POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2033

A LOST LEADER

A FASCINATING STORY OF MODERN LIFE

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Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year nineteen hundred and seven, by McLeod & Allen, at the Department of Agriculture.

CHAPTER XII.

Borrowdean sank into the chair which Berenice had indicated, with a little sigh of relief.

"These all night sittings," he remarked, "get less of a joke as one advances in years. You read the reports this morning?"

She nodded.

"And Mannering's speech?"

"Every word of it."

"Our little conspiracy," he continued, "is bearing fruit. Honestly, Mannering is a surprise even to me. After these years of rust I scarcely expected him to step back at once into all his former brilliancy. His speech last night was wonderful."

"I heard it," she said. "You are quite right. It was wonderful."

"You were in the House?" he asked, looking up quickly.

"I was there till midnight," she answered.

Borrowdean was thoughtful for a moment.

"His speech," he remarked, "sounded even better than it read."

"I thought so," she admitted. "He has all the smaller tricks of the orator, as well as the gift of eloquence. One can always listen to him with pleasure."

"Will you pardon me," Borrowdean said, "if I make a remark which may sound a little impertinent? You and Mannering were great friends at Blakeley. On my first visit there you will remember that you did not attempt to conceal that there was more than an ordinary intimacy between you. Yet today I notice that there are indications on both your parts of a desire to avoid one another as much as possible. It seems to me a pity that you two should not be friends. Is there any small misunderstanding which a common friend—such as I trust I may call myself—might help to smooth away?"

Berenice regarded him thoughtfully.

"It is strange," she said, "that you should talk to me like this, you, who are certainly responsible for any estrangement there may be between Mr. Mannering and myself. Please answer me this question. Why do you wish us to be friends?"

Borrowdean shrugged his shoulders.

"You and he and myself, with about a dozen others," he answered, "form the backbone of a political party. As time goes on we shall in all probability be drawn closer and closer together. It seems to me best that our alliance should be as real a thing as possible."

Berenice smiled.

"Rather a sentimental attitude for you, Sir Leslie," she remarked. "Have you ever considered the fact that any coolness there may be between Lawrence Mannering and myself is entirely due to you?"

"To me!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly!" At Blakeley we were on terms of the most intimate friendship. I ... like and respect him more ... had ever met. I don't ... why I should take you so ... fidence, but I am inclined ... friendship seemed likely to ... other things."

"... dear Duchess——"

"...n't interrupt me! I have an idea ... you were perfectly aware of it. Per... it did not suit your plans. At any ...te, you made statements to me concerning him which, as you very well knew, were likely to alter my entire opinion of him. I had an idea that there was some code of honor between men which kept them from discussing the private life of their friends with a woman. You seem to have been troubled with no such scruples. You told me things about Lawrence Mannering which made it absolutely necessary that I should hear them confirmed or denied from his own lips."

"You would rather have remained in ignorance, then?" he asked.

"I would rather have remained in ignorance," she repeated, calmly. "Don't flatter yourself, Sir Leslie, that a woman ever has any real gratitude in her heart for the person who out of friendship, or some ... motive, destroys her ideals. I should ... married Lawrence Mannering if you ...not spoken."

...rowdean was silent. In his heart he ... thinking how nearly one of the most ...shed schemes of his life had gone ...

"... am afraid, then," he said, "that ... at the risk of your further displeas... I have no regrets to offer you."

"I do not desire your regrets," she answered, scornfully. "You did what it suited you to do, and I presume you are satis... As for the rest, I can assure you ... the relations between Mr. Mannering and myself are such that the balance ... your political apple-cart is not likely to be disturbed. Now let us talk of something else. I have said all that I have to say on this matter ——"

Sir Leslie was not entirely satisfied with the result of his afternoon call. He walked slowly from Grosvenor Square to a small house in Sloane Gardens, in front of which a well-appointed victoria was waiting. He looked around at the well-filled window-boxes, thick with geraniums and marguerites, at the coachman's new livery, at the evidences of luxury which met him the moment the door was opened, and his lips parted in a faint, unpleasant smile.

"Poor Mannering," he murmured to himself. "What a millstone!"

