

THE STAR, ST. JOHN N. B. SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1907.

THE POOR DOCUMENT

By Arthur W. Marchmont.

(Continued.)

She soon began to meet the early workers, and many of them bade her a cheery "Good morning," and she was almost as good to her as a meal. She had not for many days set eyes on a fellow creature—except the young secretary, whom she now thought of with a smile—who had not been an enemy, and the ring in her voice and the light in her eyes, as she returned those greetings, made more than one of those who passed turn and look back at her.

Presently she came to a farmhouse, where a woman was busy in the yard. She went up and asked her for some food. But the woman turned with a scorn, and told her to be off. "You didn't want any trolloping beggars there," she said, moving away. The farmer came out, having overheard the rebuff. He spoke sharply to his wife, and called Olive back, and offered her some copper.

"I don't want money, thank you," she replied. "I asked for food."

"Wait," he said, and fetched her half a loaf of bread, and a bottle of milk. "You can rest in the barn, if you've a mind to, and eat it there," and he himself led the way to it, and made her a comfortable heap of hay.

Olive thanked him, and asked his name, saying she would repay him. He told her his name with a laugh, and said she needn't mind, as a bit of bread and cheese were of no account to anyone. He just wished her well of her troubles.

She ate her breakfast with a will, and was preparing to start, when the wife came into the barn. She was sorry for her husband, she said, and something had put her out that morning.

"I didn't see your face, either," she added. "You're over young to be in this plight. Deary-deary, you're only a girl, and her eyes shone with compassion."

"It's only for a time, thank you. I have friends when I can get to them," and she rose to go.

"I don't want to ask questions; but it's easy to see that you don't belong to these parts. You talk shows that."

"I'm from the other side of England," she said.

"And begging too, deary! But you look about that," she added, with a touch of suspicion.

"And begging, as you say," replied Olive, with another smile.

"Why don't you go to turn to and do some honest work for a living?"

"Ah, there's plenty of work waiting for me at the end of my tramp. Thank you for the meal, and also for the wait. I must get on now."

"And what are you when you do work?"

"I can sing," answered Olive. "Didn't you hear of the 'Theatrical Company' that failed in Bodmin? If ever you see the name of Alice Gargant in an opera, you can remember this breakfast you've given me."

Tell the truth, she dared not, lest any clue should be given in case of inquiry by Merridew, so she tried to divert the mind of the good soul.

"So you're one of those theatricals, are you?" There was a distinct note of contempt in the tone, and all the compass died out of the eyes. "Well, if you're tramping, and come amiss, wait while I get you a party, and hurrying out to the house, she returned with a large meat pie.

The tears were very close to Olive's eyes as she took it, and she thanked the woman. I don't know with theatrical myself, but I can't see a young girl like you wanting for food. You're welcome, and good morning."

Two ideas came to Olive as the result of the good woman's questions. She would keep to the name she had chosen at haphazard and would use her voice to earn her bread on the long journey before her. She had not sung since before her father's death; and, fortunately, Merridew had no knowledge that she could sing. If he made any inquiries, therefore this story would put him off the scent.

The second thought was that she must keep the fact that she had chosen a close secret until she could learn what had occurred at the house on the moor after her escape. If he believed that she was dead, she would have an immense advantage in the further investigations she had to make. Abandon her task of finding out the truth and clearing her father's name, and her own, she would not. Never, while life lasted, would she give up her work of atonement.

All that day she trudged on steadily and unflaggingly, resting about mid-day to rest half of the farmer-woman's party. She found her way on to the London road, and set her face eastward with a heart as brave and resolute as though her walk was to and a few miles farther on.

She had plenty to occupy her thoughts apart from the circumstances of her journey. Indeed, these troubled her very little. She would rather sing than sing; but she had no doubt that by one means or the other she would manage to get through.

Her great problem was the decision as to her future course; and there were the hundred questions which had been harrying and perplexing her in all these days in regard to Jack.

While she had been in captivity, she had passed many a bitter hour in anxious speculation as to whether the plans against him had been pushed forward; and one of the keenest causes of her anguish had been the inability to communicate with him.

And now there was an obstacle scarcely less insuperable. In her opinion, it was of the most critical importance that Merridew must believe her dead; and were she to write to Jack, and even speculation as to whether the plans against him had been pushed forward; and one of the keenest causes of her anguish had been the inability to communicate with him.

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money to help her on the journey that undertaking was sufficiently formidable. But the result of the evening's experience justified her confidence in her ability to overcome these difficulties. In the dusk she walked into a large village, and determined to put into practice at once her idea of stinging in the street.

At first the notes would not come, however. She was so nervous, so ashamed, and so terrified by the sound of her own voice that she could scarcely make herself heard. She broke down entirely; her face flamed, and choking sobs assailed her.

But she was not of the nature to be beaten. Moving on, she scolded herself almost fiercely for this weakness. She must sing. The alternative was to beg or starve. She must find a means of getting a lodging for the night.

After a little delay, she made another attempt, and this time fought with her fright and conquered. It was dark, and the darkness was once more a friend. For a few minutes her voice quivered and trembled threateningly; but gradually it strengthened; and the Irish mezzo-soprano, with her clear and beautiful, drawing the people to her, and compelling them to listen.

