

## Plot That Failed;

### Love That Would Not Be Denied.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

Leicester had spoken the truth when he had said, in answer to the captain's inquiry, that he had been out to see the ghost.

But he had another object.

Since the morning when he had come upon the captain seated in the ruined chapel he could not rid himself of the suspicion that the captain was implicated in the eavesdropping of his servant, Jem, and that the astute and plausible master was the prime mover and director of some plot, while Jem was only the machine or tool.

Thereupon, not being able to sleep, partly from his unhappiness concerning Violet, and his disquietude born of his suspicion, he had sauntered out and made his way to the park.

While there he had caught a glimpse of the ghost flitting past the ruins.

He was about to pursue it when he saw the captain emerging from behind the bush.

Instantly suspecting that it was one of the gang, he bore down upon him, as we have seen.

And now he told himself he was as far from the truth as ever.

Like the captain, he sank into a chair and gave himself up to thought, with this result:

"Why should I waste time and energy on a futile object? It is like a horse turning a mill to grind wind! Violet Midmay will marry Lord Fitz, the intellectual and the talented! She has made up her mind to marry a coronet," he murmured, bitterly, "and she would not marry Leicester Dodson, the tallow-melter's son, if he remained hanging at her apron strings until doomsday. As for Captain Howard Murpoint, he may be an honest man and he may not. I was not born to solve the problem or to bring him to justice. Let the world wag on its way; as for me, I will arise, shake off this infatuation, for it is nothing better, and seek fresh fields and pastures new. I shall have something to do in Africa, and I shall forget her."

He took from the drawers a quantity of necessary articles of clothing and packed them in the portmanteau. When it was filled he locked it and attached a label addressed, "To be taken in the yacht to the Isle of Man, where the skipper will put in until I come."

"I'll go overland," he muttered, "to cut the journey short, and they shall pick me up there."

Then he carried the portmanteau into his dressing-room and placed it where his valet could see it.

The man was used to acting on such curt and sudden instructions, and would convey the portmanteau, with its terse command, to the skipper of the yacht the first thing in the morning.

Having made his arrangements so far, Leicester slowly undressed and got to bed.

"I must wake early," he thought, "Bertie is going to-morrow, and must not know of my intended flight or he would feel hurt."

But the morning came and he was sound asleep when Bertie knocked at the door.

"I'm going, old fellow," he called, through the key-hole. "Don't get out of bed. Good-by. I shall be back in a couple of days."

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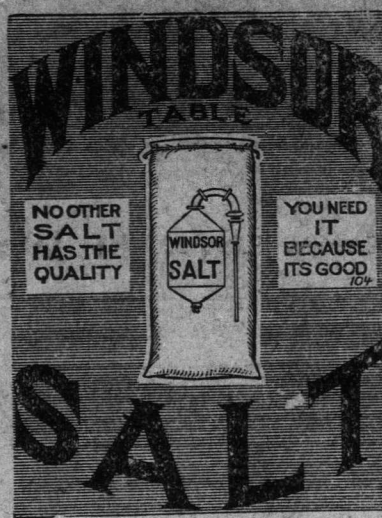
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"Good-by," said Leicester, drowsily, half asleep and half awake, and Bertie was gone.

Could either have foreseen even for twenty hours how different would have been the parting of the friends! When he came into the breakfast room he found his mother, fond and thoughtful ever, waiting at the table to see that he had his breakfast comfortably.

"Has Bert gone?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dodson, with a little laugh. "He and your father went off together; and I was almost glad to get rid of them, for Mr. Fairfax fidgeted dreadfully."

After breakfast, Leicester, who felt anything but cheerful and high-spirited, strolled out to the cliff.

He looked down at the sea and missed the yacht from the harbor directly.

"Sailed," he thought. "All the better. I will wait until Bert comes back, and then hurrah for Africa's golden sands."

He paused say "hurrah!" but he did not feel very jubilant.

With a not altogether unaccountable heaviness he sauntered down to the village.

All was going on as usual, and as he passed the "Blue Lion" he saw the usual little knot of idlers collected at the bar.

Among the voices he could distinguish that of Jem Starling's raised in turbulent tones.

Then he passed down the street to the beach.

The fishermen were busy with their nets, and old Job, the carrier, stood, with pipe in mouth, looking on.

The men touched their caps, and Job gave him a rough, kindly good-bye.

