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PROFESSIONAL CARDS.

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THE WENTWORTH MYSTERY.

Who Will Save Her?

CHAPTER XXXI. (Continued.)
The veil was raised as the words were distinctly but quietly uttered, and the light of the lantern fell full upon the speaker's face.
Simple words enough, but the effect they produced upon the old man was the effect of a thunderbolt. He threw up his arms with a cry of terror, while from his nerveless fingers the lantern dropped, to extinguish itself at his feet.
'I am going mad!' he said—'mad—mad! My brain is all in a whirl! It is not possible! It can't be possible!'
Then with another low, vague cry of terror, he stumbled forward, and striking his foot against the lantern he had dropped, came face downward heavily on the ground.
Tom, who had seen nothing of all this, came hurrying up, just managing dimly to see the outstretched form of the steward as it lay on the ground before him.
'Hillo! What's up?—or, rather, who's down? Oh, it's you, gaffer, tumbled over your own lantern, I s'pose! But where's 't'other party?' and he peered around. 'Vanished! Well, 'ere's another queer caper! I'm not what's generally called nervous, but I've had about enough of this place, and if I don't pack up my wares and start for town to-morrow, my name's not Tom Brompton!'
He raised the steward, who had had only a momentary fit of some kind, to his feet; and as he half supported him, picked up the lantern.
'Lean on me, gaffer. Don't be afraid. I'm not much as regards size but I'm as full of sinew and as tough as a fowl at a luncheon-bar. Hold on while I find my match box. Here it is. Hurrah!' and he relighted, though not without much difficulty, the lantern. 'Now let us forge ahead, look around, and inquire for some further particulars about that figure at the gate.'
Meanwhile the mysterious visitor had not passed for a moment, but as one knowing the way, had passed rapidly on, and entered the house.

obedient to a word of command from him, rose to her feet, and drew back in much alarm, leaving the steward facing the woman at the fire.
He looked down into the colorless, impassible face, which gazed up into his, showing no signs of recognition or fear.
'What brings you abroad such a night as this, lass? Where do you come from?'
'I don't know,' was the low, half-whispered reply, as the stranger went on quietly wringing the rain-drops from her hair.
'Where are you going to?'
'Nowhere. I have come home.'
'It's the same voice, but not the same face!' murmured the forlorn old woman in the background.
The steward wheeled round, and regarded her with one of those looks peculiar to himself—a look which nearly caused her to retire altogether into the fire.
'Look after your grandmother,' said the steward, fiercely, to Tom, 'or she will find herself, before long, in some such place as this poor creature has escaped from. Be still, can't you, Mrs. Bleek, with your nonsense and tomfoolery, or you'll be shut up in a madhouse—that's what you'll be!'
It required no more to effectually shut up Mrs. Bleek. Utterly dominated by the steward, she subsided at once, and though she never took her dim eyes off the stranger, went back to her chair and chronological studies, ticking off the dates on her fingers.

'What's to be done with her?' whispered Darknoll, alluding to the mysterious visitor, and glancing furtively at Tom.
'Can't turn her out such a night as this,' said the latter, 'that's positive. Give her some room for the night, and make the proper inquiries in the morning.'
'Right, lad, right. We must keep her till the morning, poor thing!'
The last two plying words were dragged out between his set teeth, and there was no music in the tone they were spoken in, nor was there any kindness in the gleaming eyes riveted on the stranger.
Suddenly the latter turned in her chair, and her eyes quietly met his. The gaze was calm and almost expressionless.
'Someone spoke of a madhouse just now. Ah, that's a dreary place to live in! There's no place like home, as the song says. You're Benjamin Darknoll, I think?'
The steward started, shivered, and glanced at Tom.
'She knows me, it seems.'
'Seems she does,' said that philosopher, who, having made up his mind to what he considered to be the true state of the case, troubled his head no more about it.
'Pr'aps she belongs to the neighborhood?'
'Pr'aps. But we've no asylums near here.'
This was *et voila*. The girl or woman with the weary voice and dripping hair went on.
'They say I know nothing; but I do. I am not quite so foolish as they all seem to think. That—and she suddenly raised her hand, and pointed to the housekeeper—that's Mrs. Bleek!'
'The housekeeper' looked up.
'Yes, it's me, dear. Glad to see you back again. Nothing like the old times, you know—nothing like the old times!' and again she went off, to Tom's infinite disgust, calculating upon her fingers the number of years those 'old times' were off.
'She must belong to the neighborhood,' said Tom. 'She went into the house straight as an arrow, while I, though the park was nearly as wide as Rotten Row, took every laurel. She's a lady, too,' added Tom—'I can see that at a glance; and I reckon, having seen a pretty fair sprinkling of both sorts, I'm in a judge of the article.'
'Yes, she's a lady,' muttered the old man; 'and as a lady, should be well cared for. All she wants to-night is rest and nourishment. She shall have both. You want rest, and she, placing his hand lightly upon her shoulder.
She shuddered as though the touch were repugnant to her; but turned, nevertheless, and looked at him with her tranquil eyes.
'Yes, I have come a long way.'
Darknoll crossed to where the housekeeper was seated.
He strook her somewhat roughly by the shoulder; then looked her steadfastly in the face.
'There could be no mistake about the influence he exercised over her. He bent down his head, and in one of those carefully modulated tones he could so thoroughly command, he said, 'You will find this poor creature a bed for the night.'
'Why not?' began the old woman—'why not, since—' She stopped, confused by the steward's snake-like eye. 'Well, well—I knew things must all come right when you and I met in the churchyard long ago.'
'What room is there ready?' he asked, impatiently.
'Only Sir Hugh's,' she said, apologetically. 'I am single-handed here, and I air them by turns, why—'
He stopped her abruptly. It was always necessary to stop Mrs. Bleek abruptly to keep her ideas in the right place.
'That room will do. Take her and place her there, I will myself prepare her a restoring drink.'

