

Tristram of Blent.

Being an Episode in a Story of An Ancient House.

BY ANTHONY HOPE.

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Synopsis of preceding chapters.

(Adelaide, wife of Sir Randolph Edge of Blent Hall, eloped with Captain Fitzhugh of Sir Randolph's staff, and was married in time for Lady Edge and Fitzhugh to marry and so make their son, Harry, a legitimate heir. They have since, however, that the date of Sir Randolph's death has been given incorrectly and Harry is not the rightful heir. They keep the matter secret and eventually Mrs. Fitzhugh succeeds to the barony of Tristram of Blent. Unknown to Lady Tristram a Madam Zabriska, and Mr. Jenkinson Neeld are also in possession of the secret and Madam Zabriska, with her uncle, Major Duplay, come to reside at Merrion Lodge. Harry Tristram, who Harry learns from his mother that he is not the rightful heir to Blent, and they determine to hold the title for him at any cost. To further his cause he decides to marry Jenny Ivers, heiress of Fairholme, but she is already betrothed to Major Duplay. The latter learns of Harry's unfortunate birth from the moment he is informed that he intends to tell Ivers and they quarrel, Harry winning in a brisk tussle. Neeld becomes the guest of Ivers at Fairholme. Madam Zabriska meets Neeld and they form a compact to protect Harry's interests and maintain a secrecy. Lady Tristram dies after extracting from her son a promise that Cecily Gainsborough, her beautiful heiress, shall be invited to the funeral. Cecily and her father come later he comes suddenly upon Cecily in the garden and realizes that she is a Tristram, the image of his mother.

half over the foot. Harry laughed. She looked up, blushing and inclined to be angry.

"Oh, it wasn't that," he said, laughing again rather contemptuously. "But—she rose, took some paces along the lawn, and then, coming back, stood beside her, staring at the Blent and frowning rather forbiddingly.

"Did you see me when I first saw you by the pool?" he asked, in a moment.

"Yes. How you hurried after me!"

Another pause followed, Harry's frown giving way to a smile, but a perplexed and reluctant one. Cecily watched him with puzzled interest—still sitting with her feet stuck out in front of her and her head resting on the bend of her arm, her eyes looking upward and her lips were just parted.

"Have I been staring at you?" he inquired, abruptly.

"Well, yes, you have," she answered, laughing. "But a strange cousin expects to be examined rather carefully. Do I pass muster among the Tristrams? Or am I still the hated Gainsborough?"

He looked at her again and earnestly.

She met the look without lowering her eyes or altering her position in any particular.

"It's too absurd," he declared, half fretful, half amused. "Your features aren't so very much alike, except the eyes, they are—and your hair's darker. But you move and carry yourself and turn your head as she did. And that position you're in now—why, I've seen her in it a thousand times! Your arm there and your foot stuck out—"

His voice grew louder as he went on, his

can't you, uncle? It won't do much good, but still—"

"The situation, I say, has arisen." She heard him get up, walk to the hearth and strike a match. Of course he was going to have a cigarette. He would smoke it all through with exasperating slowness and then arrive at an odious conclusion. Mina had not been married for nothing; she knew men's ways. He justified her forecast; it was minutes before he spoke again.

"The terms of this letter," he resumed at last, "fortify me in my purpose. It is evident that Miss Iver is influenced—largely influenced—by—the supposed position of—Mr. Tristram."

"Of who?"

"Of the present possessor of Blent."

"If you want people to know who you mean you'd better say Lord Tristram."

"For the present, if you wish it, I say she is—"

"Duppy's pompous formality suddenly broke down. "She's taking him for his title, that's all."

"O, if you choose to say things like that about your friends!"