Ten minutes afterward, and before he was scarcely out of sight, Captain Murpoint came down the path, sauntering very much after Leicester's fashion, with a Bengal cheroot in his mouth.

With his placid smile upon his face he sauntered down the beach.

"Well, my men," he said, "good night's fishing? Beautiful morning," and then passed on.

But as he passed Job he whispered in his ear:

"Meet me at sunset behind the chapel. There is danger."

Job, by a motion with his pipe, intimated that he heard and would comply, and the captain, in his turn, passed on.

He, too, as he had gone by the "Blue Lion" had heard the strident tones of Jem's harsh voice and had felt rather disgusted.

As he returned he looked in and saw Jem leaning against the bar in a state bordering upon intoxication.

Jem saw him, but instead of welcoming him with a respectful salute, scowled fiercely and sullenly.

The captain thought that it was feigned, and with a cool, "Good-morning, my man. So you've not left the village yet," was about to stroll on, but Jem, upon whom a great change had fallen, rendering his suspicious of every one, even of his lord and master, shambled on after him.

"What d'ye mean?" he hiccupped. "Didn't yer tell me to stop here? Why don't yer say what yer mean? What's a man to do to please yer?"

The captain, with an alarmed and passionate frown on his face, turned upon him, and after glancing round to see if any one was near, said, savagely:

"Silence, you idiot! Go home, and come to me to-night, in the chapel."

"No, I don't," returned Jem, with a half-drunken shake of the head. "I don't go near no chapel! I've had enough of them!"

"The cliff, then," said the captain, torn by passion and the fear that some one would overhear them.

"The cliff, you miserable hound. Come sober, for there's work to do. Do you understand?"

"I understand," said Jem, sullenly. "I'm sensible enough, ain't I?"

The captain's reply was a look so full of ominous evil that if a look could kill Jem's days would have been ended there and then.

There was no time to say more, for footsteps were approaching.

The captain hurried on, bursting with rage and apprehension.

Lord Fitz rose to meet him as he entered the drawing-room.

On his boyish face there was an anxious, nervous look which would at any other time have greatly amused the captain.

"How do you do, captain?" he said, shaking hands twice in an absent, flustered manner. "I—L came over to see Mrs. Mildmay—I mean Miss Mildmay, but she can't be found. Mrs. Mildmay's gone to look for her. You haven't seen her, I suppose?"

"No," said the captain, smiling. She won't be found far off, I expect. I know some of her favorite seats. Why don't you go and help to search?"

"Oh, I don't know whether she'd like it, you know," said his lordship, with a wise shake of the head.

"Faint heart never won fair lady," said the captain, significantly.

Lord Fitz flushed and looked at him eagerly.

"What do you mean?" he stammered. "Do you know what I've come about, eh? You don't mean to say—"

Then it flashed upon the captain that Lord Fitz had come to propose for Violet's hand.

Here was another tangle! With a readiness not to be too much commended, the captain pretended to misunderstand him.

"Ah, ha! some sly plan for an outing or a picnic, eh? Well, well, we must find her. Ah, here is Mrs. Mildmay," he said, quickly, as Mrs. Mildmay entered the room.

"I am so sorry, Lord Bolesdale," she said, "but Violet is in her room with a bad headache, and sent me to ask you to excuse her."

"Cer—tainly," said Lord Fitz, half relieved and half disappointed. "I—I think I'll go now. I'm sorry Violet—I mean Miss Mildmay—has a headache. Can I call at the doctor's as a go-back—I mean, can I do anything?"

"Oh, no, thank you," said Mrs. Mildmay.

Then Lord Fitz took up his hat and nervously said good-bye.

The mid-day post brought a letter from Mr. Thaxton.

He would have the honor of waiting upon Miss Mildmay on the morrow.

The letter broke the dreary monotony of the day, for Violet had kept to her room and put in no appearance at dinner.

The evening was setting in, cool and pleasant, the air seemed to woo her from her retreat.

She caught up her sun-hat, and with an attempt at gaiety ran downstairs into the lawn.

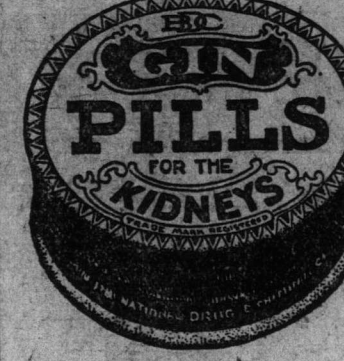
Opening a side gate, she stepped into the lane.

