POOR DOCUMENT

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THE MISSIONER

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CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

"A few months ago," he said, "I attended regularly one of the police courts in London. Day by day I came into contact with the lost souls who have drifted on to the great rubbish-heap. There was a girl, Martha Gullimore her name was, whose record for her age was as black as sin could make it. Her father, I believe, is the blacksmith in your model village! I spoke to him of his daughter yesterday, and he cursed me!"

"You mean Samuel Gullimore—my farrier?" she asked.

"That is the man," he answered.

"Have you any other—instances?" she asked.

"More than one, I am sorry to say," he replied. "There were two young men who left here only a year ago—one is the son of your gardener, the other was brought up by his uncle at your lodge gates. I was instrumental in saving them from prison a few months ago. One we have shipped to Canada—the other, I am sorry to say, has relapsed. We did what we could, but beyond a certain point we cannot go."

She leaned her head for a moment upon the slim, white fingers of her right hand, innocent of rings save for one great emerald, whose gleam of color was almost barbaric in its momentary splendor. Her face had hardened a little, her tone was almost an offence.

"You would have me believe, then," she said, "that my peaceful village is a veritable den of iniquity?"

"Not I," he answered brusquely. "Only I would have you realize that roses and honeysuckle and regular wages, the appurtenances of material prosperity, are after all things of little consequence. They hear the song of the world, these people, in their leisure moments; their young men and girls are no stronger than their fellows when temptation comes."

Deyes leaned suddenly forward in his chair. He felt that his intervention dissipated a dramatic interest, of which he was keenly conscious, but he could not keep silence any longer.

"To follow out your argument, sir, to its logical conclusion," he said, "why not aim higher still? It is your contention, is it not, that the seeds of evil things are sown in indifference, that prosperity might even tend towards their propagation. Why not direct your energies, then, towards the men and women of Society? There is plenty of scope here for your labors."

The young man turned towards him. The lines of his mouth had relaxed into a smile of tolerant indifference.

"I have no sympathy, sir," he answered, "with the class you name. On a sinking ship, the cry is always 'Save the women and children.' It is the less fortunate in the world's possessions who represent the women and children of shipwrecked morality. It is for their betterment that we work."

Deyes sighed gently.

"It is a pity," he declared. "I am convinced that there is a magnificent opening for mission work amongst the idle classes."

"No doubt," the young man agreed quickly. "The question is whether the game is worth the candle."

Deyes made no reply. Lady Peggy was laughing softly to herself.

"I have heard all that you have to say, Mr. Macheson," the mistress of Thorpe said calmly, "and I can only repeat that I think your presence here as a missioner most unnecessary. I consider it, in fact, an——"

She hesitated. With a sudden flash of humor in his deep-set eyes, he supplied the word.

"An impertinence, perhaps!"

"The word is not mine," she answered, "but I accept it willingly. I cannot interfere with Mr. Hurd's decision as to the barn."

"I am sorry," he said slowly. "I must hold my meetings out of doors! That is all!"

There was a dangerous glitter in her beautiful eyes.

"There is no common land in the neighborhood," she said, "and you will of course understand that I will consider you a trespasser at any time you are found upon my property."

He bowed slightly.

"I am here to speak to your people," he said, "and I will do so, if I have to stop in these lanes and talk to them one by one. You will pardon my reminding you, madam, that the days of feudalism are over."

Wilhelmina carefully shuffled the pack of cards which she had just taken up.

"We will finish our rubber, Peggy," she said. "Mr. Deyes, perhaps I may trouble you to ring the bell!"

The young man was across the room before Deyes could move.

"You will allow me," he said, with a delightfully humorous smile, "to facilitate my own dismissal. I shall doubtless meet your man in the hall. May I be allowed to wish you good afternoon!"

They all returned his farewell save Wilhelmina, who had begun to deal. She seemed determined to remember his existence no more. Yet on the threshold, with the handle of the door between his fingers, he turned back. He said nothing, but his eyes were fixed upon her. Deyes leaned forward in his chair, immensely curious. Softly the cards fell into their places, there was no sign in her face of any consciousness of his presence. Deyes alone knew that she was fighting. He heard her breath come quicker, saw the fingers which gathered up her cards shake. Slowly, but with obvious unwillingness, she turned her head. She looked straight into the eyes of the man who still lingered.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Thorpe-Hatton," he said pleasantly. "I am sorry to have troubled you."

Her lips moved, but she said nothing. She half inclined her head. The door was softly closed.

CHAPTER IV.

Beating Her Wings.

