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Tale of Mystery

CHAPTER XVI.

Tom Cheriton Intervenes.

(continued)

The girl kissed him, and his resolute confidence had some little effect in easing her mind; but she answered:

'It's no use. Nothing can do any good.' Her tone was not so gloomy however, and her lover noticed this with pleasure as he went out of the room with a smile and a cheery look. But his face gloomed and he frowned in deep perplexity before he reached the bottom of the stirs, so that the housekeeper who saw him leave the house thought he and Dessie had quarrelled.

As he walked away he was very troubled and anxious at all that had passed, but quite clear as to his first step. He would see the Count de Montalt, or whoever he was, and try to get from him a clue to the mystery.

He had first to go to his chambers. His uncle was no better, and Tom had felt great reluctance about staying in London the previous night. Telegrams were to be sent to him that day reporting progress, however, and his object now was to ascertain if any had arrived during his absence, and also to arrange for their being sent on to him at South Kensington.

He was completely baffled by the turn which things had taken. It was clear that in some way this de Montalt had gained some strong and extraordinary influence over Dessie, but why should he use it to prevent their marriage. What on earth could it matter to that man whether Dessie was married or not? For a long time he could not get away from that thought, and by no ingenuity could he suggest an answer to the question.

Who was the man? There were several ways of attempting to find out a man's antecedents and past career; but in this case the task seemed the more difficult because he had absolutely nothing to go on. He knew no more about him than he called himself the Count de Montalt, had picked up Mrs. Markham through George Vezey, and meant to marry her. Vezey himself knew nothing.

He was turning these considerations over and over in his thoughts all the way to South Kensington; and could get to no satisfactory conclusion.

He found Mrs. Markham and the Count together, and at once explained to the former that he wished to have a few minutes' conversation with her companion alone. The two men went at once to the library.

"I want to speak to you about Miss Merrion," said Tom, plunging right into the subject. "I have just had a long conversation with her, and I gather from it that you have some hold over her by which you have induced or compelled her to take a course which has plunged her into great unhappiness, and has caused her to break off her engagement to marry me."

'In what capacity do you come to me?' asked de Mont it with a sneer. 'Do you wish me to meddle with your love affairs.

'No, I do not,' said Tom sternly. 'And if you cannot speak civilly to me, I shall be glad if you will not speak at all.'

The other man shrugged his shoulders as a reply.

"I ask you first what is the nature of this hold you have?"

"Has Miss Merrion told you I have any hold at all?"

"Miss Merrion has not told me a syllable of any kind. You have seemingly closed her lips with your threats. But I am speaking of what I can see for myself."

"Then you had better carry your observations farther, and find out the answers to your own questions."

"Do you deny that you have put this pressure upon her?"

"I neither admit nor deny anything. I simply decline to answer you. I presume Miss Merrion is able to decide for herself; and if she doesn't like you, how can I compel her to marry you?"

"I will put it in this way," said Tom, passing over the insult. "In consequence of what has passed between you and Miss Merrion this change has been brought about. Will you give me any clue to the reasons for it?"

"If I had any I wouldn't give it," was the curt and angry reply.

"Very good," said Tom, firmly. 'I have come in the first instance straight to you. I have other steps to take; and you will not suppose that I intend to let this matter alone until I have plumbed it to the bottom. I am not without means of ascertaining all that lies behind, and my practice as a criminal barrister has taught me to be suspicious of any man who trades on the fears of women to compel them to be silent. You are doing that; and I will know the reason why. I warn you well in advance, and I hold a clue to your motives and your past which you have little anticipated would come my way."

"When you connect me with your criminal practice, you forget yourself, sir," said Montalt, with an assumption of greatly offended dignity, as he rose and walked toward the door.

"I will come with you," said Tom readily. "My first intention is to explain your grossly dishonourable conduct to Mrs. Markham, and I prefer greatly to do it to your face;" and with that they returned to the room where they had left the widow. When they entered the room, however, there was a surprise for them both, as Dessie Merrion was in close conversation with her friend.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COUNT'S NEXT MOVE.

Dessie Rose in some surprise not unmingled with alarm and agitation when the two men entered; and she directed a glance of somewhat eager appeal at Cheriton. But though he saw and understood the look, he answered it only by shaking his head and smiling to her.

