

dington, went mechanically through the day, with the vague knowledge of an old man with a wizened face, kind, deep-set eyes, and a cracked, shrill voice. The little churchyard, in its peaceful summer beauty rested and soothed her, and in the train, returning, she murmured grateful thanks to her companion for having arranged so exquisite a resting-place for her dead father. Mrs. Carlingford put out her arm and drew Margaret's head to her shoulder; and the girl rested thus, content, until the train came to Paddington. They drove thence to Euston for Margaret's luggage.

"Why did you have it sent here?" she asked.

"I did not feel sure that anybody would be in the house when they got there with it. This was the safest."

They drove from Euston to the Great Northern Station. Margaret asked if they had a railway journey before them.

"No," answered Mrs. Carlingford. "I am stopping there because there is an odd little Italian restaurant across the street where we can get some dinner."

At the Great Northern the luggage was again placed in a cloak room, and they walked across Euston Road to the little restaurant. At dinner, Mrs. Carlingford chattered with cheerful lightness, bent on rousing Margaret from her mood of depression.

"It will be rather fun finding ourselves in a strange house, won't it?" she cried, when they had finished. "One of my servants is to meet us there, and I told her to get another servant if she could. We must picnic a little, I expect. Never mind, dear, it will amuse you."

"A strange house?"

"I took it—for us. I can't ask you to Horsham, as Janet is so ill. Poor old dame, I'm afraid her days are numbered. I chose Highgate because it's pretty and elevated, and the air is bracing. A week or two there will do you no end of good."

Margaret smiled. Anywhere away from that flat would do her good.

An interminable drive through long, dreary streets followed. Margaret was very tired now, and longed for a chance to rest. As she leaned wearily back, she chanced to see that a breathless man was running along the pavement, evidently

following the cab. She carelessly called her companion's attention to him, and was surprised at the alarm which her words excited. Mrs. Carlingford turned quite white, and asked agitatedly for a description of the man.

"See, there he is," said Margaret; and her companion stretched a cautious head, and then leaned back and closed her eyes.

"I thought so," she cried, in an accent of relief. "It is one of those dreadful men who will follow you for miles, hoping for a chance to unload the luggage. They are very rude sometimes."

"Poor fellow, he looks starved," said Margaret.

"I shall stop the cab and give him a sixpence, and tell him not to follow," said Mrs. Carlingford; and this was done.

Suddenly a thought flashed to Margaret's brain as she looked curiously at her companion. Was Mrs. Carlingford afraid of being followed? Otherwise, why fear because a man had run after the cab? The curious and vaguely explained sending of the luggage to Euston, that stoppage at the Great Northern Station—was Mrs. Carlingford ingeniously concealing their movements? Why? Was this mystery in connection with her father? If so, she ought to know. If it were not about her father or herself, then her companion had something to conceal. Margaret, suspicious, troubled, determined to ask an explanation later. It was impossible now. The cab rattled over stones, and she could not talk.

It was twilight ere they found the house, and as they drove up to it the door opened, and an elderly woman appeared to welcome them.

"Jones," said Mrs. Carlingford, "is it endurable?"

"Yes, mum," answered the smiling Jones; "the house is very comfortable."

They went to a tiny drawing-room, where a cup of coffee was promptly served by a girl whom the invaluable Jones had secured from a neighbouring registry office. Margaret, too worn out to ask explanations, wanted only rest, and said she must go to bed.

Mrs. Carlingford took her in her arms and kissed her warmly; but Margaret drew back almost abruptly. A pained look flashed across Mrs. Carlingford's face and she followed Margaret's retreating figure with an intent, questioning gaze. She

was still standing, staring, when the elderly servant entered.

Jones was duly complimented by her mistress on the delightful little place she had found on such short notice.

"I'm glad you like it, mum," she said, with a pleased smile.

"It is very pleasant," said Mrs. Carlingford, walking about the room and looking at all the knick-knacks.

"It hasn't been lived in for some time," remarked Jones. "Things were rather dusty."

But Mrs. Carlingford was not listening. She was standing gazing with wide open eyes at a photograph that hung in a corner. She turned to the surprised Jones, and, with a harsh voice, demanded who was the landlord of the house.

"The agent mentioned his name, mum," said Jones; "some foreign name I don't remember."

Her mistress' look frightened the maid, so white had her face become, so bloodless her lips.

"I cannot sleep in this house," Mrs. Carlingford faltered the words in a whisper as she continued to stare at the photograph.

CHAPTER VII.

UPSTAIRS, Margaret suspicious of everybody, could find only restless, broken slumber. Distrust of Mrs. Carlingford fought with exhaustion, and would not let her sleep. She tossed about through what seemed never-ending hours; and at last sat bolt upright, listening eagerly. Her quick ear caught the sound of a stealthily closed door; and now there came to her the click of a latch. She sprang to the window and looked out through the curtains into the brilliant moonlight. Her ears had told her true. Mrs. Carlingford was slipping out of the front gate. A light cloak covered her from head to foot. It caught as she went out, and as she turned to disengage it Margaret saw that the dress beneath was not black. The girl held her breath as the head of the fleeing lady was suddenly thrown back; Margaret saw that Mrs. Carlingford was looking up at her window, but the heavy motoring veil entirely hid the face.

