

UNCLE DICK;

Or, The Result of Diplomacy and Tact.

CHAPTER XIV.

An upward glance at the clock on the mantel. It was late; within an hour of midnight. The servants had already gone to bed. Going to their rooms she gently knocked at the door; called to one of them by name—

"Ellen!"

"Yes, ma'am." The reply in a frightened, startled voice. The tone betrayed her maid's fear that she was to hear bad news. The next words were a relief—

"You know where Mr. Masters lives?"

The possibility of a want of knowledge on the part of the servants never occurred to her. She was not in the least surprised when an affirmative answer was returned to her—

"Yes, ma'am."

"I want you to get up at once, Ellen—I am sure you will not mind—and dress yourself quickly. Go to Mr. Masters, give him my compliments, and ask him—ask him to come here—to be kind enough to come here at once."

"Yes, ma'am. Certainly."

The girl had listened in astonishment, but obediently set about the task set her. She was fond of children, was Ellen; was thankful too, that she had not, as she had feared at first, been called to hear bad news about Miss Gracie.

The maid had no thought of grumbling at the late service demanded of her, although greatly wondering at the message she was to deliver. The over-wrought, tired woman returned to the sick room and waited. Presently the little lips—for the hundredth time—shaped the question—

"I want Prince Charlie; won't he come and tell me about the fairy and Jack?"

The mother's heart was full of thankfulness that she had sent; that she had humbled herself to do so. She was able to bend over and whisper—

"Yes, darling. Mother has sent for him. He will be here directly."

She was without fear in making the promise; felt so sure he would come. He was a gentleman, he would understand. He would know how urgent must be the need which could demand his presence at that late hour—indeed, to send for him at all. Or would he think—No! She stifled it.

Waiting, waiting, waiting—wearily waiting! At last she heard the maid's returning steps on the path without; ran to the door and opened it. The girl spoke reluctantly; what she had to say made the mother turn sick at heart.

"Said, ma'am, it was too late to come out to-night. He would come round in the morning."

The mother's mind failed to grasp it: that message. The callous cruelty of it. It seemed too—too impossible. Had he misunderstood—misjudged her? Could it be? Had she fallen so low in his estimation? A crimson flood overspread her face. . . . After a pause, clutching at a straw, she inquired—

"Did you see him yourself?"

"Yes, ma'am. He seemed to wonder what you could want with him. Said it would keep, whatever it was, till the morning."

"Keep—till—the-morning?"

Gracie's pleading, her own promise, rang in her ears! Keep Till The Morning. The irony of it! She staggered against the wall, passed her hand across her brow—loath to believe that the author, fond of children, could behave so—asked again—

"You are quite sure you saw him yourself?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. I know Mr. Masters quite well by sight." She did—Masters, the blacksmith! She had been to his shop in the High Street, and in response to her ringing of his house bell, he had put his head out of his bedroom window and spoken to her. Not in a very pleasant tone; he was not pleased that his beauty sleep had been broken into.

He was an early-to-bed and early-to-rise old man. He could see no sense in turning out at past seven o'clock at night for any

one. Not even for a sick child or for the finest lady in the land.

As he went grumbling back to his bed the blacksmith muttered that some of them fine ladies seemed to think it was a nonner to be at their beck and call; summat to be proud of, it was, for a poor man like hisself. None of their airs for him—he wasn't having any, this time. Such was his grumble; weighted with a plethora of adjectives—unprintable kind.

The mother staggered back in her bedroom, to the child's side. White-faced, trembling in every limb, supported herself by the bed rail. Noted the hour: past eleven o'clock. The crucial time the doctor had spoken of was approaching.

Gracie was in a quite rational mood. Her brightly burning eyes were fixed on her mother as she entered the room, and she spoke at once, eagerly—as eagerly as the feeble little lips could frame words—stuttering in her eagerness—

"Has Pr—Prince Charlie come yet, mamma?"

Right down in the depths of despair sank the mother's heart. She took the child's hot hand in her own; gently brushed the curls away from the little forehead with the other. As she did so the hot dryness of that brow was brought to her notice afresh. It was necessary to answer the child; the reply was given gently. Yet the utterance of each word was as a stab to her—

"Not—not yet, darling."

