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THE Phantom Lover.

(By the Author of "A Bachelor Husband.")

CHAPTER III.

It made him feel uncomfortable to read what she had written; it was really only quite an ordinary letter of regret that she had not seen him last night, but Micky imagined he could read more between the lines. . . . I quite hoped you would drop in, if only for a few moments," so she wrote. "It's been so dull, I am writing this alone in the library."
"Micky knew that library well; he had seen her there so often. He had seen her there together talking sweet nothings; he wondered if he would have been an engaged man by this time if that relative of the Delands had not so conveniently died, and if Esther had not chosen his particular street in which to weep.
"He screwed the letter up and tossed it into the fire; he would answer it some time, or call there was no immediate hurry. When he had finished his breakfast he went to his locked desk and took out Ashton's letter—somehow until he actually saw it again he could not quite believe that the events of last night had not all been a dream; but the letter was real enough, at all events, with callous beginning to "Dear Lizzie."
"The morning seemed to drag; twice people rang him up on the phone and asked him to lunch, but Micky was not in the mood for lunch; he felt a suppressed sort of excitement, as if something of great import were about to happen.
Driver looked at him woodenly once or twice; his face was an expressionless as his voice, but his dull eyes saw everything, and behind them his keen brain wondered what had happened to make Micky so restless.
"Towards one o'clock he ventured a gentle reminder.
"You have an engagement for half-

YOUNG GIRLS NEED CARE

Mothers! Watch Your Daughters' Health

Health is Happiness



From the time a girl reaches the age of twelve until womanhood is established she needs all the care and thoughtful mother can give.
The condition that the girl is then passing through is so critical and may have such far-reaching effects upon her future happiness and health that it is almost criminal for a mother or guardian to withhold counsel and advice.
Many a woman has suffered years of prolonged pain and misery through having been the victim of thoughtlessness or ignorance on the part of those who should have guided her through the dangers and difficulties that beset this period.
Mothers should teach their girls what danger comes from standing around with cold or wet feet, from lifting heavy articles, and from overworking. Do not let her overstudy. If she complains of headache, pains in the back and lower limbs, or if you notice a slowness of thought, nervousness or irritability on the part of your daughter, make life easier for her. She needs thoughtful care for a few years.
In all such cases Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound should be given as it is especially adapted for such conditions. It contains nothing that can injure and can be taken in perfect safety.
Read how Mrs. Eicher helped her daughter. She says:
"At the age of sixteen my daughter was having trouble every month. She had pains across her back and in her sides. Every month her back would pain her so she could not do her work and would have to lie down. My married daughter recommended Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I read the books which were left at my door. She took it faithfully and in no regular and has no pain. We recommend the Vegetable Compound and give you permission to publish this letter in your little books and in the newspapers."
Mrs. KATIE EICHER, 408 N. PATRICK ST., Philadelphia, Pa.
Mrs. Williams will profit by her own experience. She says:
"When I was thirteen years old I had sick spells each month and so I was very backward I would hear the pain and my mother knew nothing about it that I look it regularly after that until I had taken two bottles and I did not have any more pain or backache and have been a healthy, strong woman. I am now 29 years old and have a little girl of my own, and when she gets old enough I shall give her none other than Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."
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the wrong address? Supposing . . . oh, supposing a thousand and one things! Micky was full of apprehension when at last the taxicab stopped at the corner of the Brixton Road and the driver came to the door to ask what number.
Micky scrambled out.
"Oh, I'll walk the rest of the way." He said the man liberally, and set out along the crowded pathway. There were so many people about that he thought it must be a market day or something. A word with a policeman elicited the information that he was at quite the wrong end of the street rather glad. He felt that he needed time in which to collect his thoughts, and yet when at last he reached his destination he felt as nervous as a kitten and strongly inclined to go back. But he went on and up the bare strip of garden which led to the front door of the house. It wasn't such a had-looking house, he thought. Not nearly as bad as he had expected from the girl's description. In fact, once upon a time it must have been rather a palatial residence, but all the windows now were boxed up with cheap, starch-looking curtains, and there was a sort of third-rate atmosphere about the basement and the cheap knocker on the front door.
Micky looked for a bell, but there wasn't one, so he knocked.
It seemed a long time before anybody came. When at last they did he heard them coming for a long time before the door was opened, heard slipshod steps on shiny linoleum, and a husky sort of breathless cough.
The owner of the cough was young and scared-looking, in shoes several sizes too large for her, and a skirt several inches too short. When Micky asked for Miss Shepstone she stared without answering for a moment, then she turned and stopped back the way she had come, leaving the door on the chain.
Micky chuckled to himself; she evidently did not like the look of him. He waited patiently; then he heard another step along the shiny linoleum floor of the hall—a very different step this time—and, turning eagerly, he saw Esther herself in the doorway.
"I didn't really think you would come," she said breathlessly.
For a moment Micky could not find his tongue. If he had thought this girl pretty last night with the tears in her eyes he thought her a thousand times prettier now. She looked as if some magic hand had wiped the distress from her face and convinced her that the sun still shone.
She wore the same clothes she had worn last night, but even they seemed somewhat to have changed. There was a bunch of violets pinned in her jacket. Micky wondered if it were the violets that were responsible for the alteration.
"When I make an appointment I always keep it," he said.
He had almost added "with any one like you," but thought better of it. "And are you going to let me take you out to tea?" he asked.
She hesitated; she glanced back into the dingy hall behind her.
"I am leaving here to-day," she said. "My box has gone already. If you will wait a moment . . . I would ask you in, but you'd hate it so."
"I'll wait outside," said Micky.
He went down into the street. For the moment he had quite forgotten all about Ashton and the letter which must by this time be in Esther's possession.
"And what about Charlie?" he asked whimsically when she joined him. She smiled, shaking her head.
"I sent him on—in a basket. Nobody wants him here—he only gets badgered about all day long; so I'm taking him with me. Do you think I ought not to?"
"I think Charlie is a most fortunate cat," said Micky.
She did not take him seriously.
"I think he will be happier with me anyway," she said. "I'm going to quite a nice boarding-house now. I went out this morning and found it." She looked up at him with a smile. "I don't think even you would mind coming to tea there," she said.
"I thought you were going to say mind coming there to Mrs. Micky," he told her audaciously. "I've been looking about for fresh diggings; I'm tired of mine." He stopped and glanced behind him. "Can we get a taxicab here?"
"I'm not tired," she said quickly.
"Well, I must admit that I am," Micky answered. He hated walking at the best of times, and he did not like to suggest another taxicab. "Let's go on top."
They climbed up and found a front seat; there was a working man next to them smoking shag on a clay pipe; he looked at Micky and Esther doubtfully, then asked—
"Does your good lady mind smoke, mister?"
Esther flushed.
"I don't mind at all," she said, laughing.
"You got home all right last night, then?" Micky said presently. "After you had gone I wished I had seen you safely in . . ."
"It's kind of you, but I was quite all right." There was a note of constraint in her voice. "I should like to thank you for what you did for me last night," she said hesitatingly. "If it hadn't been for you . . ." She stopped.
Micky did not know what to say. "Anyway, it's all right now, eh?"