'Some muddled wine and a beat up egg,' cried the housekeeper, immediately brightening up, 'with just a little nutmeg.' Then lowering her voice and bringing her lips near to Darknoll's ear, she added, with a satisfied smirk, 'I know her tastes; she was always fond of that.'
Benjamin Darknoll, keeping his hand upon her shoulder, swerved round and glanced at Tom.
'Much to his relief, that hero was concocting for himself a stiff glass of whisky and water from a case of decanters that stood on the table. Tom needed keeping up, he thought, and he was keeping himself up accordingly.
'The poor thing wants sleep,' continued Darknoll—'rest. A lady, whoever she is, but cruelly used by the night. See if she will go with you. I will bring you the drink I spoke of; meanwhile, bed is the only place for her now. To-morrow we will find out where she came from.'
'Where she came from?' repeated the old woman, like some dismal echo. 'Where she came from?'
'Come, do you hear?' and the steward grasped her by the arm, and almost forced her to her feet. 'Don't idle time. It is killing her to keep her here, wet as she is. Get a light, and see her well cared for. Nothing can be done till she has had rest. A nice basin, this,' he muttered to himself, again glancing at Tom; 'and to have occurred just when this sharp young rascal is here! What can have happened? Time, however, is all that is wanted. They must be on her track.'

Without a word, the stranger, in obedience to the request of the steward, rose at once, and inclining her head slightly as in leave-taking, drew her drenched garments around her, and, following the housekeeper, glided out of the room.
'Poor creature!' said Tom, drawing a chair to the fire, as the old man busied himself about the drink. 'And such a pretty creature, too! She answered Gertrude, when I asked her name just now.'
The steward gave a jump, which nearly upset decanters and glasses, and caused him to spill half the contents of the jug he held in his hand over the table.
'What's the matter?' said Tom, teardily, and turning round. 'A fellow must have nerves of iron to live here. It's one succession of shocks, like an electrical machine.'
'I've scalded my hand with the boiling water, that's all,' replied Darknoll.
'Let me help you.' And Tom was about to rise.
'No, no; stay where you are. I understand these things, and will make the drink myself. So she said her name was Gertrude,' he continued, keeping his back still turned toward Tom. 'Did she say anything else?'
'Not a word; but sighed and kept on looking into the fire. Beautiful eyes, ain't they?'
'I didn't remark them.'
'She's as mad as a March hare,' said Tom.
'Any fool could see that,' acquiesced the steward.
'Gertrude!' mused Tom. 'It's a pretty name. I shouldn't forget it.'
'It is lucky for Mr. Thomas Brompton's peace of mind that his back was still turned toward the old man by the table, or he would have seen such a savage contortion of countenance, such a menacing movement of the clenched bony fist in his direction, that for a moment the hunchbacked steward seemed to be converted into a sort of horrible goblin.
Tom, in blissful ignorance of all this, went on with his reflections.
'She certainly knew the house—that is, her way into it; and she knew your name and my grandmother's.'
'Bah! Chance; that's all. And as for the names, they were both mentioned before her. Will you drink any more, as I'm going to look up the decanters?'
'No.'
'You know your way to your own room?'
'Thank you.'
'And there's your chamber candlestick. Good-night.'
So saying, the steward took up the warm drink he had been concocting in a silver mug and abruptly left the room.
'Well,' said Tom, as he finished the remainder of his toddy, and stretched out his legs before the now rapidly decaying fire, 'the next time I take an outing, it won't be in the direction of Wentworth Abbey. Believe in ghosts? Well, I don't know; but if ever there was one, it was sitting in that chair this night!'
And he pointed to the high-backed, antique chair, lately occupied by the stranger, and which itself looked vague and spectral in the flickering firelight.

