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rearis—an annual love-reast of the profession that every live man should attend. What are they? An aggregation of men with progressive ideas, eager for an interchange of sentiment, a great body that formulates the trivial ideas of the art into definite, centralized form, so as to devote time and attention to grander themes. You should attend just one convention! Here is a man with a paper on backgrounds—the result of careful thought, study and investigation. Here is another with specimens of flashlight work. It is studied, analyzed, it instructs, it gives new ideas, it makes you feel that you are not simply an isolated picture-taker, but one of a great body of active, intelligent men, who get out of themselves once a year in a harmonious exchange of sentiment and opinion, and return to routine work benefited, spurred on to do something great for the advance of art and the elevation and culture of the masses. The man who pretends to be an adept approximate a sentiment and investigation. The man who pretends to be an adept photographer, and is not a member of the association is certainly outside a charmed circle that to-day surrounds

finest jewels of art, invention and progress."

Whether the enthusiastic peroration convinced his companien, Le Britta did not find out, for the station nearest to Hawthorne villa was reached as he barely

He felt refreshed at getting away from no test retressed at getting away from brooding anxiety concerning Gladya Vernon, however, even if temporarily, and he walked toward the Vernon mansion in the early morning light with a clear head and fixed plans as to his intentions. "Perhaps Gladys has gone to the lawyer or the doctor" he ruminated. "I will make the villa my first point of

stirring," he continued, as he neared the house.

Le' Britta advanced up the steps and rang the bell. The cohoes had scarcely died away when the door was opened.

Ralph Durand had answered his ring. His face was flushed with drink, his eyes heavy and dull, as if he had been making a night of it. He scowled darkly. Then his face lighted up with a cunning, sinister expression.

"Good! The picture-taker!" he jeered.
"Ah! I understand. You are a quick actor, my friend. You came here to find Ottodra. Vennon me word. You traced.

no use quarreling with you, for I see a way to settle the whole affair speedily. You won't call in a hurry again! Come in, I say!" And he led the way to the library. "Now, then, sit down."

Le Britta regarded his host uneasily—
this reception of him boded no favorable;
results. There was a complacent, satisfied
look in Durand's face that showed that

"A few hours since."

he felt sanguine on some new development of affairs.

He lit a clear, dashed off a glass of liquor, and smiled familiarly and with insolent assurance at his unexpected

"Yes," replied Le Britta, "I certainly

"I supposed she had come here, yes admitted the photographer. "You were right." completely?"
"No, he is only handicapped."

"And she is here now?"
"She is. See here, my friend, we will ettle this whole affair here and now. there has been row and trouble enough. There has been row and trouble enough. It will do no good to make any more You may hound me down, employ detectives and all that, but I am in a position to defy you. You can positively prove nothing against me. As executor of the Vernon fortune, as guardian of Gladys Vernon, I take formal possession of Hawthorne villa to-day. That shuts out prying investigation and interference. to work."
"How?" of Hawthorne villa to-day. That shuts out prying investigation and interference. You have sought for Gladys Vernon, she is here. You have sought for her former lover, Sydney Vance. You will never find him. You have tried to connect me with the murder of Gldeon Vernon—a vain effort. You will return home and abandon your meddling interference now, I hope, for it will not avail you longer. Affairs have come to a pasis."

"What do you mean by a basis?" demanded Le Britta.

the word "Jeremiad," manded Le Britis. A
"I mean that Gladys Vernon has seen
the folly of her ways, has decided to remain under this roof until she has attained her majority."

Jera Le Britta looked dismayed. The statement seemed incredible, and yet the

plotter spoke confidently.

"You tell me this truthfully?"
demarded.

"I do." free will,

"Yes."
"And consents to

"I can scarcely credit it?"
"Ask her then,"
"Eh!" ejaculated Le Britta, with
opeful start. "I may see her?" "Certainly."
"I may talk with her?" "As much as you wish."

Le Britta had aroused to quick hope at the idea of seeing Gladys and conversing

with her.

His heart sank, however, at the malignant triumph that glowed in Ralph Durand's face, predicted that he had some sinister design hidden under his new mask of ready acquiescence to the of the science of anatomy and its greates demands of an enemy.

