle could recover from his astonishment, Rath, setting his hat straight, came up to him, and said, quite calmly and gravely:

"I hope you are not hurt?"

Lisle could only gasp for a moment or two; then he stammered:

"No, I'm not hurt. He struck me on the shoulder."

"It is well that it wasn't your head," said Rath, picking up the jemmy. "It's iron."

"And would most likely have killed me!" rejoined Lisle, with the modern awkwardness and embarrassment which kept him from saying: "You have probably saved my life," though he thought it. Then he remembered the man. "The fellow will drown!"

"Yes; if he can't swim," assented Rath, so coolly that Lisle stared at him. "Why shouldn't he?" asked Rath, answering the stare. "He meant to kill you."

"To rob me, certainly," said Lisle, as he ran down the steps.

Rath followed him more leisurely—for from his uncivilized point of view, it did not seem to matter whether the wretch sank or swam—and they saw the rough drag himself along, by the chain suspended to the wall, to the next flight of steps, up which he rushed and disappeared.

Then Lisle turned to Rath.

"I'm—I'm very much obliged to you, Mr.," he hesitated. "I'm sorry to say I didn't catch your name this afternoon," he said, frankly, but with the shyness which falls upon us nowadays when we are strongly moved.

"My name's Rayne," said Rath. "There is no need to thank me. There was no trouble, no difficulty."

Lisle's amazement rose again at the grave coolness of the response.

"You must be as strong as Hercules!" he said, admiringly. "The fellow was no lightweight."

"Yes, I suppose I'm strong," said Rath, in a matter-of-fact way; "but he didn't struggle much."

Lisle smiled.

"I should not think not! He was half stunned by that blow of yours. He was after my watch and chain!" he added.

"Meant to steal it? With all these people about?" said Rath, with surprise.

Lisle laughed.

"Oh! it would have been done in a moment. He would have knocked me

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down, got my watch and chain and emptied my pockets, and left me here—to be 'run in' as a 'helplessly drunk.' It's quite a common thing for people to be assaulted and robbed on the Embankment; it's a large place, and the police can't be all over it."

"Then why do you come here?" asked Rath, in his direct way. "I thought you said you were leaving London?"

There was something in Rath's handsome face, in the frank, grave voice which won on Lisle—strangely yet forcibly. The young man walked side by side in silence for a moment, then, as if he could not help himself, as if he were constrained by the subtle influence which Rath unconsciously exerted, he said:

"I did intend doing so, but I changed my mind. The fact is, Mr. Rayne, that my movements, just at present, are governed by impulse. I am in great trouble."

He bit his lip and hesitated. Nowadays we don't open our hearts to acquaintances of a day's standing, notwithstanding that they may have saved our lives.

"I have had the misfortune to lose a—very dear—friend, and I am searching for her; scarcely searching for her; but—well, I go nowhere, do nothing, but with the hope of finding her—What is the matter?" he broke off to enquire, for Rath had stopped short, and was looking at him with an intent gaze.

Here was another man who was searching for one who was lost.

"Nothing," said Rath; for he was not the man to return confidence for confidence. "And can't you find her?"

"No," said Lisle, sadly. "And—and, indeed, I have no right to search for her—I mean—that—she has forbidden me to do so; but all the same, I cannot rest until I know that she is safe and sound."

Rath drew a long breath. He was thinking of Stella.

"So, though I had decided this afternoon to return home," continued Lisle, "I—well, I have changed my mind. But I shall go to-morrow, for I am convinced, something seems to tell me, that she is not here, in London."

"I should think no one would be here who could help it," said Rath, "unless they wanted to be stifled. I came out for air. Is your shoulder hurt?"

Lisle shrugged it.

"No; nothing to speak of; but I can't help remembering that it might have been my head; and—and—believe me, I am very grateful, Mr. Rayne. You are travelling in company with my old and very dear friend, Bryan; I hope we shall meet again. I live near his people at Lisle Abbey. I need not say that I shall be more than glad to see you there, that I shall be bitterly disappointed if I do not."

He held out his hand, his face flushing with the emotion against which, in obedience to nineteenth-century etiquette, he was fighting.

"Thank you," said Rath, simply. "Good-night."

Lisle looked after the young giant, as he crossed over to the hotel, with admiration and gratitude, and a still lingering amazement. He had never met a man like him, so cool, so grave, so evidently inexperienced, and yet such splendid "form."

"I met your friend—Lord Lisle—on the walk beside the river last night," Rath said to Edward at breakfast the next morning; he did not add that he had saved him from a foot-pat, for Rath, uncivilized as he was, had an instinctive dislike of recounting his own deeds of daring and posing as a hero. "I went out to get some air."

Fashion Plates.

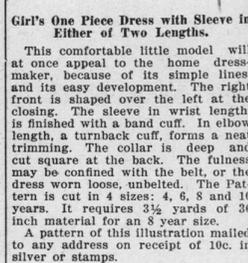
The Home Dressmaker should keep a Catalogue Scrap Book of our Pattern Cuts. These will be found very useful to refer to from time to time.

1312—A SIMPLE ONE PIECE DRESS

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This comfortable little model will at once appeal to the home dressmaker, because of its simple lines, and its easy development. The right front is shaped over the left at the closing. The sleeve in wrist length, is finished with a band cuff. In elbow length, a turnback cuff, forms a neat trimming. The collar is deep and cut square at the back. The fulness may be confined with the belt, or the dress worn loose, unbelted. The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes; 4, 6, 8 and 10 years. It requires 3 1/2 yards of 36 inch material for an 8 year size.

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Girl's One Piece Dress with Sleeve in Either of Two Lengths.

1308—A SIMPLE PLEASING HOME GOWN.

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