Never was a young man more pleased with himself than Stephen Hurd, on the night he dined at Thorpe-Hatton. He had shot well all day, and been accepted with the utmost cordiality by the rest of the party. At dinner time, his hostess had placed him on her left hand, and though it was true she had not much to say to him, it was equally obvious that her duties were sufficient to account for her divided attention. He was quite willing to be ignored by the lady on his other side—a little elderly, and noted throughout the country for her husband-hunting proclivities. He recognized the fact that, apart from the personal side of the question, he could scarcely hope to be of any interest to her. The novelty of the situation, Wilhelmina's occasional remarks, and a dinner such as he had never tasted before were sufficient to keep him interested. For the rest he was content to twirl his moustache, of which he was inordinately proud, and lean back in his chair with the comfortable reflection that he was the first of his family to be offered the complete hospitality of Thorpe-Hatton.

Towards the close of dinner, his hostess leaned towards him.

"Have you seen or heard anything of a young man named Macheson in the village?" she asked.

"I have seen him once or twice," he answered. "Here on a missionary expedition or something of the sort, I believe."

"Has he made any attempt to hold a meeting?" she asked.

"Not that I have heard of," he replied. "He has been talking to some of the people, though. I saw him with old Gullimore yesterday."

"That reminds me," she remarked, "is it true that Gullimore has had trouble with his daughter?"

"I believe so," young Hurd admitted, looking downward at his plate.

"The man was to blame for letting her leave the place," Wilhelmina declared, in cold, measured tones. "A pretty girl, I remember, but very vain, and a fool, of course. But about this young fellow Macheson. Do you know who he is, and where he came from?"

Stephen Hurd shook his head.

"I'm afraid I don't," he said doubtfully. "He belongs to some sort of brotherhood, I believe. I can't exactly make out what he's at. Seems a queer sort of place for him to come missioning, this!"

"So I told him," she said. "By the bye, do you know where he is staying?"

"At Onetree farm," the young man answered. Wilhelmina frowned.

"Will you execute a commission for me tomorrow?" she asked.

"With pleasure!" he answered eagerly.

"You will go to the woman at Onetree farm—I forget her name—and say that I desire to take her rooms myself from tomorrow, or as soon as possible. I will pay her for them, but I do not wish that young man to be taken in by any of my tenants. You will perhaps make that known."

"I will do so," he declared. "I hope he will have the good sense to leave the neighborhood."

"I trust so," Wilhelmina replied.

She turned away to speak once more to the man on her other side, and did not address Stephen Hurd again. He watched her covertly, with tingling pulses, as she devoted herself to her neighbor—the Lord-Lieutenant of the county. He considered himself a judge of the sex, but he had had few opportunities even of admiring such women as the mistress of Thorpe. He watched the curve of her white neck with its delicate, satin-like skin, the play of her features, the poise of her somewhat small, oval head. He admitred the slightly wearied air with which she performed her duties and accepted the compliments of her neighbor. "A woman of mysteries" some one had once called her, and he realized that it was the mouth and the dark, tired eyes which puzzled those who attempted to classify her. What a triumph—to bring her down to the world of ordinary women, to drive the weariness away, to feel the soft touch, perhaps, of those wonderful arms! He was a young man of many conquests, and with a sufficiently good idea of himself. The thought was like wine in his blood. If only it were possible!

He relapsed into a dry-dream, from which he was aroused only by the soft flutter of gowns and laces as the women rose to go. There was a momentary disarrangement of seats. Gilbert Deyes, who was on the other side of the table, rose, and carrying his glass in his hand, came deliberately round to the vacant seat by the young man's side. In his evening clothes, the length and gauntness of his face and figure seemed more noticeable than ever. His skin was dry, almost like parchment, and his eyes by contrast appeared unnaturally bright. His new neighbor noticed, too, that the glass which he carried so carefully contained nothing but water.

"I will come and talk to you for a few minutes, if I may," Deyes said. "I leave the Church and agriculture to hobnob. Somehow I don't fancy that as a buffer I should be a success."

Young Hurd smiled amiably. He was more than a little flattered.

"The Archdeacon," he remarked, "is not an inspiring neighbor."

Deyes lit one of his own cigarettes and passed his case.

"I have found the Archdeacon very dull," he admitted—"a privilege of his order, I suppose. By the bye, you are having a dose of religion from a new source hereabouts, are you not?"

"You mean this young missioner?" Hurd inquired doubtfully.

Deyes nodded.

"I was with our hostess when he came up to ask for the loan of a barn to hold services in. A very queer sort of person, I should think?"

"I haven't spoken to him," Hurd answered, "but I should think he's more or less mad. I can understand mission and Salvation Army work and all that sort of thing in the cities, but I'm hanged if I can understand any one coming to Thorpe with such notions."

"Our hostess is annoyed about it, I imagine," Deyes remarked.

"She seems to have taken a dislike to the fellow," Hurd admitted. "She was speaking to me about him just now. He is to be turned out of his lodgings here."

Gilbert Deyes smiled. The news interested him.

"Our hostess is practical in her dislikes," he remarked.

"Why not?" his neighbor answered. "The place belongs to her."