"You know it's true. What becomes of my duty, then?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. Only I hate people who talk about duty when they're going to—Well, one must stop somewhere in describing one's relatives' conduct. The Imp stopped there. But the sentence really lost nothing; Duplay could guess pretty accurately what she

born before, not after, the marriage of his parents. Duplay says Mina knows all about it and will give us information that will make the proof easy. That's a tolerably satisfactory story, isn't it? One prepared for something where Lady Tristram was involved, but this—"

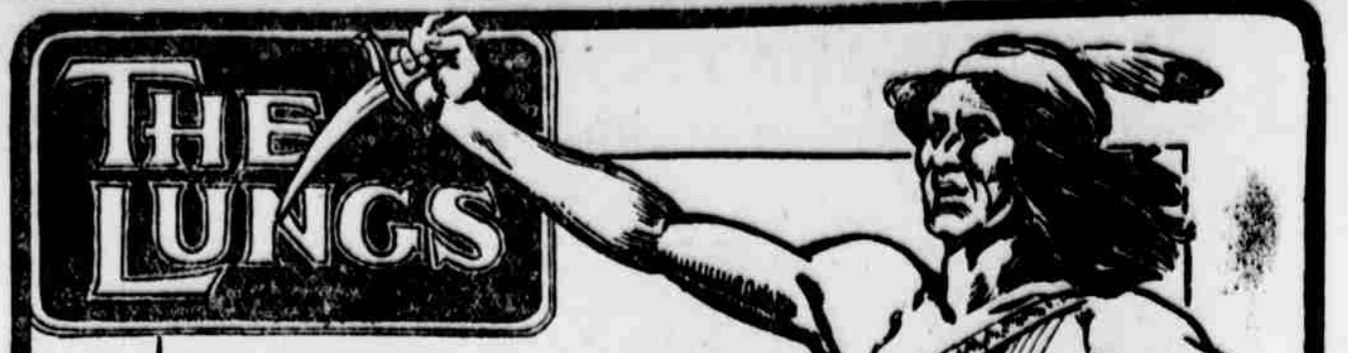
It was fortunate that he did not glance at Neeld. Neeld had tried to appear startled, but had succeeded only in looking supremely miserable. But Iver's eyes were gazing straight in front of him, under brows that frowned heavily.

"Now, what I want you to do," he resumed, "and I'm sure you won't refuse me, is this: I'm inclined to dismiss the whole thing as a blunder. I believe Duplay's honest, but I think certain facts in his own position have led him to be too ready to believe a mere yarn. But I've consented to see Mina and bring what she has to say. And I said I should bring you as a witness. I go to Merrion, lodge tomorrow for this purpose and I shall rely on you to accompany me." With that the cigar made its appearance. Iver lit it and lay back in his chair, frowning still in perplexity and vexation. He had not asked his friend's opinion, but his services. It was characteristic of him not to notice this fact. And the fact did nothing to relieve Neeld's piteous embarrassment.

"I knew it all along," he might say that, "I know nothing about it; he might act that. Or he might temporize for a little while. This was what he did."

"It would make a great difference if this were true!" His voice shook, but Iver was assured.

"An enormous difference," said Iver. (Lady Tristram herself had once said the same.) "I marry my daughter to Lord Tristram of Blent or to—whom? You'll call that snobbishness, or some people would. I say it's not snobbish in us new men to consider that. It's the right thing for us to do, Neeld. But if it's true, why who's Harry Tristram? Oh, I know it's all a fluke, a d-d fluke, if you like, Neeld, and uncommonly lax on the boy. But the law's the law, and, for my own part, I'm not in favor of altering it. Now, do you



The lungs largely rule the life. The difference between the Indian running down a wild horse and the merchant or clerk panting after climbing a few stairs is a difference of lung power. "Weak" lungs must mean a weak life, a feeble life; a life liable to be snuffed out by any sudden gust of sickness. "Weak" lungs will do weak work. The work of the lungs is in part to supply the blood with the oxygen necessary to sustain life. It is assumed that the total area of the lung surface with its 180,000,000 air cells, equals the total quantity of the blood to be vitalized. When the lungs are said to be "Weak," it generally means that a large part of the lung surface is inert; that millions of the air cells are unused. This must mean that the oxygen received by the blood is reduced below its requirements to an extent equal to the unused lung area.

It is in this inert portion of the lungs that the ground is prepared for disease. It is here that consumption sows its fatal seed, and as the lungs grow weaker the blood grows fouler, the body weaker, more feeble, until the curtain falls on the last scene in this eventful history.