A little whimpering, plaintive voice uprose from amongst the pillows—

"I want him, mamma—won't he come?"

How was she to gratify the little one's desire: to get Prince Charlie there? The doctor had warned her that at this stage the child's demands were to be granted if possible. If possible. She had sent and he had refused to come. The doctor's words rang in her ears. If possible.

She thought of the man sitting—as she knew he would be—shaping with his pen, fictional pathetic pictures, intended to draw tears from the tender-hearted. She thought of the real pathos of this child, perhaps dying, to whom he might bring life and hope by his mere immediate presence. And he had returned that message: That It Would Keep.

The child tossed uneasily from side to side. The corners of the arched little mouth went down threateningly. If possible! Was it possible for her to sink her womanhood even deeper? To humble herself to beg of him to come? Would he come even if she did?

Then the direction came from the little form tossing restlessly from side to side; the weak voice whispered—

"You said he would come, mamma. Won't you fetch him? He will come if you fetch him."

Would he? Was that the possibility? Was the little one wise in saying that? She remembered that out of the mouths of babes and—Well, she could try. The mother in her was stronger than all else: prevailed.

There was no menal balance used in her decision. No conscious weighing of pros and cons. The duty—if aught prompted by love—is duty—stood clear before her. Something greater than her own will impelled her decision. She would go to him herself.

Glancing at the clock again, she saw that the recorded time was half-past eleven. She would go to him. Go on her knees to him: would not spare herself further to him, for God's sake, to be more merciful than he had shown himself in his message. Entreat him not to put off until to-morrow—when it might be too late—that which could be done to-night.

Self-blame just then she was very full of bitterness for not having gone to him in the first instance herself. Tortured herself with the thought that it might now be too late. Wondered if God would forgive her obstinate pride. Still be merciful to her: still let her keep her child

She bent over the bed and spoke close into the little ear. Made spasmodic but unavailing attempts to control her emotion; could not bring herself to utter the words more than just audibly.

"You'll be quite still, darling, won't you, whilst mother goes to fetch him."

The face turned upwards. The mother kissed it passionately, tenderly, again and again. The wasted little arms went around her neck and clung there gratefully. Mother was going to fetch Prince Charlie!

From the adjoining room the woman who assisted in the child's nursing came; posted herself by the bedside. Then the mother—staggering as if unknown gaped before her—left the room. In the hall slipped on the cloak which she remembered, he had buttoned.

She spent no time in seeking a hat. Swung the hood up from behind over her head. So hurried out of the house.

So, into the night.

CHAPTER XV.

Wivernsea was asleep. Like its blacksmith, it believed in the theory of early rising. Not a light was to be seen in one of the windows she passed. Not until she came to the end of the Marine Terrace. There she saw an illuminated window: her beacon.

It was but a short distance from her own place; not ten minutes walk. She seems to have spent as many hours in covering it. Despite the proverb, time does not always fly.

The house which Masters lodged in was known to her. He had described the quaintness of its old-fashioned bay window; the only one in the row. She would have known it as his place without even the beacon light for identification. He was a slave of the lamp: consumed the midnight oil.

As she made towards the light she prayed, almost loud. Prayed for a conquering power—over her pride. That she might be humble. For the framing of words to move this man when she besought him to come. Soulfully prayed that God would incline his heart to hear her prayer.

Three steps—she faltered up them; proximity to her goal rendered her invertebrate—brought her to the level of the door. If she put her hand over the rails she could tap at the window. It would be better so than disturbing the household by knocking. She tapped.

Her actions elicited no response! She waited, with a hard-beating heart. Still no reply: dead silence! Had he expected this—this visit of hers and resolved to remain obdurate?

The window blind was not pulled down to its full length. Through the lace edging she could see the man calmly writing; writing as if thoroughly engrossed in his work. Evidently the thought of his cruelty did not trouble him in the least.

In desperation, there seemed nothing else to do, she used her fingers again: loudly. Masters looked up; started in astonishment. Heard a distinct tapping on the glass of his window.