Deyes watched for a moment the smoke from his cigarette, curling upwards.

"The young man," he said thoughtfully, "impressed me as being a person of some determination. I wonder whether he will consent to accept defeat so easily."

The agent's son scarcely saw what else there was for him to do.

"There isn't anywhere round here," he remarked, "where they would take him in against Miss Thorpe-Hatton's wishes. Besides, he has nowhere to preach. His coming here at all was a huge mistake. If he's a sensible person he'll admit it."

Deyes nodded as he rose to his feet and lounged towards the door with the other men.

"Play Bridge?" he asked his companion, as they crossed the hall.

"A little," the young man answered, "for moderate stakes."

They entered the drawing room, and Deyes made his way to a secluded corner, where Lady Peggy sat scribbling alone in a note book.

"My dear Lady Peggy," he inquired, "whence this exceptional industry?"

She closed the book and looked up at him with twinkling eyes.

"Well, I don't mean to tell a soul until it was finished," she declared, "but you've just caught me. I've had such a brilliant idea. I'm going to write a Society Encyclopaedia!"

Deyes looked at her solemnly.

"A Society Encyclopaedia!" he repeated uncertainly. "'Pon my word, I'm not quite sure that I understand."

She motioned him to sit down by her side.

"I'll explain," she said. "You know we're all expected to know something about everything nowadays, and it's such a bore reading up things. I'm going to compile a little volume of definitions. I shall sell it at a guinea a copy, pay all my debts, and become quite respectable again."

Deyes shook his head. His attitude was scarcely sympathetic.

"My dear Lady Peggy, what nonsense!" he declared. "Respectable, indeed! I call it positively pandering to the middle classes!"

Lady Peggy looked doubtful.

"It is a horrid word, isn't it?" she admitted, "but it would be lovely to make some money. Of course, I haven't absolutely decided how to spend it yet. It does seem rather a waste, doesn't it, to pay one's debts, but think of the luxury of feeling one could do it if one wanted to!"

"There's something in that," Deyes admitted. "But an encyclopaedia! My dear Lady Peggy, you don't know what you're talking about. I've got one somewhere, I know. It came in a van, and it took two of the men to unload it."

Lady Peggy laughed softly.

"Oh! I don't mean that sort of course," she declared. "I mean just a little gilt-edged text book, bound in morocco, you know, with just those things in it we're likely to run up against. Radium, for instance. Now every one's talking about radium. Do you know what radium is?"

Deyes swung his eyeglass carefully by its black riband.

"Well," he admitted, "I've a sort of idea, but I'm not very good at definitions."

"Of course not," Lady Peggy declared triumphantly. "When it comes to the point, you see what a good idea mine is. You turn to my textbook," she added, turning the pages over rapidly, "and there you are. Radium! 'A hard, rare substance, invented by Mr. Gillette to give tone to his bachelor parties.' What do you think of that?"

"Wonderful!" Deyes declared solemnly. "Where do you get your information from?"

"Oh! I poke about in dictionaries and things, and ask every one questions," Lady Peggy declared airily, "Would you like to hear some more?"

"Our hostess is beckoning to me," Deyes answered, rising. "I expect she wants some Bridge."

"I'm on," Lady Peggy declared cheerfully. "Whom shall we get for a fourth?"

"Wilhelmina has found him already," Deyes declared. "It's the new young man, I think."

Lady Peggy shrugged her shoulders.

"The agent's son?" she remarked. "I shouldn't have thought that he would have cared about our points."

"He can afford it for once in a way, I should imagine," Deyes answered. "I can't understand, though——"

He stopped short. She looked at him curiously.

"Is it possible," she murmured, "that there exists anything which Gilbert Deyes does not understand?"

"Many things," he answered; "amongst them, why does Wilhelmina patronize this young man? He is well enough, of course, but ——" he shrugged his shoulders expressively; "the thing needs an explanation, doesn't it?"

"If Wilhelmina—were not Wilhelmina, it certainly would," Lady Peggy answered. "I call her craving for new things and new people positively morbid. All the time she beats her wings against the bars. There are no new things. There are no new experiences. The sooner one makes up their mind to it the better."

Gilbert laughed softly.

"If my memory serves me," he said, "you are repeating a cry many thousand years old. Wasn't there a prophet——"

"There was," she interrupted, "but they are beckoning us. I hope I don't cut with the young man. I don't believe he has a Bridge face."

CHAPTER V.

Evicted.

Victor Macheson smoked his after-breakfast pipe with the lazy enjoyment of one who is thoroughly at peace with himself and his surroundings. The tiny strip of lawn on to which he had dragged his chair was surrounded with straggling bushes of cottage flowers, and flanked by a hedge thick with honeysuckle. Straight to Heaven, as the flight of a bird, the thin line of blue smoke curled upwards to the summer sky; the very air seemed full of sweet scents and soothing sounds. A few yards away, a procession of lazy cow moved leisurely along the grass-bordered lane; from the other side of the hedge came the cheerful sound of a reaping-machine, driven slowly through the field of golden corn.

