

A DETECTIVE SUCCESS.

(Continued)

As she pressed a blotting-pad on the receipt she had signed, I caught sight of some marks made by previous writing. I could just decipher "St. J—P—k"—St. James' Park, beyond all doubt. Perhaps she had some correspondent in that neighborhood, and a regular detective might—I could not finish this reflection to my liking, for what a regular, or other, detective could make of it I had not the least idea.

Well, I left the house, feeling meaner and more contemptible than I had ever felt before, and with the knowledge that now the most disagreeable part of my duty was to commence. I must watch and spy, and lurk like some dangerous reptile, to entrap that sad, careworn Mrs. Fyles. So I loitered for some hours about the adjacent thoroughfares, read the paper in a coffee-house, which was so near the end of a bye-street as to command a view of the merchant's residence, and at last I saw the lady come out alone. I, of course, followed, dawdling slowly when immediately behind her, and hurrying when she turned a corner and I lost sight of her.

At last I saw her enter a large drapery establishment, by no means a pleasant matter, for she was as likely to be in there a couple of hours as ten minutes. After I had sauntered to and fro awhile, I ventured to turn an adjoining corner, as I was afraid of attracting observation, but was dismayed to find that the shop extended right through the block of houses, and opened into another large thoroughfare, so that there was every possibility of the lady having already left without my seeing her. This proved to be the case, for, after waiting a good while longer, and carefully reconnoitring the shop from both ends, I could see nothing of her, and was forced to admit that this, my first experiment, was a failure.

"As I have no doubt all the rest will be," I muttered as I turned from the spot.

Nevertheless, I determined to go through the form of doing something for my pay, and so, from the "clue" on the blotting-pad, I resolved to try the neighborhood of St. James' Park. What I was to do when I got there, or what quarter I was to explore, I felt I must leave to chance, but thither I went. I found nothing better to do there than to sit and look at the ducks, with the children and nursemaids feeding them, and to wonder how the myriads of heroes of detective fame, of whom I had so often read, would have proceeded in such a case. I stared closely at everyone who went by, but as Mrs. Fyles was not among the number, I gained nothing in this, and being at last thoroughly tired of the pursuit, I left, marvelling how on earth I was to bring my proceedings to a close, or, indeed, how I was to do anything worthy of the description of "proceeding" at all.

Gloomily meditating thus, I was moving slowly from the enclosure, when I was startled by a voice exclaiming:

"What! Jones, old fellow! Is it really you?"

The speaker was Frank Eastone, and I was glad enough to see him as a relief to my uncheering reflections. I told him that I had been sitting by the water a long time, and found it very dull.

"Sitting by the water!" he echoed. "How came we—I—not to see you then? I have been walking by the side of the lake for the last hour."

It turned out, on comparing notes, that I had chosen a spot not included in his patrol. He laughed in his usual style at this for a moment, but then became unusually silent.

"I say, Jones," he began abruptly after this pause; "I am inclined to think it would have been a good job if I had seen you. I want a friend—most people do, but most people have someone they call a friend; I have not one in the world, and I have no doubt it serves me right. I have a great mind to tell you why I want one, for I have seen quite enough of you to know you are to be trusted."

"I would try to show myself worthy of that opinion in case of need, but I am not desirous of intruding upon anyone's secret." I thought as I added this, that my most recent experience had been in the way of having the secrets of other persons thrust upon me.

"You are the last person in the world to do that," returned Eastone. "I will think it over, and if I appeal to you for your advice I know I shall have it."

There was not much more said on the subject, and I reached home with the disheartening conviction that I had utterly failed in my first day of detective experience, and with the conviction also, which was far more unpleasant, that I was likely to repeat the failure.

CHAPTER II.

On the next morning I could think of no better plan than the again watching Mr. Fyles' house, at what I supposed would be his wife's usual time of going out; but on this second day I did not see her at all. I loitered for some hours close by, and as I could not be in the coffee-house all the time without exciting suspicion, or so I thought, I was obliged to crawl about the streets, and a heavy shower of rain coming on, I got wet, and felt that I should have a bad cold in consequence; which in no way alleviated my disappointment.

On the following day I had scarcely arrived at my post when a brougham drove up to the door of Mr. Fyles' residence, Mrs. Fyles got in, and was driven off so quickly as to prevent my keeping it in sight, or jumping up behind until I could meet and hire a cab to follow it, which was my first impulse. I hung about the neighborhood after my usual fashion, until, just as I was about to leave, the carriage returned, Mrs. Fyles alighted, alone, and the coachman drove round to the stables.

So there was another day gone, only a sample of what those yet to come could be, and I speculated, as I went to my lodgings, as to the amount of

watching and lurking which might fairly be expected of me in regard to the ten pounds. I was already more than satisfied with the experience I had had, but of course Mr. Fyles would be likely to form a different estimate.

