Second Installment.

Synopsis of opening chapters printed last Saturday:

Three gay young London men go down to the town of Stroan, a lazy old place near the sea, which had a revival of prosperity because of golf becoming fashionable. Their names were Otto Conybeare, Willie Jordan, and Clifford King. Willie Jordan speedily falls in love with pretty Nell Claris, the favorite nfece of the Blue Lion Innkeeper, having previously become acquainted with Col. Bostal and his old maiden daughter, who lived in a tumbled-down old mansion, half way between Courtstairs and Stroan. Otto and Clifford found Willie making love to Nell, and were much impressed with the girl's beauty. They came across a young fisherman, who spoke disparagingly of Nell, and said the Blue Lion had had a bad name -guests had been frequently robbed, he said-since she came to it. Nell introduced Mr. King to her bluff old uncle, the landlerd of the inn, who dayles the London visitor to stay for tea. He not only remains for the meal, but spends a delightful evening with the captivating rural miss. At a late hour it is raining so hard that he resolved to stay for the night. He goes to bed, and, remembering the mysterious warning of the fisherman, tucks his valuables under his pillow, and soon is asleep and dreaming of Nell, with whom he is already madly in love. He is awakened by sounds in his room, rouses himself, and in the dim light makes out the figure of a woman, who first rifled his pockets, and then approached his

He remained motionless, imitating

the breathing of sleep. He felt that a hand was upon the bolster, creeping softly towards his Then it was under the bolster; and, finally, it was under his pillow. He held himself in readiness to seize the hand at the moment when it should tind his watch and his purse. When once the stealthy fingers had

touched these articles, however, they were snatched away with so much rapidity that Clifford had to spring up and fling out his arm to eatch the thievish hand.

As his fingers closed upon those of a sudden and awful chill on finding licate-a hand that he knew! "Who are you? Who are you?" he

cried hoarsely. He got no answer, but the answer from his own heart. His agitation was so great that the little hand wriggled out of his, still bearing his vatch and his purse, and in another moment the door had opened and closed, and he was alone.

CHAPTER III.

Clifford sat up in bed when the door had closed with a flicker of dim light and a rush of cool air, shaking from head to foot with excitement and horror, which made him cold and sick. Was she a thief, then, a common thief, this blue-eyed, pink-cheeked girl who had infatuated him the evening This Nell of the soft voice and the bright hair, to whose pretty whom he had been ready to worship for her gentleness, her affectionate kindness to her rough old uncle? No, impossible. - He had been dreaming; he would wake in a few minutes, to find that the experience of the last few minutes had been a nightmare only.

With a wish to this effect so strong that it was almost a belief, he thrust his hand under his pillow, and felt about for his watch and his purse. But they were gone, without the possibility of a doubt.

He sprang out of bed, groped his way to the window, and drew back the heavy curtains. The dawn was breaking, and a pale golden light was on the sea. He judged that it was about 4 o'clock. The rain of the night before had made the air cool and fresh, and Clifford's brain was as clear as it could be as he threw open the indow, and had to confess that the visit of the woman with the soft and had been a terrible reality. examined his clothes, saw that they had been disarranged, and then he went to the door, turned the handle softly and looked out. The landing was small and narrow,

and two doors opened upon it besides that of Clifford's room. A steep and Very narrow wooden staircase led up

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PREPARED ONLY BY THOMAS BEECHAM, ST. HELENE, ENCLAND.

to the top of the house, and, looking up, Clifford could just discern that at the top there was a door on either