Mrs. Phillimore was at home. She would certainly see Sir Leslie, the trim parlor...d thought, with a smile. She left him ... in a flower-scented drawing room, ...ded with rococo furniture and many ...-knacks, where he waited more or ...patiently for nearly twenty min... when Mrs. Phillimore swept into the ..., elaborately gowned for her drive in the park, dispersing perfumes in all directions and bestowing a dazzling smile upon him.

"I felt very much inclined not to see you at all," she declared. "How dared you keep away from me all this time? You haven't been near me since I moved in. ... What do you think of my little ...?"

"...arming!" he declared.

"...ery one likes it," she remarked. "... a time I had choosing the furni... ...lester wouldn't help with a single ... You know that she has left me?"

"...erstood that she had gone to Mr. ...g as secretary," he answered. "... done typing for him for some ...'t she?"

...limore nodded.

"... him, the little fool!" she ... must admit I detest clever ... are all so dull, and such ... too."

...iled. A certain rough and ...ut this woman always ...e looked around.

"...ave done very nicely ...ring," he said.

"... goes a long way," ...

"...pent?" he asked.

"Five thousand pounds is not an inexhaustible sum."

"By the time it is spent," she answered, "your party will be in, and I suppose you will make Lawrence something."

Borrowdean regarded the woman thoughtfully.

"Has it ever occurred to you," he asked, "that the time might come when Mannering might want his money for himself? He might want to marry, for instance."

She laughed mirthlessly, but without a shade of uneasiness.

"You don't know Lawrence," she declared, scornfully. "He'd never do that whilst I was alive."

"I am not so sure," Borrowdean answered, calmly. "Between ourselves, I cannot see that your claim upon him amounts to very much."

"Then you're a fool!" she declared brusquely.

"No, I'm not," Borrowdean assured her, blandly. "Now I fancy that I could tell you something which would surprise you very much."

"Has he been making love to any one?" she asked, quickly.

"Something of the sort," he admitted. "Mannering is quixotic, of course, and that hermit life of his down in Norfolk has made him more so. Now he has come back again into the world it is just possible that he may see things differently. I flatter myself that I am a man of common sense. I know how the whole affair seems to me, and I tell you frankly that I can see nothing from the point of view of honor to prevent Mannering marrying any woman he chooses to. I think it very possible that he may readjust his whole point of view."

The woman looked around her, and outside, where her victoria was waiting. At last she had attained to an environment such as she had all her life desired. The very idea that at any moment it might be swept away sent a cold shiver through her. Borrowdean had a trick of speaking convincingly. And besides——

"Who is the woman?" she asked.

"I had been wondering," Borrowdean said, "whether it would not be better to tell you so that you might be on your guard. The woman is the Duchess of Lenchester."

She stared at him.

"You're in earnest?"

"Absolutely!"

Her face hardened. Whatever other feelings she may have had for Mannering, she had lived so long with the thought that he belonged to her at least as a wage-earning animal, a person whose province it was to make her ways smooth so far as his means permitted, that the thought of losing him stirred in her a dull, jealous anger.

"I'd stop it," she declared. "I'd go and tell her everything."

"I am not sure," Borrowdean continued, smoothly, "that that would be the best course. Supposing that you were to tell her the story just as you told it to me. It is just possible that her point of view might be mine. She might regard Lawrence Mannering as a quixotic person, and endeavor to persuade him that your claim was scarcely so binding as he seems to imagine. In any case, I do not think that your story would prevent her marrying him."

"Then all I can say is that she is a woman with a very queer sense of right and wrong," Mrs. Phillimore declared, angrily.

Borrowdean smiled.

"A woman," he said, "who is fond of a man is apt to have her judgment a little warped. The Duchess is a woman of fine perceptions and sound judgment. But she is attracted by Lawrence Mannering. She admires him. He is the sort of person who appeals to her imagination. These feelings might easily become, if they have not already developed into, something else. And I tell you again that I do not believe your story would stop her from marrying him."

She leaned a little towards him.

"What would?" she asked, earnestly.

He hesitated.

"Well," he said, "I think I could tell you that!"

She held up her hand.

"Stop, please," she said. "I want to ask you something else. Are you Lawrence's enemy?"

"I? Why, of course not!"

"Then where do you come in?" she asked, bluntly. "You couldn't persuade me that it is interest on my account which brings you here and makes you tell me these things. You don't care a button for me."

Borrowdean took her hand and leaned forward in his chair. She snatched it away.

