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privato joke.

"What the devil are you laughing

"Oh, at the girl," said Sir James

"You know, or, rather, you don't know,

that she has be nebrought up by Lady

Lascelles on a system of her own-I

mean her ladyship's own. Innocence,

but-er-but the things most girls

"Ah, does it answer?" asked Lord

"Well-yes. That is to say, the sys

tem has produced the sweetest and

it will answer presently, when-when

"About one hour and a quarter,"

"And weren't you struck with her?

"Dash it all, no! The girl-Decima!

"Don't knew. 'Pon my word,

He yawned and took out his cigar

"Good-bye, Starke, I'll think over

He left the house and walked across

the park to his flat in Regent Man-

sions. Men and women-especially the

latter-glanced at the handsome, list

less face curiously, and now and again

the passers-by said something like

"That's the famous Lord Gaunt

But "the famous Lord Gaunt" strode

Great traveler, and-er-you know."

on, taking no heed, his eyes fixed b

His flat was on the first floor, and

as he entered the vestibule, carpeted

with lion and leopard-skins, and lin-

ed with trophies of the chase, he smell-

ed the scent of a cigarette coming

He pushed the thick oak door open

at a man lying full length on the sad-

The man rose with a smile and a

"Halloo, Gaunt!" and Lord Gaunt stood

stock still, with a face set and white

CHAPTER III.

The two men stood and looked at

each other; hord Gaunt white and

stern, the visitor with a pleasant but

He was a fair man-one of those de-

licately fair men whose age it is so

difficult to tell-with a good-looking

almost handsome face, with bright

blue eyes, and shapely lips which were

not concealed by a mustache, but

seemed, together with the eyes, to say,

Believe me, my owner is the personi

cation of innocence and guileless-

less. He has nothing to conceal, no

had conscience to worry, no remors

to torture him, and so he faces the

world with a bland and child-like

This is what the face had been train-

ed to say, and it said it with almost

invariable auccess; only on very rare

occasions did the mask slip and the

real nature behind it reveal itself;

for, with all his smiling lips and his

blue eyes, Morgan Thorpe was as un-

scrupulous a villain, as false a man as ever trod this villain-ridden earth.

He was dressed in a suit of light

weed which fitted his graceful figure

to perfection, and as he raised his

hand-white and well-formed as a wo-

man's and lightly pushed back his neavy hair, which had been ruffled by the silken sofa cushion, a splendid ring shone on the taper finger. The two men formed a marked con rast. Lord Gaunt, with his classical face, tragic and almost awe-inspiring in its whiteness and sternness, with his dark eyes lighted as by a smoldering fire; the other man fair and denair, with the smile of an audacious child, or a heartless woman laugh-

It was Morgan Thorpe who spok

ng as she wounds.

mile, and wishes all men well."

know at two thirds Decima's age.

Gaunt, looking into his hat.

other three quarters.'

scarcely noticed her.'

"And won't take it?"

this to each other:

fore him.

dle-bag couch.

and said nothing.

half-mocking smile.

"I dare say not. Good-bye.

"The aunt?"

ette-case.

your advice."

at?" inquired Gaunt, with languid sur-

Happiness "You mean Decima Deane," said Sir

evalty Recompensed.

CHAPTER II.

"I know. But-but-some mistake are lived down-forgotten."

"Not my kind," said Lord Gaunt. absolute innocence and purity, com-"Done with this arm? Right. Thanks." bined with a knowledge of everything He rolled down his sleeve and put on his coat.

'Where have you come from now?' asked Sir James, regarding him with an admiring and yet pitying eye; for the face and form were handsome and even grand, but the expression of the most fascinating mixture of frankness eye and the mouth was that which and innocence; the audacity of a child make women, when they see it, sigh and the sweetness of a girl; but how and grow sad, though they know not the girl suddenly discovers that she

"Africa. Think I'm going back. I is a woman, we shall see. Have you should have gone before this, by my seen much of her?" man, the steward at Leafmore, has been worrying me. Says that the place | said Lord Gaunt, wearily. "And judgis going to pieces and that he wants ing from Lady Lascellas' manner, me to go down there. Let it go to am not likely ever to make up the pieces! Who cares! Certainly not I!"

Why not go down there, and try and settle down for a time?" said Sir James. "Look here, Gaunt, you know the old story of the machine that would go too fast."

"I dare say, Stopped all at once, didn't it? And you think I shall stop like the machine? Well why not? What does it matter?" He laughed a grim, short laugh. "You doctors think life's the most important of all things; that's where you make the mistake. No use

offering you a fee, I suppose?" The famous physician, Sir James Starke, and the famous traveler, Lord Gaunt, had been at college together, though Sir James was much the elder. Sir James laughed and shook his

"Go down to Leafmore for a while,

"I'll see," said his lordship. He took up his hat and held it in his hand; then he said, listlessly; "Do you happen to know a Lady Lascelles?" "Lady Pauline Lascelles, do you

"I dare say. "Oh, yes; she is a patient of mine.

mean?

from the library. Why do you ask?" and standing on the threshold, looked

"Oh, for no particular reason. I just met her-met a niece of hers, a Miss-



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His voice was low and soft, the voice that seems to sing, so supple, so flute-like is it. They have that kind of voice in sunny Tuscany, and there must have been some southern blood in Thorpe's veins to account for the voice and the smile. Lord Gaunt's eyes remained fixed on the pleasant, boy "You have found me," he said, with

that kind of calm which comes to the brave man in supreme moments. Morgan Thorpe laughed.