He went back to his room, dressed himself, and sat by the open window in a state of great agitation. Far from yielding at once to the apparently inevitable conclusion, Camord fought against it with all his might. Quickly as his passion for the girl had sprung up, it was strong enough to make him ready to accept any hypothesis, however improbable, rather than the evidence of his own senses when that evidence was against her. He was ready to believe that there was in the house another woman with a hand as small, as soft, as smooth-skinned as the one he had held in his when he bade Nell "good-And then the desperate imnight.' probability of this supposition struck remembered the stalwart, red-handed country wench who had been helping explicit the landlord in the bar, and he was forced to admit that the hand which ly. had taken the watch and purse was not hers. But mention had been made silent, each afraid to say too much. "Old Nannie," a person whom he had not seen, and he told himself that this might be a nickname, and that the bearer of it might prove to be young enough and fair enough to be the owner of the thievish fingers.
Although this explanation of the

theft was a very unlikely one, Clifford hugged it with desperate persistency until the dawn of another suggestion in his mind. This was a better one, certainly. Was pretty Nell a som-nambulist? If so, it only wanted a good hard stretch of Clifford's imagination to picture the girl as continually haunted, both by day and by night, with the idea of helping and enriching away with her, and took shape in her self had been in collusion with him, in actual thefts on his behalf. lifford had read tales of this sort, highly imaginative; but now his love made him snatch at this or at any way of escaping the dreadful possi-Nell was a thief.

hopeful about clearing up the mys- or 70 years of age, who slept in a door made him start up and listen. than a cupboard, on the ground floor, He peeped out upon the landing, but because she was too infirm to go upwas no one to be seen. he kept his door ajar and

old air from the ground floor of the tunity of examining her hands. ord would have thought nothing of and purse. she had herself told him, taking her turn with the servant. The fact of there being a visitor in the inn. too. explained satisfactorily uld have the care she took not to make any noise. But with his mind full of the agony of unwilling suspicion, the young man could not help noticing that Nell looked guilty and frightened, that the color suddenly left her cheeks, and that she stammered in her efforts to

had not expected to see you down before 8 o'clock," she managed to say

And there was in her eyes, as she looked shyly up at him, an unmistakable anxiety which made his as he answered, short and cold. "I was disturbed in the night," he said stiffly, and he avoided her eyes

as steadily as she avoided his. "Dis-turbed!" exclaimed Nell, faint-And then she looked up quickly in

his face with a glance so full of inquiry, of fear, that against his wish and his will Clifford's own eyes met hers with a suspicious frown What was it that disturbed you?" asked the girl

He hesitated. Surely this candid anxiety was a proof of innocence, not guilt. Surely a thief would have been ready with a glib speech, with a look of overdone surprise. He looked away again, absolutely unable to frame to

her the story of his adventure.
"Oh, I don't know. It was nothing, suppose," he answered confusedly. He felt that the girl's eyes were upon him, but he would not meet hem. He must speak about his loss, course, but it should be to her un-

"What are you going to do with yourself till breakfast-time?" she asked, presently. "We have no nice garden, where you could walk about on a pleasant lawn and pick roses. Will you go out over the marsh and bathe in the sea? I could show you the way to the ferry, Or would it be too slow for you to watch us turn the cows

innocence! Surely this was innocence! Clifford only hesitated for a moment. During that moment he told himself that he would conquer his feeling for the girl, that he would not run the risk of becoming more infatuated than he was. But the next noment, she conquered, and looking down into the fair, sweet face, he was ready to think that his own senses had lied to him, that the hand which had robbed him could not be Nell's. So he followed her out into the fresh morning air, helped her to pull the bolts and draw the bars, to let the cows out for their day's wandering over the marsh, and to look for the eggs which lay warm in the nests in

the fowl-house. Long before breakfast-time the oc-Long before breakfast-time the oc-currence of the night had been a half-forgotten nightmare, and Clifford was enjoying Nell's unaffected, lively cat-ter as much as on the previous day.

Nevel hand appearance, and curtly. "Let us hear what you have to say. Now I know what you meant by your being 'disturbed.'"

