

That Mysterious Major...

...BY...
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CHAPTER XI.

"I ask him! Do you dream for one moment that I shall ask him for it?" Evelyn opened her eyes in amazement. She began to think she had perhaps made a mistake in pretending she had been an interested listener to the recent conversation.

"Certainly! Did you not understand me? You have merely to say you wish for the check in order to compare it with your own signature, and the rest becomes easy. Lady Howard, you quite agree with me?"

"And do you suppose that Major Brown's suspicions will not be aroused at once?" exclaimed Evelyn, caring nothing either for her aunt's or for Falkland's opinion upon the subject. "No—it is ridiculous! It would be worse than useless!"

"But, Eve dear, surely Mr. Falkland must know better than you."

"He may, of course; but, for all that, I should not like to be the one to make the attempt. If you think your plan will answer, though, why not ask Major Brown yourself?" she added, turning a somewhat indignant look upon Gilbert Falkland. "You have always disliked him; so you ought to be satisfied now if there is a chance of convicting him of forgery."

"Yes, Miss Luttrell, you are right—I had my suspicions of him from the first," returned Falkland, a rather peculiar expression coming into his face. "I never dreamed, however, that they would be so speedily realized. But, as to your suggestion, I would willingly follow it if I could, only it is ten to one that where he would most probably comply with one of your requests mine would absolutely fail. But think it over to yourself for half an hour. Anyhow, we must do something to-

ever, as she drew slowly nearer and nearer, to hear the sound of voices and to behold not only her aunt, but two other figures sitting in the shade of the veranda. One was Falkland—she would have recognized his pale, rather cadaverous-looking face a mile away—and the other—Oh it was absurd! She must be dreaming! It was beyond the bounds of possibility! It could not be Major Brown!

Whether it was beyond the bounds of possibility or not, it was certainly the Major who sprang up at her approach, and who moved his chair to one side to allow her to pass with that same spontaneous courtesy which had struck her from the first.

"Dear me, child, where have you been? I thought you were lost!" exclaimed her ladyship by way of greeting. "Ring the bell, dear, and say we are ready for coffee. They are later than usual this evening."

But Evelyn did not utter a word as she passed silently through into the sitting room. At the sight of the Major her heart had given one tremendous bound, and now it was beating almost to suffocation. What was he doing there? What could be the reason? Never before had she seen either her aunt or Falkland making themselves so obviously agreeable to him. Never before had he even been made welcome to their room.

"Miss Luttrell"—it was Falkland who had followed her through the window—"this will be your opportunity. You cannot have a better chance. Go out the instant your aunt leaves the veranda, and in as casual a way as possible try to gain possession of that check."

At the sound of the low, rather hurried words, Evelyn started slightly and

the Major a grudge from the very first, she had felt that, if he could annoy him over anything he would assuredly avail himself of the earliest opportunity. But what was the meaning of this alteration of his manner, considering how determined he had been a short time ago to secure that check without an instant's delay? He was taking her decided refusal to help him in his scheme with wonderful placidity. Yes—he was too calm—far too calm. He must have some other plan in his head. Some other plan? Clearly he was not the kind of man to be so plainly balked.

The entrance of one of the waiters with a tray of coffee cups diverted her thoughts for a moment. Moving slowly towards the window again, she stood gazing out on the starlit night. Lady Howard, engrossed in an interesting conversation with Major Brown, turned with a slight start at her approach. "Is that the coffee at last, Evelyn? You might bring it to us out here—the air is so pleasant this evening."

Miss Luttrell drew a faint sigh. Returning to the small table where the tray had been placed, she found Falkland hovering over the cups and saucers somewhat uneasily, a sugar basin in his hand.

"Let me see, Miss Luttrell—will you make your aunt's coffee? I believe you generally do."

"Yes—I will make it," replied Evelyn, taking up the half-filled cup of coffee which was nearest to her, filling it with cream, and then carrying it off to Lady Howard without offering as much as a glance in Falkland's direction.

She wished he would not thrust his company so persistently upon her. As he knew how detestable his presence was to her, she wondered he had not the delicacy of feeling to remain on the veranda or to absent himself entirely from her aunt's room for the rest of the evening. But no—it seemed as though he took a delight in tormenting her this evening, for, looking around again, she saw him still standing by the table contemplating the coffee cups in the most meaningless fashion.

Evelyn gave a little gesture of impatience and marched boldly past him; even if Falkland was annoying her, it would never do for Major Brown to suffer in consequence. With this object in view, she took up the cream jug, and was trying to reach another cup of coffee, when Falkland stretched out his arm before her and placed one into her hand.

