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"You foolish boy—you're going to do nothing of the sort," she laughed—"at least, not until you understand it. My husband is not going to be put to rout by an automobile."

It was the one way she could have appealed to me. I looked up gratefully. "You are willing to risk your life in that thing, with me driving?" I exclaimed.

"I surely am—just as quickly as you get over this silly panic and become normal. You can do it—I know you can! Go down to the Ramesses place, and have some one who understands a car, from the front to the back, explain it in plain language, a little at a time—a little at a time, mind you—until you absorb it. Let him show you why you do this, and why you do that, and what happens when you do it. I reckon the first thing necessary to running a car is fire. I don't know how you get it, but you must have some force that propels, and fire is essential to that force." "The batteries and magneto produce a spark," I explained.

"Well, then, start with them, and work out—getting the why and the what-happens with each. When you've got them all, you'll understand your car. And, what's more, you'll drive it well, dear. You do most things well."

"I'll do it!" said I—and kissed her, nor again cared if our neighbors saw. I put the car away, without doing more than being badly frightened by the rear of the shed rushing out to meet me, and went straight to town. I told the man what I wanted.

"Good!" he said. "You're the proper sort. You'll understand your machine." And I did. In a week I took the car out with a fair amount of confidence. In a month I felt at home with it. I am now in my second year, and, with the exception of the time I went into the shed on high, I have had no accidents—except the ordinary ones of the road.

But I have always given Helen the credit. At the critical moment, she showed the nerve and I the white-feather.

The Vicar's Visitor.

By Florence Warden.

IT was on a warm but dull June evening that two ladies sat together in the dining-room of a Kentish vicarage, the one busy with a basket of stockings to be darned, the other with the weekly paper spread out before her on the table.

The elder of the two ladies, a gentle-looking spinster of about fifty years of age, was the sister of the Rev. George Kenley, the Vicar of Scarfield, and aunt, therefore, to his only child, Mary, now a charming and pretty girl of twenty.

The Vicar had lost his wife many years ago, and his sister had been house-keeper to him and mother to his daughter ever since.

Mary was reading out the various items of interest aloud to her aunt. "A boy named Jones was playing with a loaded gun on Friday last, when it went off, and the bullet with which it was loaded entered the head of his little sister, who died instantaneously."

"It only shows," said Miss Kenley, looking up with a grave frown, "how right I am in saying that all guns, at all times, should be looked upon as loaded, even if you have just seen the charge drawn with your own eyes."

Mary nodded. "This sounds rather creepy, Aunt Myra, doesn't it? Yesterday a lunatic escaped from a private asylum and has not yet been recaptured. There is considerable alarm amongst the authorities about the matter, as the unfortunate man is known to have homicidal tendencies, and has tried on two occasions to kill people by attacking them from behind."

Her aunt looked up with an exclamation. Mary went on reading—

"He is a man of little more than the middle height, of gentlemanly appearance and address, and talks well and with interest on such subjects as literature and art."

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Kenley. "It must be that poor man the Ropers were telling me about."

Mary shivered. "How horrid for him to be about! I hope he won't wander in this direction."

Miss Kenley looked uneasy. "His friends, the Ropers, live near here," she said dubiously. "And this place is so lonely! And I've got to go to the church this evening and do the flowers for to-morrow."

"Let me go, Aunt Myra; I'm not a bit afraid, really."

"Certainly not. I was only wishing that Millie were back, so that she might go with me."

Millie was the cook, a robust and laughter-loving Kentish lass, whose spirit and muscle could be relied on.

"She won't be back much before eight. Take Perrin."

This was the parlourmaid, a ladylike young person from London, with "nerves." The suggestion was taken as a jest by Miss Kenley.

"Imagine how much assistance Perrin would give in an emergency of that sort? No. I shall be on my bicycle, and—and, of course, there's no danger really. I don't suppose the Ropers are the poor man's only friends."

Whether Miss Kenley was really nervous or not, Mary could not tell. Certainly she gave no sign of it as she went off on her bicycle, with the big basket of flowers strapped on behind.

Mary, who had come as far as the garden gate to see her aunt on her way, watched her down the high-road until she became a speck in the distance and disappeared at the bend.

The vicarage, which was a quarter of a mile from the church, stood by itself at an angle of the road. It was a plain, square, flint-faced building, with a large garden behind and a small one in front, and it was built facing the road to the church and the village.

Mary felt just a little uneasy and timid as she turned to go indoors, and realised that a madman, with homicidal tendencies, might be more likely to turn his attention to the occupants of a lonely house than to people walking or bicycling along the high-road. She was not exactly nervous, but she wished she had not heard of this escaped lunatic who was a friend of the Ropers.

She had reached the open French window of the dining-room, by which she had come out, when her attention was attracted by the sound of rapid footsteps on the road which ran at right angles to that which led to the church. Instinctively she paused to ascertain whose the footsteps were, and the next moment she saw a face peering at her over the trimly clipped hedge which bordered the garden.

A spasm of horror ran through her, and, with a low cry, she tried to get into the dining-room and to shut the window behind her.

For the first glance she cast at the flushed face, glaring eyes, open mouth, and disordered hair of the hatless stranger, convinced her that she was face to face with the madman himself.

Panting, staring at her stupidly, and speaking in a hoarse, unnatural voice which made her shiver, the man muttered some incoherent words which sounded like a request of some sort.

Ashamed of her first fright, and thinking it better to appear at least cool and collected, however deceptive such a demeanour might be, Mary turned a smiling face towards the stranger, who had by this time opened the garden gate, and said, as she pushed the French window—

"The Vicar is away."

She had no idea what it was that he had tried to ask, but she thought this seemed the right sort of thing to say.