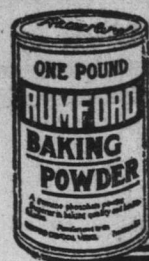


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### "A GOLD LADEN DERELICT"

OR

#### The Impecunious Adventuress.

CHAPTER IV.

##### A SUDDEN DEPARTURE.

Kenneth stopped and looked at his mother and sister, and saw that they were both smiling at him with a meaning which he could not mistake.

"And what is that, dad?" he asked. "To my son, Kenneth, I bequeath the honor of my name and the care of his mother and sister."

"And the legacy is accepted, dad. It is the most precious one that you could have left me," said Kenneth, going back to the bedside and taking his father's hand again. "I hope I shall never have to discharge the duty; you will do that yourself; but if I have to, it shall be done."

"I know it will, my boy," said his father, with a smile on his lips and in his eyes. "And now go and get to work, like a good fellow."

And then Kenneth left the room and went down to the library, to do an hour's work which was to cost him and his mother and sister a little over a million sterling.

It is not, of course, the custom of eminent pleaders to draw up wills, but it is necessary for them to know how the work should be done, and never had Kenneth Markham given so much studious care to a legal document as he gave to this one.

Short as it was, more than an hour had passed before he had finished the first fair copy, and he had just read this through for the third time before taking it upstairs to be signed, when the door was thrown open, and Kate, leaning against the wall, breathless, and with her hand clasped to her heart, gasped out:

"Kenneth, come upstairs, quick! Dad has another fainting fit. Never mind that will now. Come, come at once!"

He jumped up from his chair with the sheet of foolscap in his hand, passed her without a word and ran upstairs. His mother was standing by the open door of the bedroom, white but still clear-eyed and firm, except a little twitching of the lips. She held up her hand involuntarily as he went in.

His father was lying back on the pillow, gray-white, his eyes half closed and his lips half opened. Save for the drooping of the jaw, he might have been dead, but Doctor Harding had got his right arm outside the bedclothes, and was in the act of administering a hypodermic injection of strychnine and digitalis.

By the time Kenneth reached the bedside the eyes opened and the chest heaved, as with a breath of new life. He stopped motionless, waiting, as it seemed to him, for the verdict of the Judge from whose sentence there is no appeal.

There was a silence in the room, not of death, for it was not absolutely still, but of the terrible expectancy which conflicting hope and fear sometimes make less endurable than certainty.

Mrs. Markham moved as silently as a shadow to the bedside. Doctor Harding withdrew the needle of the syringe, keeping the forefinger of his left hand on the puncture in the skin. He dropped the syringe on the counterpane and laid the first and second fingers of his right hand on the pulse. It fluttered feebly, and then more strongly. Kenneth saw his father's eyes brighten a little, and a faint, very faint flush came into his cheeks. His lips turned from blue to red, and a faint smile trembled across them. Then his hand moved out toward the paper which his wandering eyes had already found, and he whispered:

"Just in time, Kenneth; just in time. I shall be better in a moment. Give

it to me, and get me a pen, and I'll sign."

But the purpose to do justice was stronger than the power to execute it. Before any of them could prevent him, he had made a struggle to sit up in bed. In an instant his wife's arm and Doctor Harding's were around him, but it was too late.

They heard a gentle sigh. Then the pupils of the wide-open eyes dilated and the strong jaw dropped. The head fell forward on the chest, and the arms sank nervelessly into the softness of the elderdown coverlet.

Then the deeper silence fell, and the man whom thousands of people were at that moment reviling and cursing as a charlatan and a swindler, went to present his last account to the bar of that Justice which never makes mistakes.

CHAPTER V.

##### THE PRICE OF INFAMY.

"Well, and so the old gentleman did go, after all. Rather curious coincidence, wasn't it, just as young Markham had pulled off that big case. By gad! that fellow has some brains under his hair. I'm the last person in the world to have any liking for him, but I'll tell you what, gentlemen, though we've got along very fairly so far, if we're going to get the best of the profits out of this game, he's a stumbling block in our way that we shall either have to bound over or get around, and it doesn't seem to me that there's much chance of getting

'round him. That's the worst of these honest fellows, you know—I mean, the really honest ones. They don't use business methods, and they keep on doing unexpected things, silly things, that upset all your calculations generally at the wrong moment.

"Now, just look at what young Markham did yesterday. We had Lord Overbury on a piece of toast. According to every rule of regular business, he was guilty, and we had arranged that he should be so decided by a court of justice; and then this fellow comes in, upsets the best counsel we could buy with the help of his majesty's treasury, and not only gets him off, but makes some of our friends look pretty silly in the witness box. All I can say, gentlemen, is, that if that's what they call English law and justice, it isn't worth paying for. Monty, pass the bottle."

Mr. Walter Redman, chief and manager of Redman, Cookson & Co.'s Private Inquiry Agency, delivered himself of this exordium, sitting in a low, saddleback armchair in his private office in Finsbury Circus. The three other men in the room had listened to him with considerable, if not very respectful, attention.