"Oh, rot!" she exclaimed. "I may be a fool, but I'm not quite fool enough for that. I'm simply a useful person for the moment in some scheme of yours, and I just want to know what that scheme is. That's all! I'm not the sort of woman you'd waste a moment with, expect for some purpose of your own. You've proved that. You wormed my story out of me very cleverly, but I haven't quite forgotten it yet, you know. And to tell you the truth," she continued, "you're not my sort either. You and Lawrence Mannering are something of the same kidney after all, though he's worth a dozen of you. You've neither of you any time for play in the world, and that sort of man doesn't appeal to me. Now where do you come in?"

Borrowdean looked at her thoughtfully. He had the air of a man a trifle piqued. Perhaps for the first time he realized that Blanche Phillimore was not altogether an unattractive-looking woman. If she had desired to stir him from his indifference she could not have chosen any more effectual means.

"I am not going to argue with you," he said, quietly. "I have ambitions, it is true, and the world is not exactly a playground for me. Nevertheless, I am not an ascetic like Mannering. The world, the flesh and the devil are very much to me what they are to other men. But in a sense you have cornered me, and you shall have the truth. I want to marry the Duchess of Lenchester myself."

She nodded.

"That's right," she said. "Now we know where we are. You want to marry the Duchess, and therefore you don't want her to have Lawrence. You think that I can stop it, and as I don't want him married either you come to me. That is reasonable. Now how can I prevent it?"

"By a slight variation from your story," he answered. "In fact, words are not needed. A suggestion only would be enough, and circumstances," he added, glancing around, "are strongly in favor of that suggestion."

"You mean—"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Mannering is security for your lease," he remarked. "You pay in his cheques to your bank every quarter. He occupies just that position which in a general way is capable of one explanation only."

"Well?"

"Let the Duchess believe him, or continue to believe him, to be an ordinary man—instead of a fool—and she will never marry him."

"And you will?"

"I hope so!"

She leaned back in her chair. He could not altogether understand her silence. Surely she could have no scruples?

"It seems to me," she said at last, "that I am to play your game for nothing. I don't care so very much, after all, if he marries. He'd settle all he could on me. In fact, I should have just as much claim on him as I have now."

"I did not say that you should play it for nothing," he answered. "I want us to understand each other, because I have an idea that you may be seeing something of the Duchess at any moment. Let us put it this way. Suppose I promised to give you a diamond necklace of the value of say five thousand pounds the day I marry the Duchess!"

She rose and put pen and paper before him. He shook his head.

"I can't put an arrangement of that sort on paper," he protested. "You must rely upon my word of honor."

She held out the pen to him.

"On paper, or the whole thing is off absolutely," she declared.

"You won't trust me?"

She looked at him.

"There isn't much honor about an arrangement of this sort, is there?" she said. "It has to be on paper, or not at all."

A carriage stopped outside. They heard the bell ring.

"That," she remarked, "may be the Duchess of Lenchester."

He caught up the pen and wrote a few hurried lines. The smile with which he handed it to her was not altogether successful.

"After all, you know," he said, "there should be honor amongst thieves."

"No doubt there is," she answered. "Only thieves are a cut above us, aren't they?"

"I don't believe," Borrowdean said to himself, as he reached the pavement, "that that woman is such a fool as she seems."

CHAPTER XIII.

Mannering hated dinner-parties, but this one had been a necessity. Nevertheless, if he had known who his companion for the evening was fated to be he would most certainly have stayed away. Her first question showed him that she had no intention of ignoring memories which to him were charged with the most subtle pain.

He looked down the table, and back again into her face.

"You are quite right," he said. "This is different. We cannot compare. We can judge only by effect—the effect upon ourselves."

"Can you be analytical and yet remain within the orbit of my understanding?" she asked, with a faint smile. "If so, I should like to know exactly how you feel about it all."

He passed a course with a somewhat weary gesture of refusal, and leaned back in his chair.

"You are comprehensive—as usual," he remarked. "Just then I was wondering whether the perfume of these banks of hot-house flowers—I don't know what they are—was as sweet as the odor of the salt from the creeks, or my roses when the night wind touched them."

"You were wondering! And what have you decided?"

"Ah, I must not say. In any case you would not agree with me. Wasn't it you who once scoffed at my idyll in the wilderness?"

