

"Equally with others, Lady Dimdale, you are aware that, by a strange turn of fortune, Mr. Boyd's wife whom he believed to have been dead for several years, has this morning reappeared?"

"You were in the parlour, Sir Frederick, when I was introduced to Mrs. Boyd only half an hour ago." She answered him coldly and composedly enough; but he could not tell how her heart was beating.

"Strangely enough, I happened to be in New Orleans about the time of Mr. Boyd's marriage, and I know more about the facts of that unhappy affair than he has probably told to any one in England. It is enough to say that the reappearance of this woman is the greatest misfortune that could have happened to him. Oscar Boyd was a miserable man before he parted from her—he will be ten times more miserable in years to come."

"You have not asked me to meet you here Sir Frederick, in order to tell me this?"

"This, and something more, Lady Dimdale. Listen!" He laid one finger lightly on the sleeve of his companion's dress, as if to emphasise her attention.

"I happen to be acquainted with a certain secret—it matters not how it came into my possession—the telling of which—and it could be told in half-a-dozen words—would relieve Boyd of this woman at once and for ever, would make a free man of him, as free to marry as in those old days when he used to haunt that vicarage garden which I too remember so well!"

Lady Dimdale stepped in her walk and stared at him with wide-open eyes.

"You—possess—a secret that could do all this?"

"I have stated no more than the simple truth."

"Then Mr. Boyd is not this woman's husband?" The question burst from her lips swiftly, impetuously. Next moment her eyes fell and a tell-tale blush suffused her cheeks. But here again the pink-lined sunshade came to her rescue.

"Mr. Boyd is the husband of no other woman," answered the Baronet drily.

"With what object have you made me the recipient of this confidence, Sir Frederick?"

"That I will presently explain. You are probably aware that Mr. Boyd leaves for London by the next train?"

Lady Dimdale bowed.

"So that if any information is to be made available at all, no time must be lost."

"I still fail to see why—But that does not matter. As you say, there is no time to lose. You will send for Mr. Boyd at once, Sir Frederick. You are a generous-minded man, and you will not fail to reveal to him a secret which so nearly affects the happiness of his life." She spoke to him appealingly, almost imploringly.

He smiled a coldly disagreeable smile. "Pardon me, Lady Dimdale, but generosity is one of those virtues which I have never greatly cared to cultivate. Had I endeavoured to do so, the soil would have proven barren, and the results not worth the trouble. In any case, I have never tried. I am a man of the world, that and nothing more."

"But this secret, Sir Frederick—as between man and man, and as between one gentleman and another—you will not keep it to yourself? You will not. No! I cannot believe that of you."

He lifted his hat for a moment. "Lady Dimdale flatters." Then he glanced at his watch. "Later even than I thought. This question must be decided at once, or not at all. Lady Dimdale I am willing to reveal my secret to Mr. Boyd on one condition—and on one only."

For a moment she hesitated, being still utterly at a loss to imagine why the Baronet had taken her so strangely into his confidence. Then she said: "May I ask what the condition in question is, Sir Frederick?"

"It was to tell it to you that I asked you to favour me with your presence here. Lady Dimdale, my one condition is this: That when this man—this Mr. Oscar

Boyd—shall be free to marry again, as he certainly will be when my secret becomes known to him—you shall never consent to become his wife, and that you shall never reveal to him the reason why you decline to do so."

"Oh! This to me! Sir Frederick Pinkerton, you have no right to assume—Nothing, nothing can justify this language!"

He thought he had never seen her look so beautiful as she looked at that moment, with flashing eyes, heaving bosom, and burning cheeks.

He bowed and spread out his hands deprecatingly. "Pardon me, but I have assumed nothing—nothing whatever. I have specified a certain condition as the price of my secret. Call that condition a whim—the whim of an eccentric elderly gentleman, who, having no wife to keep him within the narrow grooves of common sense, originates many strange ideas at times. Call it by what name you will, Lady Dimdale, it still remains what it was. To apply a big word to a very small affair—you have heard my ultimatum." He glanced at his watch again. "I shall be in the library for the next quarter of an hour. One word from you—Yes or No—and I shall know how to act. On that one word hangs the future of your friend, Mr. Oscar Boyd." He saluted her with one of his most ceremonious bows, and then turned and walked slowly away.