MOTHER!
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He asked presently, with awkward cheerfulness, "I thought it would be; when things look so black that they can't possibly look any blacker, they always begin to mend. I've found that out before; I don't know if you have."
"I found it out this morning."
Micky looked down at her. She was sitting with her hands clasped together in her lap; there was a little flush in her cheeks, and her lips were curved into a faint smile.
"It seems so wonderful too," she went on softly, "that it should have happened on New Year's Day."
"Fares, all fares, please," said the conductor beside them. Micky dived into a pocket and found a shilling.
"Two, please," he said.
He had paid for and shared taxicabs with Marie Deland times without number, but it had never given him quite the same pleasurable little thrill as he experienced at this moment.
There was something so pleasantly familiar about this tramcar ride, the fact of sharing the same uncomfortable seat with Esther Shepstone.
"Penny ones?" the conductor asked.
Micky looked at the girl.
"Where shall we get off?" he asked.
"Penny ones will do," she said.
Micky took the tickets and pocketed his change.
"I don't know if there are any decent teashops round here," he said dubiously. "If you would rather go up to the West End . . ."
But finally they found a confectioner's quite close to where the penny fare ended.
Micky looked round critically.
"Is this all right?" he asked. "I've never been here before."
"I have, often," she said. She was drawing off her gloves.
Micky glanced hurriedly at her hands; she was wearing a ring. Hardly knowing that he did so, he leaned across and touched it.
"Is that an engagement ring?" he asked. His voice sounded a little breathless.
She looked up at him, drawing her hand away.
"Why do you ask me?"
He drew back; he shrugged his shoulders.
"I beg your pardon. I suppose I have no right to ask."
He ordered tea. He talked rather forced platitudes for the rest of the time. He was just going to call for the bill, when Esther Shepstone said suddenly—
"Mr. Mellowes, I should like to tell you something."
(To be continued.)

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