

my loan that may be required, deserves more consideration than it seems to have received. Nor do we believe that it will be found impossible to complete within the present year a larger portion of the defences of Quebec than the insignificant sum of \$3,000 is likely to suffice for. It is well to be that the Americans will be too wise to count a second war immediately after the close of such a struggle as they have been engaged in for the last four years; but the exhaustion of war is never fully felt until after a short interval of peace, just as the weakness of disease shows itself only after fever has subsided. The risk of hostilities will be infinitely less in the second than in the first year of peace, whenever it may come, and the blot in the Government scheme is, that it makes admissible arrangements for defence to be perfected only when the chief danger will have passed away. It is noticeable, too, that a silence, which we hope is not ominous, was maintained as to any provision for the naval protection of the river and lake frontier. We have no sufficient supply of suitable ironclads and gunboats at present allot for any such purpose, and no trace is to be found in the Navy Estimates of an intention to supply the deficiency. If the storm should come, we do not doubt the spirit in which it will be faced, but we do not see any due appreciation of the value of the time which may intervene before our preparations may be put to the test. In matters of this kind it cannot be so often repeated that promptitude is worth all other military virtues at together.

AN M. D'S. TALE.

(Continued.)

Was it a woman, or could I be dreaming? No one, certainly no woman, had any business in the shrubbery, I reflected, this bitter frosty night. Yet there the tall slight figure, with some dusky tinge on, was passing quickly before me. Soon the gate of the shrubbery was opened and silently shut, and, whoever she was, he figure disappeared amongst the laurels.

I was on the point of dropping the blind, and thinking it a bad maid going to meet the young keeper for a few minutes' chat, when another female figure, tall as the other, and also loosely wrapped in a grey shawl, came out from the house to the path.

She was evidently undecided what to do, as she paused and listened; that instant the moon came brightly out from a cloud, and I saw it was Miss Vandeleur's face, but pale and terror-stricken.

In a moment an awful fancy seized me. The moon's power had drawn out Jack's wife, and Kate had followed but lost sight of her. Mrs. Arden might do herself no harm beyond catching a cold, or she might destroy herself; but what of Kate? What if she were perceived by Mrs. Arden, and the latter, in her frenzy, were to turn upon her? The idea was too awful. I hastily flung on my cloak, rushed down-stairs, and in the hall met Mrs. Arden, calm and bright as ever.

She was habited just as when she left the drawing-room, and carried a candle and a book.

"Mr. Tracy! what is amiss? You might have seen a ghost!" she said.

"I—I fancied I—Excuse my agitation? Where is Miss Vandeleur?"

"Kate! In her room, to be sure!"

"Well, but I thought I saw her just now on the lawn. By-the-by," added I, as a thought struck me, "where is Mrs. Awdry?"

"I have just been down to fetch her the second volume of 'Stolen Secrets.' But what's amiss with you? what has happened?"

"Will you oblige me by taking up the book to Mrs. Awdry, and then saying Good-night to me from the upper landing? I will tell you my dreams in the morning," I added lightly.

"After a good night's sleep, I hope," said she, and passed upstairs. I paced impatiently up and down the hall till steps were heard above, and Mrs. Awdry said softly, "My good Mr. Tracy, don't terrify us poor women to death, but go and join the men in the smoking-room, or else ring for Hastings to bring you hot water, and have a sedative before you go up-stairs! Good-night!" Mrs. Arden also said Good-night, and before I could rejoin they had both retired. Was it a dream of mine, or had I seen two people outside? Miss Vandeleur I could not be mistaken in; at all events I would look out at the night. I opened the door and passed on to the lawn. There was a touch of frost in the air; and all was silent except the monotonous fall of water over a distant wheel. Rapidly passing into the shrubbery where I had seen the figures disappear, I looked up and down the long walks, but beyond the bare leafless arms of trees and many a dark shadow chequering the moonlit ground, I saw nothing. Brushing through the laurels, I vaulted the paling and found myself in the park. Few scenes are more lovely than an English park in the moonlight—the dark clumps of trees and ruminating cattle, and silvery grass shrouded by mists here and there, are always engaging; but I had no time for an artistic glance just then; I was looking for a moving figure. Hah! there was something on that rise, but now it had disappeared! I ran to the hillock, dashed through the mist and down into the glade in time to hear a snort or two, and a fine hind joined a troop of ten or dozen others, and all trotted off into the darkness. With a laugh I retraced my steps, and thinking all must have been a delusion which, as Mrs. Awdry had suggested, would best be cured by a glass of brandy-and-water, I resolved to punish Hastings for my nocturnal ramble, and returned to ring him up.

