

UNCLE DICK;

Or, The Result of Diplomacy and Tact.

CHAPTER IX.—(Cont'd.)

He knew that to be a lie! Hope, that he had thought entombed, rose again. One thing incorrect, why not all? He said sharply—"You are mistaken!" "I don't think so, sir." "That hideous smile. Accursed this time by a pitying woman's pity for his simplicity. Like the generality of men—written under pity. It acted on him, the irritation of a rasp. He controlled himself sufficiently to enquire—" "Tall, fair, blue-eyed young lady?"

The description elicited a second edition of the pity—third of the head shaking, as the woman answered—

"That's the mistress, sir."

It is difficult to keep a watchful eye on the safety valve. The indignation within him was seething to boiling point. He was getting up steam so rapidly as to create the impression that his emotions were arranged on the principle of the tubular boiler. He blurted out—"I tell you, you are wrong! Her name is Miss Mivvins!"

Combination of every unpleasant wrinkle that the human face is capable of assuming as she replied, with the incisiveness of a knife cut—

"Very likely that's one of her names, sir. Now I come to remember, I did once in a shop hear her called so—called so by her own child."

That was the last straw! the safety valve was discarded.

"Her own child!"

"Yes. The little girl who's always with her. The one with the curly hair as some people call her."

Amazement! Consternation! Disappointment! A combination of these feelings, and many other indescribable ones, made him break out with—

"Then—then she is married?"

All the subtle devilish suggestions in her came to the surface. To emphasize the point of her answer, slow head-shaking was necessary—"I couldn't say as to that, sir."

She smiled too that horrible smile again! The desire to speak evil of others assails some natures irresistibly. She really could not resist—October lodger or no lodger.

"Thank you. That will do."

He managed to dismiss her so, and the landlady left the room. She was fearful of having gone a little too far; yet was filled with the complacency with which such utterances—to such natures—is fruitful.

CHAPTER X.

The closing of the door behind his landlady was unheard by Masters. He did not move from the position in which the woman had left him for many, very many minutes.

When at last he rose, lifting his head, he caught sight of his own reflection in the mirror. Started back, almost cried out: there was such a deathly pallor on his face.

His mouth felt as parched as Sahara. Mechanically he mixed a whisky and soda, drank it off. Then laughed. Not a pleasant laugh; one of those built up on a sob.

Then self-railery: the old, old, ever sought useless salve. What a fool! What a fool he was to care! A woman! Just as he had always pictured them—always till the book he was now engaged on. When he thought how chaste and good and pure his last heroine was, on paper, he laughed again. The same laugh; with the same choking little catch-in-the-throat in it, too.

work came to him. Lying on his desk was a bundle of corrected galley proofs, which should have been posted to his publisher. Now it was too late: the post bag would be made up.

He was annoyed that he had allowed the incident—he was miserably failing in trying to label it so to himself—to interrupt the routine of his work. Another glance at the clock and he kicked off his slippers and horned on his shoes.

Putting on a cap, fastening his greatcoat as he went, he hurried railway stationwards. For all the thickness of his coat he was not warm. There was no coldness around his heart as if it were ice-bound.

The last up-train left at 8 o'clock. In October the passengers made no great demand on the guard's attention; in the season he might have been, with justness, likened to a sardine packer. Entrustment of the bundle of proofs, to be posted by the railway man on arrival in London, was an easily arranged matter.

Crossing the hand with a piece of silver is as effective with the average guard as it is with a gypsy: the oracle is worked thereby. The proofs would reach the publisher by first post in the morning.

Masters had effected this arrangement by five minutes to eight; five minutes before the scheduled time for the train's departure for London. Having lighted a cigar, in the shelter of the waiting-room doorway, he buttoned up his coat, prepared for his return walk home.

As—buttoned up, cigar in mouth—he emerged from the station's precincts, he could not fail to observe the lights in the back windows of Ivy Cottage. The bungalow stood three minutes' walk away.