Eastone was not at home on this night, but in a note left with the landlady he asked me to meet him on the next evening about six o'clock, near one of the entrances to Kensington Gardens. To comply with this request might perhaps interfere with my other pursuit, but so far as I could see it would be of no great consequence if it did so, and I wrote a line or two signifying my compliance. I was not likely to see him in the morning, as I was now always out before the poor fellow rose, and so it was on this occasion.

Again I was at my coffee-shop, where by this time I was pretty well known, and where, I was glad to find, I was looked upon as a clerk out of work, who came there to see the advertisements, and to write his letters. I had written one or two while waiting there, and this, I suppose, gave rise to the idea.

To my surprise, while sitting there on this day, my admiring friend, the messenger from Mr. Fyles' office came in to get a lunch; he having, as he explained, lost his dinner-hour by being sent on an errand to this side of London. He asked me if I should be at the office that afternoon, but I returned a negative, and then remembering my position, I assumed the wisest, most solemn air I could command, and with a smile and shake of the head to correspond, said:

"No, no; I have other fish to fry. I shall be at the Anglesea Gate in Kensington Gardens at the time your office closes."

It could do no harm to tell him this, and it sounded, I fancied, so businesslike.

"Well, that is a rum thing!" exclaimed the man. "I had a glass at The Petersham Arms, over at the corner there, with Bill Jemmett—Mr. Fyles' coachman, as, of course, you know."

I had presence of mind enough to shake my head and smile again:

"Ah, I know it is of no use trying to draw you out," said the messenger; "I could soon see that. Well, Bill said he was going to drive to Kensington Gardens, and should take the Anglesea Gate. I suppose you are not going for a ride with him. Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed at what he evidently considered his witicism. I laughed too, but the coincidence was certainly an odd one. With this my friend, the messenger, left. I was glad he did not stay longer, for somehow I felt more ashamed of myself when he was so unmistakably contemplating me with an admiration which was almost reverence, if not awe, than at any other time.

Mrs. Fyles did not come out of the house all day. The carriage certainly drove up, but instead of the merchant's wife, two ladies, who were guests in the house, as I knew from my watching, got in and were driven off. As Bill Jemmett, to quote my admiring friend, the messenger, was, of course, the coachman, I easily decided that this was the Kensington Gardens trip he had spoken about.

It was past the time at which Mrs. Fyles usually left home. I was sick and tired of my capial, so I left, and determined to walk over to my rendezvous at Anglesea Gate as a cheerful exercise and change after such a day as I had spent. It was no great distance, only two or three miles, but as I had plenty of time I took more than an hour in my saunter, and was there quite early enough.

So was Frank; I had scarcely been there a minute when he appeared at the gate and beckoned to me.

"Thank you, old fellow, for being so punctual," he said. "I am about to confide a great deal in you; but I know you are to be trusted."

I did not know how he could tell this, and was not altogether sure he was right; but this was not the time for reflection or discussion on such points, so I followed him. As I entered the gardens I heard the sound of wheels behind me, and glancing round saw that a cab had stopped close to the gate, but this was constantly happening, so I did not give it a second thought.

We turned into a side path, and just where a few trees and some tall evergreens lent a retired character to the spot, I saw a lady.

"This is Mr. Jones, my only friend," began Frank, "who has kindly—"

The lady looked up, smiled and bowed.

"We are very much obliged to your friend," she said; "and I thank him for his kindness to you. It is impossible that it could have been so, and yet I have a strange feeling of having seen and spoken to you, Mr. Jones, and that quite recently."

Had she? I did not wonder at it. So had I. Why, this was Mrs. Fyles herself, and beyond that, I now saw of whom her smile had reminded me, for, as the pair stood side by side, the selfsame smile, a very pleasant one, was on each face.

I felt utterly staggered by the turn events were taking, and wondered what I was likely to be called upon to do in order to show my friendship. Whatever it might be, I thought, even at the moment, I could hardly expect it to fit in very well with a proper zeal in an employer's service.

"You know, Jones," continued Eastone, "that I have spoken of going abroad again."

"But he must not, Mr. Jones," interposed the lady. "I cannot part with him any more. Use your influence with him; tell him his health—"

"You are a dear, good, anxious thing!" exclaimed Frank, throwing his arm caressingly on the lady's shoulder; the latter only smiled, and in no way objected to this proceeding. "Now, as you are about a great deal," he resumed, "we think—"

"I have seen enough!" cried a harsh voice. "At last, madam, I have trapped your accomplice and yourself, thanks to the wonderful skill of Mr. Jones. I thank you, Jones, and shall not forget you."