

# "A GOLD LADEN DERELICT"

OR  
The Impecunious Adventuress.

CHAPTER X.  
A PAIR OF SCOUNDRELS.

"Look here, Ashley, it stands to reason that you must be in this game, or you would have kicked hard before now. Under the circumstances, I must say that I have a sort of right to know."

"My dear Redman," replied the Honorable Arthur Ashley, "to put matters quite plainly, you have no right whatever to interfere in a purely family matter such as this is."

"Oh, haven't I?" replied Mr. Walter Redman, leaning back in his chair and looking up at the ceiling of his dining room in Russell Mansions. "Surely you haven't forgotten—"

"No, my dear chap, I've not forgotten; one doesn't forget the kind of thing that you were going to allude to; but I've learned something since I was fool enough to—well, manufacture that policy of underwriting, which, of all the idiotic contrivances, was about the most unspeakably ridiculous that a really good business man like yourself ever became mad enough to think about."

"You may be right or wrong," said Mr. Redman, bringing his teeth together with a snap, "but you mustn't forget that piece of paper, and certain others, are still in existence."

"There isn't the slightest necessity to remind me of that, my dear fellow," replied Ashley, thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets and spreading his legs wide apart. "I know that they exist, and that a fortnight or so ago they did give you a certain amount of hold over me."

"A hold that is still strong enough, metaphorically speaking, to take you by the neck, my dear Ashley, and run you into the nearest police station, on a charge, or rather two or three charges, of forgery, which would be quite enough to get you a sentence of seven of the best years which you'll ever see."

"Bosh!"

"Don't you know—you, one of the most successful private detectives in London, and, therefore, the most unscrupulous—that the offense of compounding a felony is considered by English law to be about as bad as committing the felony itself?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite take your meaning."

"Rubbish, my dear Redman. You can't bluff me like that; you ought to know me better. Let me put the thing into plain terms, and show you exactly where we stand."

"As you seem to have an idea that we don't stand exactly where we did," replied the other angrily, "perhaps it would be well if you explained matters a little more clearly. Personally, I don't like connardums in business, and for the last two or three minutes, you've practically been asking me, 'When is a forgery not a forgery?'"

"I can answer that at once," laughed Ashley. "It's when the other fellow doesn't prosecute you for it. See?"

"Not at present," said Mr. Redman, taking a fresh cigar out of his case, "and, therefore, it may be as well if you'll be good enough to shed the light of your superior intelligence upon my own mental darkness."

He spoke with a slowness and deliberation which constituted a somewhat bad mistake for such a clever man as he was, because Ashley knew at once that he was afraid of something, that he recognised him now, not as a man who was at his mercy, but as one who might possibly be an enemy, and that was the last thing that he ought to have done with such an unprincipled scoundrel as he knew that the Honorable Arthur Ashley to be.

"My dear Redman, I'm surprised that you, with all your undoubted ability and proved experience, should not have seen how completely the position has changed during the last fortnight. In the first place, this fellow Markham has bowled us clean out; and you know as well as I do that there isn't a member of the firm who dare produce that policy of underwriting in open court; if we did, he would have us by the hair in a moment."

"I must confess that I don't at all see how that affects me," said Mr. Redman, after a few moments' contemplation of the end of his cigar.

"Just you let me get the secondly, as the parsons say, before you interrupt, my dear chap," laughed Ashley, with a carelessness which was not at all pleasant to the senior partner of Redman & Co. "As I was going to say, the publication of that unsigned will has knocked the ground from under our feet. After all, there are in this country such things as justice and equity, as well as law; and what is perhaps more to the point is the fact that your respected colleagues in this business are not above taking their price."

"What the devil do you mean? And, for goodness sake, drop that nonsense, and come to the point, whatever it is."

"Just arriving at it," replied Ashley, with exasperating slowness, "only you will keep interrupting a fellow so. You see, that Kenneth Markham, with his infernal honesty, or, as I suppose you'd call it, unbusinesslike methods, has sacrificed the whole of his father's private fortune to liquidate the debts of these companies which you and others knew a good deal more about than the late lamented Markham, senior, did; whereas, the document which you, in the presence of witnesses, asked me to manufacture, is as useless to us collectively as it is to you individually—I mean as a personal menace against myself."