That he should have avoided, he knew; but the night was dark; he would not be seen. Moreover, he was in no way different from other moths who flutter round candles. So, more or less unconsciously, he was attracted; slowly walked in the direction of the light. The little god with wings is as experienced in the use of the magnet as the dart.

The corner of the road, which the rear of the house faced, was reached. Suddenly the back door of the house was opened. By the light in the passage behind he saw a man and a woman silhouetted in the door-frame, evidently engaged in actions of a farewell.

The woman had her arms lovingly round the man's neck. She fervently kissed him—his lips—again and again. Her sorrow at the parting was apparently of the deepest kind; at times she applied her handkerchief to her eyes. Not a detail of the incident escaped the attention of the man in the road.

Masters stood quite still watching them. Not an act due to ill-breeding; he was for the moment simply incapable of movement. Had his existence depended on a forward step, Death would have added another name to his list.

The couple came out in the garden; walked towards the gate. The path led straight from the door; the hall lamp still showed him the positions; the woman's arms clinging around the man.

It was well he stood in the shadow on that road; well that they were so occupied as to prevent their noticing him. Perhaps the iron that had entered into his soul travelled via his face. That would account for the seared look on it. It was as the face of the dead.

So different. Ah! So different had he thought her. Had linked up, in his mind, the purity of the snow in connection with her. This was the woman he had pictured; she was ever before him that

tion. Then came the sound of a whistle, followed by the rumbling of the departing train.

Footsteps! He knew them—short as had been his acquaintance with them—along the gravel path; then the door of Ivy Cottage was shut. The blackness of the night could not have been heavier than the thoughts he was alone with. Ideas of things seemed to grow more entangled and confused every instant.

From the moment that he had despatched his parcel, he had been mentally accusing himself of folly of the highest class. Did so whilst lighting his cigar and on the way from the booking office—with the back of Ivy Cottage fronting him. Why had he believed those wretched over-the-wall gossips, when there was the face—those soulful eyes—of the woman herself to look into?

That he had listened to and questioned his landlady, was an insult to the woman of whom his mind was so full. He knew how those glorious, plumbless blue eyes of hers would flash contempt for him did she but know; she must never know! Standing there—near the house which enshrined what he thought the dearest and best in the world—he almost cursed himself. For his folly in doubting her. His future faith should obliterate the memory of that moment.

Then—then the back door had opened! It was a shock; a horrible shock. But there was confirmation of what he had been told. The scales fell from his eyes.

Minutes—they seemed to him like centuries—passed. The mist before his eyes cleared away; the veiling disappeared. But he felt that it would not be a display of wisdom to turn homewards, just yet.

Masters was a sensitive—hyper-sensitive is perhaps a better word—man. To rub up against inquiries from a garrulous landlady as to his health would prove more irritating than sand paper. He knew that his appearance would provoke comment; felt how he looked; determined to try and walk the look off.

By setting his face eastward, continuing on the station road for a mile or so, he would come out on the shore at what was known as The Gap. By walking along the sands therefrom, past the private owner's wall, he would be able to mount to the parade by the steps which faced his seat.

Lips tightened and his fingers clenched when he remembered the reference to this as "our" seat. The walk would do him good; he laughed a little at that last idea. As if, he thought, anything in the whole world would ever do him any good again!

Shaken faith is a wound that smartens acutely; the only surgeon able to apply a salve is Time.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a fitful night; one on which the clouds travelled swiftly. One moment the brightness of a silvering moon; the next comparative darkness. When the extinguishers hid the lamp of night; the illumination of the heavens was left to the stars.

There was sufficient light for Masters to find his way over the breakwaters without stumbling. At times, though, despite the brightness of the moon, his eyes saw dimly. With a swiftness bred of anger he knocked the dimness away, cursing his own irrespressible folly that

His heart—soul—was at a bursting point. If he could laugh, he thought; or cry himself! What an immense relief it would be!