The man, through half-closed eyes, looked out upon these things, and every line in his face spelt contentment. In repose, the artistic temperament with which he was deeply imbued, asserted itself more clearly—the almost fanatical light in his eyes was softened; one saw there was something of the wistfulness of those who seek to raise but a corner of the veil that hang before the world of hidden things—something, too, of the subdued joy which even the effort brings. The lines of his forceful mouth were less firm, more sensitive—a greater sense of humanity seemed somehow to have descended upon him as he lounged there in the warmth of the sun, with the full joy of his beautiful environment creeping through his blood.

"If you please, Mr. Macheson," some one said in his ear.

He turned his head at once. A tall, fair girl had stepped out of the room where he had been breakfasting, and was standing by his elbow. She was neatly dressed, pretty in a somewhat insipid fashion, and her hands and hair showed signs of refinement superior to her station. Just now she was apparently nervous. Macheson smiled at her encouragingly.

"Well, Letty," he said, "what is it?"

"I wanted—can I say something to you, Mr. Macheson?" she began.

"Why not?" he answered kindly. "Is it anything very serious? Out with it!"

"I was thinking, Mr. Macheson," she said, "that I should like to leave home—if I could—if there was anything which I could do. I wanted to ask your advice."

He laid down his pipe and looked at her seriously.

"Why, Letty," he said, "how long have you been thinking of this?"

"Oh! ever so long, sir," she exclaimed, speaking with more confidence. "You see there's nothing for me to do here except when there's any one staying, like you, sir, and that's not often. Mother won't let me help with the rough work, and Ruth's growing up now, she's ever such a strong girl. And I should like to go away if I could, and learn to be a little more—more ladylike," she added, with reddening cheeks.

Macheson was puzzled. The girl was not looking him in the face. He felt that there was something at the back of it all.

"My dear girl," he said, "you can't learn to be ladylike. That's one of the things that's born with you or it isn't. You can be just as much a lady helping your mother here as practising grimaces in a London drawing-room."

"But I want to improve myself," she persisted.

"Go for a long walk every day, and look about you," he said. "Read. I'll lend you some books—the right sort. You'll do better here than away."

She was frankly dissatisfied.

"But I want to go away," she declared. "I want to leave Thorpe for a time. I should like to go to London. Couldn't I get a situation as lady's help or companion or something of that sort? I shouldn't want any money."

He was silent for a moment.

"Does your mother know of this, Letty?" he asked.

"She wouldn't object," the girl answered eagerly. "She lets me do what I like."

"Hadn't you better tell me—the rest?" Macheson asked quietly.

The girl looked away uneasily.

"There is no rest," she protested weakly.

Macheson shook his head.

"Letty," he said, "if you have any definite ideas of a definite future for yourself, different from any you see before you here, tell me what they are, and I will do my best to help you. But if you simply want to go away because you are dissatisfied with the life here, because you fancy yourself superior to it, well, I'm sorry, but I'd sooner prevent your going than help you."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh! Mr. Macheson, it isn't that," she declared, "I—I don't want to tell any one, but I'm very—very fond of some one who's—quite different. I think he's fond of me, too," she added softly, "but he's always used to being with ladies, and I wanted to improve myself so much! I thought if I went to London," she added wistfully, "I might learn?"

Macheson laughed cheerfully. He laid his hand for a moment upon her arm.

"Oh! Letty, Letty," he declared, "you're a foolish little girl! Now listen to me. If he's a good sort, and I'm sure he is, or you wouldn't be fond of him, he'll like you exactly as you are. Do you know what it means to be a lady, the supreme test of good manners? It means to be natural. Take my advice! Go on helping your mother, enter into the village life, make friends with the other girls, don't imagine yourself a bit superior to anybody else. Read when you have time—I'll manage the books for you, and spend all the time you can out of doors. It's sound advice, Letty. Take my word for it. Hullo, who's this?"

A new sound in the lane made them both turn their heads. Young Hurd had just ridden up and was fastening his pony to the fence. He looked across at them curiously, and Letty retreated precipitately into the house. A moment or two later he came up the narrow path, frowning at Macheson over the low hedge of foxgloves and cottage roses, and barely returning his courteous greeting. For a moment he hesitated, however, as though about to speak. Then, changing his mind, he passed on and entered the farmhouse.

He met Mrs. Foulton herself in the passage, and she welcomed him with a smiling face.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hurd, sir!" she exclaimed, plucking at her apron. "Won't you come inside, sir, and sit down? The parlour's let to Mr. Macheson there, but he's out in the garden, and he won't mind your stepping in for a moment. And how's your father, Mr. Hurd? Wonderful well he was looking when I saw him last."

