

ing so frightened, miss; whatever there may have been between you and him, you'll thank me some day for saying—"

Then came old Helestine's voice. "D'ye see that door?" he said. "Get out of it, quick, else I'll lay this ash-plant about you! What! You force yourself into my house to tell me tales about a young man that me and mine's come to respect! Why, od-rabbit you! if he hadn't been an honest lad he could ha' made away with my silver weeks since. Now, then, are you off? Here, lads, there—loose them hounds on this fellow!"

Bastable heard the kitchen-door open and close again with a bang; he heard flying feet on the cobble-paved yard; and then he dropped into a chair in the darkness of the parlour and hid his face in his hands.

FOR Pansy knew now! He had caught a glimpse of her standing staring with horrified eyes at the informer. She knew! And she had gained her knowledge from a malevolent and bitter mouth. The sudden shock must have killed the love which he had honestly believed was rising in her for him.

The door between his room and the kitchen was closed. How long he sat there he never realized. Just as that one black page in the book of his life was about to be torn out, erased, an inexorable hand had been laid upon it.

The door suddenly opened—Bastable looked up and saw Pansy standing on the threshold. Behind her the kitchen was empty.

"Come in," he said. "I—I want to speak to you."

"Listen," he went on. "I was here, and the door was open, when that man was there. I heard all he said. It was no news to your father and mother, for I had told them myself this afternoon. Just as I had meant to tell you. And now—you heard it in—that way!"

"Was it—true?" she whispered. "Quite true," he answered. "Then—why?" she asked.

"This," he replied. "My father was a very poor clergyman who had no chance of saving; he and my mother died when I and my sister were about nineteen. We had to earn our living; she as a typist, I in a bank. Well, she fell ill, and then all depended on my small pay. It was then I gave way, because I had, somehow, to find money. I thought I could make money on the Turf, and so I began taking it from the bank. And, of course, I didn't, and in the end there was detection, and then—disgrace."

"That man who was here just now," he continued, "was in charge of the case. He hates me because, in consequence of a complaint made by me, he was punished rather seriously. But on the main facts of the matter he spoke the truth."

"And—your sister?" she said. "She never knew," he answered, in a low voice. "She died before it was found out. So it was all for no good! And, oh! if what happened afterwards had only happened six years before, what a difference there would have been in two lives. A distant relative left me a fortune—a little of it would have saved her. I used to hate that money at first, but I spent it in travelling—I hadn't rested anywhere since getting it until I came here, Pansy. And here—"

She lifted her eyes at last to his, and suddenly put out both her hands. "And here," she said, as he drew her to him, "here you are going to stay—always!"

THE WILDCATTERS

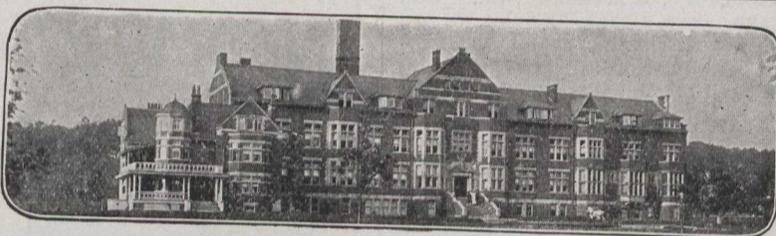
(Continued from page 19.)

"Pretty exact. Much more so than Freeman's work. By the way, where is he?"

"I haven't seen him since last night."

"Well," Ridgeley said, "go on with your third shaft. That is my advice. The chances are against you, but go ahead as your uncle told you. Go ahead till he comes. Then get out!"

"What!"



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