She glanced down upon the shabby ter as much as on the previous day.
Only when his hand touched hers, as took the basket of eggs from him, did he remember with a shudder that it was the same touch which he had felt in the night, the same smooth. soft skin, the same slender fingers, so that he was bound, before he met the landlord, to come back to his old theory that Nell walked in her sleep. It was a disagreeable business, that of making known his loss to George Claris, but it had to be done. And as soon as he had finished his break-fast, Clifford followed the landlord to the front of the house, where he was taking down the shutters, and told

im he had something unpleasant to The young man at once perceived, know.'
by a sudden change to sullen expectancy in the landlord's manner, that upon y he was not wholly unprepared for the He heard with attention the whole narrative, and only looked up when Clifford described how he had actually touched the hand as it was withdrawn from under his rillow.
"You touched it, you sav?" said George Claris, sharply. "Then why in his face with a faint smile.

on earth didn't you hold on and defiantly, incredulously, the man, with his red, honest, face full

of sullen anger, turned to face his Clifford hesitated. He had said nothing about the sort of hand it was, and he began to feel that he would rather lose all chance of ever seeing watch or money again, than formuhowever euphemistically, the fearful accusation.

was snatched away as soon as I feit

"Well," grumbled Claris, with apparent suspicion on his side, "it seems to me a strange thing that a man should feel a thing like that without calling out. It's the first thing a man would do, as wasn't quite a fool, to jump up an' make for the feller.'
"Ah!" exclaimed Clifford sharp exclaimed Clifford sharply. George Claris looked at him with a

deepening frown. "What do you mean, sir?" "That I am not sure-that I am very

far from sure, that the intruder was 'Who do you think it was, then? Who do you think it was as took your watch an' money? Speak out, sir, speak out, if you dare?"

The blood rose in Clifford's face. The man's surly, defiant, tone seemed to show that he had either knowledge or some fear of the truth. But again there rushed over the young man an overwhelming sense of shame which prevented him from being more

"I have spoken out," he said, simp-

Then Claris, as sullenly, as fiercely low him into the inn. "Come an' see 'em, come 'an see 'em all; search 'em if you like," said he bluntly. "And look over the house, see if there's a way in it or out

of it that anybody could have got in or out by. Come and see for your-Clifford followed him in silence into the little bar, allowed Claris to point out to him that the window was still barred, and had evidently not been tampered with. And so in turn they examined together the windows and with the idea of helping and enriching the doors of the whole house; and her uncle, until at last her wishes ran Clifford saw that unless Claris him-

no thief could have got in from the

outside during the night. But then

Clifford himself had not suspected a thief from the outside. As for the persons who had slept in the house that night, George Claris bility of having to acknowledge that said they were five in number-him-The sleep-walking notion had whom Clifford had seen in the bar, brought comfort, and he felt quits and old Nannie, a woman about 60 tery, when a faint noise outside his small room, which was scarcely more than a cupboard, on the ground floor,

stairs. Clifford made the excuse of wishing In a few minutes he felt a rush of man, that he might have an opporhouse, and dashing quickly out upon were withered and lean, rendered the landing, he came face to face with coarse by field work, and enlarged at Nell herself as she ran up the stairs. the joints by rheumatism. Without coarse by field work, and enlarged at As his hingers closed upon those of Now, if it had not been for the a doubt it was not the hand of old and turning to her uncle, cried in a sudden and awful chill on finding ford would have thought nothing to have thought nothing the nothing the nothing that the nothing the nothing the nothing the nothing the nothing the nothing that the nothing the no

the staff of the establishment, Clifford followed Claris again into the road in front of the inn. said Claris, defiantly,

as was in the house last night. Which money value, I mean, for of course of 'em was it as you think took your that is all we can do." Clifford hesitated.

anyone having acted dishonestly Is there in your house a-a-woman who walks in her sleep?" 'Not into folks' bedrooms to steat their money, anyhow," answered Cla- watch besides? No, that I won't. It's ris surlily. "And I've never heard of my belief it's a trumped-up story alno sort of sleep-walking by either of together, an' I dare him to fetch the

"I have an idea," he said, "and

"Either of your servants, you mean?" said Clifford, with a slight emphasis.

