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Kiterature.

## A VERY NARROW ESCAPE.

[Conclusion.]

"Why should I trouble myself about his affairs? And who is this Bessie Raynor?

"Never mind who she is, Mrs. Hartfield. She was a good girl before he met her. She will never be a happy woman again. Ask him about her if you doubt what I tell you, and you will see by his countenance whether he is innocent or guilty. Knowing what I do, time for the Dover mail. I am bound to warn you of his real character.

"I do not require any such warning," replied Alice coldly; "Mr. Comberford is no more to me than any journey. He did not, however, go back to the Hall, but other client of my husband's. And I beg that you will fidgeted in and out of the lawyer's house several times not trouble yourself to dictate my conduct to him."

"I see that I have offended you."

"I do not like spies."

I am no spy, Mrs. Hartfield. I am an old man, and have had bitter cause to know the wickedness of the world. Your sweet face has been a kind of light to take Mrs. Hartfield to the station. to me ever since your husband brought you home to this house. God forbid the light should ever be cloud-

He bowed and left her-left her standing in a reverie, looking absently out upon the shadowy fields beyond Comberford. the little garden and winding creek. She was angry unhappy, bewildered.

'I wish George had taken me to Paris.' she thought. "He ought not to leave me aloue in a dreary old house

like this, to be insulted by a clerk." After this evening she passed Mr. Morgan without speaking to him, much to the old man's concern. The days went by, and not one passed withot a visit from Edgar Comberford, although in that first evening Alice had expressly forbidden him to call again during her husband's absence. He was not easily to be put aside. He knew the weekness of the girl's unschooled nature, and knew how to trade upon it. His tender talk of the life that might have been had Alice been free-his glowing descriptions of distant lands which those two might have seen side by side, of countries where the commonest life was a kind of poetry-charmed her in spite of herself. She knew the guilt involved in this dangerous pleasure, and hated herself for her weakher husband's return. Nothing could tempt her to sin against him, she told Edgar, however unsuited they might be to each other. She was his wife and would arrived about him.

mere ruse of the old clerk's to frighten her, she thought. The poor dismal old creature had tried to make her miserable about the only acquaintance that gave her any pleasure. Mr. Hartfield had been away ten days, when Mr. Comberford came in upon Alice suddenly Alice looked at him in despair. Wherever lote so had the morning with a very grave countenance. The sat little parlor maid was only just clearing away the reakfast things when he came in, and lingered insistively to hear the meaning of this early wist.

'I am sorry to say I have rather bad news of your about the said in answer to Alice's warning!

'You must not talk to me like that; it is taking a mean advantage of our companionship. You know to listen to him.'

'You was ny truest friend,' she thought, 'and I have a like to him.' one morning with a very grave countenance. The neat little parlor maid was only just clearing away the breakfast things when he came in, and lingered in- down to my grave a bachelor.' quisitively to hear the meaning of this early visit.

husbahd, Mrs. Hartfield, he said in answer to Atice's that I am with you at my husband's wisn,' expression of surprise,. 'He has been taken ill with now. Don't be alarmed; it is nothing very serious; but he wants you to go across to him. His doctor, a Frenchman, has written to me, but there is an enclosure for you from the patient."

He handed her a slip of foreign paper, on which there were a few lines in her husband's hand:

DEAR ALICE: Please come over to see me at once, if you are not arraid of the journey. Comberford can

You'll not be afraid of the journey?' asked Mr. Comberford.

Not at all, I should not mind going alone.'

· But, you see, I am due there, so you cannot deny me the pleasure of being your escort.

· It is not a very pleasurable occasion,' said Alice,

writing round and round her fingers. She was wondering whether the strict moralists of Norbury would boxes and Here Mrs. Har field sat altogether approve of this journey.

Mr. Comberford gave her little time to think. went into the clerk's office to tell Mr. Bestow of his employer's illness, and to make inquiries about her; butwell as he succeeded in doing to the the London trains. William Morgan looked up from not makener quite nuconscious of the pan femhis desk and watched him thoughtfully as he lounged against the mantlepiece reading the time-table.

There was no possibility of going to Paris earlier board.' than by the night mail. Mrs. Hartfield would have to 'Oh go first to London-a three hours' journey. There was a train left Norbury at a quarter to four in the tle longer thin usual.' afternoon, which would take the travellers in ample

Mr. Comberford decided upon going by this, and definite answer. left Alice in order to make his praparations for the in the caurse of the day on some pretence or other, shore. Their luggage was ready for landing among spending the interval at the Crown, where he drank the first, only a couple of carpetings and a portman-brandy and soda water to an extent that astonished the teau, which were pounced upondspeedily by officials, waiters. But in spite of all he had drunk, he looked and borne off to a building in the distance. pale and anxious when he came at three o'clock ready

Morgan came out of the house, with a carpet-bag on one hand and a moro co office-bag in the other

'Why, where the deuce are you going?' asked Mr.