"For Major Brown, I suppose?" he interrogated, with unusual deference. Evelyn murmured some word of thanks and turned away. But what was it that arrested her attention? What was it that made her start, bend hastily towards the cup, and then, growing whiter than ashes, look round at Falkland?

"By fair means" or "any means." Those were the words he had uttered; and now back in her ears they were ringing, back in her ears she could hear them clanging, clashing, whilst a horrible idea struck her—an idea which seemed almost to paralyze her. (To be continued.)

Doing Penance for Sins.

In former times persons guilty of grievous and notorious offenses were required to make open confession, and further to make satisfaction for the scandal given by their bad example by doing penance publicly in a white sheet in their parish church. The sheet was used to show clearly to everyone which was the offender. The last time that public penance was done in an English church was on Sunday evening, July 30, 1882, when a man named Hartree, in the church of All Saints, East Cleveland, made an open confession of immorality, and promised to perform the penance thus imposed on him by the vicar. No white sheet was used on this occasion. The last case in which one was used appears to have been one in St. Bridget's church, Chester, in 1851. But on that occasion the penance was not public, the church door being locked. In the previous year, however, public penance in a white sheet was done in a country church in Essex, and a similar thing occurred in Ditton church, near Cambridge, in 1849.—Stray Stories.

Metropolitan Beggars' Trust.

The New York police have recently made the discovery that most of the successful beggars in the city belong to a trust. The beggars' trust is said to own a large house in Brooklyn, which provides every description of beggars' supplies, including bogus wooden arms, legs, hump backs, pitiful placards for alleged blind men and cripples, etc. The beggars pay the trust a certain percentage of their earnings, and the trust regulates the hours of their labor, selects the districts, furnishes a list of charitably disposed people, and looks after members when ill. The police say that several wealthy and cultured mendicants belonging to the trust live in fashionable flats. Several attended the grand opera last season, and one rides in his own carriage.

Irish Repentance.

From the New York Gael: Many good stories are told in legal circles in Ireland of encounters between lawyers and judges in court. John Phillip Curran, in the early days of his struggle at the bar, appeared in a case before Lord Chancellor Clare, and laid down some points in law which did not find favor in the mind of the judge. "If that be law, I may as well burn my books," said Lord Clare. "Better read them, my lord," replied Curran.

There is no use in praying to God for blessings, unless we are conforming to his will. —Rev. A. C. Peyton.

THE EBON CROSS.

My friend, Robert Thurston, is a man whose real character, and that indicated by his appearance, are as far different as can be imagined. He is the proverbial "black sheep" of the family, and yet, despite all his wildness, he has often been mistaken for a clergyman. Here is the story of one of my nomadic friend's adventures, as related by himself:

I was in Paris. The city and its ways were well-known to me, while my circle of acquaintances was not small.

One day, while wandering about the city alone, I came to a standstill at the corner of one of the most fashionable streets. A man passed me who looked very searchingly into my face. In a few minutes he returned, and again favored me with that annoying stare.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur, but is not this Alaris?"

The man was sincere, and I comprehended that I was mistaken for some other person, but I was about to deny all knowledge when the desire for a little sport overcame my more serious inclinations, and I gravely replied:

"I am so called."
"I thought it must be so," he continued, with an air of satisfaction. "Those black crosses are too uncommon to be seen in large numbers on this corner at the appointed hour."

I bowed slightly. I knew my strange friend referred to the ebon cross that hung over my white shirt bosom, but for all that his words were most mysterious.

"You are nearly an hour before time," continued the unknown, "but if you are ready we will at once proceed to the residence of my master."
"Quite ready," I replied; "lead on."
Had you been present, my dear fel-

"Col. de Lisle knew his business," I returned with an emphatic nod.

"Then, monsieur, we will to business at once. As you have, perhaps, learned, my name is M. Jules Levane. I am believed to be very wealthy, but really I am not worth a thousand louis d'ors. Ten years ago I lost nearly my whole fortune by the failure of a scheme in which I had speculated largely. Ruin stared me in the face. I knew not what to do in such a fearful situation. Accustomed from my youth to a life of luxury and ease, and looked upon as a man whom princes dared not slight, the idea of falling was too terrible for contemplation.

"Thus situated, I did what nearly every other man would have done in my situation. I had a ward, given to my charge five years previously, by her dying father, my early friend. This ward was very wealthy, and all her property was under my control. To save myself from ruin I appropriated her fortune that has for ten years kept my head above the tide. Now my ward has reached the age at which her fortune was to be placed conditionally in her hands. Monsieur, what shall I do? Ruin is inevitable if I give up her money."

"Let me hear your plan," said I.
"I have a son, 24 years of age, the heir of my respectability and my poverty. If Louis and Marie were to marry, the fortune would not need to leave my control, and all would be well."

"Then, let them marry."