Ralph Durand had proceeded to the door of the next room. His hand on the knob, he lingered.

"You wish to see Miss Vernon," he

spoke, assuming a good dignity of manner so foreign to his usual demeanor, that it was aminously menacing.
"Yes," replied Le Britta.
Durand bowed and retired. He returned at the end of five minutes—five anytons, diutaring moments of swemptons. anxious, fluttering moments of suspens

anxious title end of five minutes—five anxious, fluttering moments of suspense to the photographer.

"Gladys—Miss Vernon"
Jera Le Britta started forward eagerly.
A great cry of joy escaped his lips as the door opened and Gladys Vernon appeared, Durand following her.
Her face was pale, her eyes downcast. Like one bound by a spell, under the domination of some powerful tyrant, she did not look up. Her lips, tightly pressed, seemed to shut in the emotion that was tugging at her heart strings.

"Wait!" cried Durand, in a mandatory tone, sharp, clear, resonant, as Le Britta was about to glide forward and seize Gladys' hand. "Miss Vernon is exhausted by a long journey. She bids me speak for 'her. Is it not so, Gladys?"

The fair young girl shuddered slightly. Then, with icy, imponensable reserve she Then, with key, impenettable reser

"I told her you were here," continued the miscreant. I have asked her if she wished to see you. Her answer was—no!"

"I do not believe it! She is under some terrible constraint!" burst forth Le Britta, excitedly. "Gladys! Miss Vernon! speak! I am your friend, the friend of your friends. I wish to tell you"—

He paused. Gladys Vernon had lifted her haunted, pained eyes to his face.

"Go," she spoke, in a low, wailing voice. "I do not wish to discuss the past. I have chosen my future. If you are my true friend, leave here, now and forever, for I shall refuse to see you again!"

And then, half reeling, she turned from the room, leaving the petrified Le Britta overcome with consternation and

CHAPTER XXVII.-AT THE VILLA

The mournful words of Gladys Vernon had been decisive, the caim, mock-civil demeanor of Ralph Durand striging as the cut of a whip. The miscreant had triumphed completely, and the photographer was bound to acknowledge the fact.

Le Britta, with bowed head and thoughtful mice, walked

thoughtful mien walked sadly toward the village. He found the lawyer at his home, and was soon closeted with him in his library. "I have just come from Hawthorne villa," was Le Britta's first statement, and the lawyer was at once interested: "You have arrived at an opportune season," spoke Mr. Munson. "I have much to tell you."

"Concerning Durand, I suppose,

"What!"
The lawyer started as if dealt a sudder Le Britta rapidly detailed his efforts to Le Britta rapidly detailed his efforts to trace the heiress of Hawthorne villa, and the result of his late inter-lew.

The narration petrified the lawyer.

"I can scarcely believe it!" he murmured. "Gladys returned to Hawthorne villa! Why! if that is so, and I can only talk with her"—

"She will refuse."

"Refuse to converse with an old friend, her dead uncle's counsalor!"

"Yes, for Durand will compol her to do so. Do you not understand my how subtle and far-reaching are the picts o. this consummate villain? There is but

one theory to advance on."
"And that is?"
"The octainty that he has GladyVernon's lover, Sydney Vance in his

"A prisoner?"
'Undoubtedly."
'Then"
"I theorize that he has him hidden distance. Further, he has convinced Gladys that this is so. She saw the advertisements he published. While she would never have returned willingly, the dread that her lover might be murdered, surrendered up to justice competitive.

"And that villain, Durand"wishes."
"Which are?"
"To refuse our friendly offers

"I see."
"To remain there with sceming willingness."
The lawyer reflected deeply. His face grow stern. He related the discovery about the missing hundred thousand

ened. He understood now what the treasure amounted to which the tramp had located in the ravine.
"Then," he said, "if the missing money is not found, Durand is beaten completely?". "No, he is only handloapped."
"I do not understand."
"Why, if that amount of ready cash was in his possession, he would begin the properties of the would pretend to invest with the aid of accomplices, he would dissipate the money, seemingly legally, but in reality to get it eventually into his own hands. As it is, the scheme will take more time to work."

Continued on 4th page.

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