Soon I perceived I had missed my way, and as each turn I took round the gnarled hawthorne only led me up one hill and down another glade shrouded in the same blue mist till all looked identical, I began to think my adventures were not yet over. I had never been in this part of the park before, and, though I approached a large fir wood at the side, did not like venturing into it; better be lost in an open park, I reflected, than plunge about in a dark wood, and perhaps fall into an old quarry. So I passed down the edge of it to an open ride. I had entered this, when to my amazement the same figure I had seen from the window crossed it at right angles some way in front. A moment more and the second figure followed. I dashed up the ride and grazed down the cross-path; it led into a thick haze that cut off all further investigation of the mysterious wanderers, and they were not in sight. I listened and heard no footfalls.

"They are in the park," I thought; "I will secure them at once, or at all events see the dénouement of all this."

Turning my head, however, I saw the house at the other end of the park, and a light in a small window that I conjectured must be the pantry. To reach this window and tap at it took me not a moment's time. I heard some one give a violent start, and then the valiant Hastings called out (to some imaginary ally, for no other slept indoors), "Thieves! mercy on us! thieves! here, John, bring my blunderbuss, and take you the big carver!"

"Hold your stupid noise, Hastings," I said, "and come out quickly without saying a word to any one: you will find the front door open. I want you for a guide."

After a minute or two he appeared on the lawn with a dark lantern (that he had forgotten to light), and a sword, as if to attack poachers.

"Drop those," I said, "and come on at once. Two of the ladies are in the park, and I fear the worst." We hurried on in silence down the ride and through the haze to a height over-looking the park, where we paused a moment. Hastings was puffing like a grampus over what might be a tablecloth he wore as a necktie. He evidently thought me light-headed, and began to wish he had kept his sword. I descended the long dip with intense eagerness. It led down to the Exe, and like a clear white ribbon the river wound round this side of the domain. I saw no signs of the ladies, and once more began to doubt my own sanity. Turning to my guide I said,—

"Well, Hastings, did you hear any one moving in the house before I knocked at the window?"

"I did, sir; the gentlemen are still in the gun-room; but I heard some lady pass my door, and fancied I heard the drawing-room window open. But I had a good deal to do to the plate; and it doesn't do, you know, sir," he added meaningly, "to take any notice of one's fancies."

I was going to blow him up for his cowardice, when I saw one of my phantoms passing quickly to the waterside, and the other following.

"Stay, Hastings, not a word! Look there!"

"It is my lady and Miss Vandeleur, I think, sir," he said.

We were somewhat hidden, and stood rooted to the ground in utter amazement. The first figure turned as the river's edge, and seeing Miss Vandeleur following, waited for her; we could see them parleying as it seemed, and then they walked along the side to a clump of low willows. The moon was out brightly at this time, so I could see distinctly what occurred. The first figure stepped into a boat under the trees, the other delayed.

"Good heavens, sir!" said the butler, "run! There are no oars in her, and the lash is only a hundred yards off below the willows!"

I was off like a shot long before he had ended, and sped to the boat, but not in time to prevent both ladies getting in and pushing off into the stream! They saw me, and Mrs. Awdry, flinging the boat-hook into the water, stood up in the stern, while poor Kate covered on the benches.

"Save me, Mr. Tracy," she cried; "oh save us!"

"All right, my darling," I called; "look out!" and was instantly in the water up to my knees, when, horror of horrors! Mrs. Awdry raised a knife that gleamed in the moonlight responsive to her own wild eyes, and said coldly, sternly, and impressively, as she held it over Kate,—

"Come a foot nearer us and I strike! We are going to have a new sensation to-night!"

I stood in utter despair, not daring to move, and the boat whirling round heavily swung off into deeper water past me, while Mrs. Awdry stood dressed in white with her hair loose, and the gleaming knife over her head, like some fury bearing off poor Kate to destruction. She was raving mad, I saw, and, awful as the situation was, I felt instinctively it was best to be quiet.

"Keep up, my brave Kate! Wait a moment," I called, "and help is at hand!"

Mrs. Awdry did not seem to heed this, but raised a wild snatch of Italian, *Dolce vendetta!* and glared now at the moon above, now at poor trembling Miss Vandeleur below. As the boat moved into the centre of the river I ventured to emerge and run along the bank, keeping a vigilant watch on Mrs. Awdry's movements. Soon the boat ceased to whirl round, and shot steadily on, and I heard the increasing rush and roar of what had seemed from the lawn like a water wheel, but was in reality a lasher or a backwater, where the Exe, swollen with the late floods of autumn,