'I am very glad you are here, Dessie, as what I have to say now concerns all who are present—you as well, Mrs. Markham, and I would much rather say it when we are all together.' Mrs. Markham was a little perplexed by this opening, and looked toward her lover, who immediately went to her side and sat down, with a slight shrug of the shoulders and a lifting of the hands and eyebrows into suggest his complete inability to understand Cheriton's actions.

'Is anything the matter, Mr. Cheriton?' asked the widow.

'Yes, a great deal is the matter and I want you to help to put things right. You know that Dessie——'

'Stop, Tom,' interrupted the girl. 'You know nothing can alter things. I have told you so. This can do no good.'

"My dear girl, I am going my own way in this," he answered.

"Have you two quarrelled then?" cried Mrs. aMrkham, not without a suspicion of a smile. In her present frame of mind a lovers' quarrel was about the most interesting thing on earth.

"Quarrelled? No, certainly not," cried Cheriton, with a smile. "Dessie and I would never think of doing anything like that. But between us there has come some kind of barrier which I think you—you and that gentleman—" waving his hand towards the Count, who smiled, "can help to remove. That is, if you will."

"If we will. Of course we will, won't we, Godefroi?" said Mrs. Markham, with ready good nature.

"I have already explained to Mr. Cheriton that I know nothing whatever about it, and can do nothing—much as I regret it." He added the last sentence as a sort of concession to Mrs. Markham's appeal.

"Whatever does it all mean?" she cried, looking in perplexity from one to the other. "Have you all got a lot of secrets?"

"It is the secret I wish you to help me to find," said Cheriton, an answer that puzzled Mrs. Markham more than ever.

"Why don't you ask Dessie?" she cried. "I don't understand."

"This shall all be made plain now, if you will give me one moment. On the day you were coming back—"

"Tom!" cried Dessie, with an interrupting protest.

"Dessie and I were just the same as usual," continued Cheriton, taking no notice of the interruption. "We had a cup of tea together and a chat, and both of us were looking forward to the time of our marriage. That evening she came here. You have already told me that she was in her usual spirits when she first met you, and that everything was just the same as usual. That evening she was introduced to this gentleman—"

"What do you mean?" cried Mrs. Markham, momentarily alarmed that Tom was going to say something which would show her own love affair to be in jeopardy. "What has that to do with—with the Count de Montalt?"

"That is precisely what I do not know; what I want to know. I want you to now ask M. de Montalt whether he can give you any reason for this."

"Godefroi!" asked Mrs. Markham, to them with a glance.

"You had better let Mr. Cheriton say all he wishes with Miss Merrion, though I am a comparative stranger, I shall of course be delighted — for your sake." He dropped his voice at the last three words, and pointed them with a glance.

"I left London the day Dessie came here," said Tom Cheriton, "and then I got a letter from Dessie hinting that some kind of trouble was brewing; then another urging me to come back at once; and then a telegram and another letter couched in the same urgent terms. I came, of course, and as you know, Dessie was away; no one knew where or for what. I waited until to-day, and on going to her rooms this afternoon I found that gentleman there—"

"Godefroi!" exclaimed Mrs. Markham, starting.

"There had obviously been a serious conversation between them, and one of the results was that Dessie met me in a condition of some hysterical emotion; said that all was at an end between us; that she could not give me any reason whatever; that she was bound to silence; but that the seperation had nothing to do with any change in her feelings toward me. The man is the cause;" and Tom pointed at the Count, who assumed the demeanour of a somewhat amused but quiet unconcerned spectator. "There has been no other possible cause for this change in Dessie."

"Where you in Dessie's rooms?" asked Mrs. Markham of the Count going straight to the one part which seemed to touch her personally, and showing her suspicions in her manner.

"My dear child, if you will think a moment you will see that I could be nowhere else, if I wished to please you," answered the Count. "I knew your anxiety on Miss Merrion's account; I saw you were troubled; and it grieved me. When the telegram came from her I thought I would go and see that all was well with this eccentric young woman journalist. If not, and there was bad news of any kind, I should better know how to break it to you than anyone else in the world. At least, I thought so. I met her at the station, and walked with her to her rooms. That is all," he said, with the air of a man who has explained away a point that need and should have puzzled nobody.

