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## "A GOLD LADEN DERELICT" OR The Impecunious Adventuress.

### CHAPTER I.

"I'm not going to say what I think of your performance, Kenneth, because I'm quite sure that Mercia has said it already," remarked Kate, with true sisterly reserve. Then, with equally characteristic feminine inconsistency, she added: "But, really, it was magnificent! I knew you would win! You always do when your side is in the right."

"A nice sort of reflection on our judicial system, my dear Kate," laughed Kenneth again, for laughter came easily to him just now, not only because of his triumph, but perhaps even more on account of something that he had seen in the hazel eyes which just now had looked up into his.

"Well, and what did you think of the case, John?" he continued, turning to his sister's companion. "Quite a drama in real life, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Kenneth," said John Ackersley slowly, and with just a suspicion of the northern burr in his voice, "but I hope this won't be the last act of it, and, though I'm no lawyer, I don't think it will be."

"Neither do I," said Kenneth, more seriously this time, "and certainly I hope it won't be. But now I shall have to ask you all to excuse me for two or three hours at least. I'll see you all at dinner at eight, if I can possibly scramble through and get home. I've asked Nevil, but he has another dinner engagement."

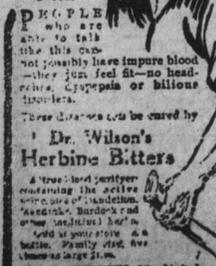
"What a pity!" said his sister, with just a snap of malice in her tone. "Nevil would have made such very interesting company to-night."

John Ackersley did not at all like this familiarity of Christian names, although he knew it was merely a relic of almost lifelong acquaintances and of old school days; still it forred upon him a little, as was perhaps only natural under the circumstances.

Kenneth Markham uttered a general good-by and hurried away after

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xiety took its place. He turned around, and said to the clock, whose hands were arranging themselves to make it five of the afternoon:

"I can't stand this any longer. There must be something wrong with the governor. Either this horrible news has been too much for him, and he's fainted, or else—"

But the other idea was too terrible to be translated into words. He went to the door of the sanctum and knocked rather loudly than usual, and to his comfort he heard a voice like and yet somewhat unlike his master's reply:

"Well, what is it? I can't see any one now. Oh, is that you, Crudge? Come in."

"Beg your pardon, sir; the door's locked."

"Oh, yes, of course it is. I forgot that."

Then he heard the key turned in the lock, and the next moment he was looking up with anxiously inquiring eyes at the white but still strong and sane face of the only man on earth whom he loved and revered.

"Oh, it's all right, my dear Crudge," said Kenneth, putting his hand on his shoulder, and making a somewhat sorry attempt to smile. "Yes, yes, I understand what you've feared, but you ought to have known me a little better than that. Still it has hit me very hard. I don't know whether I mesmerised myself looking at that thing," he went on, pointing to the Globe on his table, "but perhaps— What time is it?"

"Just five, sir," said Mr. Crudge, looking up with added anxiety in his eyes.

"What! Five?" exclaimed Kenneth, his voice rising almost to a shout. "Good heavens! what a fool I am! What can I have been dreaming about when I have so much to do—yes, and to think about, too."

He rubbed the palm of his left hand across his eyes and forehead, and looked about him at the familiar walls and bookshelves as though he scarcely recognized them. Then he went on, more quietly:

"Dear me, dear me. Why, I must have been asleep, or something else. I ought to have been home half an hour ago. What on earth will they be thinking? Look here, Crudge—run up to the stand and bring me a hansom with the best-looking horse you can find. I shall drive to Wimbledon. Yes, and go to the post office. Wire home that I am coming, and send another wire to the city, and ask Hodgson, or any one who is there, to wire back full particulars of anything that has happened in Wimbledon. Hurry up, now. While you are gone I will have a rinse."

The orders were given in a quick, peremptory tone, which quite reassured Mr. Crudge. The brain which had done such wonders that day had thrown off the stupor with which this swift, unpeppable calamity had benumbed it. It was quite safe for him to leave his master alone now, and so, with a quickly spoken, "Certainly, sir," he disappeared.

CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW OF SHAME.

Heathcroft is one of those cozy, three-shaded houses, with a generous allowance of garden land, whose upper windows look out across the road to Roehampton, over Wimbledon Common.

It is a big, roomy, comfortable-looking house, built twenty years before the desirable family residence invented by the modern builder and the real-estate agent came into existence. It has a square, substantial tower, at the top of which is a four-windowed room, about sixteen feet square, study, library, smoking room and observatory, recognised as Kenneth's own private and particular domain.

As the cab rolled around into the carriage drive, Kenneth looked up and saw a red ray of light from the setting sun glowing on the western window, and before the cab had stopped at the door a cloud bank had drifted up from the south and the ray vanished, leaving the window blank and cold.

"Not an omen, I hope," he muttered, as he got out of the cab, "but it looked like one."

The door opened before he could get out his latch-key, and his sister, white-faced but clear-eyed, came forward to meet him.

"I suppose you've been to the city, Kenneth; but father is here, and Doctor Harding is with him. It has been an attack of heart failure, but he has been a good deal better the last hour."

"What?" said Kenneth, as he went in with her. "Heart failure! How on earth could he have got to the city?"

(To be continued.)

So that singers in the hotel may practice whenever they feel the urge, the Majestic Hotel, New York, has had a glass enclosed studio built in the roof garden, where the song birds can try out their voices without disturbing other guests.

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strong in disaster as it often is in death, Kenneth went into the little dressing room at the other end of his suite of chambers, and he washed his hands and sponged his head and face, just as he had done many a time before after a hard and exciting tussle in the courts.

Within ten minutes Mr. Crudge was back. He had a flask of brandy in one hand and a bottle of soda water in the other. He put them down on the table, got a glass, and said: "Cab's at the door, sir. Found him as I came back from the office. Horse just out of the stable, and a likely looking man. But you must have this first, sir. I know it's against your rules, sir, but must ask you this time positively. It's a long drive, you know, sir, and you've had a very long day's work."

By the time he had finished, the brandy was in the glass and the cork out of the bottle.

"You're a good fellow, Crudge, but you know—"

"Yes, sir, of course we know; but this time, if I may say so, it is really necessary. Allow me, sir, if you please."

And he held the glass nearly full of the sparkling, cool-looking golden liquid toward him.

Kenneth had always been one of the most rightly temperate of men, but at the moment his lips were parched, his tongue seemed a stranger in his mouth, and his nerves seemed aching about his muscles like slack cords. He took the glass and emptied it in two or three gulps.

"Thank you, Crudge," he said, as he put the glass down. "Yes, I think you were right. Now I am ready. You'll put out the lights and lock up, won't you? I'll telephone you first thing in the morning. Good night."

A couple of minutes later his cab had pulled up through the western traffic to Wimbledon, via Hammer-smith and Barnes.

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This illustration calls for TWO separate patterns which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10c. FOR EACH pattern in silver or stamps.

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