"I do not think that I believe in idylls, nowadays," she answered. "One risks so many disappointments when one believes in anything."

He raised his eyebrows.

"You did not talk like this at Blakeley," he remarked.

"I am nearly a year older," she answered, "and a year wiser."

"You pain me," he answered, with a little sigh. "You are a person of intelligence, and you talk of growing wiser with the years. Don't you know that the only supreme wisdom is the wisdom of the child? Our inherent ignorance is fed and nourished by experience."

"You are hiding yourself," she remarked, "behind a fence of words. Words that mean less than nothing! I don't suppose that even you would hesitate to admit that you have come into a larger world. You may have to pay for it. We all do. But at any rate it is an atmosphere which breeds men."

"And changes women," he murmured, under his breath.

She did not speak to him again for several moments. Then the alteration in her tone and manner was almost marked.

"You mentioned Blakeley a few minutes ago," she said. "I wonder whether you remember our discussion there upon precisely what has come to pass."

"Perfectly!"

"I remember that in those days," she continued, reflectively, "you were very firm indeed, or was it my poor arguments that were at fault? Your vegetable and sentimental existence was a part of yourself. Ambition! You had forgotten what it was. Duty! You spouted individualism by the hour. Gratify my curiosity, won't you? Tell me—what made you change your mind?"

Mannering was silent for a moment. A close observer might have noticed a certain alteration in his face. A touch of the coming weariness was already there.

"I have never changed my mind," he answered, quietly. "My inclinations today are what they have always been."

She dropped her voice a little.

"You puzzle me," she said, softly. "Do you mean that it was your sense of duty which was awakened?"

"No, I do not mean that," he answered. "Forgive me—but I cannot tell you what I do mean. Circumstances brought me here against my will."

"You talk like a slave," she remarked, lightly enough. She too was brave. She drank wine to keep the color in her cheeks, and she told herself that the pain at her heart was nothing. Nevertheless some words of Borrowdean's were mocking her all the while.

"We are all slaves," he answered. "The folly of it all is when we stop to think. Then we realize it."

Their conversation was like a strangled thing. Neither made any serious effort to re-establish it. It was a great dinner-party, chiefly political, and long drawn out. Afterwards came a reception, and Mannering was at once surrounded. It was nearly midnight when by chance they came face to face again. She touched him with her fan, and leaned aside from the little group by whom she was surrounded.

"Are you very much occupied, Mr. Mannering?" she asked, lightly, "or could you spare a moment?"

He stopped short. Whatever surprise he may have felt he concealed.

"I am entirely at your service, Duchess," he answered. "Harrison will excuse me, I am sure," he added, turning to his companion.

She rested her fingers upon his arm. The house belonged to a relative of hers, and she knew where to find a quiet spot. When they were alone she did not hesitate for a moment.

"Lawrence," she said, quietly, "will you imagine for a moment that we are back again at Blakeley?" "I would to God we were," he answered, impulsively. "That is—if you wish it too!"

She did not answer at once. The sudden abnegation of his reserve took her by surprise. She had to readjust her words.

"At least," she said, "there are many things about Blakeley which I regret all the time. You know of course the chief one, our own altered selves. I know, Lawrence, that I need to ask your forgiveness. I came there under an assumed name, and I will admit that my coming was part of a scheme between Ronalds, Rochester and myself. Well, I am ready to ask your forgiveness for that. I don't think you ought to refuse it me. It doesn't alter anything that happened. It doesn't even affect it. You must believe that!"

"I believe it, if you tell me so," he answered.

"I do tell you," she declared. "I can explain it all. I am longing to have it all off my mind. But first of all, there is just one thing which I want to ask you."

His face as he looked towards her gave her almost a shock. Very little was left of his healthy coloring. Already there were lines under his eyes, and he was certainly thinner. And there was something else which almost appalled her. There was fear in his manner. He sat like a man waiting for sentence, a man foredoomed.

"I want to know," she said, "what has brought you—here. I want to know what manner of persuasion has prevailed—when mine were so ineffectual. Don't think that I am not glad that you decided—as you did. I am glad—very. You are in your rightful place, and I am only too thankful to hear about you, and read—and watch. But—we are jealous creatures, we women, you know, and I want to know whose and what arguments prevailed, when mine were so very insufficient."

He answered her without hesitation, but his tone was dull and spiritless.

"I cannot tell you!"