The tendency to "weak" lungs is the result of the conditions under which we live. Few people use the lung surface to its full capacity. A vast number of people not only do not use their lungs fully, but being employed in stores and factories, the air they breathe is deficient in oxygen, so that they are in double danger. These facts account for the alarming increase of consumption especially in cities, where the wards overflow with patients until they are turned away to die in the streets. It is a truth, therefore, that under existing conditions of life the majority of people have a tendency to weak lungs; a considerable part of their lung surface being inert.

Whatever threatens the lungs, threatens the life. That "slight cough" may be the beginning of serious sickness. It may not be the alarm of consumption in this case, but it has been in so many cases, that we may well dread even a "slight cough."

"Weak" lungs have been made strong, and are being made strong daily, by the use of

Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery.

Every claim for this medicine has behind it a thousand cures, of coughs, bronchitis, bleeding of the lungs, emaciation and the conditions in general which by neglect or unskillful treatment find a fatal termination in consumption.

"Twenty-five years ago, when I was thirteen years old, I had what the doctor called consumption," writes Mrs. Ella Taylor Dodge, Matron, Home for Missionaries' Children, Morgan Park, Ill., Box 165. "He told my mother that nothing could be done for me excepting to make me as comfortable as possible. The pastor of the M. E. church, in the place where I lived, heard of my condition, and although he was not acquainted with our family, he called, and during the call he asked my mother if she would allow me to take a medicine if he would send it to me. She thought it could do no harm if it did no good, so he sent a bottle of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. Before the bottle was empty, my friends saw a little improvement in my health, whereupon another bottle was bought. I can't say now just how much I took, but I improved steadily and to-day I am a well strong woman, as you may imagine I must be to have the care of this Home. I now have a child under my care who when she takes cold it settles in the lungs. I at first used medicines which her mother suggested before leaving her, but nothing did the least good till I gave your 'Golden Medical Discovery.' I have unbounded faith in it."

"Three years ago I had the grip," writes Mrs. Tillie Linsay, of Gravel Switch, Marion Co., Kentucky. "It settled on my lungs and the doctor said I had consumption. I took six bottles of 'Golden Medical Discovery,' and am thankful to say I am entirely well. You may print this letter if you see fit to do so."

"I was very sick indeed," writes Mrs. Mollie Jacobs, of Felton, Kent Co., Delaware, "and our family doctor said I had consumption. I thought I must die soon for I felt so bad. Had a bad cough, spit blood, was very short of breath, in fact could hardly get my breath at all sometimes. I had pains in my chest and right lung, also had dyspepsia. Before I took your 'Golden Medical Discovery' and 'Pleasant Pellets,' I was so weak I could not sweep a room, and now I can do a small washing. I worked in the canning factory this fall, and I feel like a new person. I believe that the Lord and your medicine have saved my life. I was sick over two years. I took 13 bottles of 'Golden Medical Discovery' and four vials of Dr. Pierce's Pellets."

Was it consumption? The doctors said so. The symptoms all indicated the disease. If it was anything else than consumption, then it is evident that there is a disease unrecognized by doctors, which has the same symptoms as consumption, and which when doctors fail to cure it, is perfectly and permanently cured by Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It always helps, it almost always cures.

Accept no substitute for the "Discovery." Insist on the medicine which has cured others.

WE WILL SEND FREE, on receipt of pay expense of mailing ONLY, Dr. Pierce's Common Sense Medical Adviser, containing 1008 large pages, one-cent stamps for the book in paper covers, or 31 stamps for the cloth-bound volume.

Address: DR. R. V. PIERCE, Buffalo, N. Y.

"Cecily Gainsborough," said she with a distant manner, inclined to be offended that their meeting should be by accident.

"Yes, I was as surprised as you, I thought I was sure." He took no heed of her manner, engrossed in some preoccupation of his own. "At first I was startled." He smiled now, as he offered her his hand. Then he recollected. "You must forgive me for being out. I have been hard at work all day and the time for the evening was on me. I went out without thinking."