To be continued.

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A
Adams, John
Adams, Annie, card, Field Street
Adams, J., Queen's Road
Andrews, C. B., retd.
Ackerman, W. H., retd.
B
Barrett, Miss Annie, Pleasant Street
Brady, Mr.
Bassie, Mrs. Eddy, Cabot Street
Braithwaite, Miss Evelyn, care Gen'l Delivery
Barnes, Harvey
Bannister, Miss P., late Hospital
Ball, Albert, retd.
Brady, Michael, Gen'l Delivery
Best, Miss, retd.
Bennett, F. P., retd.
Beddlescombe, Mr., Allandale Rd.
Bennett, Herbert, care G. P. O.
Brien, Michael
Breene, M. J., retd.
Brown, Patrick, late Sound Island
Brown, Martin, late Botwood
Butler, E. J., Mt. Scio Rd.
Butt, Miss Margaret, Carter's Hill
Budden, Miss L., Gower St.
Butler, George, Long Pond Road
Brushett, Miss Teresa, New Gower Street
Bussey, Alfred, retd.
Burns, Master Wm.
Butt, N. H.
Butler, Azariah, card, Lion's Square
C
Clarke, Pricella, retd., late Carbonear
Cannings, W. F., care G P. O.
Cave, F., care Reid Nfld. Co.
Caldwell, W. T., Engineer
Callahan, George, Water St.
Clarke, Willis, care G. P. O.
Cash, A. B.
Carey, Bob, South Side, St. John's
Coughlan, Bernard, care Henry Blair
Caldwell, Miss Jennie
Costello, Fannie, Adelaide Street
Collins, Mrs., Military Rd.
Cotter, D., Nagle's Hill
Cole, Reuben, card
Carbery, Mrs. Georfige, retd
Cooper, Miss Mary Grace
Cooper, Edward, Scott St.
Cluney, Miss Aloysius, Middle Street
Cuddihy, Richard, St. John's
D
Dawe, Gordon, Gower St.
Delaney, Miss, card
Dyke, Hannah J., 9 —— Place
Dwyer, Michael, Nagle's Hill
Downs, Miss Lillie, care Gen'l Delivery
Down, Mrs. Wm., care Gen'l Delivery
Downey, Miss K., card
Duffy, Thos., retd.
Dalton, Bridget, George's Street
E
Edgar, Joseph
Edney, Mrs. Lucy, card, Flower Hill
Escott, Miss Maggie, St. John's Place
F
Farrance, P. H., care G. P. O.
Frampton, John, care Jas. House, Bond Street
French, Miss Fannie, Cabot Street
Fitzgerald, Mary, Carter's Hill
Fitzgerald, Mr., Carter's Hill
Fitzgerald, Mrs. Fred., Central Street
Fisher, Miss L., retd., New Gower Street
Froud, Philip, care Nathaniel Froud
Foster, Miss N., card
G
Grant, Miss Alice, retd.
Greene, Miss Lizzie, card, care Gen'l Delivery
Greene, Minnie, card, care Gen'l Delivery
Greene, Miss Bride, card, care Gen'l Delivery
H
Hallett, Mrs. Thos., Bond Street
Hanlon, P. J., card
Harvey, John
Harding, Mary, New Gower Street
Hawcks, Miss Sarah, Middle Street
Hanlon, J.
Hanlon, Mrs. M., retd.
Herbert, A.
Heartery, Minnie, card, Gower Street
Heart, Miss L., care Mrs. Geo. Hear
Hiscock, Miss Jessie, Brazil's Square
House, Fred., retd.
Hollett, Miss E. J., card, Bond Street
Hutchings, Miss Minnie,
Hussey, N., card Hamilton Street
I
Isaacs, Alfred, late of Charlottetown
J
Jacobson, N., Bond St.
Janes, Thomas
Jackman, Mrs.
Johnson, Miss M., Moore Street
Jackson, Archibald, late Witless Bay
Johnson, Miss B., care Mrs. Puppy, Theatre Hill
Jacobs, Winnie, card, George's Street
Janes, S., slip
K
Kelly, Mrs. S., Pleasant Street