Walking, smart was the only relief he experienced. Mental exertion was a dote to mental energy; sufficient energy to last indefinitely. When on till he fell, that there was no faction; rest that tumultuous

tion surged from himself. From the moment that a foot as a fine as a

ideal was shattered, he still loved its ruins. Therein lay the hopelessness of it all—and he knew it. Striding on, he savagely kicked out of his way, now and then, a stone. Poor sort of relief again.

The configuration of the coast line brought him to an abrupt standstill. The cliff, jutting out, was met by a barrier of high rocks. These latter were overgrown with seaweed of the slipperiest sort: defiance bidding Nature's sudden intervention in his proceedings produced a corresponding interruption in his thoughts.

Why should he think about this woman any longer? She was not worth wasting thought over. He had been happy enough without her—before he knew her. He would be happy without her still.

Cut the thought of her clean out of his mind; out of his heart. That, he told himself, was the correct thing to do. Life should be for him as if he had never seen her, never looked into the unfathomable depths of those forget-me-not eyes. It would be quite easy; a little effort of will was needed—that was all.

All that he meant; every word of it. Framed a resolution that he looked on as adamant. But he ignored an important factor; made no allowance for the strange vitality of that pure white flower: Love.

The axe of common sense may be laid to the root of the tree; may cut 't down root and branch. Still one small remaining tendril, hidden from the sight, will work its way into the heart; spread and grow until in its magnitude it overshadows every other thought. Such is love.

(To be Continued.)

The Farm

HINTS ON SELLING POULTRY.

Have as good an article as you know how, just a little better than you have seen.

Above all, be honest, no matter what the other fellow does. Have your goods as represented.

As a rule I would rather sell poultry dressed. When sold alive there is a chance of tramping or smothering and for the beginner especially the shrinkage seems unreasonable.

If live poultry is fed a mash before shipping the shrinkage will be heavy. If fed at all give dry grain.

I do not think it right to starve poultry from twelve to twenty-four hours before sending on a journey that will take as many more hours. Twelve hours' starvation will clean the stomach.

Live poultry that pays for shipping should be docked at the farm. Never mix dead or alive poultry. Live will sell the former.

shouldn't be any). Burn all rubbish. Then owls, hawks, cats and crows can readily see and catch all field mice.

As a rule, the man who succeeds as an extensive farmer must keep stock to consume the bulk of the products of the farm, and no department of farming calls for greater intelligence and skill than the profitable feeding of stock. Whether kept for meat or milk, the greatest profit will always result from full feeding.

A herd of cows, properly fed and cared for, will turn out first-class butter, having a first-class color; but, if they are improperly fed and cared for, the butter will be correspondingly inferior and defective in color. These failings are concealed by artificial coloring, and the consumer has this inferior butter imposed upon him, for a first-class article, when, in reality, it is far from it, and lacks in the nutritive and healthful qualities of first-class butter. Honesty requires that everything should be sold for just what it is.

If you have no suitable shelter for the sheep, construct one. That is one way to put money into the pocket. If it is not possible to build a sheep barn that can be completely closed when that is desirable, construct a simpler shelter. Remember that the great object to be achieved is not warmth, but protection from storms. Sheep are well protected from the cold, but against storms they ought to have good protection. A very simple structure is a shed open on one side with a yard in front. It may be covered with straw or hay, but a better roof than that, and a more permanent one, is desirable. Build racks all around the shed.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Feed the horse from a low manger and not from a high overhead rack. It is not natural for a horse to get his rations in that way; naturally, he eats from the ground. A lot of dust rattles down by the overhead method.

The cow, whose food is largely cornmeal, will be likely to wear out early, but when there is a proper digestible ration given to cows, they may be fed liberally, so as to produce the best results in milk and butter and will last longer than will those cows that are so fed that they are always spring poor.

Overfeeding and high feeding do not mean the same by any means. High feeding means giving the animal all the food it can profitably digest and assimilate, and, in order to practice it successfully, there must be a variety of food, and the ration must be a digestible one and suited to the purpose intended. The intelligent farmer will not feed the same ration to a growing animal that he does to one he is fattening for the butcher, or to the cow he is