The young man followed her inside, but declined a chair.

"Oh! the governor's all right, Mrs. Foulton," he answered. "Never knew him anything else. Good weather for the harvest, eh?"

"Beautiful, sir!" Mrs. Foulton answered.

"Were you wanting to speak to John, Mr. Stephen? He's about the home meadow somewhere, or in the orchard. I can send a boy for him, or perhaps you'd step out."

"It's you I came to see, Mrs. Foulton," the young man said, "and 'pon my word, I don't like my errand much."

Mrs. Foulton was visibly anxious.

"There's no trouble like, I hope, sir?" she began.

"Oh! it's nothing serious," he declared reassuringly. "To tell you the truth, it's about your lodger."

"About Mr. Macheson, sir!" the woman exclaimed.

"Yes! Do you know how long he was proposing to stay with you?"

"He's just took the rooms for another week, sir," she answered, "and a nicer lodger, or one more quiet and regular in his habits, I never had or wish to have. There's nothing against him, sir—surely?"

"Nothing personal—that I know of," Hurd answered, tapping his boots with his riding-whip. "The fact of it is, he has offended Miss Thorpe-Hatton, and she wants him out of the place."

"Well, I never did!" Mrs. Foulton exclaimed in amazement. "How offend Miss Thorpe-Hatton! So nice-spoken he is, too. I'm sure I can't imagine his saying a wry word to anybody."

"He has come to Thorpe," Hurd explained, "on an errand of which Miss Thorpe-Hatton disapproves, and she does not with to have him in the place. She knows that he is staying here, and she wishes you to send him away at once."

Mrs. Foulton's face fell.

"Well, I'm fair sorry to hear this, sir," she declared. "It's only this morning that he spoke for the rooms for another week, and I was glad and willing enough to let them to him. Well I never did! It does sound all anyhow, don't it, sir, to be telling him to pack up and go sudden-like!"

"I will speak to him myself, if you like, Mrs. Foulton," Stephen said. "Of course, Miss Thorpe-Hatton does not wish you to lose anything, and I am to pay you the rent of the rooms for the time he engaged them. I will do so at once, if you will let me know how much it is."

He thrust his hand into his pocket, but Mrs. Foulton drew back. The corners of her mouth were tightly drawn together.

"Thank you, Mr. Stephen," she said, "I'll obey Miss Thorpe-Hatton's wishes, of course, as in duty bound, but I'll not take any money for the rooms. Thank you all the same."

"Don't be foolish, Mrs. Foulton," the young man said pleasantly. "It will annoy Miss Thorpe-Hatton if she knows you have refused, and you may just as well have the money. Let me see. Shall we say a couple of sovereigns for the week?"

Mrs. Foulton shook her head.

"I'll not take anything, sir, thank you all the same, and if you'd say a word to Mr. Macheson, I'd be much obliged. I'd rather any one spoke to him than me."

Stephen Hurd pocketed the money with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Just as you like, of course, Mrs. Foulton," he said. "I'll go out and speak to the young gentleman at once."

He strolled out and looked over the hedge.

"Mr. Macheson, I believe?" he remarked interrogatively.

Macheson nodded as he rose from his chair.

"And you are Mr. Hurd's son, are you not?" he said pleasantly. "Wonderful morning, isn't it?"

Young Hurd stepped over the rose bushes. The two men stood side by side, something of a height, only that the better cut of Hurd's clothes showed his figure to greater advantage.

"I'm sorry to say that I've come on rather a disagreeable errand," the agent's son began. "I've been talking to Mrs. Foulton about it."

"Indeed?" Macheson remarked interrogatively.

"The fact is you seem to have rubbed up against your great lady here," young Hurd continued. "She's very down on these services you were going to hold, and she wants to see you out of the place."

"I am sorry to hear this," Macheson said—and once more waited.

"It isn't a pleasant task," Stephen continued, liking his errand less as he proceeded; "but I've had to tell Mrs. Foulton that—that, in short, Miss Thorpe-Hatton does not wish her tenants to accept you as a lodger."

"Miss Thorpe-Hatton makes war on a wide scale," Macheson remarked, smiling faintly.

"Well, after all, you see," Hurd explained, "the whole place belongs to her, and there is no particular reason, is there, why she should tolerate any one in it of whom she disapproves."

"None whatever," Macheson assented gravely.

"I promised Mrs. Foulton I would speak to you," Stephen continued, stepping backwards. "I'm sure, for her sake, you won't make any trouble. Good morning!"

Macheson bowed slightly.

"Good-morning!" he answered.

Stephen Hurd lingered even then upon the garden path. Somehow he was not satisfied with this interview—with his own position at the end of it. He had an uncomfortable sense of belittlement, of having played a small part in a not altogether worthy game. The indifference of the other's manner nettled him. He tried a parting shaft.