There was a short silence. She gathered her skirts for a moment in her hand as though about to rise, but apparently changed her mind. She waited for some time, and then she spoke again.

"Perhaps you think that I ought not to ask?"

He looked at her hopelessly.

"No, I don't think that. You have a right to ask. But it doesn't alter things, does it? I can't tell you."

"You asked me to marry you."

"It was at Blakeley. We were so far out of the world—such a different world. I think that I had forgotten all that I wished to forget. Everything seemed possible there."

"You mean that you would have married me and told me nothing of circumstances in your life, so momentous that they have practically exercised in this matter of your return to politics, a compelling influence over you."

"I am sure," he said, "that I should not have told you!"

His unhappiness moved her. She still lingered. She drew a little breath, and she went a good deal further than she had meant to go.

"It has been suggested to me," she said, "that your re-appearance was due to a woman's influence. Is this true?"

"A woman had something to do with it," he admitted.

"Who is she?"

"Her name," he answered, "is Blanche Phillimore. It was the person to whom your yourself alluded."

The Duchess maintained her self-control. She was quite pale, however, and her tone was growing ominously harder.

"Is she a connection of yours?"

"No!"

"Is there anything which you could tell me about her?"

"No!"

"Yet at her bidding you have done—what you refused me."

"I had no choice! Borrowdean saw to that," he remarked, bitterly.

She rose to her feet. She was pale, and her lips were quivering, but she was splendidly handsome.

"What sort of a man are you, Lawrence Mannering?" she asked, steadily. "You play at idealism, you asked me to marry you. Yet all the time there was this background."

"It was madness," he admitted. "But remember it was Mrs. Handsell whom I asked to be my wife."

"What difference does that make? She was a woman too, I suppose, to be honored—or insulted—by your choice!"

"There was no question of insult, I think."

She looked at him steadfastly. Perhaps for a moment her thoughts traveled back to those unforgotten days in the rose-gardens at Blakeley, to the man whose delicate but wholesome joy in the wind and the sun and the flowers, the sea-stained marches and the windy knolls where they had so often stood together, she could not forget. Her life had seemed to her then so beautiful a thing. The elementary purity of his thoughts and aspirations were unmistakable. She told herself passionately that there must be a way out.

"Lawrence," she said, "we are man and woman, not boy and girl. You asked me to marry you once, and I hesitated, only because of one thing. I do not wish to look into any hidden chambers of your life. I wish to know nothing, save of the present. What claim has this woman Blanche Phillimore upon you?"

"It is her secret," he answered, "not mine alone."

"She lives in your house, through her you are a poor man, through her you are back again, a worker in the world."

"Yes!"

"It must always be so?"

"Yes."

"And you have nothing more to say?"

"If I dared," he said, raising his eyes to hers, "I would say—trust me! I am not exactly one of the beasts of the field."

"Will you not trust me, then? I am not a foolish girl. I am a woman. You may destroy an ideal, but there would be something left."

"I can tell you no more."

"Then it is to be good-bye?"

"If you say so!"

She turned slowly away. He watched her disappear. Afterwards, with a curious sense of unreality, he remained quite still, his eyes still fixed upon the portiere through which she had passed.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mannering kept no carriage, and he left Downing Street on foot. The little house which he had taken furnished for the season was in the somewhat less pretentious neighborhood of Portland Crescent, and as there were no hansoms within hail he started to walk home. An attempt at a short cut landed him presently in a neighborhood which he failed to recognize. He paused, looking about him for some one from whom to inquire the way. Then he at once realized what he had already more than once suspected. He was being followed.

The footsteps ceased as he himself had halted. It was a wet night, and the street was ill-lit. Nevertheless, Mannering could distinguish the figure of a man standing in the shadows of the houses, apparently to escape observation. For a moment he hesitated. His follower could scarcely be an ordinary hooligan, for not more than fifty yards away were the lights of a great thoroughfare, and even in this street, quiet though it was, there were people passing to and fro. His curiosity prompted him to subterfuge. He took a cigarette from his case, and commenced in a leisurely manner the operation of striking a light. Instantly the figure of the man began to move cautiously towards him.

Mannering's eyes and hearing, keenly developed by his country life, apprised him of every step the man took. He heard him pause whilst a couple of women passed on the other side of the way. Afterwards his approach became swifter and more stealthy. Barely in time to avoid he scarcely knew what, Mannering turned sharply round.