thing of the kind. A cautious woman; she preferred that the odium of any severity should fall upon others, not upon herself.
So she privately reported the cold, stern woman as one stubborn and stiff-necked, and hard to deal with.
For Mrs. Prudence herself, Windlestraw House was indeed an Elysium. Not only was she mistress in the absence of the two principals, but—and that without arousing any jealousy on the part of the learned 'Seppy's' better-half—she was the one constant and sole assistant permitted in the doctor's laboratory; her knowledge—testified to by Dr. Malyon—of herbs and simples rendering her services invaluable.
So, as the serpent lay coiled among the flowers of Paradise, so did those twin snakes jealousy and malice raise their heads in the health and mind-restoring (see advertisement) atmosphere of Windlestraw.
Matters here at last came to a climax.
The escape of a patient had aroused the fiercest ire of Septimus Balm and his wife, if so strong a term as fierce can be used to such soft-gliding, soft-speaking, velvety people.
It has been intimated to Jane Murdoch that the doctor, in the course of the morning, will pay her a visit, accompanied by Mrs. Balm, in her room.
A hint, which, as the woman well knew, signified dismissal.
Formalities of that kind were never used by Dr. Balm without a result having been determined upon beforehand.

What is the matter with Mrs. Murdoch? Is there an apprehension of coming misfortune in the set, gold face? On the contrary, her eyes glittered as with the light of some coming triumph, and her thin-tipped mouth wears a smile.
She has locked the door, and more than that, has hung a shawl or garment of some kind over it, so that any inquisitive eye would find only a dark disappointment; in peering through the keyhole.
She has been busy mending and darning—an active, industrious woman, and clever with her needle.
A pile of garments of various kinds are scattered on the floor beside her chair. A pair of stays, partially ripped, lie before her on the table.
But, for once, needles and thread are idle, and the eager scissors have ceased their sharp clippings.
Mrs. Murdoch's, whole attention is absorbed by the contents of two papers—two written papers, which are opened out upon the table. They were the papers which poor Gertrude, in one of her rare lucid intervals, had sworn into her stays the night of her visit to the Abbey.
It has been described in a former chapter how the unfortunate girl, after reclosing the panel, had, on approaching the window, been recaptured by her relentless gaolers.
They had easily tracked her from Windlestraw to Wentworth, and with the aid of Darknoll, the rest of their work had been easy.
The release from prison—if reason could be called, where there was no possibility of following up a connected idea—was the immediate result of Gertrude again finding herself in the hands of Doctor Balm and his myrmidons.
She had offered no resistance—she thought of none. Gentle and submissive, she had submitted without a word. The subtle drugs which, under the direction of Malyon, the little herbalist knew so well how to administer, resumed their sway, and the mind, which had for so brief a space struggled toward the light, fell back into the darkness, and all was, as before, a blank.
'It is lucky,' said the mafron, still ruminating, 'that it was I who undressed her when brought back. Had the fingers of that red-eyed dwarf once touched the stays, she would have found these hidden papers—ay, quicker than I did. How I hate that quack! After so many years of service, to be dismissed, and through her! I'll be revenged, that I will!'
The hard mouth grew harder, and the straight brows tightened into a frown that harmonized with her words, while the strong, bony hand clenched itself fiercely, and she smote the larger of the documents before her as though she were smiting the face of a foe.
'There's been some deadly, black work afoot, and who knows but what the key to it mayn't be here? I am no scholar, but can make out that one of these is a will in favor of a Miss Gertrude Wentworth, and that must be the girl that's here, but they call her Mary. This other paper is a statement of an exchange of children, and a heap of other things beside; a twisted hank, which wiser heads than mine must unravel. A black business! a black business!' she repeated, slowly folding up the papers as she spoke.
'But there's a fortune for somebody—several somebodies, perhaps—who knows? At least, I'll try for it.'
She had taken out of a capacious pocket an equally capacious pocket-book—a dingy and greasy affair, with a great clasp, which opened with difficulty, and a closed with a sudden snap, like a steel trap, that is sure to hold fast what it has once caught.
Placing the papers in this bulky receptacle—it might, at a pinch, have done duty as a valise—Jane Murdoch fastened it carefully, then, holding it in her hand, which rested on her lap, continued to ruminate.

'What shall my first move be?' who to consult? Ah, there's the difficulty. I don't like lawyers, never did. They may take advantage of my being only a woman, and no scholar, to play the game out for themselves. They are capable of it. They're a bad lot, and there's no choice between 'em!