There was a garden-seat close by, and to this Lady Dimdale made her way. She was torn by conflicting emotions. Indignation, grief, wonder, curiosity, each and all held possession of her. "Was ever a woman forced into such a cruel position before?" she asked herself.

"What can this secret be?" Is that woman not his wife? Yet Oscar recognised her as such the moment he set eyes on her. Can it be possible that she had a husband living when he married her, and that Sir Frederick is aware of the fact? It is all a mystery. Oh, how cruel, how cruel of Sir Frederick to force me into this position! What right has he to assume that even if Oscar were free to-morrow, he would—And yet—Oh, it is hard—hard! Why has this task been laid upon me? He will be free, and yet he must never know by what means. But whose happiness ought I to think of first—his or my own? His—a thousand times his! There is but one answer possible, and Sir Frederick knows it. He understands a woman's heart. I must decide at once—now. There is not a moment to lose. But one answer." Her eyes were dry, although her heart was full of anguish. Tears would find their way later on.

She quitted her seat, and near the end of the walk she found the same gardener that the Baronet had made use of. She beckoned the man to her, and as she slipped a coin into his hand, said to him:

"Go to Sir Frederick Pinkerton, whom you will find in the library, and say to him that Lady Dimdale's answer is 'Yes.'"

The man scratched his head and stared at her open-mouthed; so, for safety's sake she gave him the message a second time. The he seemed to comprehend, and touching his cap, set off at a rapid pace in the direction of the house.

Lady Dimdale took the same way slowly, immersed in bitter thoughts. "Farewell, Oscar, farewell!" her heart kept repeating to itself. "Not even when you are free, must you ever learn the truth."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Boyd, after lunching heartily with kind, chatty Mrs. Bowood to keep her company, and after arranging her toilet, had gone back to the room in which her husband had left her, and from which he had forbidden her to stir till his return. She was somewhat surprised not to find him there, but quite content to wait till he should think it well to appear.

There was a comfortable-looking couch in the room, and after a hearty luncheon on a warm day, forty winks seem to follow as a natural corollary; at least that was Estelle's view of the present state of affairs. But before settling among the

soft cushions of the couch, she went up to the glass over the chimney-piece, and taking a tiny box from her pocket, opened it, and, with the swan's-down puff which she found therein, just dashed her cheeks with the faintest possible suggestion of Circassian Bloom, and then half rubbed it off with her handkerchief.

"A couple of glasses of Champagne would have saved me the need of doing this; but your cold thin claret has neither soul nor fire in it," she remarked to herself. "How comfortable these English country-houses are. I should like to stay here for a month. Only the people are so very good and, oh! so very stupid, that I know I should tire of them in a day or two, and say or do something that would make them fling up their hands in horror." She yawned, gave a glance at herself, and then went and sat down on the couch. As she was re-arranging the pillows, she found a handkerchief under one of them. She pounced on it in a moment. In one corner was a monogram. She read the letters, "L. D.," aloud. "My Lady Dimdale's, without a doubt," she said. "Damp, too. She has been crying for the loss of her darling Oscar." She dropped the handkerchief with a sneer and set her foot on it. "How sweet it is to have one's rival under one's feet—sweeter still, when you know that she loves him and you don't! Lady Dimdale will hardly care to let Monsieur Oscarkiss her again. He is going away on a long journey with his wife—with his wife, ha, ha! Fools! If they only knew! The echo of her harsh, unwomanly laugh had scarcely died away, when the door opened, and the man of whom she had been speaking stood before her.

After bidding farewell to Lady Dimdale, Mr. Boyd had plunged at once into a lonely part of the grounds, where he would be able to recover himself in some measure, unseen by any one. Of a truth, he was very wretched. It seemed almost impossible to believe that one short hour—nay, even far less than that—should have sufficed to plunge him from the heights of felicity into the lowest depths of misery. Yet, so it was! and thus, alas, it is but too often in this world of unstable things. But the necessity for action was imminent upon him; there would be time enough hereafter for thinking and suffering. A few minutes sufficed to enable him to lock down his feelings beyond the guess or ken of others, and then he went in search of Captain Bowood. He found his host and Mrs. Bowood together. The latter was telling her husband all about her recent interview with Mrs. Boyd. The mistress of Rosemount had never had a bird of such a strange plumage under her roof before, and had rarely been so puzzled as she was to-day. That this woman was a lady, Mrs. Bowood's instincts declined to let her believe; but the fact that she was Mr. Boyd's wife seemed to prove that she must be something better than an adventuress. The one certain fact was, that she was a guest at Rosemount, and as such must be welcome.

