

# UNCLE DICK;

Or, The Result of Diplomacy and Tact.

## CHAPTER IV.—(Cont'd.).

The amusement and mischief tones left her voice. She asked de-

murely—

"Are you thirsty?"

"Parched! I confess I am. I have just escaped from the dead level of dry conventionality. That arid desert, the Sahara of Society. Its womenkind are my abomination."

She looked a little annoyed. As if not appreciating his description.

"I have heard it rumored, Mr. Masters, that you fly from London to escape Society's attentions."

"And for once the many-tongued is not a lying jade. I suppose all of us, every man and woman, are more or less eccentric."

"Put it that we, most of us, have bees in our bonnets."

"Precisely. The buzzing of my particular insect is the artificial life of modern Society. I just loathe it; never go out for that reason. Fly from London? Yes; I own up; I do. As fast as an express can wing me. Fly to escape the inanities with which the cup of social life is overflowing."

"Balls, parties—"

"And things of that sort are my pet horrors."

She smiled at the expression of his disgust; his manner of expressing it; said—

"I seem to be shaking a red rag at a bull!"

"If," he continued, "Society is the product of civilization I am an untaught savage. Not an ungrateful one, mark you, but one thankful for his savagery. Afternoon teas, flower shows, and the hundred and one idiotic things which go to make up the ordinary everyday life in London ought to be abolished by a drastic Act of Parliament."

Her smile merged into laughter. She had gauged his capacity for exaggeration by this time. The beginning of her understanding of him was setting in. Her laugh over she said—

"I think you are very drastic."

"I hope not!"

"Why?"

"Because if you think so, I have been mistaken. I have formed a wrong estimate of your character if you care for these things."

"And supposing I did. Would it be, think you, unwomanly?"

"As the world wags? No. On the contrary, the absolute quintessence of womanliness in nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a possible thousand."

"But—"

"Ah! that is it."

"But if I did care for all and the singular things you object to so much?"

"I should be sorry, really sorry, that I have spoken as I have done."

"Why?"

"Because it would, must, savor of impertinence. We, each of us, have a right to our own opinions. I should just hate to think that I have been forcing mine on any one; it would be a painful thing. Opinions, like boots, should fit the wearer—neither too narrow nor too wide, and possibly an allowance for stretching a point. To force an opinion would be a modernized version of the iron boot the torturers used to handle in the Inquisition days."

"But you expressed yourself"—she smiled at the recollection of it—"very strongly just now."

"Because I thought we were more or less on the same plane; were thinking in common. I hoped so."

"Tell me, will you, why you thought me different from other women; thought as you did of me?"

"Oh, come! Isn't that now don't you think that rather hard on me?"

"Why?"

"To put such a question as that. Calling on me to tell you why I think."

"Why not?"

"Think! If I could bring myself to lie you would not like it. Yet, supposing I said something to offend you?"

"Why should you?"

"Because of my ignorance. I would not for worlds, knowingly. You would know that I should not mean to."

"Very well, then. Why should I take offence where none is intended?"

He hesitated a moment. Plainly

he saw the danger-signal flying; then he spoke—

"You are a woman."

She tossed her head at that. There was no mistaking the tone in which she said—

"Thank you!"

"There! . . . Proof positive! I won't speak; I won't risk it. I am most anxious not to offend you, and you shan't force my hand."

She tapped impatiently with the toe of her shoe.

## CHAPTER V.

Miss Mivins was annoyed; the impatient tapping was evidence of it. Not that a little exhibition of temper in any way detracted from her personal appearance. On the contrary, the air of petulance heightened her charms.

"You are just like a man."

Her speech was accompanied by another toss of her shapely head.

"Isn't that twisting things round? You mean that he never gives a reason for what he says or does?"

"Yes."

Resumption of tattoo with her foot on the ground. It made him exclaim—

"I knew I was right! What if I tell you that I am a mind reader?"

"I would not be a bit surprised."

He was greatly. Could not understand what she meant, said—

"You wouldn't?"

"No."

"I am—to hear you say it. Why?"

"Because in this book of yours I am reading"—she held it up—"I see you believe in palmistry."

"Come, come!" He was genuine in his expostulation. "I make one of my characters believe in it."

"Then you do not?"

She had him in a corner; was merciless. He tried to wriggle out; said—

"I did not say so."

It was an infecund effort on his part. She pinned him in still further; was that kind of woman.

"What does that mean? That you do and you do not?"

There was nothing for him but to fence; he answered—

"Yes and No."

It did not in any way extricate him from his difficulty. She continued—

"You are a complete enigma."

"There is no prize offered for the solution." He endeavored to speak lightly, to bring the conversation back to the humorous line it had left; continued—

"I have known people take quite an interest in enigmas. Do you?"

She changed the subject. Kept away from where there was a tread on dangerous ground; felt the ice getting thin; said—

"I gather that this palmist character of yours professes to read the past, but does not venture on prophecy?"

"I venture on prophecy now."

He spoke suddenly, rising as he did so. Picking up his books, and, for the first time, quietly possessing himself of her bag, continued—

"That rapidly travelling cloud, at present looking very little larger than a man's hand, coming from the south is full of rain. It will burst before we are back in the town, unless we hurry. Gracie! Gracie!"

The little girl came running in response to his call. All three, for the first time, walked homewards together. A student of human nature might have seen in it a beginning of things.

"I am living in Marine Terrace."

He was describing the situation of his lodgings. Waited for her to respond, and then asked—

"Have you got far to go?"

"Oh, not so far as you have, little more than half-way. Ivy Cottage; on the front. Do you know?"

"That pretty little bungalow with the creeper over the porch? Before we reach the big houses?"