After which rapid 'summing up' of the entire legal profession, Mrs. Murdoch put the huge pocket-book back into her pocket, and continued, now with both hands resting in her lap, to ponder.
'If something should turn up out of this, it might be the means of reclaiming my poor leg. I can't bear to think that flesh and blood of mine is going headlong to the pit!—(it was an involuntary pun)—by frequenting their theatres. I haven't heard from Mr. for these three years, come next Michaelmas, but I've heard of her to my shame. It was only the other day I came across a newspaper, in which was written down in print all about her singing and dancing. Ah!—(this with a heavy sigh)—and Nauey never missed chapel once till that man came. That man! What man? and again the hard mouth tightened. 'She has never told me his name, this scoundrel, who visited our village to steal my daughter, and my daughter's heart from me! I swore I would never forgive her, but oats she weak against a mother's love. The man! ah! if he has behaved bad to Nancy, I pray heaven.'—and the stern, old woman raised two rather formidable fists, and shook them threateningly in the air.—'to give me the power, before I die, to render him the measure he has meted out to her.'
The light, foolish bird! He came like a thief in the night, and stole her, so bright, so beautiful, so clever, from beneath her mother's wing! Well, well! Providence watches over them who wait and pray, and nothing is denied to those who hide their time.'
A sharp knock at the door, at the same time the sound of a stumble on the threshold, caused Mrs. Murdoch to start hurriedly to her feet.
[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Even With One Another.

A certain squire had a friend to visit him on business, and was very much annoyed to be interrupted by his wife, who came to ask him what he went for to dinner.

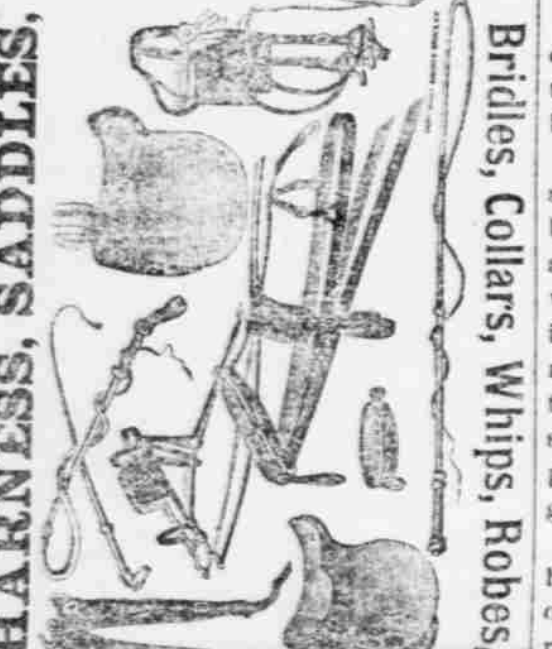
'Go away! Let us alone!' impatiently said the squire.
Business detained the friend until after dinner time, and the squire urged him to remain. The squire was a generous provider, proud of his table, and he complacently escorted his friend to a seat. A little to the surprise of both, they saw nothing on the board but a huge dish of salad, which the good wife began quietly to dish up.

'My dear,' said the squire, 'where are the meats?'
'There are none to-day,' said his wife.
'No meats? What in the name of poverty! The vegetables, then! Why don't you have them brought in?'
'You didn't order any.'
'Order! I didn't order anything!' said the amazed squire.
'You forgot,' coolly answered the housewife. 'I asked what you should have, and you said lettuce alone. Here it is.'

The friend burst into a laugh, and the squire, after looking lugubrious for a moment, joined in.
'Wife, I give it up. I love you one. Here's that fifty dollars you wanted for that carpet which I denied you.' The squire forked over. 'Now let us have peace and some dinner.'

The good woman pocketed the paper, rang the bell, and a sumptuous repast of fish, poultry and vegetables was brought in.
A few days afterward the squire remained working in the garden later than the usual tea hour. His wife grew impatient of delay and went to find him. His excuse, when asked what he was waiting for, threw her into a flutter of excitement.
'Some one's come to supper?' she exclaimed. 'Why don't you tell me? I declare, you are the provokingest of men.'

And without asking which of his friends was expected, she hastened to change her dress and slick up her hair for the occasion. This done, she came out and found the squire seated at the table reading the newspaper.
'Where's your company?'
'My company? I haven't any company.'
'But you said you expected somebody to supper,' exclaimed the indignant wife.
'My dear, I said no such thing. You asked me what I was waiting for, and I said someone was to come to supper—that's what I was waiting for, and I came at once.'
'And you have made me go and change my dress! Oh, I'll pay you for this.'



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