"Ah, that is the trouble. Marie refuses to wed my son."

I began to comprehend the plot, and resolved to carry out the part I had undertaken.
"Proceed," said I, blindly.
"Did you ever hear of a marriage ceremony being performed where the bride refused to give her consent to the union?" demanded M. Jules Levane, fixing a gaze upon me as though he would read my very thought.

per I left the Levanes, father and son, in raptures, and, with the bag of gold in my pocket, proceeded to the office of the chief of police, where I told my story and demanded justice for the unfortunate ward of M. Jules.

I need not dwell on what followed. Marie Duchane recovered her fortune and soon after married a worthy young man.—New York News.

HAD HEARD OF HIM.

A Naples Landlord Who Mistook Dewey for Buffalo Bill.

Washington Post: In connection with the visit of Admiral Dewey to Naples, an amusing story is told. It is highly illustrative of the dense ignorance of the Neapolitans as to current events in other parts of the world. It seems that the inhabitants of that beautiful but sleepy city were not aware of the presence of their distinguished guest, although the Italian journals in other cities had contained great accounts of the exploits of the American naval commander. The English and American colonies were very profuse in their display of the stars and stripes, and the newspapers of that city might have been aware, had they not slumbered, that an American of some distinction was about to honor the burg with a visit. It was not until the day after the admiral's landing, however, that the Naples press awoke to the importance of their guest. Even then, instead of announcing the fact with adequate headlines, the mention was wedged in, with ordinary type, between the police news and the daily reports on the spaghetti output. A well-known English broker, who was putting up at one of the flea-infested hotels of the city, was very desirous of paying his respects to Dewey as soon as he should arrive. The broker, who butchers the dulcet Italian in frightful style, undertook to question his oily and garrulous landlord about the hero of Manila. "Corpo di Dio!" exclaimed the boniface, as he thrust his thumbs into his velvet waistcoat. "I hear speak of deee Americano; he have one big shoe—what you call him—show? Ze Villa Vesta expozitione—I see heem. He ride cowboy in Roma two, three years ago." The moral being obvious, no comment is necessary.

A Battle-Scarred Heroine.

There is a very handsome young woman in Washington, rather well known in art circles, who had the misfortune to fall down stairs a few years ago, so badly fracturing one of her knees that the limb had to be amputated, relates the Washington Post. The young woman, of course, walks with the aid of crutches. She is not in the least sensitive about the matter, and she doesn't mind informing properly introduced people of the nature of the accident which maimed her. She has set a little limit, however, and she was compelled to use it one afternoon recently. She got into an F street car, bound for the hill, and found herself in the same seat with a sharp-faced woman, who seemed to take a whole lot of interest in her and her crutches. She scrutinized the young woman's face carefully for a couple of minutes, then turned her attention to the workmanship of the crutches, which she took the liberty to handle curiously. Then she looked the young woman over again, and leaned over to her. "Dye mind tellin' me how you lost your leg?" she asked, rasply. "Not in the least," responded the young woman, amiably. "I lost it in the battle of Gettysburg."

Speed of an Automobile.

The greatest speed of a motor-car yet recorded is nearly sixty miles an hour. A Belgian inventor, M. Camille Jenatzy, in April this year determined, if possible, to break the kilometer record of 38 3-5 seconds made by Count de Chasseloup Laubat. The course was a perfectly straight and level road running through the new sewage farm lying off the highway between Saint-Germain and Constance. The car which Jenatzy rode was the "Jamais Contente," which is built of sheet-iron, and is torpedo-shaped so as to offer as little resistance to the wind as possible. The first kilometer was ridden in 47 4-5 seconds, and the second in 34 seconds, which is equivalent to 105,882 kilometers (65 miles 1,404 yards) in the hour. "La Jamais Contente" is not even yet satisfied, for Jenatzy thinks that he will be able to do the flying kilometer at the rate of about 120 kilometers, or about 75 miles an hour.

An Unfortunate Blunder.

New York Weekly: Mrs. D'Avnoo—Oh, the awfulest thing has happened! Clara de Style, who never could deign to look at any one in trade, has just discovered that the man she has married is a dry goods clerk. Mrs. D'Fashion—Horrors! I should think she might have found him out by his talk. Mrs. D'Avnoo—That's just how the poor girl was deceived. He never seemed to know anything about anything, and she supposed, of course, he was a millionaire's son.

Almost a Suicide.

New York Journal: Biggs—I nearly killed my barber this morning. Boggs—Judging from the appearance of your face I should say he nearly killed you. Biggs—It amounts to the same thing. I shave myself.

Crushed Him.

Indianapolis Journal: The Shoe Clerk—Beg your pardon, madam, but it is a number five shoe you want, instead of a number three. She—Number five! You must be thinking of the size of your hat.

