

CHAPTER VII.

She thought of the Winterdick's pride, of the position they had held in the country, and she realised what a terrible blow this would be for them. "Oh. I think money is the most dreadful thing," she said passionately. "It never seems to make people happy when they have it, and yet when they lose it . . . " She turned her grey exes to him in sweet sympathy. "And is this what you wanted to tell me? she asked.

Philip Winterdick drew a long breath: he felt as if he were about to take a plunge into icy water.

"No," he said at last, desperately "it isn't; at least . . . Miss Dennison " He forced his eyes to her face, and for a moment there was absolute silence; then he rushed on: "Now, how can I . . . after what I've just told you . . I-I . . . Oh, I can't tell you-I can't.

He had meant to do the square thing and tell her why he wanted to marry her, but now it had come to the point his courage failed him. He liked her too well-he realised that she was a girl to be trusted and honoured -and that if he told her she would probably despise him for the rest of her life. And Philip Winterdick was a man who liked to be thought well eyes.

He looked away from her, and for what seemed an eternity neither of them spoke. Then Eva said almost in a whisper-

"But . . . but why need what you have just told me-make . . . anyany-difference?"

"Why-why need it make any-difference?" Philip Winterdick could not believe that he had heard aright. He turned his head slowly and looked at the girl beside him, then the hot colour flooded his face from chin to forehead. He stood still staring at her.

"You mean . . . you don't mean that . . . that you want to marry

me?" he stammered at last. Her head was downbent, and he could not see her eyes, but he saw the little quivering smile that curved her lips as she said softly:

"Why not, if . . . if you really want to marry me?'

He felt as if someone had struck him a knock-out blow over the heart. She must care for him then-that was his first thought, and it brought with it a tumult of emotion that for the moment robbed him of breath. He clutched at his scattering wits des-

How could she care for him? She nounced, and for a moment he sat still

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OINTMENT

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nattered much to the Dennisons, he supposed, but all the same . . . He took a little step towards her.

"I don't think you quite understand," he said with a note of great gentleness in his voice. "My father is a ruined man, which means that I also am practically penniless. I've never done a stroke of work since I left Oxford. I daresay it's a thing to be ashamed of, but it's a fact all the same. I shall have to start at the bottom of the ladder . . . Oh, you don't understand," he said again almost

"She looked up then. "I think I do," she said. "But it loesn't frighten me at all. I've known what it is to be poor. I never expected to live in a house like this, and have a lot of money to spend.'

She laid a timid hand for a moment

"If you want to marry me, and I want to marry you, what does it matter what sort of house we live in?"

Philip Winterdick pulled himself together with an effort. "You're a brick," he said stumbling-

ly. "A real brick-I . . . I'm not half good enough for you. . . . He wondered if she considered herself engaged to him: there seemed nothing more to say: he wrung her hand

hard and let it go. He stammered out something about speaking to her father. about taking

"I am afraid your mother pleased," she said nervously. "I think you will find that my mo ther will welcome you," he said, looking away from her.

They had reached the gate Winterdick glanced at the girl and quickly

He wondered whether she expected him to kiss her. He longed to kick himself, because he felt so stilted and unnatural. He thanked his lucky stars when Peter came up the road and put an end to any further tete-a-tete. He took his departure hurriedly.

"I'll come round after dinner-if I may," he said to Eva. He went off at a

hurry," Peter said, rather uncomfortably, as he joined his sister. He wondered if Philip guessed that he had been to Kitty's and had purposely avoided him in consequence. He looked at Eva's flushed cheeks,

and a sudden suspicion grew in his Bonnie?" he asked sharply.

Eva slipped an arm through his. "I was going to tell you first, anyway." she said, with happy shyness. 'Peter, dear, he asked me to marry

Peter gasped. He stopped dead for moment, staring at his sister. "And you-what did you say?"

"I said 'Yes,' " she told him. "Well, I'll be dashed!" said Peter. He put an arm round her with rough affection.

"I say, I'm jolly glad—if you are," jolly happy," he added lamely.

Eva returned his kiss heartily. "Yes-I'm sure of that." little dazed and bewildered, but over him and put him at a disadvantage. everything the fact that life was glorious shone steadily. She had got everything she had ever wanted. The little

CHAPTER VIII. "Mr. Winterdick, if you please, sir." shoulders resolutely. Mr. Dennison was nodding over his after-dinner cigar when Philip was an-

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Yours faithfully.