The Monty whom he had asked to pass one of the bottles of champagne standing on a little table near the center of the room was Mr. Henry Montagu, of the firm of Montagu Brothers & Co., land and exploration agents, of Copthall Avenue, and of other companies and addresses, not quite so well known to the public. He was a short, thickset man, of about forty-four, who already showed those comfortable curves which, in many men of his race, so quickly expand into the grosser contours of obesity. At twenty-five he had been slim and handsome. His black hair had been curly then, and now it was getting thin and crinkly; and his nose, which in those days had been only aquiline, was now thickened and protuberant, and his lips had assumed that fleshy, pendulous expression which makes such lips seem as though they were always trembling to eat the something which the nose above them had been smelling out as possible prey.

He got up and filled Redman's glass from one of the bottles; then he filled his own and those of the two others, which, for the time being, belonged to Mr. Austin Cookson, junior partner in the firm of Redman, Cookson & Co., and to Mr. Arthur Ashley, who may be briefly described as a man of thirty-one, who looked five years older, through his own fault, whose birth

was better than his blood. His manners were about as perfect as his morals were irredeemable; he was one of those social parasites who seem to live upon credit and die without honor—which was one of the reasons why he happened to be sitting in Mr. Redman's private office on the morning after the tragedy which had taken place at Heathercroft, and which he, with others in the room, had no inconsiderable share in bringing about.

"You are quite right about young Markham," said Mr. Montagu, as he raised his glass, "and here's destruction to him, if it can be managed by what we call legal means in this glorious country of law and order. I've watched Kenneth Markham from the time that he made himself notorious by those extraordinary methods of his, never taking a case unless he thought it was an honest one. My gracious! who would have thought a man could ever have succeeded at the bar with a handicap like that, and yet he has done so, and that's just what makes him dangerous. Now if we could only buy the fellow—"

"My dear Mr. Montagu," said Ashley, putting his glass on the table, "I know Kenneth Markham in what you will perhaps pardon me for calling another sphere of society, and I am sorry to say that you might just as well think of hiring the prime minister of England to give a lecture at Queen's Hall on such a subject as 'Cabinet Secrets, and How to Betray Them'; in other words, you couldn't do it."

"No," said Mr. Cookson, who was a small, somewhat shriveled and prematurely old-looking man of about forty-two, who had spent most of his energies in working his way up from the humble position of an office boy in the office of a legal and commercial agent who was a good deal more commercial than legal, into the scarcely less honorable position of junior partner and quasi-legal dustman in the firm of Redman, Cookson & Co. "No, you are quite right there. In my opinion, the man is a disgrace to his profession. Fancy a junior counsel who won't take a brief from the best legal firms in London unless, forsooth, he satisfies himself that the client's cause is a just one. If all lawyers were like him, what would happen to the legal profession in both its branches? Why, it wouldn't last five years. The man ought to be disbarred for unprofessional conduct."

"Not at all bad, Mr. Cookson," said Montagu, between the intervals of lighting a long, black cigar. "That's just what he ought to be. What would happen to the stock exchange, I'd like to know, if we had to carry on business in Throgmorton Street on those lines? Why, South African stocks wouldn't be in it, and that old hammer would be going all the time."

"All the same, my dear Monty," said Mr. Redman, "our late respected friend, Markham, did somehow manage to get together a very considerable pile by means of what are vulgarly called honest means. Of course, I am not talking about the company business, which, I may say, we have been successful in exposing, but, well, by other means which—"

"Yes, I know what you mean," said Monty; "to put it into plain English, by other means which were too stupidly honest for us to get at. There's no reason why we shouldn't tell something like the truth among ourselves, but the question is just now, what about that same private fortune of him? It must be pretty well over a million, you know, and if we don't somehow manage to get hold of that, well, the pickings won't be quite as fat as we expected."

"I see," replied Mr. Redman, taking another sip of his champagne. "That is certainly a serious point. When the Markham group of companies goes into liquidation, as, of course, it must now, there will be the usual howl of the aggrieved shareholders, and there may be meetings and applications to masters in bankruptcy, and all that sort of thing. It might be rather awkward. Of course, we've got the bulk of the properties, but I quite agree with you in thinking that we ought not to lose that million or so, if it's possible to save it. The only question is, how?"

"Is it quite certain that the senior Markham's private fortune is beyond the reach of the creditors?" asked Mr. Cookson. "Would there be no means of attaching it, for the benefit of the creditors? It really seems very unjust that we should be defrauded of such a large amount as that."

(To be Continued.)

## Fashion Plates.

A STYLISH COMBINATION.



Illustrating a pleasing dress made from Blouse Pattern 3131 and Skirt Pattern 2818. Printed Georgette and taffeta are here combined. This is a very pretty style for crepe de chine and chiffon, net and georgette and also nice for linen, batiste or voile. The Blouse is cut in 6 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, and 44 inches bust measure. The Skirt in 7 Sizes: 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 inches waist measure. To make the dress for a medium size will require about 6 yards of 36 inch material with 1½ yard for tas overblouse. The skirt measures about 1½ yard at lower edge.

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.

A SIMPLE APRON.



Pattern 3145, cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 32-34 Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42; and Extra Large, 44-46 inches bust measure is here portrayed. Gingham, percale, lawn, cambric, drill, saten and alpaca are good for this style. A Medium size will require 4 yards of 36 inch material.

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