"They said you were engaged on pressing business."

"They lied for me. I forgot to leave any message. I'm not generally discourteous."

His apology disarmed her and made her resentment seem petty.

"How could you think of us at such a time? It's good of you to have us at all."

"My mother wanted you to come."

He added no welcome of his own. "You never saw her, did you?" he asked a moment later.

Cecily shook her head. She was rather confused by the steady gaze of his eyes. Did cousin Harry always stare at people as hard as that? Yet it was not exactly a stare. It was too thoughtful, too ruminative, too unconscious for that.

"Let's walk back together. You've had a look at the place already, perhaps?"

"It's very beautiful."

"Yes," he assented, absently, as they began to walk.

If he did not stare, still she used her eyes, curiously studying his face with its suggestion of strength, and that somehow rather inconsistent hint of sensitiveness. He was gloomy. That was just now only proper. She saw something that puzzled her. Mina Zabriska, she had heard tell of her what it was, but she herself did not succeed in identifying Harry's watchful look. She was merely puzzled at a certain shade or expression in the eyes. She had not seen it at the first moment, but it was there now, as he turned to her from time to time while they walked.

"That's Merrion, our dower-house. But it's let now to a funny little woman, Mme. Zabriska. She's very much interested in you."

"In me? Has she heard of me?"

"She hears most things," she said as sharp as a needle. "Like her, though."

He said no more till they were back in the garden. Then he proposed that they should sit down on the seat by the river.

"My mother used to sit here often," he said. "She always loved to see the sun go down from the bank, she didn't read or do anything—she just sat watching."

"Thinking?" Cecily suggested.

"Well, hardly. Letting thoughts happen if they wanted to, perhaps. She was always rather passive about things, you know. They took hold of her, as I say, if they wanted to. It turned to her quickly as he asked, "Are you at all like that?"

"I believe I'm only just beginning to find out that I'm anything or like anything. And anyhow, I'm quite different from what I was yesterday."

"From yesterday?"

"Yes. Just by coming here, I think."

"That's what I mean. Things do take hold of you, then?"

"This place does apparently," she answered, laughing, as she leaned back on the seat, throwing her arms behind her and resting her head on it. She caught him looking at her again with marked and almost startled intensity.

"Tell me about yourself," he asked, or rather commanded—so brusque and direct was the request.

She told him about the small house and the small life she had led in it; even about the furniture and the bric-a-brac, confessing to her occasional clearances and the deception she had to practice on her father about them. He was very silent, but he was a good listener. Soon he began to smoke, and did not ask leave. This might be rudeness, but seemed rather a cousinly sort of rudeness and was readily forgiven.

"And suddenly I come to all this!" she murmured. "Then with a start she added, "But I'm forgetting your mother's death and what you must feel, and chattering about myself!"

"I asked you to talk about yourself. Is it such a great change to come here?"

"Immense! To come here even for a day! I never saw the water, but I had a moment and found him following it with his eyes as it moved."

"You don't look," he said, slowly, "as if it was any change at all."

"What do you mean?" she asked, interested in what he seemed to suggest.

"You sit in," he murmured, looking up at the house—at the window of Addie Tristram's room—"and you're very poor?" he asked.

"Yes. And you—"

"I'm not rich, as such things go. The estate has fallen in value very much, you know. But—" He broke off, frowning a little. "Still we're comfortable enough," he resumed.

"I should think so. You'd always have to look at it that way. What did you think I should be like?"

"Anything in the world but what you are."

The tone was at once too sincere and too absent for a compliment. Cecily knew herself not to be plain, but he was referring to something else than that.

"In fact I hardly thought of you as an individual at all. You were the Gainsboroughs."

"And you didn't like the Gainsboroughs?" she said, in a flash of intuition.

"I didn't," he admitted.

"Why not?"

"A prejudice," answered Harry Tristram, after a pause.

She crossed her legs, striking one foot out in front of her, and looking at it thoughtfully. He followed the movement, and slowly broke into a smile. It was followed by an impatient shrug. With the feminine instinct, she pushed her gown lower down,

suppose I want my daughter to marry him if it's true?"