"Mrs. Foulton said something about your having engaged the rooms for another week," he said, turning back. "Of course, if you insist upon staying, it will place the woman in a very awkward position."

Macheson had resumed his seat.

"I should not dream," he said coolly, "of resisting—your mistress' decree! I shall leave here in half an hour."

Young Hurd walked angrily down the path and slammed the gate. The sense of having been worsted was strong upon him. He recognized his own limitations too accurately not to be aware that he had been in conflict with a stronger personality.

"D—— the fellow!" he muttered, as he cantered down the lane. "I wish he were out of the place."

A genuine wish, and one which betrayed at least a glimmering of a prophetic instinct. In some dim way he seemed to understand, even before the first move on the board, that the coming of Victor Macheson to Thorpe was inimical to himself. He was conscious of his weakness, of a marked inferiority, and the consciousness was galling. The fellow had no right to be a gentleman, he told himself angrily—a gentleman and a missioner.

Macheson re-lit his pipe and called to Mrs. Fulton.

"Mrs. Fulton," he said pleasantly, "I'll have to go! Your great lady doesn't like me on the estate. I dare say she's right."

"I'm sure I'm sorry, sir," Mrs. Foulton declared shamefacedly. "You've seen young Mr. Hurd?"

"He was kind enough to explain the situation to me," Macheson answered. "I'm afraid I am rather a nuisance to everybody. If I am, it's because they don't quite understand!"

"I'm sure sir," Mrs. Foulton affirmed, "a nicer lodger no one ever had. And as for them services, and the Vicar objecting to them, I can't see what harm they'd do! We're none of us so good but we might be a bit better!"

"A very sound remark, Mrs. Foulton," Macheson said, smiling. "And now you must make out my bill, please, and what about a few sandwiches? You could manage that? I'm going to play in a cricket match this afternoon."

"Why, you've just paid the bill, sir! There's only breakfast, and the sandwiches you're welcome to, and very sorry I am to part with you, sir."

"Better luck another time, I hope, Mrs. Foulton," he answered, smiling. "I must go upstairs and pack my bag. I shan't forget your garden with its delicious flowers."

"It's a shame as you've got to leave it, sir," Mrs. Foulton said heartily. "If my Richard were alive he'd never have let you go for all the Miss Thorpe-Hattons in the world. But John—he's little more than a lad—he'd be frightened to death for fear of losing the farm, if I so much as said a word to him."

Macheson laughed softly.

"John's a good son," he said. "Don't you worry him."

He went up to his tiny bedroom and changed his clothes for a suit of flannels. Then he packed his few belongings and walked out into the world. He lit a pipe and shouldered his portmanteau.

"There is a flavor of martyrdom about this affair," he said to himself, as he strolled along, "which appeals to me. I don't think that young man has any sense of humor."

He paused every now and then to listen to the birds and admire the view. He had the air of one thoroughly enjoying his walk. Presently he turned off the main road, and wandered along a steep green lane, which was little more than a cart-track. Here he met no one. The country on either side was common land, sown with rocks and the poorest soil, picturesque, but almost impossible of cultivation. A few sheep were grazing upon the hills, but other sign of life there was none. Not a farm house—scarcely a keeper's cottage in sight! It was a forgotten corner of a not unpopulous country, the farthest portion of a belt of primeval forest land, older than history itself. Macheson laughed softly as he reached the spot he had had in his mind, and threw his bag over the grey stone wall into the cool shade of a dense fragment of wood.

"So much," he murmured softly, "for the lady of Thorpe!"

CHAPTER VI.

Cricket and Philosophy.

"The instinct for games," Wilhelmina remarked, "is one which I never possessed. Let us see whether we can learn something."

In obedience to her gesture, the horses were checked, and the footman clambered down and stood at their heads. Deyes, from his somewhat uncomfortable back seat in the victoria, leaned forward, and, adjusting his eyeglass, studied the scene with interest.

"Here," he remarked, "we have the 'flannelled fool' upon his native heath. They are playing a game which my memory tells me is cricket. Every one seems very hot and very excited."

Wilhelmina beckoned to the footman to come round to the side of the carriage.

"James," she said, "do you know what all this means?"

She waved her hand towards the cricket pitch, the umpires with their white coats, the tent and the crowd of spectators. The man touched his hat.

"It's a cricket match, madam," he answered, "between Thorpe and Nesborough."

Wilhelmina looked once more towards the field and recognized Mr. Hurd upon his stout little cob.

"Go and tell Mr. Hurd to come and speak to me," she ordered.

The man hastened off. Mr. Hurd had not once turned his head. His eyes were riveted upon the game. The groom found it necessary to touch him on the arm before he could attract his attention. Even when he had delivered the message, the agent waited until the finish of the over before he moved. Then he cantered his pony up to the waiting carriage. Wilhelmina greeted him graciously.