She said—

"Good-bye, Prince Charlie. I shan't see you in the evening because I go to bed at half-past seven."

"My word! Half-past seven! How late for a little girl to sit up!"

She exclaimed indignantly at so gross an insult—

"I'm not a little girl! I'm nearly five!"

Her indignation was a fleeting one. He held her away; threw her up in the air till she screamed with the delight of the pleasant fear.

Then caught and kissed her and set the mite on her feet again.

So he dealt with the child. Then,

you off for reading matter?"

"Oh, Mudie's have sent me down an absolutely abominable selection. With"—a twinkle escaped from the corner of her eye—"with the exception of that one of yours."

"I won't gratify you with even a smile of approval at so callous a joke," he said coolly. "To trample on my feelings so is positively inhuman. Still, that 'exception' embodies me."

"In what way?"

"That finding you interested in one of my books, I want you to let me—I want you to favor me by accepting from me a set?"

"A set?"

"I have been guilty of five others." Mock despair was in his tone. "Accept my contrite apologies."

"Five others!"

"I have to plead guilty to that number. Henious, isn't it?"

"Oh, I did not mean that."

"And so young too!"

"Really, Mr. Masters!" The flush was being worn again. "You are, really, too bad; raking up old grievances!"

"I would like to try and think there is a substratum of good."

She ignored his speech, rather the significance in the tone of its delivery!

"I did not know—I confess openly, you see. This makes but the third of yours I have read."

"Then there is a possibility of interest being left in the three you have not read. Let the weather be state as emphatically as words can make it that the true policy for the Canadian farmer is to fatten on his own farm the cattle he raises, not to sell them to be finished by anyone else, either at home or abroad."

"The raising of lean cattle, to be sold at a low price for somebody else to fatten, is almost always a poor business. Generally speaking, and leaving out just now the element of speculation, the profitable part of cattle-feeding is the finishing end, for two reasons.

In the first place, fattening cattle return to the soil, in the form of manure, a large part of the elements of soil fertility in the feed consumed.

Lean, growing cattle, on the other hand, appropriate a

large share of these elements for the growth of bone and muscle, to be subsequently walked off the farm. The manure from fattening stock is much more valuable than that from growing animals, even when the same feed is given to both, although, as a general thing, the concentrated nature of the feed used for fattening goes to make the manure all the richer. Scarcely any farmer makes due allowance for this important fact.

"I beg your pardon. I mean I will make a parcel of them and send them up to you."

The note of pain in his voice was so plain that any question of his wisdom—or want of it—vanished.

She was moved to put her hand on his arm; to say—

"Don't deprive me of half the pleasure of the gift. Please bring them yourself."

It was a pretty little speech. Prettily spoken. No answering word came to his lips, but the look of gladness in his eyes was eloquent. Eloquent enough to make her mentally pause again and ask herself: was she acting altogether wisely?

Miss Mivins was sailing under false colors. Was not in a position to haul them down, or fly her own. But she found him entertaining and—and very pleasant to talk to.

She could not afterwards remember much of what they talked about on their walk along the wall home-wards. But she was conscious of spending a very pleasant afternoon; that it passed away all too quickly. The most entertaining conversations are usually those which flow so smoothly that we forget to note the landmarks and stepping-stones on the way.

She was in a quandary; dared not reveal to him her true self. She had learnt enough of him to know that if she ran up her own flag, one glance at the masthead would mean his sheerling right away.

She was not at all anxious that that should happen; did not want to lose him. She had grown to—more than like him. Why, she asked herself petulantly, why could he not be as other men?

The rain held off till they reached her gates. There they said good-bye, shaking hands for the first time. The touch thrilled them both. As an outcome he saw possibilities; felt what their meeting might possibly lead to. It was a pleasant feeling. Things were colored by it—color of the rose.

Her good-bye was spoken lightly. Instinctively she tried to counteract that thrill. Yet there was a lingering tone in her voice as she said, finally—

"Till eight o'clock."

Then came Gracie's turn. He stooped down, lifted and kissed her.

She said—

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raising his hat, gave a final kindly smile in the direction of the governess; said a final good-bye.

Such was their parting. Each full of thoughts of the other. He walked home wondering, thinking why—for what reason, had she said eight o'clock. It sounded so—then he laughed at his stupid thought.

So life touches life a moment, thrills and bids it stay, as two drops of water in a peaceful stream may touch for an instant and in the next be parted by the waving reeds.

What of after meetings? Would they be guided to one another by that strange fate that we call Destiny?

(To be Continued.)

## The Farm

alfalfa hay, and a little straw for a change, a little bran and oil, or cottonseed meal, with some corn, barley, frosted wheat, oats or peas, will make any steer fat, and a heavy grain allowance is not needed, either. If a farmer has not sufficient heavy feed to fatten his own cattle, he can buy and feed some concentrated meals, with more profit than can the speculative feeder, providing he has the necessary skill; and this, it must be admitted, is the one snag. Some men are such poor herdsmen that they cannot fatten beasts well. However, there is about it, if one feeds moderately, it requires no more skill—rather less—to finish a steer to a reasonable point of fatness than to raise a thrifty calf up to the feeding stage; and be this point well considered, that, if a calf is raised as it should be, kept thrifty and growing, as it ought, it will be nearly ready for the butcher at any time, and will not require a prolonged feeding period to fit it for the shambles.

If one cannot finish successfully for the export market, let him turn his attention to raising and feeding handy-weight butcher's cattle. In any case, let him fatten his own stock. To sell lean cattle is like skimming milk, selling the cream at milk prices, and keeping what is left. It is poor business. Let each man aim to fatten his own stock. Farmer's Advocate.