"What do you want with me?" he demanded.

The man showed no signs of confusion. Mannering, as he looked sternly into his face, lost all fear of personal assault. He was neatly but shabbily dressed, pale, and with a slight red moustache. He had a somewhat broad forehead, eyes with more than an ordinary lustre, and in somewhat striking contradiction to the rest of his features a large sensitive mouth with a distinctly humorous curve. Even now its corners were receding into a smile, which had in it, however, other elements than mirth alone.

"You are Mr. Lawrence Mannering?"

"That is my name," Mannering answered, "but if you want to speak to me why don't you come up like a man instead of dogging my footsteps? It looked as though you wanted to take me by surprise. What is that you are hiding up your sleeve?"

The man held it out, placed it even in Mannering's hand.

"A life preserver, steel, as you see, and with a beautiful spring. Deadly weapon, isn't it, sir? Even a half-hearted sort of blow might kill a man."

Mannering swung the weapon lightly in his hand. It cut the air with a soft, sickly swish.

"What were you doing following me, on tiptoe, with this in your hand?" he asked, sternly.

"Well," the man answered, as though forced to confess an unpleasant truth, "I am very much afraid that I was going to hit you with it."

Mannering looked up and down the street for a policeman.

"Indeed!" he said. "And may I ask why you changed your mind?"

"It was an inspiration," the man answered, easily. "To tell you the truth, the clumsiness of the whole thing grated very much upon me. Personally, I ran no risk, don't think it was that. My escape was very carefully provided for. But one thinks quickly in moments of excitement, and it seemed to me as I took those last few steps that I saw a better way."

"A better way," Mannering repeated, puzzled. "I am afraid I don't quite understand you. I presume that you meant to rob me. You would not have found it worth while, by the bye."

The man laughed softly.

"My dear sir!" he exclaimed. "Do I look like a robber? Rumor says that you are a poor man. I should think it very likely that, although I am not a rich one, I am at least as well off as you."

Mannering looked out no more for the policeman. He was getting interested.

"Come," he said. "I should like to understand what all this means. You were going to tap me on the head with this particularly unpleasant weapon, and your motive was not robbery. I am not aware of ever having seen you before. I am not aware of having an enemy in the world. Explain yourself."

"I should be charmed," the man answered. "I do not wish to keep you standing here, however. Will you allow me to walk with you towards your home? You can retain possession of that little trifle, if you like," he added, pointing to the weapon, which was still in Mannering's hand. "I can assure you that I have nothing else of the sort in my possession. You can feel my pockets, if you like."

"I will take your word!" Mannering answered. "I was on my way to Portland Crescent, but I fancy that I have taken a wrong turn."

"We can get there this way," the man said. "Excuse me one second."

He paused, and lit a cigarette. Then with his hands behind his back he stepped out by Mannering's side.

"What was that you said just now?" he remarked, "that you were not aware of having an enemy in the world? My dear sir, there was never a more extraordinary delusion. I should seriously doubt whether in the whole of the United Kingdom there is a man who has more. I know myself of a million or so who would welcome the news of your death tomorrow. I know of a select few who have opened, and will open their newspapers tomorrow, and for the next few days, in the hope of seeing your obituary notice."

A light commenced to break in upon Mannering. He looked towards his companion incredulously.

"You mean political opponents!" he exclaimed. "Is that what you are driving at all the time?"

The man laughed softly.

"My friend," he said; "excuse me, Mr. Mannering, you remind me irresistibly of Punch's cartoon last week—the ostrich politician with his head in the sand. You have thrust yours very deep down indeed, when you talk of political opponents. Do you know what they call you in the North, sir?"

"No!"

"The enemy of the people! It isn't a pleasant title, is it?"

"It's a false one," Mannering declared, with a little note of passion quivering in his tone.

"It is as true and certain as the judgment of God!" his companion answered, with almost lightning-like rapidity.

There was a moment's silence. They passed a lamp-post, and Mannering, turning his head, scrutinized the other's features closely.

"I should like to know who you are," he said, "and what your name is."

"It is a reasonable curiosity," the man answered. "My name is Fardell, Richard Fardell, and I am a retired bookmaker."

"A bookmaker!" Mannering repeated, incredulously.

