

of a great battle before six weeks were over. But things are not done quite so quickly as all that. Where to bring off a fight used to be a knotty problem in the latter days of the prize ring, and this was just the point which at the present moment puzzled our rulers. Russia told us vaguely to come on, but had inconsiderately forgotten to name where the combat was to take place.

Miss Smerdon, as we know, had no belief that there would ever be actual hostilities, and she was rather chaffing Byng on obtaining hospitality under false pretences. Indeed it really was a joke in the regiment at their being fêted, mainly because their predecessors had been sent campaigning.

"Ah, you can chaff us, Miss Smerdon," said Byng, "but we really have a good deal the best of the joke; you see we've got the cakes and ale, and may never gather the laurels."

"There, never mind the war," replied Frances, "let's talk about something else. You know Miss Lynden, you've met her at our house."

"Certainly," rejoined Byng. "Is thy servant blind that he could forget her?"

"Have you ever met Dr. Lynden?"

"Only once, and that was at a small bachelor dinner, and how I was included in that to the present moment I can't imagine. They were a scientific lot, and how they came to think that a Captain of Infantry was a savant, I can't conceive."

"Now tell me all about it, Captain Byng. This interests me."

"More than it did me," rejoined the soldier. "They talked a good deal about things a little over my head. Nothing for it but the old magpie dodge, you know. I didn't talk much, but I thought the more, I know I got through no end of claret."

"Nonsense, Captain Byng, you must know what they talked about, and I particularly want to know."

"Well, chemical discoveries, new beliefs, and all sorts of things you never hear at a mess-table. Bless if I don't think every one of the party had a religion of his own——"

"Except yourself," said Miss Smerdon, sweetly, "but you surely can recollect some of the talk if you try, Captain Byng."

"Indeed, I can't, my sole recollection of that evening was, that it was dull; that the claret was good, and that I was there by mistake."

"It's very provoking. You know I am staying here with the Lyndens. The Doctor is a charming old man, but I'm dreadfully curious about him."

"Clever old fellow," said Byng, "they were all too clever for me, but I'm bound to say I don't think Dr. Lynden would have gone on propounding his rigmorole theories if the others had left him alone."

"I only wish I had had half your opportunity," rejoined Miss Smerdon. "Now take me back to Mrs. Montague please, for its getting late, and I daresay she's wanting to go home."

Byng did as he was bid, and as he wished his fair partner "good night," marvelled much in what way he had missed his opportunities. It was impossible for him to know the theory that Miss Smerdon's vivid imagination had conceived concerning her host, and that she regarded Captain Byng as having been present at a secret conclave of adepts in mysticism.

#### CHAPTER IV.—CONSTABLE TARRANT

"You see, Pollie, I'm a man of intellect, that's what I am. I may be only an ordinary police-constable now, but my chance will come, and then you'll see a lot about that 'active and intelligent officer,' and all the other clap-trap."

"Of course you are, Dick, everybody knows you are awfully clever," and Miss Phybbs looked admiringly at the sandy-haired young man in a policeman's uniform, with whom she was walking.

Constable Tarrant looked at her suspiciously for a moment. He was quite aware his talents were not so universally admitted as Polly suggested. But he was a young man with a very excellent opinion of himself, and though, during the two years he had been in the force, nothing had taken place to afford any grounds for the belief, he was certainly firmly impressed with the idea that he was destined to achieve greatness in the career upon which he had embarked. Polly Phybbs was

a thin-lipped, black beady-eyed young woman, a trustworthy, capable servant and with no weakness about her excepting her love for this cousin of hers, Richard Tarrant. Whatever he said was law to her. She was four or five years his senior, and he had made love to her from the time he was fifteen, not very disinterested love either, for from the very commencement, he had utilized her in every possible way. He invested her with the general supervision of his wardrobe, let her wait upon him, and work for him, and spent a considerable portion of her wages for her to boot. A sharp, hard working girl, she was never long out of a good situation, and might by this have saved money if it had not been for her infatuation for her cousin; she rewrote though she was on all other matters, on this point she was blind. Though a smart looking girl, with a rather neat figure, nobody could call her good-looking. It might be that she attracted no other sweetheart, but certain it is that she had been for the last seven or eight years completely devoted to Richard Tarrant. When after having failed twice or thrice in his attempts to get a living, Dick succeeded in getting into the police force, she quite believed that it was due to the display of considerable talent on his part, and felt quite sure that he would sooner or later distinguish himself. She was not pledged to be married to him, but he was her young man, and she quite understood that they would be married some of these days—some of these days being interpreted into such time as she should have saved money enough to start house-keeping on.

"Now," said Dick, "you see in my profession"—Police Constable Tarrant was given to speaking grandiloquently of his calling—"a fellow's only got to keep his eyes open, and his turn must come. Now you know, Polly, I always was a regular winner for observing."

Polly dutifully assented, although she could call to mind no particular recollection of this faculty in her cousin.

