

round table having tea. He could picture the little kitchen which he had once entered as a penniless wanderer. He had been hungry, and they had given him to eat; thirsty and they had given him to drink; homeless and they had sheltered him.

His heart grew very tender as he thought of these things, and he registered a vow that, so long as they lived, this good old couple should never know want again.

Martha's kindly face appeared behind the geranium plant with an expression of perplexity as the big private car came to a stop before their door.

"If the gentleman ain't comin' here," she exclaimed in a sudden fluster, wiping her hands upon her apron, and going to the door—then she flung up her hands with a shrill cry:

"John Grey!—why—if it ain't John Grey!"

Jacob grated his chair back over the stone floor, and rose hastily, coming forward with an incredulous ejaculation.

"So it be—John Grey—his very self!"

"The Lord be praised!" cried Martha piously.

Violet had risen also, and stood, one hand grasping the back of her chair, with a very white face, staring silent and wide-eyed at the newcomer.

LAUGHING and holding a hand on either side, which Jacob and Martha had caught hold of, he looked at Violet.

"Are you not glad to see me back, Violet?" as he noticed her frozen silence.

"Have—you—come back?" she stammered, a flood of colour rushing over her white face. "You don't seem—the same—John Grey!"

"Well, now you mention it," interposed Jacob laughing, "it do seem a bit upsettin' mate—you a-drivin' up inside a fine motor car—with a choofeur doin' the work. Done it for a joke mate?"

Arnold laughed and shook his head.

"Fact is, Jacob, I've been ill, and am not up to walking yet. I got knocked down by a car, the morning I left here—and nearly killed—that was why I did not come back."

Violet gave a little stifled scream, her hands were trembling violently, she looked on the verge of hysterics.

"Well now, that accounts for it mate. Such a scare as you give us. Miss Pragg, she were in a fine takin', a-ringin' up the garage all day. Miss Assitas—she comes next day, an' starts ringin' up—an' we was all that flabbergasted we didn't know if we was on our 'eads or our 'eels. We got yer things, mate; the missus thought she'd look after them for yer, case yer turned up agin'."

"That we has, yer'll find 'em as yer left 'em," chimed in Martha.

"Awfully good of you," said Arnold heartily.

"What are yer doin' of now, mate? Yer look as if yer'd struck a bit of orl right.—Miss Pragg do have a noo man—but I don't think he suits 'er—guess she'd give him the sack strite, if yer was ter go back."

"Oh, no. She mustn't do that," said Arnold, "in fact I couldn't go back to Miss Pragg now."

"Got a noo job, mate?" said Jacob, while Martha drew forward a chair.

"Sit ye down, John Grey. Violet! What's come to ye? Haven't ye got a word to say?" She looked at the girl's curiously strained face.

"Violet," said Arnold, turning to her with a smile. I have brought you good news."

"Brought—me—good—news?" gasped the girl.

"I've found someone you have lost." He watched her as he spoke, her face growing ashy grey to the lips.

"I have come to take you to see—"

"Rose!" she breathed, her eyes fixed on his face. She clasped her hands together with the startled inquiry, taking a step forward.

"Yes—Rose," he replied kindly.

"Oh! Where is she?" cried Violet hysterically.

"You must calm yourself, Violet.

Rose is—very ill—she is—"

"Oh!—don't say she is dying!" cried the girl in a wild voice.

"No, no. Calm yourself, Violet. She is not dying, but she is in hospital. I have seen her—and I told her I would bring you to her. Violet—you will mean everything in the world to Rose—she has no one to live for—but you."

The trembling girl covered her face with her hands. She was crying silently.

Martha and Jacob were looking from one to the other with a bewildered air.

"Finish your tea, Violet, and then get ready to go to the hospital with me. I am going to call on Miss Pragg now, and then I shall come back for you."

"Bain't yer stoppin' mate?" asked Jacob, with a note of acute disappointment.

"Not now, Jacob. I must make my excuses to Miss Pragg for my abrupt disappearance, then I will come back for Violet."

"An' wheer might ye be stoppin' now, mate? Was you in 'orsipta' when ye met Rose?"

"I did see her in the hospital—I am not there—I live at Harley Street now."

"That's wheer all the swell doctors lives Martha.—Glad ye've got another berth, mate," Jacob spoke heartily.

"Thank you, Jacob," said Arnold simply. "Yes, I have got another berth."

With perplexed faces, the old couple saw him to the door, saw him enter the big car, saw the chauffeur touch his cap, and watched the car wind its way out of the mews.

They both drew a deep breath, then they looked at each other.

"If that don't cap all!" was Jacob's comment.

Martha shook her head, being for the moment incapable of speech.

When they returned to their interrupted tea, they found Violet with her head on the table weeping violently, and forgot everything else in their united efforts to calm and comfort her.

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

##### Unexpected Meetings.

HENRY was employing his leisure in looking through the glass panels of the hall door as Arnold Bassingbroke stepped out of a large motor which had drawn up at the kerb. The youth in buttons thereupon withdrew hastily from the glass door with a sudden resumption of dignity, to await the ringing of the electric bell. Then he opened the door with his usual celerity.

Receiving with official calm the card presented to him by the visitor, he unfortunately raised his eyes at the moment that the latter removed his silk hat. Nearly dropping the card, Henry's mouth fell open, his eyes bulged, and contrary to all precedent he ejaculated the one word:

"Blimy!"

"Is Miss Pragg at home?"

Henry winked, and executed a swift and silent movement of his thumb in the direction of Miss Pragg's private room.

"Take my card to her," said the imperturbable visitor.

Henry seized a silver salver from the stand, laid the card upon it with elaborate care, and perused it with leisurely intentness.

"Doctor Arnold Bassingbroke, F.R.C.S. Harley Street, W."

A solitary tuft of hair at the back of his head, which was always of an obstinate nature, detached itself from its sleek surroundings, and stood erect like a small plume, as Henry, bearing the silver salver before him, twitched his brows up and down in the effort to fathom the meaning of these things.

He presented the card to Miss Pragg, and awaited developments.

Miss Pragg, busy with literary efforts, glanced at the card with a snort of impatience.

"Don't know the man. What can he want? Hope it isn't a death in the family!" (This as an after-thought.) "Better see him, perhaps."

(To be continued.)



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