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THE P. J. SYNDICATE

Which was One Way of Dealing With Men who Get Rich at Other People's Expense

By J. J. BELL,

Author of "Wee Macgregor," "Thou Fool," &c.

"SURELY you aren't getting nervous, Witherow."

The speaker, a smartly-dressed rather handsome man of about forty, gave a genial laugh, without however looking up, from the correspondence on his writing table.

"But I am getting nervous," Witherow returned, rising from the easy chair and leaning against the mantelpiece. For a moment or two his anxious eyes rested on the other; then they began to rove about the luxuriously furnished private office. "Yes, Vasper, I'm infernally nervous, but I shouldn't have bothered you had I not chanced to catch sight of you at the station this morning. You don't often reach the office so early as this—why, it's not nine-thirty?"

"No. I'm earlier than usual. My reliable clerk and office boy are in for a pleasing surprise this morning. I pay them to be here at nine. This is evidently not their lucky day. But you were saying you were nervous, Witherow. May I ask why?"

"Oh, well, you see, Vasper," said the younger man apologetically, "it's about those mining shares, you know."

"What mining shares?" Vasper enquired pleasantly, as he slit an envelope.

"I mean the Honeydew Deeps. You remember—"

"Oh, Honeydew Deeps. What about them? Are you thinking of buying?"

"Buying?" Witherow's voice was bitter. "Buying? Great Heavens! I bought far more than I ought to have bought when they were round six pounds—don't you remember—and now they're somewhere about half a sovereign. They fell fifteen shillings yesterday on the latest rumour regarding the flood. Didn't you notice it?"

"I did," said Vasper carelessly. "But the flood may not be so serious after all, and then—"

"But what ought I to do? Ought I to sell and save what I can, or hold on the chance of a recovery?"

"It's hardly worth while selling, is it?"

"I'm in need of money. Still, if you advise—"

"You must not ask me to do that, my friend."

"But you advised me to buy the shares six months ago."

"I?" The syllable was turned to mild astonishment.

"At least you told me you were buying heavily; you said the mine was a rattling good thing."

"I could not have foreseen the flooding trouble. And I certainly never advised you to buy, Witherow. I don't believe in giving advice on such matters."

Witherow produced a cigarette and lit it with shaking fingers.

"I thought you did, Vasper," he said, not quite calmly. "At any rate, I took the hint. Everyone knows that you never make mistakes in these matters. Of course it's your business."

"What do you mean precisely?" The question was chilly.

"Oh, Lord knows," the young man answered in heavy tones. "But I can't afford to lose another sovereign. Do you mind answering one question?"

"What is it?"

"Have you sold your Honeydew Deeps?"

"You wish to know a great deal! What if I have?"

"Then it's true!—the story that's going round about you and some of your friends hammering the shares. Is it true?"

"What if it is?"

Witherow drew a long breath. "Curse you!" he whispered.

Vasper rose to his feet. "You had better clear out," he said evenly. "I'm busy this morning."

Looking savage, the younger man took a step forward, then halted, wavering.

"For God's sake tell me what I'm to do, Mr. Vasper."

"How can I tell you? You say I told you to buy the shares six months ago, and now you curse me. You must do as you think fit. I have an important engagement immediately."

"You won't tell me? Then I suppose I must sell. I'll sell this morning, and—and if they go up afterwards, I'll curse you to the end of my days. Do you hear, you devil? I wonder how many people you have ruined one way and another—you swindler!"

With something like a sob he flung out of the room and along the passage. A moment later the outer door shut with a crash.

Vasper shrugged his shoulders.

"The young fool, to have approached me in that spirit, when I could have made him his fortune! Had he apologised, I'd have given him a chance."

He rang the bell on his desk—rang it again.

"That clerk and boy of mine have earned the sack this time," he muttered at last.

But for a space, immersed in the papers before him, he forgot his belated employees. After all, they were mainly for show. Mr. Vasper did a large business, yet he could overtake most of it himself. The brass plate on the door bore the lettering, "J. B. Vasper, Accountant," but the designation was all but nominal.

At ten o'clock, his eyes on a sheet of figures, he was about to use the telephone, when he heard the outer door open. He rang the hand bell instead. Footsteps approached the private room, very leisurely. A tap fell on the panel.

"What do you mean—" he began, as the door was pushed inwards.

"Good morning," returned an unfamiliar voice, and a man of perhaps thirty entered the room. "No one in the office, so I took the liberty of finding my way to you, Mr. Vasper. Let me give you my card."

After a moments hesitation, and obviously annoyed, Vasper took the proffered card. He had business to do—business that must not be long