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WON AT LAST.

CHAPTER III.
By the way, in describing Whittlesford and its neighborhood, I have managed to omit Holmeade. It certainly deserves a word or two. It was a fine place, although the size and staidness of Mount Chavasse threw it into the shade. It had been built some five-and-twenty years before by an enormously rich City man, who had made a fortune in soap and glass, or some such article, and who, becoming tired of money-making, bought some of the best land in Daleshire and built himself this splendid house, intending to retire to it. But he never did so, for he died when it was barely completed; and his heir, not choosing to retire I suppose, let the place on lease. A Colonel Temple and his family took it. They did not remain many years, and when their lease had expired, did not renew it, but quitted Daleshire. There had been a good deal of wonder as to who would be the next tenant or owner of Holmeade, and even a little excitement when it became known that it had been purchased, and that the person who had bought it intended to take up his residence there. And now it turned out to be this queer, thin black-eyed Fraser Froude, a man in the stock-broking way.

I wondered what madame would say to it, and what sort of a reception she would give him if he did call at Chavasse. Certainly she would not care to have what might be called a doubt-

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—Mrs. ROBERT FAIRBAIN, 72 Parent Avenue, Windsor, Ontario.

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and so, without further parley, went down the steps, got into the phaeton, took the reins, and turned the ponies' heads. Madame stood at the hall door watching me as I swept out of the lodge gates, and then, looking back, I saw her turn and disappear into the shadowy hall. Very pale and grave she looked, and I fancied that her headache was not quite genuine. It is certain that Madame Chavasse was agitated far beyond her proud and tranquil wont, because of the forthcoming meeting with Philip Orme's unknown daughter.

Whittlesford Station was at the other end of the village; but I had time enough and to spare, and so kept the ponies at an easy pace, getting many nods, smiles, and cheery salutations as I went. Jolly old Dr. Dizarte rolled by in his comfortable brougham, with its fat horses, and presently came Fraser Froude, mounted on a tall horse nearly as thin as himself; then out of the milliner's shop Alice Deeping came fluttering, a vision of blue muslin, bluer eyes, and fluffly flaxen hair. Seeing that she wished to speak to me, I pulled up.

"And what are you after, Master Ned?" she asked, daintily holding her skirts out of the way of the wheel as she gave me her hand. "Something nice, of course. Ah, you boys have the best of it!"

"I wish somebody else had this, at any rate," I replied, meeting her blue eyes, and thinking how fresh and nice she looked. "I'm going to meet Miss Orme."

"What, already?" cried Alice. "I thought she wasn't coming for ages."

"At present I almost wish she wasn't," I returned, dubiously. "Yes, she's coming to-day, and, as madame has a headache, I'm told off to fetch her."

"And at present you wish she were a boy, I suppose?"

"You're right. I shouldn't mind a straw in that case. The best of it is that the mother has got a notion that she will be shy of me, oo, and I'm charged to put her at her ease."

Alice laughed.

"Well, I hardly fancy you will care her much," she said, gayly. "I say, Ned—I'm just dying to see her, you know; she ought to be something quite unique after us Whittlesford girls. When may I call at the Mount, I wonder? I don't mean formally with mother—I hate that—but to make friends with her?"

"Whenever you please, of course. The sooner the better, I should think, only wish you were in my shoes now."

"I almost wish so, too," she cried, with another laugh; "but I'm going on to the doctor's now. Mother's mixture as given out, and they haven't sent any more. She declared she would be dead before dinner if she didn't see the head before she was, oh, and I'm are out?"

"Dizarte is—he passed me just now. For he will do, I suppose; won't he?"

"Of course—why not?" said Alice, rightly. "There is more of aquapura than of anything else in mother's mixture, it is my belief, although of course it would be treason to say so. I suppose they're judicious enough to put in something to make it nasty. Did you see Mephistopheles just now?"

"See whom?" I asked, puzzled for a moment.

"Fraser Froude, then, if you are so very particular. Wasn't it he?"

"It was. Looks like the shadow of



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somebody else, doesn't he?"

"He doesn't look like anything very pleasant," Miss Deeping said, shrugging her shoulders. "Do you like him, Ned?"

"Haven't seen anything of him, so far—only for a moment, that is."

"Hesn't he called at the Mount, then?"

"Not yet—that's a treat in store."

"I hope you may enjoy it when he comes," she said, with a queer little grimace. "I shouldn't break my heart if he were to forget the way to the rectory. But mother is delighted with him; she says he is so sympathetic. Well, good-bye for the present, Ned. You will be late for the train if you are not quick, and I shall miss Doctor Yorke."

"Certainly you will if you go to the surgery, Miss Alice."

"I turned round quickly, as did Alice, standing close to the carriage wheel. As he shook hands with me and then with her, raising his hat, I saw that her bright cheeks had flushed a rosier pink. But then Alice Deeping had rather a habit of blushing at nothing, although she was not by any means a shy girl.

"You quite startled me, Doctor Yorke," she said, gayly.

"I should apologize but that I heard you taking my name in vain. What is wanted, Miss Alice? You are not in need of professional assistance, I hope?"

"No, thank you," Miss Deeping made another grimace. "I see quite enough of that kind of thing, and, with due reference to you, Doctor Yorke, I will confess that I am rather tired of doctors. Mother's mixture is finished. Are you going to send her any more?"

"I darsay it is at the rectory by this time. I sent it before I came out," Roger said.

"Then I need not trouble to go, and I am glad enough—it is so warm," Alice returned, drawing back on to the curb. "Good-bye, Ned, and don't fall in love with Natalie Orme before I see you again. Good-bye, Doctor Yorke," and with a merry laugh, she was off toward the rectory.

To be continued.

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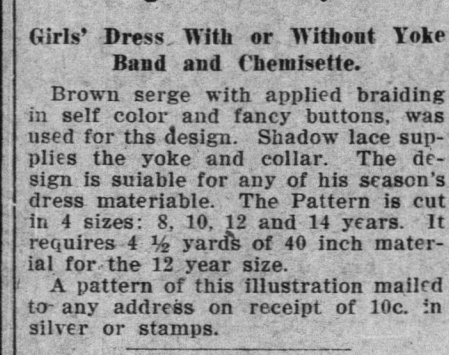


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