"Yes, of course. Why, man alive, you wouldn't sure dare to say as my niece, my lovely Nell, was a thief to take your dirty money?" shouted the landlord with sudden fury, all the more fierce that, as Clifford could see. he had heard whispers of the same sort before. "Here, Nell, Where are you?"

And, not heeding Clifford's angry protests, Claris rushed into the house and almost into the arms of his niece, who, apparently suspecting nothing, came running quickly in from the garden at the sound of her own name. "What is it, uncle?"

She still were her hat, but it was pushed back, and her pink and white face, glowing with the wholesome sting of the fresh morning air, smiled at the hot and agitated faces of the two men.

"This man, this centleman, you're a thief, my girl; says you went into his room last night and stole his watch and money, and that he caught your hand in the very act. There, my girl. answer him yourself. Tell him what you think of a cur that tells such lies as them of my bonnie Nell!" The man was genuinely agitated, adeed almost sobbing with rage and disgust. As for Clifford, he was inarticulate: he could only look at girl, as she grew deadly white, and seemed to lose the bloom of her beauty in horror, in blank amazement, as she

CHAPTER IV

In spite of his own indignation and remorse on hearing Claris make this speech, watched the girl narrowly, and was shocked and surprised to observe that while he and her uncle were at a white heat of excitement, she showed remarkable self-control. After a moment's silence on her part, she rupted Clifford's protests and excuses with a little pettish movement of her hand. 'Never mind apologizing." she said

carpet of the little sitting-room, and stood, leaning with one hand upon the table, her head half turned away. It was evident that she did not suffer half so keenly as did Clifford, whose voice was hoarse and tremulous as he spoke in answer.

"You don't suppose, you can't suppose, that I accuse you of anything," said he, trying in vain to meet her eyes, and betraying even to the prejudiced eyes of George Claris the genuineress of his feeling. "I was disturbed in the night. I found a hand under my pillow. I caught the hand with my purse and my watch in it. The hand was a woman's, small and soft and slender. There, that's all I

"But you think it's enough to upon when you accuse my riece of being a thief!" shouted George Claris, with a counding thump upon the table "Tush, uncle," said the girl, with perfect calmness. "Mr. King never meant that. I am sure of it." And to the voung man's intense re-

what she was going to propose, she suddenly set down upon a chair and leaned upon the table, in the endeavor to hide the fact that her limbs were not as much under her control as her

mind was. "Let us think it out," said she. And then, before either of the others had "It was a shock, you know," then, before either of the others had In about ten minutes he saw from he stammered meekly. "The hand spoken, there passed suddenly over the corner of the garden where he her face a sort of spasm of horrorstruck remembrance, as if a half-forgotten incident had returned to her nind with a new significance. Clifford saw that a light had broken in upon her. But instead of communicating to her companions the idea, whatever it was, which had flashed through her own brain, she raised her head very suddenly, and meeting Clifford's eyes with a piercing look, asked: "You have some idea, some suggestion to make. What is it?" It was strange that the man had blustered, while the woman prepared herself to reason. Clifford sat down

on the other side of the table, feeling that here was a person with whom he could discuss the matter with all "I was wondering," he said gently, whether you ever walked in your sleep. I know it seems an infamous

thing to have dared to connect you with the matter at all " with the matter at all-"That will do," she said gravely. don't want any apologies about that. I can see, Mr. King, that the very nomakes you much more unhappy than it does me. The tears sprang to Clifford's eyes. trace of suspicion of her hon-

esty had melted away long since un-

the influence of her perfect straightforwardness. "It's awfully good of you." he said gratefully. "As I was saying, somnambulism is the only explanation possible. You must have read of such You must have heard that it is possible for a person to take things in his sleep and hide them away.

without ever being conscious of what he's done.' Again there passed over the ingenuous face of the young girl that look which betrayed some vague but horrible memory. It perplexed Clifford, and worried him. It was the one circumstance which marred his perfect belief in her. For it showed what all her words denied—that she had a little more knowledge than she