Self-admiration is ample proof that there is no accounting for tastes.



"IS THAT THE COFFEE AT LAST?"

night. Every moment is of consequence, and— We must secure it— if not by fair means—well, in such a case as this I suppose any means are allowable!"

Evelyn's only answer was a deep sigh as she rose slowly to her feet and turned away with a strange inexplicable longing to be left alone to her own thoughts, conflicting ones though they were, to be worried by no more cross-questioning or cynical taunts concerning the man whom, despite her short acquaintance with him and her aunt's strong prejudices, she was beginning to regard with something which was not exactly mere interest.

No wonder, therefore, that this latest affair had been to her like a blow, that for the time being she was simply stunned by the seriousness of the discovery. She could hardly believe that everything had been done with one aim and object in view, that all the Major's attentions, his numerous little acts of kindness to both her aunt and herself, had been part of a deeply laid scheme. It was too terrible to think how easily she had been duped, how she had been carried away by his well assumed courtesies, in many cases falling readily into the traps which had been so ingeniously contrived for her. Yet, as she reviewed the past two weeks, it seemed incredible to her that it should really be so—that a man who could commit such a deliberate felony could at the same time possess such fascinating manners and appear, as he always did, so thoroughly at his ease.

It was growing dark when Evelyn roused herself wearily from her somewhat harassing reveries, and turned her footsteps in the direction of the brilliant lamp which was streaming forth from Lady Howard's room.

Her aunt had disappeared some time previously, alarmed no doubt by the heavily falling dew, and it was only as the hour was struck by some distant clock that Evelyn remembered she would be waiting for her to make her coffee.

Great was her astonishment, how-

suddenly dropped the parasol which she was swinging slowly to and fro in her hand.

"The check!" she gasped, gazing wildly round.

There was no need to wonder any longer what the unusual affability meant. The Major had not been proclaimed innocent of the forgery, as she in a vague sense of despair had almost imagined. It was clear why he had been welcomed so warmly into their private room; and yet, as her eyes rested for one brief moment upon the accused as he stood talking to her aunt, a handsome, wonderfully distinguished-looking man in his faultless evening dress, all her old feelings of incredulity came back to her as forcibly as ever. She forgot any doubts and suspicions that she had, never for an instant remembered the episode of the birthday book and the strange manoeuvres he had adopted to secure a specimen of her writing and her signature, and with a decided shake of her head put an immediate veto upon Falkland's carefully worked-out plan.

"Then you refuse to do anything in the matter? Really, Miss Luttrell, you astonish me!" observed Falkland, a cynical smile curling his lips. "But you have a tender heart, I suppose, and dislike the thought of your elegant friend being provided with a suit of broad arrows at the nation's expense."

"I refuse," returned Evelyn, her head erect, her eyes flashing, "simply because I am certain that Major Brown is an innocent of forging that check as—pausing to add greater emphasis to her words—"as you are!"

"Oh, very well—there is nothing more to be said, I suppose!" was Falkland's calm reply as he turned away and, without even attempting to argue the point further, walked across to the other side of the room.

Evelyn looked after him with an air of satisfaction, and then drew a sigh of relief. She was agreeably surprised by the way in which he had received her refusal, knowing that he owed



I TOOK THE UNWILLING BRIDE ASIDE.

low, you would, without doubt, have been greatly shocked at the course I was taking; but it just suited me, and I saw before me a prospect of rich pleasure.

So I followed on after my guide, who finally paused before one of the most pretentious mansions of the city, and applied for admission. While we waited for an answer to his summons, I read the name upon the door-plate of the mansion. It was M. Jules Levane.

The servant who answered the bell admitted us without question, and my companion conducted me through several rooms into the library, and then left me with the announcement that he would at once send M. Levane to my presence.

The mystery was deepening. This house, with its magnificence, was such as might well be inhabited by a prince, and I began to fear I had carried my joke too far.

The reflection that it was now too late to retreat caused me to determine to keep up the deception for a time longer, and I heard advancing footsteps with the utmost tranquillity.

A tall, imperious-looking man of about 50 years entered, and, while saluting me, kept his gaze constantly fixed upon me.

"You are the clergyman sent here by Col. de Lisle?" he questioned, abruptly.

"Sent to the corner of — and — streets," I amended, at a venture.

"And you are the gentleman who was directed to answer to the name of Alaris?"

"I am."

"Very good. Did Col. de Lisle inform you as to the nature of the business in hand?"

"He did not," I ventured to affirm.

"Very well; I will make it plain to you. First, however, I presume you are the bold, fearless man Col. de Lisle agreed to send to me—one willing to perform a bold deed for a pecuniary inducement?"