First one, and then another, came forward and put something into her hand; and then an incident occurred which turned the tide all in her favor. One of a number of men who had stopped to listen uttered a coarse, jeering remark about her; and some others called to him to hold his tongue. Irritated at this, he went toward her, and standing in front of her, intimated that if she did not stop, he would strike her. She was ready to repeat it, and he himself led the way to it, and made her a comfortable heap of hay.

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especially that portion which contained Jack's explanation of his part in the papers from the Foreign Office; and matter. The report left no doubt on her mind that he was suspected of complicity in it; and the comments upon his statement, while not openly accusing him, made the case look very black.

"I am perfectly willing to tell all I know," he said; "and have received permission to make a statement. For some days before the robbery, I had been in a condition of intensely restless nervousness on account of the lady to whom I am engaged to be married. I had already received a warning that some robbery was being planned, and had taken all precautions that appeared possible. But as nothing unusual occurred on some of the ways which from time to time reach us."

"On the day of the robbery, the 30th, I went as usual to the house, and was more anxious than ever on account of the lady I have mentioned; and I took some papers to the house of the Minister in Cromwell Gardens, a letter was not sent to my hands; and the effect that her life might depend upon my going at once to her. The address was on the other side of London: 25, Josephine Villas, Finchley. In my agitation I thought of nothing else, and rushed away, without a word to anyone."

"That omission was, of course, inexcusable, and I do not defend it. I hurried to the address, with the utmost haste, to find that nothing was known there either of the letter or of the lady named in it. I was deeply distressed and alarmed; and after some little time I returned, calling on the way at the house where the lady had been living. I had left the building, and I went on to the office. In my agitation I had never occurred to me to connect the matter with the robbery, and I did not do so until on my return. I heard that a robbery had taken place, and I was glad to hear it."

"I was told that during the luncheon hour, just when the fewest clerks were in the building, I had returned and had gone straight to my desk, had taken up the papers which were lying for me to take to the chief, and with them in my hand had gone into his room and shut the door; and that a few minutes later, I had come out of the room and had thanked him. 'And there,' I had not spoken to anyone, and it was observed that my manner was very unusual."

On leaving I was said to have called a hansom and given the address in Cromwell Gardens. The driver of the hansom had not been told my name, and he can identify me as the person whom he drove there. He declares that he had not spoken to anyone, and that he had not seen me since."

"The man was as honest as I was kindhearted. 'You're new to this, I can see,' he said, when he had finished, and had thanked him. 'And there's a fool behind, or John Polforth is a bad traitor. Let me stand by 'ee while ye sing me a song.'"

He was as good as his word; and when Olive was too tired to sing any more that evening, she had collected five shillings and sixpence.

"Nor was that all. When he heard that she had no place to sleep, he insisted upon her going with him to his wife. And the wife was as kind as her husband."

"I hope you hit 'em hard, Jack," she said, when she heard of the fellow's blackguardism; and would take no denial when she asked that Olive must stay the night under their roof. After supper, Olive sang to them both, and as the woman sat listening, the man, who had been so kind to her, wiped his eyes, and wept openly and without restraint.

Then Olive told them something of the journey before her, and the good soul, who had been so kind to her, her own daughter, and put her to bed with a care which could not have been more thoughtful had Olive been a little child.

In the morning she counted over her earnings, and then found among the coins two sovereigns. Then she saw that she had not lost a penny. She was a grateful thought of the woman's kindness, Olive was soon asleep again, serenely happy at having found such a friend in her hour of need.

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question which the newspaper had asked was really the vital point. Where were the stolen papers? Olive had learnt enough of matters to be able to guess the answer to this. Either they had already been handed over to the people for whom they had been stolen, or they were in the keeping of Mrs. Taunton, or Merridew. Probably the former.

It must be her work to ascertain this. And find this out, she must, at the same time, hit on the means of helping to solve her own problems.

She had before recognized that in attacking Merridew first, she had made a mistake. It was the mother who had been at the bottom of the scheme against her, and it was Mrs. Merridew who must be watched in the future. Olive's idea had been to gain an admittance to Silverbeech, getting a place in the household there—just as she had in Cromwell Gardens.

But now, she saw, wherever she would gain the information she needed to expose the fraud of that early marriage, and as soon as the idea had taken firm root, it was strengthened with every mile of her journey.

Then another development occurred to her. If it would contrive to force Merridew to Silverbeech, and then manage to overhear the conversation between mother and son, she might indeed discover her secret. She knew every nook and cranny of the big rambling house. It was a very old house, with more than one secret chamber, staircase, and hiding-place; constructed cunningly in the times when the former masters of the house had been in the habit of making a secret of their affairs.

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willin', will there?" and she placed a chair for herself in the middle of the floor and sat down. "I suppose it's kapa him in a box or a glass case, ye do?"

Mrs. Gibbons went into Mr. Casement and brought word that the lawyer would see Miss O'Brien.

"Miss O'Brien, is it?" laughed Olive. "Sure, that no sister, Maggie, seen' that we're twins and she was born an hour in front of me; and with this last sally she walked into the lawyer's private