'I am to be your fellow traveller, sir; at least, I am going second class by the same train.'

' To London.

'No, sir, to Paris. Mr. Bestow sends me across with papers?

'Why, what consummate folly of Bestow's! Your master is not fit for business. He won't be able to attend to anything for days to come.'

'I hope he may be better than you think, sir. In any case, I am bound to obey Mr. Bestow's orders.'

countenance express the faintest interest in his work. Mr. Combertord laughed grimly to himself as they drove away with the old man on the box.

'That old fool's company can make very little difwas wont to be in Alice Hartfield's company.

were alone in a first-glass-compartment, flying Lond m-

against him, she told Edgar, however unsuited they might be to each other. She was his wife and would do her duty to the end of her life. But the tempter was not convinced.

One day she ventured to ask him about Bessie Raynor. He gave a little start at the sound of the name, but declared that it was strange to him; and Alice was weak enough to believe his assertion. It had been a position.

And then he went on to speak of his own solitary position.

And then he went on to speak of his own solitary position.

'What is to become of me in the hour of sickness, Alice,' he asked, ' with no one but a gloomy old housekeeper to care for me?'

You will marry by and by, I daresay, and have a wife to care tor you.'

some kind of low fever, which is a good deal about dear George, what a fine bold hand he writes, doesn't Alice gave a gry of delights, and called nin to the 'Yes, you have his orders for the journey .- Poor

Mrs. Hartfield did not see the sardonic grin which accompanied this trivial remark, nor did Mr. Comberford again affend her by any allusion to his hopeless not a star in the sky, and a high wind blowing. There has an unfortunate habit of making mistakes. was considerable confusion in getting on board, and Mrs. Hartfield scarcely knew where she was till she escort you, as he is wanted over here. Yours, &c., G. H. found herself stanling on the deck of a steamer armin-arm with Edgar Comberford, while the lamps of Dover receded rapidly from her vision. Her companion | nantly. persuaded her to remain on deck.

would inevitably in the you ill,' he said.

with some embarrasment, as she twisted the slip of can sit still all night secure from wind and weather.'

way to escapa Hefound a sheltered nook b

ped inshawls and railway rugs, ak, that it is fellow-aveller's conversation. He st lectures, highest ossible spirits, and did his utr will not

'I thought the steamer crossed in an need half,' she sid; 'but we have surely been twak,

'Oh, dea no, I think not. There's a good wind to-night, however; so I dare say they'll be

Mrs. Harfield questioned him about the time than once after this, but he was unable to give her a

It was all night, he said vaguely, and his spirits mounted as the boat plunged gaily through the waters. With the first gleam of morning they neared the

Mr. Comberford led Alice un the steps, and put her at once into a fly that loomed aduskily out upon them Alice was just stepping into the fly, when William in the chilly atmosphere. He came back to her presently with the lug-age, and seated himself by her side; but before he could rejoin her she had asked the driver the name of the place, and he had told her that she was in Ostend.

She looked at Edgar Cumberford with a face full of terror. 'What a wretched mistake!' she said; 'we have come by the wrong steamer. Why did you not tell me the truth on board? But of course we can go on from here to Paris. It is only the loss of time that annoys me.

"My darling Alice, you are as innocent as a baby," exclaimed Mr. Comberford, with a triumphant smile. We are no more going to Paris than we are going to hy case, I am bound to obey Mr. Bestow's orders.' the moon. All stratagems are fair in love and war. He spake in a mechanical kind of tone, nor did his George Hartfield is as well as ever he was in his life; and the little note you so implicitly believed in was only a specimen of imitative penmanship by your humble servant. I wanted to get you away from that dreary old town without esclandre, my love. We are ference,' he muttered, and then grew moodier than he bound for the sunny Rhineland, there to forget that He brightened considerably by-and-by, when they George Hartfield.

'And you think that I will go with you?'

'Impossible!'
'Where are you going now?' To a hotel. I must get you some breakfast. There is no train for Paris till segen; there is one for yologue.a.

Alice looked at him in despair. Whatever lote so hall

They were at the door of a hotel by this fin an ! while the driver was ringing Alice gave a ary of delight, and calle thin to tidoor

of the vehicle. There has been a mistake,' she said; 'Mr. Co neford brough; me by the wrong poat. But, thank Heavyou came, the same way? You can take me on to Pa

Or back to Norbury, whichever you prefer, has an unfortunate habit of making mistakes. His not the first time he has signed another marks and y mistakes about forged take. There was an awaward business about forged accounts lation bill, some four years ago, with induced Air. Comberford to cross the Atlantic.

. What do you mean, sir? cried the young maydidig

There is an atmosphere of sickness below that you better than Bessie Dalynor's ancle. Answered illian you better than Bessie Dalynor's ancle. Answered illian Morgan. I never sately so a your fais fee till victure Morgan. I never sately so a your fais fee till victure into my masters of the, but I have least younger an sit still all night secare from wind and weather.