He walked to the window; pulled the cord, attached to a spring roller, and in a moment the blind had shot up. Outside all was moonlight brightness. At first he looked straight away; saw only the sea with the intervening roadway. Then, suddenly, at the side, on the steps, saw a woman with a ghastly white, haggard face looking at him! The Woman He Loved!

Start! He almost jumped in his amazement! Was he dreaming? Was it his phantasy? Then he came plump to earth; lost no further time in surmises; went to the door. The room opened on to the hall; the street door was but a couple of yards away. He had gripped its handle and opened it in a moment. The woman was there—no phantasy—flesh and blood, clinging to the railings.

"My God! What has happened to bring you at this hour?" "Just—a-moment!"

The answer given weakly; breathlessly. A swerve, and she would have fallen but for an almost nerveless clutch at the railings—but that he was by her side in a moment, with a strong upholding arm round her waist.

There was unconsciousness of his clasp; things were going round with her. . . . She had a feeling of being lifted; then set down again. Then—then a blankness; consciousness left her.

For a brief moment Masters held her in his arms; her whole weight. For a brief moment the blood coursed wildly through his veins; surged brainwards. A wild, mad impulse seized him: to press his

lips to hers, helpless, passive as she lay there.

With difficulty he restrained himself. Laid down his burden reverently; her angel's face seemed eloquent of innocence. Once, surely once on a time, it had spoken truth. Ah! What Might Have Been.

She opened her eyes. Found herself lying on a sofa. Masters standing by her side, holding brandy. She tried, feebly, to push it away; but his now full-of-authority voice commanded—

"Drink!"

She was constrained to so do by reason of a hand which went under and lifted her head; another which placed the glass to her lips. . . . Struggling to a sitting position, passing her hand across her eyes, with a pitiful little drooping at the corners of her mouth, she said—

"I beg your pardon for—Was I silly? Did I—I felt a little faint."

He remained watching her. His own face had grown almost the color of hers. He had touched her, had had her hand in his, had felt the softness of her hair! It seemed to him as if the noise of the beating of his heart drowned the ticking of the clock.

"Tell me," he inquired, still supporting her, "what brings you here so late?"

She shook her head. Womanlike, answered his question by another—

"Didn't the girl tell you?"

"What girl?" he asked in surprise. "Didn't the girl tell me what?"

"About Gracie. I—I sent to you half-an-hour ago. She—they tell me—I think—Oh, my God!—I am so—so afraid!—is dying. She asked for you again and again. You sent a message you would come to-morrow."

"I!" His astonished look, the blaze of suddenly aroused anger in his eyes, frightened her. Could he be even now deceiving her? His kindness was it falsity? She hurried on with her explanation; in her embarrassment the words tumbled from her lips.

(To be continued.)

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

OUTLIVED ALL RIVALS SAVE ONE IN 240 YEARS.

Has Posts Scattered Over a Domain Covering 3,700,000 Square Miles.

The history of the famous Hudson's Bay Company dates from 1670, when a license to trade in furs in Hudson (now Hudson) Bay was granted to a company which included several men of high rank. The Duke of York, the Duke of Albemarle and the Earl of Shaftesbury were among them.

The capital was £3,420, not a great amount with which to fight the rival companies and the intrepid individual agents, chiefly French, whose competition was hard on the new enterprise. But the conquest of Canada helped it a good deal. English traders learned the ways of the Indians and their system of the exchange of goods.

Toward 1648 some merchants of Montreal combined to explore the fur country and founded that powerful Northwest Company, which soon became the centre of the fur trade. In 1793 this new company shipped furs to the value of no less than £120,000, and the existence of the Hudson's Bay Company was again threatened.

In "Conjuror's House" Stewart Edward White has given us glimpses of the picturesquely

HIGH-HANDED METHODS

of "the company"—which now-a-days has but one meaning, the Hudson's Bay Company. But according to a writer in Fur News its early revival was no better.

"It shrank from no act, however iniquitous," says the account. "Its agents imposed on their own employees and speculated on the misery of the Indians consequently realizing immense profits in spite of the competition of new Russian and American companies."

