

SYNOPSIS

bel Stermont daughter of Sir David mont, a weakhy Scotch country gen-an disappears without leaving the test trace. She was a quiet retiring with only one distinguishing feature-tiful Titian hair, which had been a to d the Stormont family for genera-Her finnce, Basil Conyers, comes London to aid in the search for ag-finally receives intelligence that a girl reting to her description has been seen man ering to her descri a band of gypsies.

CHAPTER III-(Continued)



the landlady's description, "who was with you in the village yesterday still here?" In spite of himself, his breath came a little quicker as he waited for the answer.

The woman peered doubtfully through the drifting smoke at the tall figure, and though her eyes fastened greedily on the gleam of silver in his hand her face settled to a look of low, doubtful cunning. Men of Conyers' stamp did not visit a hawker's camp for nothing. What could he want?

"A; red-haired girl?" she said, as if consideringly.

"Yes, the one who was with you in the village yesterday," said Conyers impa-"You need not be afraid 'to tiently. speak. I'm neither a policeman nor a health inspector. I don't mean you any harm. Is she still here? Has she been long with you? Can you tell me any-

thing about her?" "Not much, sir. She's a bit touched in the 'ead, I think. We came on her by the roadside two or three days ago. Ehe was a-sittin' lookin' at 'er 'ands, as you would say, and when we come up she hout with some lingo, but the only word of sense in it was 'Dun-caird.' 'We're for Duncaird, too,' says I, but she sits still and falls a-starin again: but hafter a bit we sees 'er follerin', and when by night she made up with us she got the bit and the sup with the kids and a corner to lie

with the kids and a corner to lie in; more than many would 'a' done, sir, for, Gord knows, the pore gypsy 'as lit-tie enough to go round, and she might 'ave 'ad the fivver or the smallpox, and where would we 'ave bin?" said the woman readily enough, but with a wheseling trans in the thick, throaty voice. She had shown the charity of the wretched to one even more miser-able, but if this fine gentleman was in-terested in the "softy," why, then, he might as well know what she had one for her.

done for her. "Then, where is she?" asked Convers, with a glance toward the tents, from the black mouths of which, in spite of the black mouths of which, in spite of

He set his teeth hard as he breasted the steep slope. She might have hoped to find some shelter among these totter-ing walls. It was the last frail chance, and he knew it. He was among the ruined houses now. One after another he searched within and without, but there was no sign of life, not even a nibbling sheep. Netties breast high choked the roofless interiors, no human foot had crossed their thresholds for many a day. Despair clutched him as over the pallid face, the long eyelashes, like the delicate arching brows, a shade darker than her hair, slowly lifted from the wan, sunken cheeks. She looked wonderingly up to the bosses and carv-ing of the vaulted roof, and round at the old walls hung with the portraits of he stood amid these forsaken dwellings -a desolation deeper than the dread emptiness of the wide moors. He fairly trembled to enter the last, which stood the men and women of her race, and decked with the armor and weapons which long-dead Stormonts had carried into many a well-fought field. Then she a little apart from the others. If it were empty, too, if she were not there-

clouds was answer enough. Then he vaulted the low, crumbling wall which surrounded it, and made one stride to slightly turned her head, and her wan-dering gaze' met Basil's and held it A sudden light leaped into the great limpid eyes, a slight tremor passed through the slim body resting in his the door. Within it seemed dark as a cave, for the wind had not yet stripped it to the bone — the ragged thatch still clung about the roof-tree. On the threshold he paused. Above the wind he heard his heart murmur loud, and the sullen drip, drip of the rain in the puddles on the clay floor. With a long breath he stepped into the foul blackness, feeling for his matches, when suddenly the darkness lighted. The wind had torn a huge rent in the doud roof, and through the gap a white wisp of a cresarms, while through the young man's every fiber there went a shock, a thrill, so swift, so keen-edged, that he could not have told whether it were pain or rapture. That gaze did not last a breath's length, but while ft lasted, and to Conyers it might have been years or moments, it seemed to sunder him and Isobel from all the eager crowd about them, to set them more apart than even they had been when speeding over the hills in the black, empty night. Then the light failed, her head sunk back through the gap a white wisp of a crescent moon looked down, wan and

the scourge of the wind, the loom of the

mournful. again. The pale, cheerless light stole in through the broken roof, showing with quite distinctly. "You are at home, my darling, safe at home again, thank God!" said Lady Stormont, stooping nearer and feeling that the sight of her face would surely chill, unsparing distinctness the rough naked walls, the slimy floor, the yawning cavity of the chimney, and there on the cold hearthstone-Conyers' hand paused midway, his breath stopped for dispel all wandering fears or fancies moment-was a dark heap-a reddish "At home, my own child," she repeated gleam! more urgently as the gray eyes gazed