"I notice everything. If I see a chap loitering, I says to myself at once: 'Now, what's he loitering for?' He don't gammon me that he's tired and his boots hurt him. 'On you go, my man,' says I. Bless you, he might be keeping watch while two or three of his pals commit a burglary. No, no, my eye is everywhere, and when your eye's everywhere you're bound—well you're bound to see something at last," concluded Mr. Tarrant, rather impotently.

It did not occur to Polly that in a big city like Manchester those gimlet eyes of Constable Tarrant's ought, in the course of two years, to have detected crime of some nature. Dick had never told her of any such success, neither had he told her of a pretty sharp reprimand he had received from his superiors when a gentleman's watch was snatched almost under his very nose, without attracting his observation.

"Now," resumed Tarrant, "This master of yours is a queer sort of a man. What can he want with a side door to his house? You see all these villa residences are built exactly alike, except your house. Now, who is Dr. Lynden that he should have a side door all to himself? That's what I want to know."

"Lor', Dick, my master's as quiet an old gentleman as you'd meet anywhere; there's no harm in him."

"That's your unsuspecting nature," replied the constable, loftily. "The law is suspicious; the police, which is an arm of the law, is suspicious too—me, I'm suspicious—it's my duty."

"I tell you what, it's all nonsense your being suspicious of master; and as for Miss Lynden, she is as sweet a young lady as ever I saw——"

"Don't rile me, Polly; you'll make me suspicious of you next. I tell you, sometimes when I've been hanging about here after you, I've seen two or three suspicious characters go in at that side door."

"What do you call suspicious characters, Dick?"

"They were men," replied Constable Tarrant, glaring at his companion in a most Othello-like manner.

"Some of master's chemical friends most likely," suggested Miss Phybbs.

"Friends! Lovers—lovers of yours!" exclaimed Tarrant, with a burst of well acted jealousy.

"Now, don't be foolish, Dick; you know I care for nobody but you. Men do come in at times by that door to see master. It was built on purpose; they are friends interested in his experiments, and go straight to the chemical room without going through the house."

"Polly," said Tarrant, endeavouring to call up a look of preternatural sagacity, "your master's conduct is suspicious. It's your duty to the public to keep your eye on him. It's your duty to me to keep your eye on him."

"I assure you you're all wrong. My master's a quiet, harmless old gentleman, who shuts himself up with his pots and pans, and blows himself up occasionally. I go in now and then, when he's there, but bless you, there's nothing to see in the room."

"It's not likely a woman would see anything in it. It would look very different, no doubt, to a police officer."

"But what is it you suspect the Doctor of doing?"

"That's it," replied Constable Tarrant, "I suspect him; it doesn't signify what of, at present. Keep your eye on him, Polly."

Polly laughed as she replied: "Of course I will, if you tell me to, and now I must run away. Kiss me, Dick, before I go, and don't be long before you come and see me again." And their embrace over, Miss Phybbs sped home conscious that she had considerably exceeded the time for which she had been granted leave of absence.

"I don't know what he's up to. I don't know what his little game is, but the circumstances are suspicious," said Mr. Tarrant, as he walked quickly back to his own dwelling. "Let's reckon it all up," he continued, stopping and placing the forefinger of his right hand solemnly on the palm of his left. "First, you've a doctor with no visible means of earning his living; verdict on that, rum, and I only wish I knew how he did it. Secondly, he has a private room, into which nobody is ever allowed to go, rummer. Lastly, he's a private stair and a private door, what's he want with a private door? rummer. Men go in by day, what goes in by night?" There was a pause of some seconds, and then Mr. Tarrant suddenly laid the forefinger of his right hand against the side of his nose, winked at an imaginary audience, and ejaculated "Bodies!"

Doctor Lynden meanwhile continues the harmless tenor of his way, dining out occasionally, and for the most part with the savants of Manchester, among whom he is now generally well-known. He spends a good deal of time in his laboratory, in experiments presumably, the result of which has not yet been published to the outside world. That Miss Smerdon had a strong girlish curiosity to see the inside of his den he knows, but he little thinks what that imaginative young lady pictures his real life. Still further would he have been astonished to hear that a rather thick-headed young policeman was also taking a lively interest in his proceedings. At the former he would probably have only laughed, but had he been cognisant of the latter, he would doubtless have been seriously annoyed. Nobody cares to be under the observation of the police—the guilty naturally dislike it; the innocent fiercely resent it;—but to find oneself under the self-imposed surveillance of a young police constable would exasperate most men. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Doctor Lynden is in blissful ignorance of there even being such a person as Police Constable Tarrant, at present.

But the summer slips away: Miss Smerdon has long ago gone back to her home. The army has moved from Gallipoli to Varna, but still those bulletins of "Glorious victory" for which the British public yearn are not forthcoming. The cavalry has lost a good many men and horses from an expedition into the unhealthy Dobrutschka, but of actual crossing of swords and exchanging shots there is yet no sign; still rumour has it that both French and English fleets, with innumerable transports, have all been collected at Varna, that such a flotilla has not been seen since the days of the Armada; and, indeed, that probably would have seemed a very small affair compared to that assembled in the Black Sea under the flags of the allies.