"Precisely. I should imagine from what I know of you, Mr. Mannering, that my occupation, or rather my late occupation, is not one which would appeal to you favorably. Very likely not! I don't see why it should myself. But at any rate, it taught me a lot about my fellow men. I did my business in shillings and half-crowns, you see. Did it with the working classes, the sort who used to go to a race-meeting for a jaunt, and just have a bit on for the sake of the sport. Took their missus generally, and made a holiday of it, and if they lost they'd grin and come and chaff me, and if they won they'd spend the money like lords. I made money of course, bought houses, and made a lot more. Then business fell off. I didn't seem to meet with that cheerful holiday-making crew at any of the meetings up in the North, and I got sick of it. You see, I'd made sort of friends with them. They all knew Dicky Fardell, and I knew hundreds of 'em by sight. They'd come and mob me to stand 'em a drink when the wrong horse won, and I can tell you I never refused. They were always good-tempered, real sports to the backbone, and I tell you I was fond of 'em. And then they left off coming. I couldn't understand it at first. The one or two who came talked of bad trade, and when I asked after their pals they shook their heads. They betted in shillings instead of half-crowns, and I didn't like the look of their faces when they lost. I tell you, it got so at last that I used to watch for the horse they'd put their bit on to win, and feel kind o' sick when it didn't. You can imagine I couldn't stand that sort of thing long. I chucked it, and I went to look for my pals. I wanted to find out what had become of them."

Mannering looked at him curiously.

"You found, I hope," he said, dryly, "that the British workman had discovered a better investment for his shillings and half-crowns than the racecourse."

Mr. Richard Fardell smiled pleasantly, but tolerantly.

"It's clear," he said, "that you, meaning no offence, Mr. Mannering, know nothing about the British workman. Whatever else he may be, he's a sportsman. He'll look after his wife and kids as well as the best of them, but he'll have his bit of sport so long as he's got a copper in his pocket. When he didn't come I put my kit on one side and went to look for him. I went, mind you, as his friend, and knowing a bit about him. And what I found has made a changed man of me."

Mannering nodded.

"I am afraid things are bad up in the North," he said. "You mustn't think that we people who are responsible for the laws of the country ignore this, Mr. Fardell. It is a very anxious time indeed with all of us. Still, I presume you study the monthly trade returns. Some industries seem prosperous enough.'

"I'm no politician," Fardell answered, curtly. "Figures don't interest me. They're just the drugs some of your party use to keep your conscience quiet. Things I see and know of are what I go by. And what I've seen, and what I know of, are just about enough to tear the heart out of any man who cares a row of pins about his fellows. Now I'm going to talk plain English, to you, Mr. Mannering. I bought that little article you have in your pocket seriously meaning to knock you on the head with it. And that may come yet."

Mannering looked at him in amazement.

"But my dear sir," he said, "what is your grievance against me? I have always considered myself a people's politician."

"Then the people may very well say 'save me from my friends'," Fardell answered, grimly. "Mind, I believe you're honest, or you'd be lying on your back now with a cracked skull. But you are using a great influence on the wrong side. You're standing between the people and the one reasonable scheme which has been brought forward which has a fair chance of changing their condition."

Then Mannering began to understand.

"I oppose the scheme you speak of," he answered, "simply because I don't believe in it. Every man has a right to his opinion. I don't believe for a moment that it would improve the present condition on things."

(To be continued.)

T. C. DRUCE'S COFFIN OPENED

MADAME VALETTE.

MRS. MARGARET HAMILTON

G. H. DRUCE

THE GRAVE OF THOMAS CHARLES DRUCE AT HIGHGATE CEMETERY. — From the Tatler.

London, Dec. 30—The body of Thomas Charles Druce, in Highgate Cemetery was exhumed this morning just forty-three years to a day after its burial. The coffin was found to contain the remains of a human body, thus exploding the romantic tales told by Robert C. Caldwell and others who swore during the recent hearing of the Druce perjury case that it contained a roll of lead.

The official statement given out by representatives of the home office and others who were officially present at the exhumation, not only definitely disposes of the lead myth, but seems effectively to confirm that the body buried in 1864 was actually that of T. C. Druce.

The authorized statement follows:—"The coffin was opened and found to contain the body of an aged, bearded man. The plate on the coffin bore the name Thomas Charles Druce."