"And what made you think the hand was mine?" asked she, in a troubled

And instinctively as she spoke tried to hide her hards under the rim of the broad hat which she had taken

"Well the hand was small and soft, like yours," said Clifford, in a low "So small, that it was almost voice. like a child's hand in mine. It seemed to me that I had only touched one hand in my life at all like it." Nell shot a frightened glance at him, and in the pause which followed Clifford saw a tear fall on the table-

oth. He started up.
"Oh, this is horrible!" he moaned. But the girl sprang up in her turn.

that the skin was smooth as satin, this early morning meeting. People that the trembling fingers were siender and soft, the hand small and dehad the live stock to attend to, as turning to Clifford with eyes now bright with excitement "we cannot give you back your watch, but we give you the value of it, if you "you've seen every blessed creature will tell us what it is. The mere

But even before Clifford could protest against this suggestion, which he had indeed never contemplated for a want you to listen quietly; since, if it moment, the innkeeper burst out into is correct, it takes away all suspicion torrent of indignant remonstrance. torrent of indignant remonstrance.
'Me give him £25! That's what he said he had on him. An' who's to redit it? Who's to prove it, I say? An' the vally he likes to set on his watch besides? No, that I won't. It's

> police in! I dare him to, I say!" And he gave another thump on the in the man's eyes as he spoke, the avarice of a man who has had to work hard for small gains. Clifford looked from the niece to the uncle, and suspicion of the latter began to Nell retained her presence of mind. She went up to the

> excited man, and put a coaxing hand upon his shoulder. "Uncle," she said, almost in a whis-"you remember there have been ther robberies here! Her voice sank until the last word

was almost inaudible. George Claris started violently, and shook his fist in the air in a tumult

"I know there has! I know there said he, between his teeth. I'd like to catch the rascal as did 'em. But nobody before 'as dared to say you or me was at the bottom of it, NeM. Nobody before 'as dared to say we wasn't honest. Why. man, I've been settled here these 25 years, and I'm known to every man, woman, and child between Stroan and Courtstairs. Me take a man's watch or purse, me or my niece? It's a plant, my glrl, a plant of this fine London gentleman's. Twenty-five pounds!. You bet it's more than he's worth, every rag and stick of him! He's heard of my misfortunes lately, an' he's come and trumped up this story, thinking it'll be better worth my while to pay him the money than to have another scandal about the place. But I won't, I

won't!. I'll do time rather! Clifford was torn with battling emo-tions as he listened to this speech, which seemed indeed to be that of a broken-hearted man. He had not beer able to stem the torrent of the poor fellow's flerce wrath, and it was only when Claris cank down with his head upon the table that he was able to

sav. very quietly: "I never thought of asking for com pensation, Mr. Claris. I should not think of doing so. All I want is to clear up this detestable puzzle, much more in your interests than in mine. am not a rich man, but neither am I a beggar, as you have rather unindly suggested. I can afford the loss of my watch and money, but I cannot afford to leave you and poor Miss Nell here without doing my hest to find out the cause of these unfortunate occurrences."

Then Nell looked again in his face with a smile which made him ready to go down on his knees and worship for her sweet forbearance. "Thank you." said she. Then turn-ing to her uncle-"It will all come

she said. "Or at least," she added hurriedly. "we will hope it may. You go back to your work. and I will see if I can't set my wits to work and have something to tell you when next I meet you' Claris allowed himself to be into compliance with her wishes, and disappeared into the Then, when they were alone together. Clifford noticed a cudden alteration in ber manner towards bimself. It was no longer the confiding, childish be-havior of a light-hearted girl: it was and thoughtful woman

"You are not to distress vourself.
"Ting," she said, quietly. "Although it is a terrible thing, for us. trious needle. And this artistic effort we are in a way used to it: for, as absorbed Clifford so completely by its you heard me say, there have been brilliancy and daring, that the colonel,

"Thank you; thank you with all my two or three cases of theft here be- opening the door softly, surprised him heart," said he hoarsely.

