

## 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 Fitzhubert, Sir Randolph died in Russia, presumably in time for Lady Edge's return to Blent to marry and so make their son, Harry, legitimate. They learnt later, however, that the date of Sir Randolph's death had been given incorrectly and Harry is not the rightful heir. They keep the matter secret and eventually Mrs. Fitzhubert succeeds to the barony of Tristram of Blent, and resides with Harry at Blent. Lady Tristram and Mr. Jenkinson Neeld, are also in possession of the secret and Harry is not the rightful heir to Blent, and they determine to hold the title for him at any cost. He is not the rightful heir, but he is the son-in-law of the legal heir, but he is Lady Tristram of Blent.

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### The Very Same Day.

"Shall I wait up, my lord? Miss Gainsborough has gone to her room. I've turned out the lights and shut up the house."  
Harry looked at the clock in the study. It was 1 o'clock.  
"I thought you had gone to bed long ago, Mason." He rose and stretched himself. "I'm going to town early in the morning. I shan't want any breakfast, and I shan't take anybody with me. Tell Fisher to pack my portmanteau—things for a few days—and send it to Paddington. I'll have it fetched from there. Tell him to be ready to follow me if I send for him."  
"Yes, my lord."  
"Give that letter to Miss Gainsborough tomorrow morning." He handed a thick letter. "Two others lay outside the table. After a moment's hesitation Harry put them in his pocket. "I'll post them myself," he said. "When did Miss Gainsborough go to her room?"  
"About an hour back, my lord."  
"Did she stay in the long gallery till then?"  
"Yes, my lord."  
"I may be away a little while, Mason. I hope Miss Gainsborough—and Mr. Gainsborough, too—will be staying on some time. Make them comfortable. I shan't be home till late to-night. I'll have a surprise escaped Mason. His 'very lord,' was just the same as though Harry had ordered an egg for breakfast. Sudden comings and goings had always been the fashion of the house.  
"All right. Good night, Mason."  
"Good night, my lord." Mason looked around for something to carry off—the force of habit—found nothing, and retired noiselessly.  
"The o'clock," sighed Harry. "Ah, I'm tired. I won't go to bed, though I could sleep." He moved restlessly about the room. His food of feeling had gone by; for the time of thought, too, seemed to have deserted him. He had told Cecily everything; he had told Janie enough; he had yielded to an impulse to write a line to Mina Zabriska—because she had been so mixed up in it all. The documents that were to have proved his claim made a little heap of ashes in the grate.

"All this had been two hours' hard work. But, after all, I've done no more than to spend in getting rid of an old life and entering on a new. He found himself rather surprised at the simplicity of the process. What was there left to do? He had only to go to London and see his lawyer—an interview easy enough for a man of his rank, no doubt, to the lawyer. Cecily would be put into possession of her own. There was nothing sensational. He would travel a bit perhaps, or just stay in town. He had money enough to live on quietly, or to use in making more, for his mother's savings were undoubtedly his, left to him by a will, in which he, the real Harry, was so expressly designated by his own full name, even more than that—Harry Austin Fitzhubert, Tristram, otherwise Harry Fitzhubert, my son by the late Captain Fitzhubert—that no question of his right could arise. That money would go with the estate. He threw himself on a sofa, and in spite of his conviction that he could not sleep, dozed off almost directly.

"It was 3 when he awoke. He went up to his room, had a bath, shaved, and put on a tweed suit. Coming down to the study again, he opened the shutters and looked out. It would be light soon, and he could go away. He was fretfully impatient of staying. He drank some whisky and soda water and smoked a cigar as he walked up and down. Yes, there were signs of dawn now; the darkness lifted over the hill on which Merriem stood.  
"Merriem! Yes, Merriem. And the major? Well, he had not frightened him. Duplay had not turned him out. He was going of his own will—or of his own act, anyhow, for he could not feel so sure about the will. But for the first time it struck him that his abdication might incur to the major's benefit. He had written to the lawyer the prize which he was sure the gallant officer could not have achieved for himself. "I'll be hanged if I do that," he muttered. "Yes, I know what I'll do."  
He got his hat and stick and went out