When Mr. Boyd entered the room, Mrs. Bowood was at once struck by the change in his appearance. She felt instinctively that some great calamity had overtaken this man, and her motherly heart was touched. Accordingly, when Mr. Boyd intimated to her and the Captain that it was imperatively necessary that he and his wife should start for London by the five o'clock train, she gave expression to her regret that such a necessity should arise, but otherwise offered no opposition to the proposed step, as, under ordinary circumstances, she would have been sure to do. In matters such as these the Captain always followed his wife's lead. Five minutes later, Oscar Boyd went in search of his wife.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Religion stands upon two pillars, namely: what Christ did for us in His flesh, and what he performs for us by His spirit. Most errors arise from an attempt to separate these two.

A Bear Story.

From all accounts, the larger portion of the population of the Pine mountain region, in Delaware county, Pa., is at present in earnest pursuit of the mother of two bear cubs, about the size of small puppies, which fell into the hands of two fishermen recently. The fishermen had seated themselves in the shelter of a rock to smoke their pipes and take a drink. One of them, Jack Trumbell, in sighting over the bottle at an angle of forty-five degrees toward a hill opposite him, discovered that it had "drawn bead" on two baby bears. They were rolling and tumbling over one another in play on the upper side of an old log. Trumbell lowered the bottle at once, laid it on the ground, and started up the hill toward the cubs. His companion, a man by the name of Herbutt, followed him. The little bears showed no disposition to resist capture, and the men each took one up in his arms. The fishermen turned to go back after their fishing tackle and bottle, but changed their minds before they had taken a step. On the other side of the hollow, about three hundred yards away and coming directly and rapidly toward the spot where they had sat down to refresh themselves, was an old bear. It was plainly the mother of the cubs, and Trumbell and Herbutt started for the nearest clearing with their booty. They expected to be followed close by the old bear, but they reached a lumber cabin nearly two miles distant without having seen any signs of her. An hour afterward, while they were awaiting the arrival of a messenger who had been sent after arms and ammunition, with which the fishermen intended to return in search of the old bear, a boy without any hat and very much excited, came running into the cabin.

"There's a big bear up the creek," he exclaimed, "and if it ain't drunk it's crazy! I was fishin' down the creek, an' jist as I worked myself 'round the edge of the big rock at the lower end o' the dark hole, I came square on to the bear. It was rollin' 'round on the ground, and kickin' about an' kind o' growlin', but not like as if it was mad. Fust I thought it had been shot an' had got away, an' was layin' there givin' its dyin' kicks. Then I looked agin' an' see two fish poles broke into a dozen pieces, an' a fish line was wound all round the bear. I was jst goin' to make a break for t'other side o' the creek to git away 'fore the bear seed me, but jist then it did see me, an' riz up an' came right fur me, a sparrin' away jist like I've seen drunken raftmen doin'. I didn't wait much longer, but jist pulled across that brook an' made for here."

The messenger came in a few minutes later, and Trumbell and Herbutt started back with shot guns loaded with buckshot after the bear. When they reached the spot the bear was gone. Two hours had passed since the boy had seen her. The bottle was found near where it had been left. It was empty. This was explanation enough to the hunter why the bear had not followed them. Unable to resist the temptation of strong drink, she had tarried with the bottle and drained it. When the boy came upon the bear she was drunk. She had amused herself by breaking the fishpots into bits. While under the influence of the liquor she had forgotten all about her cubs, and when the effects had passed off, she knew it was too late to be of any service to them, and at once betought herself of her own safety. So well did she look out for herself that although twenty men and boys have been scouring the region ever since, they have not discovered one trace of her. It is supposed that she has eluded her pursuers in one of the dense swamps around the headwaters of the Delaware.

Four years ago two men named David Rosenther and Ed. Linchley captured three cubs on Pine mountain, near where the above two were found. A hunt for days for the old bear was kept up, but they were never found. The two cubs captured on Saturday are still at the cabin, where they play about as contentedly as two kittens.