Kelly, John, care Gen'l Post Office
King, Miss May E.
Kirby, Charles, Water St.
King, Martha, retd.
L
Lane, William
Lainwood, George
Larder, A. C.
Lewis, Patrick, retd.
Lynch, Mrs. Thos., Field St.
M
Martin, Agosto, care Gen'l P. Office
Mayer, Albert, care Mrs. has. Lester
Martin, Miss B., card, Middle Street
Martin, ——, care Gen'l Delivery
Martin, Nicholas, retd.
Maywood, Miss Jenny
Marshall, H., ook's Hill
Mercer, Wm., Cornwall Avenue
Miller, Wm., Pleasant St.
Miller, John, Wickford St.
Mills, Mrs. O.
Miller, Miss Ethel, Gilbert Street
Morgan, Mrs. Wm., Moore Street
Moore, Wm., Moore St.
Moyst, John, Mundy P. Road
Molloy, Mrs. Mary, retd.
Moore, Peter D., Cabot St.
Morgan, R.
Mullowney, Miss Annie, Waterford Bridge
Murphy, M. J.
Mc
McMartin, John, St. John's
McCormack, N., retd.
McKay, James, card, Prince's Street
McDonald, Florence
N
Noseworthy, Wm., Holloway Street
Noseworthy, Miss Alice, Prince's Street
Noseworthy, J., care Geo. Knowling
O
O'Neal, John, Water St. West
O'Brien, Maria, retd.
O'Brien, Maggie, Prescott Street
Oliver, Miss Mary, Spencer Street
P
Parsons, Frederick, retd.
Pardy, Eli
Parsons, Miss L., Avenue —— 7
Pearce, Mrs. Robert
Padgett, Mrs. John
Pretty, Miss Lucy, Brazil's Square
Peckham, Thomas, Water Street
Pilley, Master George
Pippy, Alfred
Piercey, Miss Grace, Adelaide Street
Pynn, G. W.
Power, Miss Katie, Balsam Street
Power, Miss Lilian, card, Henry Street
Porter, M., Duckworth St.
R
Reid, Miss G.
Reardon, Robert, retd.
Rilles, John, 46 ——
Riley, H. C., retd., care Gen'l Delivery
Roache, Miss Margaret, care Miss Katie Roache
Rose, Monsieur Eugene
Rowsell, J. R.
Roberts, Geo., slip
Rowles, James, late of Sussex Place
Roberts, Mrs. Mary, retd.
Rogers, Katie, retd.
Rogers, Mrs. Maggie, Stephen's Street
Russell, Edward, Blackmarsh Road
S
Stamp, Edward, retd.
Shaw, Anna, retd.
Saunders, Mrs., retd.
Stamp, James, retd.
Shaw, Mrs. George, card
Sparrow, Mrs. Katie, card
Stewart, Mrs. Albert, retd.
Sheppard, S. L., Monroe St.
Serrick, George
Sheehan, H. J.
Seviour, Mrs., Hamilton Street
Smith, Miss Dolly, College Street
Snow, Wm.
Snow, Wm. H.
Snow, J. C., retd.
Sullivan, Nicholas
T
Taylor, Arthur
Taylor, Mrs., Colonial St.
Tobin, Miss Bride
Turner, Mrs. Jas.
Turpin, Wm., card
Taff, George
W
Walsh, Martin, Mount Scio
Way, Annie, card
Wheeler, Elizabeth, G. P. O.
Westbrook, George
Whelan, Miss Lizzie
Wersall, K. J.
Whitefield, W. J.
White, E. R.
Wilkinson
Williams, Miss M.
White, Miss Thelominic
Y
Yetman, Moses, George's St.

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A
Arnebury, H. S., schr. A. K. MacLean
B
Ayers, Simeon, s.s. Beatrice
G
Butler, Lewis, schr. Glide
I
Parks, Capt., schr. Inga
Ford, James, schr. Inga
P
Blagdon, Silas, schr. Portia
Mosher, Wesley, schr. Portia
Y
Hobbs, Capt. Robert J., schr. Vaudeville
W
Johns, Capt., s.s. Whitefield
Rowe, J., s.s. Whitefield

G. P. O., May 19th, 1911.

H. J. B. WOODS, Postmaster General.

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