into the garden. The windows of the long gallery were all dark. Harry smiled again and shook his fists at them. There was no light in Cecily's window. He was glad to think that the girl slept; if he were tired she must be terribly tired, too. He was quite alone—alone with the old place for the last time.  
He started at a brisk walk to the little bridge, reached the middle of it and stopped short. The talk he had had with Mina Zabriska at this very spot came back into his mind. "The blood, not the law!" he had said. Well, it was to the blood he had bowed, and not to the law. He made a movement, as though to walk on, but for a moment he could not. When it came to go, for an instant he could not go. The parting was difficult. He had no discontent with what he had done. But it was hard

contract with Harry Tristram, as well as his own strong desire.  
"Have you sympathized—or condoned—or triumphed—enough?" she asked; she was fierce still.  
"I don't know that I've had a chance of saying anything much," he observed with some justice.  
"I really don't see what you can have to say. What is there to say?"  
"Well, there's just this to say—that I'm jolly glad of it."  
She was startled by his blunt sincerity, so started that she passed the obvious chance of accusing him of cruelty toward Harry Tristram, and thought only of how his words touched herself.  
"Glad of it! O, if you knew how it makes me feel about myself! But you don't or you'd never be here now!" He spoke slowly, as though he were himself searching for any sound reason.  
"O, it's—The power of explanation failed her. People who will not see obvious things sometimes hold a very strong position. Janie began to feel rather helpless. "Do go, I don't want anybody to come and find you here." She had turned from command to entreaty.  
"I'm jolly glad," he resumed, settling himself back in his chair. "That the bust-

ness between you and Harry Tristram is all over. It ought never to have gone so far, you know."  
"Are you out of your mind today, Bob?"  
"And now what about the major, Miss Zabriska?"  
She flushed red in indignation, perhaps in guilt, too. "How dare you? You've no business to—"  
"I don't know the right way to say things, I dare say," he admitted, but with an abominable tranquillity. "Still I expect you know what I mean, and I don't think you do you accuse me of having encouraged Major Duplay?"  
"I should say you'd been pretty pleasant to him. But it's not my business to worry myself about Duplay."  
"The door of the room opened abruptly, and in the doorway stood Mrs. Iver. Little need to dilate on the situation as it appeared to Mrs. Iver. Had she known the truth the thing was bad enough. But she knew nothing of Harry Tristram's letter. After a moment of consternation Janie ran to her, crying:  
"I'm not engaged any more to Harry Tristram, mother."  
Mrs. Iver said nothing. She stood by the open door. There was no mistaking her meaning. With a shamefaced look, struggling with an unruly smile, Bob Brodley got through it somehow. Janie was left alone with Mrs. Iver.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### An Inspector Interrupted.

"My mother told me just as a bit of gossip. She didn't believe it; no more did I."  
"Oh, I repeated it to my uncle, because I thought it might amuse him—just for something to say."  
"Your idea of small talk is rather peculiar," was Iver's dry comment. He looked at the major on his right and at Neeld on his left at the table; Mrs. Iver was opposite, like the witness before the commission.  
"So are yours of politeness," she cried. "It's my house. Why do you come and bully me in it?"  
Duplay was sullenly furious. Poor Mrs. Neeld's state was lamentable. He had not spoken a word throughout the interview. He had taken refuge in nothing, exhausted by the significance of nods in reply to the various appeals that the other three addressed to him.  
Iver had his temper in hand still, but he was hard and resolute to understand the seriousness of the thing in the least," he said. "I've spoken plainly to you. My daughter's future is at stake. You say it was all idle gossip. I find that hard to believe. Even if so, I must have that gossip investigated and proved to be nothing but gossip."  
"Investigate it, then," said the Imp, peevishly.  
"You refuse me the materials. What you told Major Duplay was too vague. You know more. You can put me on the track."  
Mina was silent. Neeld wiped his brow with his handkerchief. Iver changed his tone.  
"Mina, we've been friends to you; I'm not ashamed to remind you of it. Janie's a great friend of yours; my wife and I have welcomed you first for her sake, then for your own. Is this the best return you can make us?" He paused a moment. "Ask Mr. Neeld here what he would do. I'm willing to abide by his judgment."  
Mina was sorely tempted to say, "Ask him, then." The situation would thus become so much the more poignant. But Mr. Neeld was in such distress—to her sharp eyes a distress so visible—that she did not dare to risk the coup.  
"I must judge for myself. Mr. Neeld can't help me," she answered. "Uncle has chosen to say he can prove these things. Let him try." She drew herself up with a prim, prudish air. "I don't think it desirable to mix myself up in such very peculiar questions at all, and I don't think it's wise of me to come and cross-question me about them."  
"O, we're not in a ladies' school," said Mrs. Iver, with a touch of irritation hardly suppressed. "We come as men of the world to a sensible woman." She looked at Janie, who was silent. "Uncle has chosen to say he can prove these things. Let him try." She drew herself up with a prim, prudish air. "I don't think it desirable to mix myself up in such very peculiar questions at all, and I don't think it's wise of me to come and cross-question me about them."  
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"I should think a—a week would be about right."  
"A week? No, no. Six months."  
"Six months be—"  
"Well, then, three? Do agree to three."  
"We'll think about three. Still I misorder, Janie."  
"Yes, still—rather. Now you must go. Fancy if anybody came!"  
"All right, I'll go. But I say, you might just drop a hint to the major."  
"I can't send him another message—that I'm—I've done it again!"  
She looked at her wrist again. Bob's hearty laughter rang out; his latent sense of humor was touched at the idea of this second communication to the major. For a moment Janie looked angry; for a moment