"I suppose you wouldn't," murmured Neeld.

"And there's another thing. Duplay says Harry knows it—Duplay swears he knows it. Well, then, what's he doing? In my opinion he's practicing fraud. He knows he isn't what he pretends to be. He deceives me, he deceives Janie. If the thing ever comes out, where is she? He's treated us very badly if it's true."

The man, ordinarily so quiet and calm in his reserved strength, broke out into vehemence as he talked of what Harry Tristram had done, if the major's tale were true. Neeld asked himself what his best would say of a friend who knew the story would be true, and yet said nothing of it. He perceived, too, that although Iver would not have forced his daughter's inclination, yet the marriage was very good in his eye, the proper end, and the finest crown to his own career. And in the face of his feelings how stood Mr. Neeld? He saw nothing admirable in how and where he stood.

"Well, we'll see Mina and hear if she's got anything to say. Fancy that little monkey being drawn into a thing like this! Meanwhile we'll say nothing. I don't believe it, and I shall want a lot of convincing. Until I am convinced everything stands as it did. I rely on you for that, Neeld—and I rely on you to come to Merrion tomorrow. Not a word to Janie! Not a word to anybody! He got up, took possession of Neeld's railway and walked off into the house with his businesslike, quick stride.

Neeld sat there, slowly rubbing his hands against one another between his knees. He was realizing what he had done, and rather, what had happened to him. And why had he done it? The explanation was as strange as the things that he invoked to explain. Still rubbing his hands, palm against palm, to and fro, he said very slowly, with wonder and reluctance:

"I was carried away. I was carried away by a romance."

The world made him feel a fool. Yet what other word was there for the overwhelming, unreasoning feeling that at the cost of everything the Tristrams, mother and son, must keep Blent, the son living and the mother dead; that the son must dwell there and the spirit of the mother be about him she loved in the spot that she had traced? It was very rank romance, indeed—no other word for it! And—widest paradox—it all came out of editing Jostah Cholderton's Journal.

Before he had made any progress in unravelling his skin of perplexities he saw Janie come across the lawn. She took the chair her father had left and seemed to take her father's mood with it; the same oppressive silence settled on her. Neeld broke it this time.

"You don't look very merry, Miss Janie," he said, smiling at her and achieving a plausible jocularity.

"Why should I, Mr. Neeld?" she glanced at him. "Oh, has father told you anything?"

"My dear Iver, my opinion? O, I'm not a business man, and—"

"It's not business. You know Major Duplay? What do you think of him?"

"I've always found him very agreeable."

"Yes, so have I. And I've always thought him honest, haven't you?"

Neeld admitted that he had no reason to impugn the major's character.

"And I suppose he's sane," Iver pursued. "But he's just been telling me the most extraordinary thing. He paused a moment. He laid his hand on Neeld's knee. "Neeld, Duplay fell on the ground by him and ceased to struggle with the elephants."

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been going to say.

Fortunately, although he was very dependent on her help, he cared little about her opinion. She neither would nor could judge his position fairly; she would not perceive how he felt, how righteous was his anger, how his friends were being cheated, and he was being jockeyed out of his chances by one and the same unscrupulous bit of imposture. He had brought himself round to a more settled state of mind and had got his conscience into better order. Mina must speak—and, if money were needed, it must come from somewhere. The mere assertion of what he meant to allege must at least delay this hateful marriage. It must be added, though the major was careful not to add that it would also give Harry Tristram a very unpleasant shock; the wretched bout by the pool and the loss of that shilling were not forgotten. In the afternoon of that day Duplay went down to Fairholme.

Mr. Neeld was still at Fairholme; he had been pressed to stay and needed little pressing; in fact, in default of the pressure he would probably have taken lodgings in the town. He could not go away; he had seen Addie Tristram buried in her own walking behind the coffin, clad in his new dignity. His mind was full of the situation. Yet he had shrunk from discussing it further with Mina Zabriska. The family anxiety about Janie's love affair had been all round him; now he suspected strongly that some issue was being decided upon. He ought to speak, to break his word to Mina and speak, or he ought to go.