"We can very soon see about that," replied Redman, with a snarl.

"You shall see about it at once, my dear fellow," laughed Ashley. "You have asked me to enlighten your darkness, and I will. You know, of

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course, that my respected, if somewhat debilitated, cousin, Sir Arthur Eversley, has placed himself in the care of the fair Lillas and her aunt, and that he's going through a sort of alcoholic cure in that house up at Hampstead, which they took so suddenly under the advice of Doctor Edward Mathews; but what you don't know is that, last night, he signed a will, leaving everything that he possesses to the fair Lillas, in case he dies unmarried. If he doesn't, he will marry Lillas, which will come to about the same thing."

"Good heavens, man! You don't mean that?"

"I do; and, what is more, I want to tell you that I shall benefit to such an extent under the arrangement—you know there's forty thousand a year, and about half a million's worth of real estate, houses, furniture, pictures, family jewels, and so on—that I could buy your respected partners over your head. That's the situation. Now, perhaps you will begin to see how ridiculous you would look if you prosecuted me for forgery, and had to appear in the dock beside me, charged with compounding a felony, and convicted, as you would be, on the evidence of your own partners and managing clerk. They would have no scruples about turning king's evidence against you, for an adequate consideration, and accuse you of conspiring to defraud the shareholders in the Markham companies, by means of a forged document. How does that strike you, my dear Redman?"

"If you're telling the truth, Ashley, it strikes pretty hard," replied Mr. Redman, after a couple of turns up and down the room; "but the weak link in your chain of argument, if you'll excuse me putting it so, is the fair Lillas herself. How does she propose to render herself eligible for matrimony?"

"You may take it from me that she won't trouble to do that," replied Ashley, stretching his arms up over his head. "A judiciously arranged funeral would be very much less trouble than a wedding which might lead to awkward complications later on."

"Exactly. I quite see the situation now. But I don't quite see where its particular interest to myself lies."

"When that will is proved, and I give you a check for five thousand

pounds in exchange for those slips of paper—"

"Oh, yes, of course, if you like to put it that way, my dear fellow—"

"That is the way I propose to put it. Do you agree?"

"Yes, certainly; granted always that the fair Lillas gets the will proved."

### CHAPTER XI. HELD BY THE ENEMY.

The house at Hampstead, to which Sir Arthur Eversley had transferred himself, on the advice of Doctor Edward Mathews, and in which, to the utter but helpless disgust of his heirs at law, he was being nursed by Mrs. Lillas Ashley, under the supervision of her aunt, was quite an ideal sort of private sanitarium. It was a wide-fronted house, of three stories, and the whole of the first floor had been arranged for the use and comfort of the distinguished patient.

Doctor Mathews, the owner of the house, was one of those members of the medical profession who have discovered the fact that it pays a great deal better to take charge of a few special patients, who pay their fees promptly and certainly, than to engage in a general practice, in which a man working hard day and night thinks himself lucky if he gets seventy-five pounds-cash out of every hundred that he has earned.

Doctor Mathews made a speciality of diseases resulting from overindulgence in alcohol and drugs, and in Sir Arthur Eversley he had found a patient who was satisfactory from every point of view.

Some specialist might have objected to the nursing arrangements which Mrs. Ashley proposed, but he was tactful enough to find no fault with them. Her beauty, her charm of manner, and the arguments which she was able to make use of, proved entirely convincing to him, so much so, indeed, that he was quite content to accept the nominal position of medical adviser, who, in the event of anything serious happening, could sign a death certificate, and leave the management of the case to Mrs. Ashley and her aunt.

(To be continued.)

Tinsel tulle is most attractive. The new waistline is undetermined. Taffeta is preferred for formal suits.

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3138 Pattern 3138 is here depicted. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 6, 8, 10 and 12 years. Size 10 will require 1 1/4 yard of 27 inch material for the gump and 3 1/2 yards for the dress. This model would look well in blue taffeta, with gump of balisot or crepe. It is also nice for linen, chambray or voile. Brown plaid suiting could be selected for the dress and silk or crepe in a contrasting color for the gump.

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