"I want to know about the cricket match, Mr. Hurd," she asked, smiling.

Mr. Hurd wheeled his pony round so that he could still watch the game.

"I am afraid that we are going to be beaten, madam," he said dolefully. "Nesborough made a hundred and ninety-eight, and we have six wickets down for fifty."

Wilhelmina seemed scarcely to realize the tragedy which his words unfolded.

"I suppose they are the stronger team, aren't they?" she remarked. "They ought to be. Nesborough is quite a large town."

"We have beaten them regularly until the last two years," Mr. Hurd answered. "We should beat them now but for their fast bowler, Mills. I don't know how it is, but our men will not stand up to him."

"Perhaps they are afraid of being hurt," Wilhelmina suggested innocently. "If that is he bowling now, I'm sure I don't wonder at it."

Mr. Hurd frowned.

"We don't have men in the eleven who are afraid of getting hurt," he remarked stiffly.

A shout of dismay from the onlookers, a smothered exclamation from Mr. Hurd, and a man was seen on his way to the pavilion. His wickets were spreadeagled, and the ball was being tossed about the field.

'Another wicket!" the agent exclaimed testily. "Crooks played all round that ball!"

"Isn't that your son going in, Mr. Hurd?" Wilhelmina asked.

"Yes! Stephen is in now," his father answered. "If he gets out, the match is over."

"Who is the other batsman?" Deyes asked.

"Antill, the second bailiff," Mr. Hurd answered. "He's captain, and he can stay in all day, but he can't make runs."

They all leaned forward to witness the continuation of the match. Stephen Hurd's career was brief and inglorious. He took guard and looked carefully round the field with the air of a man who is going to give trouble. Then he saw the victoria, with its vision of parasols and fluttering laces, and the sight was fatal to him. He slogged wildly at the first ball, missed it, and paid the penalty. The lady in the carriage frowned, and Mr. Hurd muttered something under his breath as he watched his son on the way back to the tent.

"I'm afraid it's all up with us now," he remarked. "We have only three more men to go in."

"Then we are going to be beaten," Wilhelmina remarked.

"I'm afraid so," Mr. Hurd assented gloomily.

The next batsman had issued from the tent and was on his way to the wicket. Wilhelmina, who had been about to give an order to the footman, watched him curiously.

"Who is that going in?" she asked abruptly.

Mr. Hurd was looking not altogether comfortabe.

"It is the young man who wanted to preach," he answered.

Wilhelmina frowned.

"Why is he playing?" she asked. "He has nothing to do with Thorpe."

"He came down to see them practise a few evenings ago, and Antill asked him," the agent answered. "If I had known earlier I would have stopped it."

Wilhelmina did not immediately reply. She was watching the young man who stood now at the wicket, bat in hand. In his flanels he seemed a very different person from the missioner whose request a few days ago had so much offended her. Nevertheless, her lip curled as she saw the terrible Mills prepare to deliver his first ball.

"That sort of person," she remarked, "is scarcely likely to be much good at games. Oh!"

Her exclamation was repeated in various forms from all over the field. Macheson had hit his first ball high over their heads, and a storm of applause broke from the bystanders. The batsman made no attempt to run.

"What is that?" Wilhelmina asked.

"A boundary—magnificent drive," Mr. Hurd answered excitedly. "By Jove, another!"

The agent dropped his reins and led the applause. Along the ground this time the ball had come at such a pace that the fieldsman made a very half-hearted attempt to stop it. It passed the horses' feet by only a few yards. The coachman turned round and touched his hat.

"Still I move farther back, madam?" he asked."

"Stay where you are," Wilhelmina answered shortly. Her eyes were fixed upon the tall, lithe figure once more facing the bowler. The next ball was the last of the over. Macheson played it carefully for a single, and stood prepared for the bowling at the other end. He began by a graceful cut for two, and followed it up by a square leg hit clean out of the ground. For the next half an hour the Thorp villagers thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Never since the days of one Foulds, a former blacksmith, had they seen such an exhibition of hurricane hitting. The fast bowler, knocked clean off his length, became wild and erratic. Once he only missed Macheson's head by an inch, but his next ball was driven fair and square out of the ground for six. The applause become frantic.

Wilhelmina was leaning back amongst the cushions of her carriage, watching the game through half-closed eyes, and with some apparent return of her usual graceful langour. Nevertheless, she remained there, and her eyes seldom wandered for a moment from the scene of play. Beneath her apparent indifference, she was watching this young man with an interest for which she would have found it hard to account, and which instinct alone prompted her to conceal. It was a very ordinary scene, after all, of which he was the dominant figure. She had seen so much of life on a larger scale—of men playing heroic parts in the limelight of a stage as mighty as this was insignificant. Yet, without stopping to reason about it, she was conscious of a curious sense of pleasure in watching the doings of this forceful young giant. With an easy good-humored smile, replaced every now and then with a grim look of determination as he jumped out from the crease to hit, he continued his victorious career, until a more frantic burst of applause than usual announced that the match was won. Then Wilhelmina turned towards Stephen Hurd, who was standing by the side of the carriage.