"Mind you say nothing—nothing—nothing." That sentence had reached him on the reverse side of an invitation to take tea at Merrion—a vague, some-day-when-you're-passing sort of invitation, in Neeld's eyes plain and clearly a pretext for writing an urgent little scrawl on the other side. It arrived at midday; in the afternoon Duplay had come and was now alone with Iver. The outward calm of the gray-haired old gentleman who sat on the lawn at Fairholme, holding a weekly review update, was no index to the alarming and disturbing questions which were agitating him within.

Iver came out and sat down beside him without speaking. Neeld hastily restored his paper to a position more befitting his dignity and became apparently absorbed in an article on "Shyness in Elephants." (The subject was treated with a wealth of illustration and in a vein of introspective philosophy exceedingly instructive. But it was all wasted on Mr. Neeld. He was waiting for Iver; no man could be so silent unless he had something important to say or to leave unsaid. And Iver was not even smoking the cigar which he always smoked after tea. Neeld could bear it no longer; he got up and was about to move away.

"Stop, Neeld. Do you mind sitting down again for a moment?"

Neeld could do nothing but comply. The review fell on the ground by him and he ceased to struggle with the elephants.

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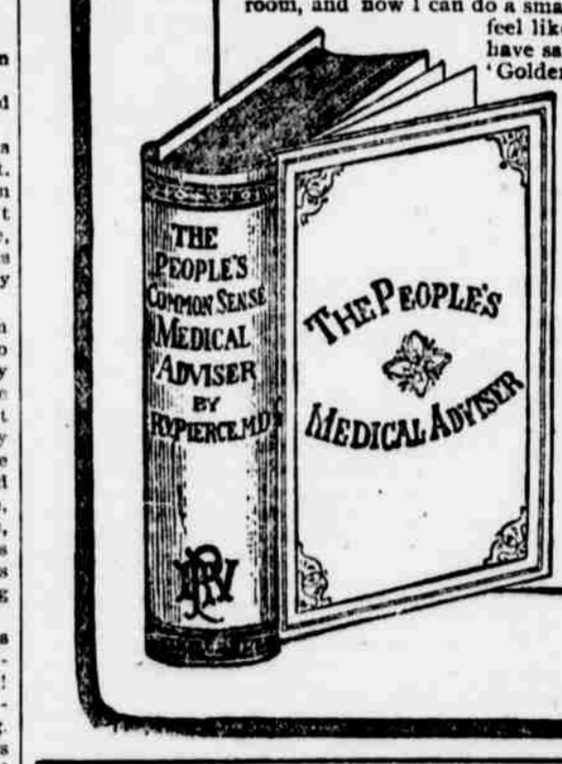
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"I think I've done right," she said, as she had said when she wrote to Mina. "Everybody will be pleased. Father's very pleased." Suddenly she put out her hand and took hold of his, giving it a tight grip. "Oh, Mr. Neeld, I've made somebody so unhappy."

"I dare say, my dear, I dare say. I was a young fellow once. I dare say."

"And he says nothing about it. He wished me joy—and he does wish me joy. I've no right to talk to you, to tell you, or anything. I don't believe people think girls ever mind making men unhappy, but they do."

"If they like the men?" This suggestion, at least, was not too difficult for him, when they're old friends, you know. I only spoke to him for a moment. I only just met him on the road. I don't suppose I shall ever talk to him about it, or about anything in particular again." She squeezed Neeld's hand a second time and then withdrew her own.

This was unknown country again for Mr. Neeld; his sense of being lost grew more acute. These were not the sort of problems which had occupied his life, but they seemed now to him no less real, hardly less important. It was only a girl wondering if she had done right. Yet he felt the importance of it.

"You can't help the unhappiness," he said. "You must go to the man you love, my dear."

With a little start she turned and looked at him for an instant. Then she murmured in a perfunctory fashion:

"Yes, I must make the best choice I can, of course." She added after a pause, "I wish—"

Words or the inclination to speak failed her again and she relapsed into silence.