Nell was still very pale, but she was quite calm and composed; and, after a short pause, during which the two men had watched her, wondering made."

She would not listen to his protests.

She would not listen to his protests, his objections, but left him, and went upstairs. Clifford, miserable and per-plexed, went out into the garden, and strolled among the cabbages and carrots, torn by doubts which he tried room, had kept herself more in touch

in vain to suppress. In about ten minutes he saw from smoking his pipe under an appletree, Nell coming quickly out of the house by the back way, and flying like an arrow down to the river's bank. From the glimpse he caught of her face, he saw that she looked scared and guilty, and that she east around her the glance of a person who does not wish to be observed.

Hastily unmooring one of the boats which lay by the bank, she got in, sculled across the stream, made the boat fast to the opposite whore, and began to run across the fields as fast as her feet could carry her. It occurred at once to Clifford that she must be going to take counsel with her friend, Miss Bostal, and he

started in the direction of Shingle End himself, thinking that it would be a good idea for him to open his heart to that lady, and re-assure Nell as to his own trust in her through the unimpeachable lips of her elderly He went by the road, and sauntering along at a very sedate pace, reached little tumble-down residence Col Rostal just as Nell emerging

from it by a back gate into the fields, started on her journey home. She did not see him; but he, looking through the hedge at her, was able to discern that her face was, if anything, more sad than it had been when she had left heme, and that her eyes were swollen with recent tears. The prim old maid had been un-

sympathetic and harsh to her poor little protege, that was evident, and Clifford felt that he hated the starchy He could not, however, help feeling

that he should like to hear her opinion on the whole matter of people who, like the Bostals, were acquainted with the family at the "Blue Lion," and who were at the same time, on friendly terms with them. Miss Bostal herself opened the door

as before, and from this and other signs it was easy for Clifford to discover that she and her father kept no servants. She seemed not to be at all surprised by his visit, and when he began to apologize for intruding upon her again, and at such an early hour of the day, she only smiled, and asked him to come in. "I must own that I was engaged

in the homely pursuit of peeling potatoes for our early dinner," said as she showed him the old worn tableknife which she held in her carefully Very careful she was, this dried-up little elderly lady, about the care of

her person; she never went into the garden without a sun-bonnet to preserve her complexion, nor did any sort of rough work without the protection of an old pair of gloves. She led Clifford into the drawingroom, a long, pleasant apartment, with a low ceiling, an old-fashioned bow-window, that looked to the west, and another that looked to the south. The sunshine showed up the shabbi-

ness of which Clifford had noted some traces the day before. The cushions, the rickety chairs, the bare sheet of brown paper in the grate to replace the winter's fire-all spoke desperate shifts, of the meanest straits of gentle poverty. But Miss Bostal gave him very little time to look about him.

"I can guess what you have comabout," she began, as she put dow her old knife upon the side table in the passage before entering the room s about this dreadful thing tha has happened at the Clarises'. But must tell you frankly, that if you hav any suspicions of old Claris and h niece, it is of no use your talking t me, for you will get no sympathy. have known George Claris for near twelve years; and as for Nell. I dor think I could care more for the gi were my own sister. She is incapable of the theft as an angel." The lady's thin, pale face grew qui pink under the energy of this protest which Clifford hastened to assure he was not needed.

"I believe that just as heartily as you do," he said earnestly. "I only want the mystery cleared up for their sake; and I thought that you could help us to arrive at the truth. "I have a notion," she said emphat cally, "a very strong notion indeed.

will tell you in confidence whom I suspect, and I shall try my hardest to find out the truth." Clifford's face glowed with excitement and expectancy.
"Who-who is it?" he asked breath-

"Jem Stickels." she answered with decision. "And who is that? You know I'm a stranger here." "A young fisherman who owes Nell a grudge because she would not listen to the fellow's impudent advances. He is always hanging about the place, and he doesn't scruple to threaten the girl to do her some harm; and he is always prattling to people who come this way about the which have been committed at the