"You executed my commission," she asked, "respecting that young man?"

"The first thing this morning," he answered.

"What did he say?"

Stephen hesitated, but Wilhelmina waited for his reply. She had the air of one remotely interested, yet she waited obviously to hear what this young man had said.

"I think he said something about your making war upon a large scale," Stephen explained diffidently.

She sat still for a moment. She was looking towards the deserted cricket pitch.

"Where is he staying now?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "I have warned all the likely people not to receive him, and I have told him, too, that he will only get your tenants into trouble if he tries to get lodgings here."

"I should like," she said, "to speak to him. Perhaps you would be so good as to ask him to step this way for a moment."

Stephen departed, wondering. Deyes was watching his hostess with an air of covert amusement.

"Do you continue the warfare?" he asked, "or has the young man's prowess softened your heart?"

Wilhelmina raised her parasol and looked steadily at her questioner.

"Warfare is scarcely the word, is it?" she remarked carelessly. "I have no personal objection to the young man."

They watched him crossing the field toward them. Notwithstanding his recent exertions, he walked lightly, and without any sign of fatigue. Deyes looked curiously at the crest upon the cap which he was carrying in his hand.

"Magdalen," he muttered. "Your missioner grows more interesting."

Wilhelmina leaned forward. Her face was inscrutable, and her greeting devoid of cordiality.

"So you have decided to teach my people cricket instead of morals, Mr. Macheson," she remarked.

"The two," he answered pleasantly, "are not incompatible."

Wilhelmina frowned.

"I hope," she said, "that you have abandoned your idea of holding meetings in the village."

"Certainly not," he answered. "I will begin next week."

"You understand," she said calmly, "that I consider you—as a missioner—an intruder—here! Those of my people who attend your services will incur my displeasure!"

"Madam," he answered, "I do not believe that you will visit it upon them."

"But I will," she interrupted ruthlessly. "You are young and know little of the world. You have not yet learnt the truth of one of the oldest of proverbs—that it is well to let well alone!"

"It is a sop for the idle, that proverb," he answered. "It is the motto for the great army of those who drift."

"I have been making inquiries," she said. "I find that my villagers are contented and prosperous. There are no signs of vice in the place."

"There is such a thing," he answered, "as being too prosperous, over-contented. The person in such a state takes life for granted. Religion is a thing he hears about, but fails to realize. He has no need of it. He becomes like the prize cattle in your park! He has a mind, but has forgotten how to use it."

She looked at him steadily, perhaps a trifle insolently.

"How old are you, Mr. Macheson?" she asked.

"Twenty-eight," he answered, with a slight flush.

"Twenty-eight! You are young to make yourself the judge of such things as these. You will do a great deal of mischief, I am afraid, before you are old enough to realize it."

"To awaken those who sleep in the daytime—is that mischief?" he asked.

"It is," she answered deliberately. "when you are older you will realize it. Sleep is the best."

He bent towards her. The light in his eyes had blazed out.

"You know in your heart," he said, "that it is not true. You have brains, and you are as much of an artist as your fettered life permits you to be. You know very well that knowledge is best."

"Do you believe," she answered, "that I—I take myself not personally but as a type—am as happy as they are?"

She moved her parasol to where the village lay beyond the trees. He hesitated.

"Madam," he answered gravely, "I know too little of your life to answer your question."

She shrugged her shoulders. For a moment her parasol hid her face.

"We are quite a la mode, are we not, my dear Peggy?" she remarked, with a curious little laugh. "Philosophy on the village green. Gilbert, tell them to drive on."

She turned deliberately to Macheson.

"Come and convert us instead," she said. "We need it more."

"I do not doubt it, madam," he answered. "Good-afternoon!"

The carriage drove off. Macheson, obeying an impulse which he did not recognize, watched it till it was out of sight. At the bend, Wilhelmina deliberately turned in her seat and saw him standing there. She waved her parasol in ironical farewell, and Macheson walked back to the tent with burning cheeks.

(To be continued.)

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FOSTER'S STATEMENT OF CLAIM IN LIBEL SUIT AGAINST GLOBE

Toronto, Dec. 2.—Hon. G. E. Foster's statement of claim in his libel suit against the Globe was fyled today. The alleged slander was uttered at a public meeting held at Orillia, Oct. 20 last. Mr. Macdonald charged Foster with getting "an unjustifiable rake-off in the notorious Swan River deal," and challenged him to serve him with a writ of slander.

Last year a return shows as many as 104 new London streets, having a total approximate length of eight and a quarter miles, were made.