The scene at Highgate cemetery this morning when the vault was opened, was remarkable. Constables seemed to spring from everywhere, every bush and every tree apparently hid an officer of the law. All the entrances to the cemetery were surrounded by cordons of police. Only those persons who had passes from the home office were admitted to the grounds. George Hollamby Druce, who claims to be the rightful heir to the Portland dukedom and its vast estate, tried twice to get into the cemetery but was met with a stern refusal.

PURSE FOR PASTOR OF BRUSSELS STREET CHURCH

Address and $100 Presented to Rev. A. B. Cohoe Sunday Evening.

The congregation of Brussels street Baptist church Sunday took their pastor, Rev. A. B. Cohoe, completely by surprise when they presented him an appreciative address, accompanied by a substantial sum of money. There was a very large congregation. Rev. Mr. Cohoe preached a vigorous sermon appropriate to the death of the old year and the birth of the new. Just as the closing hymn was announced, Frank Fales and Deacon Alwood, stepped forward and on behalf of the congregation Mr. Fales read an address in which appreciation of Mr. Cohoe's work, especially among the poor, was expressed. Earnest prayers were added also for the continued good health and happiness of the pastor and Mrs. Cohoe. Deacon Alwood then placed in Rev. Mr. Cohoe's hands a purse containing $100 in gold in behalf of the congregation, accompanying the gift with expression of the best wishes for the new year.

Rev. Mr. Cohoe feelingly expressed his thanks for the generous gift to him and appreciative praise of his work.

EMPRESS TOOK SOME 800 PASSENGERS

The C. P. R. steamer Empress of Ireland saled for Liverpool via Halifax at 5 o'clock Friday night with a large general cargo and about 800 passengers. Two special trains and the regular Montreal train arrived Friday with passengers for the big steamer and as all arrived nearly on time the vessel got away as early as was expected.

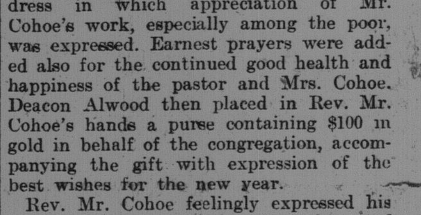
Among the passengers on the Empress yesterday were: Hon. Alex. Bruce, Edinburgh; J. A. Clark, W. Robson, H. W. Schofield, F. Skinner and William Hulme, St. John.

The first cabin passengers were:

Howard Bligh, Halifax; Mrs. Bligh, Halifax; Wilfred Bovey, Montreal; A. Branscombe, St. John; P. Brooksbank, Nelson; Hon. Alex. Bruce, Edinburgh; Col. C. H. W. Cafe, Victoria; Capt. C. J. Catto, Toronto; J. A. Clark, St. John; E. B. Crompton, Brantford; Miss Crompton, Brantford; Wm. Cross, Winnipeg; Miss F. B. Cruso, Toronto; Mr. Dumanie, Montreal; E. C. Fry, Quebec; A. J. Gorrie, Montreal; Mrs. Gorrie, Montreal; Miss M. E. Grenfell, Ottawa; E. B. Hall, Mrs. Hall, Calgary; Capt. M. A. Hamer, London; Mr. Hayton, Montreal; Major Helmer, Mrs. Helmer, Miss M. C. Hoveden, Ottawa; Wm. Hulme, St. John; Mrs. M. Huth, Victoria; P. W. Kenny, Halifax; Mrs. Miller, two children and infant, Vancouver; H. W. Morgan, Quebec; Wm. Nivin, Mrs. Nivin, Montreal; Geo. M. Richardson, Montreal; Mr. Ritchie, Belleville; W. Robson, St. John; Mrs. Russell and child, Toronto; H. W. Schofield, F. Skinner, St. John; H. C. W. Verney, London; C. J. Warwick, St. John; W. K. White, Woodstock; W. J. Wilson, Montreal.

Among the second cabin passengers were Captain and Mrs. Fitzgerald and child, Yarmouth, and Mr. Mazier, Mr. Nicolas, North Sydney.

Thomas Ryan, an assistant cook on the Empress of Ireland, was found dead in bed Friday by his roomates. Coroner Kenney was notified and found that the man had died from natural causes. An inquest will not be held. Thursday evening when retiring the man complained of a severe pain across the stomach, but nothing serious was feared.



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