Clifford listened doubtfully. He remembered the young fisherman in the punt, with his unprepossessing manner and low type of face; and if it had been possible to connect him with the robbery he would have jumped at the idea as a plausible one. But then hand he had touched was certainly not that of Jem Stickels, and moreover, he could not conceive how the oung fisherman could have got into the house and out of it unless by collusion with someone inside. Rather disappointed, therefore, with

the lady's apparently fantastic Hifford, upon finding that she had no better suggestion to make, was about to take leave of her, when she caught sight of the colonel through the window, and sprang to her feet. "My father!" cried she. "He is back arly today. He always goes into

Stroan to the club to read the papers. tay and see him. Perhans he may have some suggestion to make. At any I know he'll be glad to see you.' She hurried out of the room, leaving Clifford to a more minute examination of the room than he had had the opcortunity for on his previous visit. Otto was right. There was eloquence in the old carpets, in the window curtains with their neat darns. And there was evidence of untiring industry and patience on the part of the little dry spinster in the landscapes, with silk on fine canvas, which formed the seats of the chairs. Wonderful productions they were, re minding Clifford, in the unratural chubbiness of the inevitable infant in the foreground, the stiffness of th qually inevitable dog or sheep, and the massive solidity of the follage in the background, of Willie Jordan's art at its worst. A banner-screen also, that hung from the mantelpiece, with flagrant red, yellow and nink roses of scarlet hackground, was evidently the production of Mise Bostal's indus-

in his contemplation of The old man was evidently rather pleased by the discovery. He smiled a little, and glanced at the screen as

he held out his hand. "All my daughter's work! All her It's wonderful what that girl finds time to do! But the shrewd little lady herself, who had followed her father into the with the times than he had done. "People don't do that sort of work now-a-days, papa," she chirped, with a shrewd look at Clifford. "And when they admire that sort of thing out of politeness, isn't it, Mr. King?

Clifford hastened to perjure himself, though with the uncomfortable feel-ing that he did not deceive the little "No, indeed; I think it's very pret

And beautifully done," he added,

with a triumphant sense that on this ground he was safe. Well, yes, I grant you that," chirped she, cheerily. "There are no hills and vales among the stitches." "My daughter is a very clever girl. however she may disparage herself," said the colonel, obstinately, "And a very good daughter to her old father. "And a loyal friend as well," said ifford. "I suppose Miss Bostal has Clifford. told you what we have been talking

Over the old man's face there came a shadow, as he answered:
"Yes, she has told me. I am very sorry about it, very sorry. I don't know what else I can say.' "But surely you don't believe that she had anything to do with it? Ask your daughter what she thinks! Miss just as sure as I am that Nell had nothing to do with it, nothing whatever."

The old man, with a troubled face, shook his head gently. "And I agree with my daughter,"

he said in a low voice, "fully, entire-But the old colonel's manner was lacking in the warm-hearted spontaneity his daughter had shown, and Clifford felt angry with him for it. After a few remarks, therefore, upon other subjects, he took his leave of them both, begging Miss Bostal, as he said good-bye, to impress upon Nell his unwavering belief in her in-

nocence. In the hope that he might overtake Nell on her way home, or perhaps only with the lover's wish to tread in the loved one's footsteps, Clifford obtained Miss Bostal's permission to go through the little gate at the bottom of the garden, so that he could return to the "Blue Lion" by fields. Nell was out of sight, howby the time he started, and whatever pleasure he extracted from the walk was due only to the knowledge that she had passed this way not long before.

There was a faint track over the fields, not defined enough to be called a footpath, but just clear enough for him to discern by the trodden look of the short grass. He was within a couple of hundred

yards of the little river, and was looking out for any sign of Nell's presence in the kitchen garden on other side, when he became aware that the questionable Jem Stickels was in sight, punting slowly along the stream, as he had done the day before, Catching sight of the gentleman, shore, and with his black felt hat on the back of his head, his short clay pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets. he landed, and slouched along towards (To be continued next Wednesday.)

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