"My dear fellow, how curt, how brusque! Is this the way in which to receive an old friend who has been searching for you for-how many weary months, years?"

Lord Gaunt placed his hat on the table, and going to the fern-filled fireplace, leaned his elbow on the mantelshelf and regarded his visitor steadi-

"How did you find me?" he asked as a man asks of the physician how he had discovered the fatal disease. The other man dropped back on the

ouch, stretched out his hand to the cigarette-box of sandal wood which James, his keen face lighting up. "Oh, stood on a table within reach, took a yes the loveliest, dearest girl in the cigarette and lighted it, arranged the cushions comfortably, and smiled up He laughed and chuckled as at some at Gaunt's stern, set face.

"My dear Barnard-I beg your pardon. I should say, my dear Lord Gaunt!—why do you glare at me so reproachfully, and like a Banquo's ghost?" he said, with the soft voice pitched in a tone of banter which made Gaunt's teeth close tightly and caused his hands to clinch at his side. "It is I who ought to look black and overwhelm you with reproaches. Just think

of it. Two years ago-" Gaunt's face worked, but his voice



GEORGE NEAL

vas stern and cold as he broke in: "There is no need to go back to the

"Pardon me; but I really think there is!" retorted Morgan Thorpe, stetching himself luxuriously, like a cat on a soft hearth-rug. "Your manner is so-what shall I say?-inhospitable. not to say repellent, that I fell it to he absolutely necessary to state the case for, shall we say, the plaintiff?" Gaunt did not move a limb or the eyes which rested upon the face upturned to him.

"What is the case?" continued Morgan Thorpe, delicately knocking the and, as Edward Barnard, you take it. from his cigarette on to the inlaid table. "Three years ago"-he half married at the little English church closed his eyes and regarded the at Vevey, on-what is the date?"

the narrow slits, as a cat regards the wretched mouse lying between her paws-"you and I, and another who shall be nameless, were the closest friends. We had met as fellow-travelers in an Alpine pass. Alpine pass sounds quite 'novelish,' dosen't it? I like the sound-Alpine pass! We spent the night with sundry guides and porters in a snow-bounds hut. The acquaintance thus pleasantly commenced ripened into a friendship which. I trust, may continue."

Gaunt made a gesture of impatience but Morgan Thorpe only smiled, as the cat might smile at the contortions of the mouse. "You are traveling along and are

solitary. I have my sister with me, a charming girl whom to see and know is to-love!"

Gaunt bit his lip and drew a long breath. "You see, you learn to know, you

ove her! For reasons best known to yourself you travel incog. You state that your name is Edward Barnard, a gentleman of independent means, traveling for pleasure and instruction. As Edward Barnard you lay siege to my sister's heart, and you take by storm that precious citadel." Gaunt shifted one foot, but his eyes never left the smiling, mocking face As the tortured man on the rack watches the executioner, so he watched Morgan Thorpe.

"The lady is, of course, virtuous There is only one road to happinessthe path which leads to matrimony,

white-faced man before him through Lord Gaunt remained stonily silent. may be needed

He was like the figure of the Sphinx

in his set calmness. "No matter; I have the date on the certificate in my pocket-book. You are married with all the forms and ceremonies prescribed by rigid law and exacting church, and you set out for your honey-moon: Alas! it is a short honey-moon! Before it has scarce begun to wane, you-

(To be continued.)

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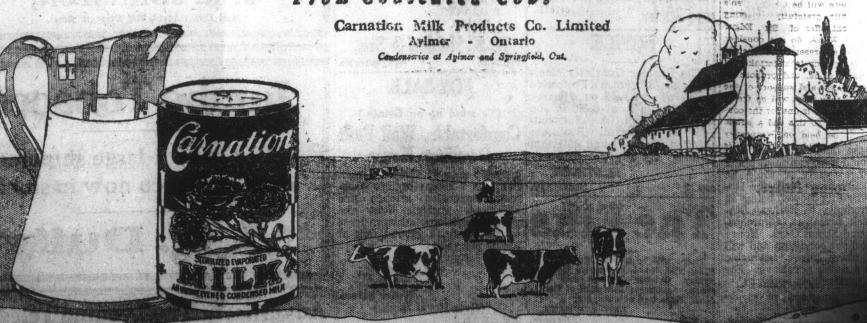
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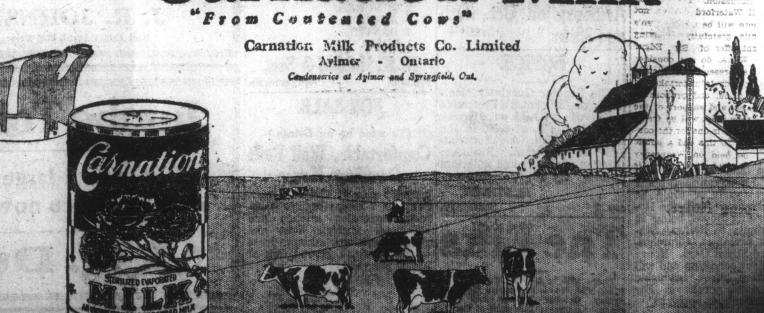
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