The hovel was not empty, then, like blankly into her own. "Home!" repeated the girl, as if the word had no meaning for her. "Where is home? Who-who are you?" gaing the others; but a new dread like a leadthe others; but a new dread like a lead-en weight made his step heavy, his brow damp, as he advanced and stooped over the huddled figure. With unsteady hands he gently raised the fallen head, and parted the ruddy mass of hair, etcompted by the statement of the rapture into her own. The poor mother fell back with a faint cry as if she had been struck. streaming loose like sea-tangle cast

up by the waves., A little oval face, white as the cotton "Isobel, darling. don't you know me-me-your mother?" her voice rising to a A fittle oval face, white as the cotton grass waving on every bog, looked out on him, the fixed, unseeing eyes turned, as if in vain, pitiful appeal to the lennk, unheeding heavens. From the parted bluish lips came a faint sighing breath. "Isobel!" he cried aloud. wall, the outward composure she had maintained so long in the face of agony, and, harder still perhaps, under the

CHAPTER IV THE HOME-COMING.

O HIS last conscious breath Basil

and, harder still, perhaps, under the shock of bewildering overmastering re-lief and joy, breaking down pitfully un-der this unlooked-for blow. Dr. Purves hurried forward. "My dear Lady Stormont, you've set us all such a good example, you musin' fail us now. We've cause enough to be thankful that we have got Miss Isobel home alive. The rest will follow all in good time-all in good time," soothingly, "and the first step toward if is to get her quietly to be and as quickly as we can. It is no wonder that the poor child is all astray yet." Convers would remember that moment, and the wild night drive which followed. Even as he had led down the rough track, with his wirden-willfully light-in his words. light burden-pitifully light he had swiftly debated course. She needed she every care, and yet to take her back to the scanty comfort of the village his seemed a doubtful proceeding; better overcharged feeling. Basil was relieved of his light burden, and Isobel hastly conveyed to her room, that dainty malden bower, the aching emptiness of which Lady Stormont had not dared to push on to Duncaird, or why not risk and take her

ing heart of the fire, seeing again that new light awakened in her transormont bent over the waxen face on his breast, uttering broken, inarticulate sounds of pity and tenderness like the brooding note of a mating dove. As she stooped over the still unconscious gtrl her yearning love seemed to awaken parent eyes, feeling again the strange, sudden thrill of their meeting glances, sudden thrill of their meeting giantees while Sir David walked restlessly up and down the long room At last, as if he could forbear no longer, the elder man paused. "Basil, you don't know what you've done for me," he said: "Tve never thenked you..." some instinctive response, to touch one of Nature's chords which lie deeper than sense or sight, for a quiver passed

thirty years back. Sir David caught it from her hand with a muttered sound between a gasp-and an exclamation, and stood staring at the feebly traced lines. As he did so, something white fluttered from bethanked you\_" 1



pity on me and mine."

On the yellowed paper was written in a feeble, pointed hand, "To my dear Elsle, on her fifth birthday, from her mother." with a date some five-and-thirty years back.