As he sat there beside her, silent, too, his mind traveled back to what her father had said, and slowly he began to understand. No doubt she liked Harry, even as her father did. No doubt she thought he would be a good husband, as Iver had thought him a good fellow. But it became plain to the searcher after truth that not to her any more than to her father was it nothing that Harry was Tristram of Blent. Her phrases about doing right and making the right choice included reference to that, even if that was not their whole meaning. She had mentioned her father's pleasure—everybody's pleasure. That

pleasure would be found largely in seeing her Lady Tristram. What, then, would she have to say on the question that so perplexed Mr. Neeld? Would she not echo Iver's accusation of fraud against Harry Tristram and (as a consequence) against those who aided and abetted him? She, too, would call out "Fraud! fraud!" And he did not blame her. He called himself a fool for having been led away by romance, by unreasoning feeling.

Meanwhile Duplay walked home, the happier for having crossed his rubicon. He had opened his campaign with all the success he could have expected. Now it only remained to bring Mina to reason. If she spoke the case would be so strong as to demand inquiry. The relief in Duplay's mind was so great that he could not explain it until he realized that his niece's way of treating him had so stuck in his memory that he had been prepared to be turned from Iver's doors with contentedly. Such an idea seemed absurd now, and the major laughed.

Mina was strange. Duplay never ceased to think of that. They had parted on impossible terms, but now, as soon as he appeared, she ran at him with apparent pleasure and with the utmost eagerness. She asked nothing about his expedition, but, though she should easily have guessed where he had been and for what purpose. She almost danced as she cried: "I've seen her! I've been talking to her! I met her in the meadow near Matron's cottage, and she asked me the way back to Blent. Uncle, she's wonderful!"

"Who are you talking about?"

"Why, Cecily Gainsborough, of course. I just remember how Lady Tristram spoke. She speaks the same way exactly! I can't describe it, but it's the sort of voice that it asks. Don't you know? She told me a lot about herself; then she talked about Blent. She's full of it; she admires it most tremendously—"

"That's all right," interrupted Duplay with a malicious smile. "Because, so far as I can understand, she happens to own it."

"What?" The Imp stood frozen into stillness.

"You've been talking to Lady Tristram of Blent," he added with a nod. "Though I suppose you didn't tell her so?"

"To Lady Tristram of Blent?" She had never once thought of that while they

talked. The shock of the idea was great—so great that Mina forgot to repudiate it or to show any indignation at Harry's claims being passed by in contemptuous silence. All the while they talked she had thought of the girl as far removed from Blent, as even more of a visitor to the countryside than she herself was—a wonderful visitor, indeed, but no part of their life. And she thought! How had she forgotten that? The persistent triumph of Duplay's smile marked his sense of the success of his ally.

"Yes, and she'll be installed there before many months are out," he went on. "So I hope you made yourself pleasant. Mina!"

Harry gave him one scornful glance as she passed by him and ran out onto her favorite terrace. There was a new thing to look at and wonder at in Blent. She forgot the prose of that marriage arrangement and turned eagerly to the poetry of Cecily Gainsborough—of the poor girl there in the house that was hers, unwitting guest of the man who was—The Imp stopped herself with rude abruptness. What had she been about to say? What had she been about to think? The guest of the man who was rubbing her? That had been it. But she! She did not think that. Confused in her mind by this new idea, none the less she found her sympathy going out to Harry again. He was not a robber; it was his own; the blood, she cried still, and not the law! But what was to be done about Cecily Gainsborough? Was she to go back to the little house in London? Was she to go back to ugliness, to work, to short commons? There seemed no way out. Between the old and the new attraction, the old allegiance and the new claim to homage that Cecily made, Mina Zabriska stood bewildered.

But Major Duplay was well content with the day's work. If his niece had a divided mind she would be easier to bend to his will. He did not care who had Blent, if only it passed from Harry. But it was a point gained if Mina could think of no passing from Harry to somebody who would be welcome to her there. Then she would tell the story which she had received from her mother and the first battle against Harry Tristram would be won. The attainment of fighting was on the major now. He would neither pity the enemy nor distrust his own cause till the strife was done.

(To be Continued.)