deeply hurt. Bob laughed still. There was nothing for it but to join in. Her own laugh rang out easily as he caught her in his arms again and kissed her.  
"O, if anybody knew!" sighed Janie.  
"But Bob was full of triumph. He kissed his love again.  
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general happiness, too, if you must know. Now, I'm off, Bob!"  
He held out his hand and Bob grasped it. "We'll meet again some day, when things have settled down. Best Duplay for me, Bob. Goodbye."  
"That's a grand real grin," muttered Bob, as he returned to the house after seeing Harry Tristram on his way.  
It was that—or else the intoxication of some influence whose power had not passed away. Whatever it was, it had a marked effect on Bob Brodley. There was an appearance of strength and resolution about it—as of a man knowing what he meant to do and doing it.  
In the afternoon he had his gig brought round and set out for Blentmouth. As he passed Blent Hall he saw a girl on the bridge, a girl in black, looking down at the water. Lady Tristram! It was strange to call her by the title that had been another's. She did not look up as he passed; he retained a vision of the slack dreariness of her pose. Going on to meet the Iver carriage, Iver and Neeld sat in it, side by side; they waved their hands in careless greeting and went on talking earnestly. He could not tell. He put up his gig at the inn and sauntered out into the street; still he could not get rid of it. He wandered out to Fairholme, up to the gate and past it, and back to it, and past it again.  
Now, would Harry Tristram do that? No; either he would never have come or he would have been inside before this. Bob rang the bell.  
Janie was not denied to him, but only because no chance was given to her of denying herself. A footman, unconscious of convulsions external or internal, showed him into the morning room. But Janie's own attitude was plain enough in her reception of him.  
"O, Bob, why in the world do you come here today? Indeed, I can't talk to you today." Her dismay was evident. "If there's nothing very particular—"  
"Well, you know there is," Bob interrupted.  
She turned her head quickly toward him. "I know there is? What do you mean?"  
"You've got Harry Tristram's letter, I suppose?"  
"What do you know of Harry Tristram's letter?"  
"I haven't seen it, but I know what's in it, all the same."  
"How do you know?"  
"He came up to Mingham today and told me." Bob sat down by her, uninvited; certainly the belief in boldness was carrying him far. But he did not quite anticipate the next development. She sprang up, sprang away from his neighborhood, crying: "Then, how dare you come here today? Yes, I've got the letter—just an hour ago. Have you come to—to triumph over me?"  
"What an extraordinary idea!" remarked Bob in the slow tones of a genuine astonishment.  
"I call it to be conde. I suppose?"  
"That's rather worse."  
Bob confirmed himself to a long look at her. It brought him no enlightenment.  
"You must see that you're the very—"  
She broke off abruptly, and, turning away, began to walk up and down the room.  
"The very what?" Bob asked.  
"She turned and looked at him; she broke into a peevish, nervous laugh. Anybody but Bob—really anybody but Bob—would have known! The laugh encircled him a little—which again it had no right to do.  
"I thought you'd be in trouble and like a bit of cheering up," he said with a diplomatic air that was ludicrously obvious.  
She considered a moment, taking another turn about the room to do it.  
"What did Harry Tristram say to you?"  
"O, he told me the whole thing. That—that he'd checked it up, you know."  
"I mean about me?"  
"He didn't say much about you. Just that it was all ended, you know."  
"Did he think I should accept his withdrawal?"  
"Yes, he seemed quite sure of it," answered Bob. "I had my doubts, but he seemed quite sure of it." Apparently Bob considered his statement reassuring and comforting.  
"What about your doubts?"  
"Yes, I thought he—"  
"You were wrong then, and Harry Tristram was right." She flung the words at him in a fierce hostility. "Now he's not Lord Tristram any longer. I don't want to marry him." She paused. "You believe he isn't, don't you, Bob?"  
"I believe him, all right. He's a fellow you can rely on."  
"But it's all so strange. Why has he done it? Well, that doesn't matter. At any rate, he's right about me."  
"Bob sat solidly in his chair. He did not at all know what to say, but he did not mean to go. He had put no spoke in the major's wheel yet, and to do that was his