"With unsteady hands he gently raised the fallen head."

tween the leaves. Sir David made an instant snatch at it, but Conyers, at whose feet if fell, had already stooped, "Only the corner of an old envelope," he said. "No, there's hair in it." "The mother's hair likely," said Lady "I don't need any thanks. It means too much to me," said Convers quietly. Sir Donaid laughed harshiy, strangely. "Do you think I meant to thank you? My God would a man thank another for Uffirs him out of hall? You don't

"No, nothing," Said Sir David, hastily, in a thick, hoarse voice, putting both back between the leaves and snapping the clasp again. "Til keep it meantime, the same bars to throw some light by and defers that exaction till the poor, de-luded wretch thinks he has paid in full, that he has suffered enough, that the past is past, that though he can never

when I heard of this, I thought it a beastly shame that anything should have happened to her. That she should be dead or drowned, and nobody know suthing of it heardd work know

was of the utmost importance to the Hon. Evelyn Ashe-some people laid a slightly ironical emphasis on the cour-tesy prefix. Of the great army of those Accustomed, therefore, to rule her own family socially with a rod of iron, and having established herself as a personage in her own set. Miss Rudgeley re-sented the consciousness that there were still certain circles in which she who live by their wits, the skilled prac-titioners devote themselves to a special class-the young, the old men or women that such society was stody, dull, be-hind the times, not worth the trouble -and it was among the last that Mr. Ashe found his subjects, and for his chosen walk in life he was well equipped. An effective personality-a tall figure, slight and graceful without beof conquering; still, the knowledge raning unmanly; a well-featured face, with somewhat remarkable eyes of an opaque

slaty, gray, which could look melting or mournful or mocking as occasion required, but which were always, as one of his fair friends dubbed them, "in-scrutable," a definition which, as supplying a touch of mystery, added sensi-bly to his stock in trade. That hint of mystery had been judiclously heightened by vague rumors of some romance, some quixotic conduct which had hindered his advance in life. How such reports had originated it might be un-charitable to inquire; but fortunately for Mr. Ashe, "hawks do not pyke oot hawks' een," and, though a good many men despised him, and still more dis-liked him, those who knew did not take the trouble to disclose how baseless these floating fictions were.

In his own class he was well enough received because of his birth and con-nections, while amid the great and everincreasing army of the "nouveaux-rich-es" and the would-be smart he posed as an authority upon the great world, and his services were eagerly sought after as guide and adviser in its untrodden ways. Of course, his El Dorado was a wealthy marriage, but rich women are too well watched, or proved them-selves, as Vi Rudgeley had as yet done, much too wary and too well aware of the price they could command. Now, as the autumn afternoon burned

Now, as the autumn arternoon burned away in its brief glory, his thoughts were busy, though he showed his usual excellent form as a shot, not only for his own credit and pleasure, but to pay for his invitation in recognized fashion by ruaning up the total of a big bag. VI Rudgeley's talk, half heedless, half malicious, had suggested what appeared a very profitable opening for his special talents.

a very profitable opening for his special salents. He topped a long slope, and as the wide view burst upon him he stood still. Far away in the summy distance he could see the great house lording it over the broad valley, and at the thought of all it implied he drew a deep breath. For a moment he let his racing fancies have full play, then cool, calculating reason pulled them up. He had better have something to go upon before he played Alnaachar; meantime the first thing was to get a footing at stormont, and then feel his way with the girl herself.
More the took a swift sid steady sim, and as it came pitching eardy at the data store of ruffled feathers, which had been a thing of life a moment before, his thin but well-cut lips drew to a reflective smile, as if he had brough down more than a bird on the wing.

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CHAPTER VI

ON THE TERRACE.

HEN she remembers nothing 66 -nothing at all! It seems imble. Of co heard of such things, but I always thought it was story-book rot." "So did I." said Lady Stormont, "but

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Ottawa, Dec.

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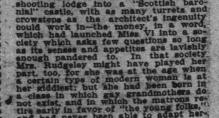
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Ikenes. Her very volce seems in ther ikeness. Her very volce seems in the transfer of the servery thing easy that will so memory she has retained the accent she has been hearing last, though every thing else has gone truly." with a shiver. "We are fearfully and wonder-turn the trucks our faculties can be the trucks our trucks our would like to see the trucks our would like to see the trucks our would like to see the trucks our at least and "." "The trucks of you at least and "." "Most the truck of the truck out the trucks our trucks

know me. I felt as if some change-ing had taken the place of my lobbel, and I fear that that is what Sir Daxid is still feeling; but now when I see Her so sweet and happy I can hardly bear to disturb her peace. However, with a sigh, "perhaps we ought to try; you "Don't be atraid, Fill be very cau-tious!" and watraid, Fill be very cau-vers time with a reassuring pod Con-

(CONTINUED NEXT SUNDAY.)



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