Still keeping up the effort to appear gay, if she really was not, she tripped along, singing, in a low, sweet voice, a merry refrain, the very refrain which she had sung with Lord Fitz.

The lane was a pretty one, little used, the grass in its center being scarcely trodden, and Violet, in her light muslin, looked like some Pagan pastoral divinity dropped from Paradise to cull earth's flowers. Beautiful, indeed she looked to Leicester Dodson as, coming round the green, flower-grown corner, he came suddenly upon her.

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"What a beautiful evening," she said, scarcely knowing what she said. "I have been gathering some wild flowers."

"So I see," he said, curiously, looking down at them. "It is almost a needless sacrifice, considering the hecatombs of choicer ones offered daily; you have flowers in abundance on your tables. But it is a woman's way to spoil and spare not. It does not matter, Miss Mildmay, flowers are but flowers and of little consequence. But there are other things higher in the scale which a woman gathers with reckless mood, to fling aside with wanton scorn. You ask me what they are?"

He continued, standing stern and passionate before her. "I answer—hearts. Hearts are only hearts," you may reply, but I tell you, Miss Mildmay, as one who speaks from sad experience, that a man's heart counts for something in the universe, and that a man's life is too high a thing to be wasted for a woman's toy."

He paused a moment.

Violet, who had stood silent and motionless, was silent still, but a burning flush of indignation flushed to her face.

He mistook it for conscious guilt and shame, and it maddened him.

(To be Continued.)

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## British Defeat

IN BIG BATTLE AT LA BASSEE.

Picardy, Jan. 26.—What will probably be recorded in military annals as the second battle of La Bassee, took place yesterday morning, and resulted in the defeat of a strong German army that had been massing for days behind this part of the line. Hundreds of Germans were killed and several remained in our hands as prisoners, including two officers of high rank.

The strategical advantage obtained by the Allies is considerable.

Without being too exacting, one may be allowed to say that the conflict raged roughly along the triangle of Auchy-le-la-Bassee, Guinchy and Ginchy. Once again as at various points where the issue had to be decided by cold steel, did the British prove more than a match for the Germans in the use of the bayonet.

A railway line from Bethune to La Bassee, parallels the canal running but a few yards north of it. The Allies hold both towns and naturally these lines of communication are of the utmost importance to preserve intact.

It has been the ambition of the Germans to get astride the railway, and cut our communications. Just before Christmas, they made a big move and drove the Indian troops out of Ginchy, but were repulsed in their turn with heavy loss.

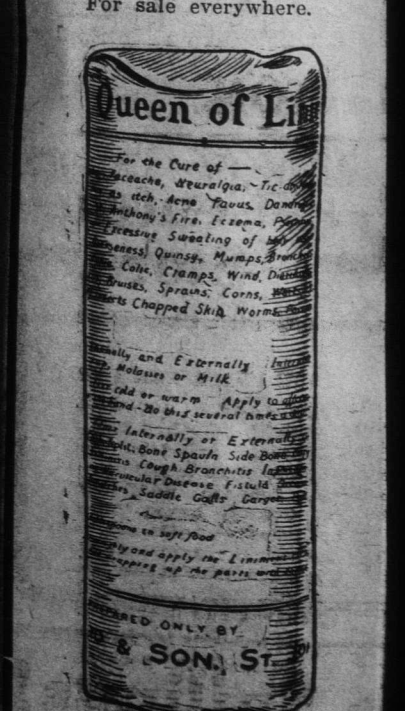
For more than a week past, word has been brought to the allied commanders of large movements of German troops to this important part of the line, so the British were fully prepared, in a general sense, for any big move, though the soft condition of the ground still forbade expectation of anything like an attack en masse.

But it is the eve of the Kaiser's birthday. About ten minutes past seven o'clock yesterday morning, private, who now has his right arm in bandages, was just beginning to think about breakfast in his mud lodging when to his astonishment a German soldier came tumbling over the top of the trench. He was a Hanoverian, and in a moment he was locking down the business end of the British soldier's rifle. He soon disclosed his errand by giving himself up as a prisoner and declaring that he was sick of the war and the typhoid stricken trenches. He added when another Tommy began to wield his bayonet threateningly, that grand attack by the Germans had been planned for 7.30 o'clock.

The deserter was speaking the truth, and just as our men were starting breakfast in the fighting

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