The American Fur Company, for instance, was founded in 1809 with a capital of \$1,000,000 and operated west of the Rocky Mountains. The competition of all these rivals put the Hudson's Bay Company into greater danger than it ever had been.

But in 1821 a treaty was made amalgamating the Hudson Bay and Northwest companies under the title the Hudson's Bay Fur Company. At present it has only one rival of importance, the American St. Louis Fur Company.

The Hudson's Bay Company has posts scattered over a domain covering 3,700,000 square miles. Its principal establishments are on James Bay and toward the frontiers of upper Canada, on lakes Athabasca, Winnipeg, Methve, and near the Columbia, Mackenzie, Saskatchewan and Assiniboine rivers. Fort York, commanding the course of the River Nelson, is the headquarters of the company and contains

ITS PRINCIPAL DEPOT.

In 1842 it took a lease of all the Russian establishments in North America at an annual rent of \$40,000, so that it is now working on its own account the vast tracts of country between the Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean.

The following is a list of the quantities of skins and furs despatched to Europe by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1833-34, which will give an exact idea of the extent of its trade:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Beavers | 1,074 |
| Skins and young beavers | 92,094 |
| Muskkrats | 694,092 |
| Badgers | 1,069 |
| Bears | 7,451 |
| Ermines | 491 |
| Foxes | 9,837 |
| Lynxes | 14,255 |
| Sables | 64,490 |
| Polecats | 25,100 |
| Otters | 22,303 |
| Raccoons | 713 |
| Swans | 7,918 |
| Wolves | 8,484 |
| Wolverines | 1,571 |

Such figures ought to bring in a large profit to the Hudson's Bay Company, but unfortunately they have not been maintained, and for the last twenty years have been decreasing.

Until 1839 the company was in a flourishing condition. In that year the number of furs exported was 2,350,000, but since then the trade has gradually declined, and this number is now reduced by one-half at least.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE,

taken from the "Voyage of Capt. Robert Lade," shows on what terms exchanges were formerly made with the Indians. Beaver skins were then the currency employed in buying and selling. The Indians paid

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| For | Beaver skins, |
| One gun | 10 |
| Half pound powder | 1 |
| Four pounds shot | 1 |
| One axe | 1 |
| Six knives | 1 |
| One pound glass beads | 1 |
| One laced coat | 6 |
| One coat not laced | 5 |
| One laced female dress | 6 |
| One pound tobacco | 1 |
| One box powder | 1 |
| One comb and one mirror | 2 |

But a few years ago beaver skins became so scarce that the currency had to be changed. Bison furs are now the medium of trade. When an Indian presents himself at the fort the agents of the company give him as many pieces of wood as he brings skins, and he exchanges these pieces of wood for manufactured articles on the premises, and as the company fixes the price of the articles it buys and sells it cannot fail to realize large profits.

FAMOUS DISHES IN LONDON.

Inns Which Have Won Success Through One Dish.

Formerly every London inn with any pretension at all had its own special dish, upon whose excellence it prided itself and to partake of which patrons travelled many miles. Eel pies were once the great features of the duellist's breakfast served at the old Sluice House, near Finsbury Park. The necessary quantity of fish was regularly dredged up from the stream which ran under the windows. The pies are still to be had, but the eels are obtained from a nearby fish market. Simpson's in the Strand is noted for its fish dinners. The place was once very popular, and even to-day there is a certain following who swear by this repast. For a certain sum the guest eats as much of a variety of fish as he cares to. The Ship and Turtle, in Leadenhall street, is noted for three things—the turtle soup, the turbot and the Madeira. The first named is prepared after an old recipe which has been in the possession of the hosts of the house for over a quarter of a century. Only certain parts of the turtle are used and these are stewed and seasoned with a variety of herbs and spices, besides lemon and Madeira, making a most delectable dish. Another inn boasts of a special dish in the shape of a saddle of Southdown mutton. This is wheeled up to the table on a movable arrangement, in order that each individual may select the particular cut to which he is partial. The mutton is kept warm by means of water heated by a lamp.