O. E. FRANCIS.

had actually heard the maid's voice, when Philip himself walked into the

That woke him thoroughly, and he started up with out-stretched hand. "My dear boy-delighted. Sit down -have a cigar-take my chair. Nonsense, I insist."

Philip ignored chair and cigar alike; he stood stiffly by the table, looking at his future father-in-law. . "You expected me?" he asked. "Miss Dennison told you I should be com- laughing mirthlessly.

"No-not a word-but I'm delighted all the same. Do have a cigar-half a crown apiece they cost me. No? Very well, then. Sit down, my dear boy." Philip was a little nonplused; somehow he had been sure that Eva would

pave the way for him. He felt at a shabby disadvantage. Mr. Dennison looked at him and coughed nervously.

He always felt a little ill at ease bacco habit. Whenever you have a smacking kiss. "I say, I hope you'll be with the Winterdicks, though he would longing for a smoke or chew, just the winter." Perhaps the furiously have denied it had the sug- place a harmless No-To-Bac tablet in gestion been made. He wished with your mouth instead. All desire stops. all his heart that Philip would sit Shortly the habit is completely brok-She was sure of it. There were no down. He was a small man himself, en, and you are better og mentally, cloud on her horizon. She was still a and young Winterdick towered above physicetly, financially. It's so easy "Hot night," he ventured after a mo-

> There was a moment's silence: suddenly the young man squared his

"I've come to ask your permission to marry your daughter, sir," he said. It was out at last, and he drew a hardly knew him. How could she pos- in his big chair with a sort of sleepy long breath of relief. He had burned sibly care, particularly after what he bewilderment, uncertain whether he his boats behind him, and the sky

Mr. Dennison dropped his cigar-it was a habit of his when he was very Perhaps the thing that had chiefly

taken his breath away was the fact that a Winterdick-a Winterdick, of the Highway House-had called him "sir." He was almost stunned by the unexpectedness of it. Seeing that the cigar was apparent

ly to be allowed to burn a hole in the obviously expensive Persian carpet, Philip stooped, picked it up and placed it carefully on an ashtray. Mr. Dennison darted forward.

"You shouldn't have bothered-it didn't matter. I've plenty more." In his confusion he hardly knew what he was saying. His face was purple with excitement. The greatest dream of his life had come true, and here was the only son of the most blue-blooded and influential man in the county asking permission to marry his daughter!

terdick. She's a lucky girl." He stopped, struck by something in

There was a little silence, then Philip said deliberately:

am the lucky one?" He shook his shoulders as if to ric them of a disagreeable burden. "Look here, Mr. Dennison, we may as well be frank with one another." he said roughly "My father has told me of his conversation with you the other night. so it's useless for me to try and pretend innocence. . . I have a great admiration and a deep respect forfor Miss Dennison, but-but if it had not been for your offer . . ."

Winterdick. The words were forced from him and as soon as they were spoken he would have given his soul to recall

"I admire her and respect her more than any woman I know-except my own mother," he went on. "But it would be a lie if I told you I had any deen feeling for her. . . . We may as well have all the cards on the table while we are about it," he added

(To be continued)

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THE CRIMINAL.



specialist in crime, as on his course he at MAUNDER'S. Samples hops, and when he isn't serving time he's dodging gumshoe cops and he can never reach a clime where the avenger stops. He now and then

and swipes some sucker's hoard; but never may, like other men, the wholesome joys afford, and soon or later in the pen he has his bed and board. For him there is no peace of mind, no rest at set of sun, and moral people and refined he evermore must shun and if he hears a step behind, his impulse is to run. His nerves forsakes him when he's old, his days are days of dread, the step that once was firm and bold is like a rabbit's tread, and, shaking in the dark and cold, he wishes he were dead. And if he'd use the clever brain with which he is endowed, for purposes of honest gain, in ways by law allowed, when old age gets him he might train with any classy crowd. 'Tis strange that men of splendid gifts elect with crooks to chase and try out all the evil shifts that stern detectives trace, and join the caravan that drifts to prison and disgrace. 'Tis strange because they well must know the end of such a trail; the law will dog them to and fro and in the end prevail; and crime will bring them only woe, and long years in a jail.

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"I'm delighted-of course. I'm 'de lighted. It's been the dream of my life." He was too pleased to be diplomatic.

"Marry her by all means, Mr. Winthe young man's face.

"Isn't that a mistake? Isn't it I who

The elder man broke in eagerly: "Not another word, Mr. Winterdick, assure you I don't wish to hear another word. Any little assistance may be able to give your father is more than repaid by the fact that you have done my daughter the honour to

"But I don't love her."

them. But it was too late

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