contract with Harry Tristram, as well as his own strong desire.  
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### "THE LAW CAN MAKE YOU SPEAK," SAID IVER. "WHEN WE HAVE REACHED A CERTAIN STAGE IN THE INVESTIGATION YOU CAN BE MADE TO TELL ALL YOU KNOW."

to go, to leave Blent just as the slowly growing day brought into sight every outline he knew so well, and began to warm the gardens into life. "I should rather like to stay a day," was his thought, as he lingered still. But the next moment he was not with her to see him. She was here, and beginning to mount the road up the valley. He had heard a shutter thrown open and a window raised; the sound came from the wing where Cecily slept. He did not want to see her now; he did not want to awake to undivided possession, free from any reminder of him. That was his fancy, his idea of making his gift to her of what was hers more splendid and more complete. But she did see him; she watched him from her window, as he walked up the valley. He did not know; true to his fancy, he never turned his head.  
Bob Brodley was an early riser, as his business in life demanded. At 6 o'clock he was breakfasting in a bright little room opening on his garden. He was the middle of his meal when a shadow fell across his plate. Looking up, he started to see Harry Tristram at the doorway.  
"Lord Tristram!" he exclaimed.  
"You've called me Tristram all your life. I should think you might still," observed Harry.  
"All right. But what brings you here? These aren't generally your hours, are they?"  
"Perhaps not. May I have some breakfast?"  
The maid was summoned and brought him bread and butter. He sat at the table, and saucer when she realized that the great man was there at 6 in the morning.  
"I'm on my way to London," said Harry. "Going to take the train at Fillingford instead of Blentmouth, because I wanted to drop in on you. I've something to say."  
"I expect I've heard. It's very kind of you to come, but I saw Janie Iver in Blentmouth yesterday."  
"I daresay; but she didn't tell you what I'm going to. Harry, having made by a pretense of breakfast, pushed away his plate. "I'll smoke if you permit. You go on eating," he said. "Do you remember a little talk we had about our friend Duplay? We agreed that we should both like to put a spoke in his wheel."  
"And you've done it," said Bob, reaching for his pipe from the mantelpiece.  
"I did not. I can't do it any more. You know there were certain reasons which made a marriage between Janie Iver and me seem desirable. I'm saying nothing against her, and I don't intend to say a word against myself. Well, those reasons no longer exist. I have written to her to say so. She'll get that letter this afternoon."  
"You've written to break off the engagement?" Bob spoke slowly and thoughtfully, but with no great surprise.  
"Yes, she accepted me under a serious misapprehension. When I asked her I was in a position to which I had no—"  
He interrupted himself, frowning a little. Not even now was he ready to say that. "In a position which I no longer occupy," he amended, recovering his placidity. "All the same, I have written to her to say I am no longer owner of Blent."  
"What?" cried Bob, jumping up and looking hard at Harry. The surprise came now.  
"And I am no longer what you called me just now—Lord Tristram. You know the law about succeeding to peerages and entitled lands? Very well. My birth has been discovered the smiled for an instant not to satisfy that law—the merits of which, Bob, we won't discuss. Consequently not I, but Miss Gainsborough, succeeds my mother in the title and all the property. I have informed Miss Gainsborough—I ought to say Lady Tristram—of these facts, and I'm on my way to London to see the lawyers and get everything done in proper order."  
"Good God, do you mean what you say?"  
"Of course I do. Do you take me for an idiot to come up here at 6 in the morning to talk balderdash?" Harry was obviously irritated. "Everybody will know soon. I came to tell you because I fancy you've some concern in it, and, as I say, I shall want that spoke put in the major's wheel."  
Bob sat down and was silent for many moments, smoking hard.  
"But Janie won't do that," he broke out at last. "She's too straight, too loyal. If she accepted you—"  
"A beautiful idea, Bob, if she was in love with me. But she isn't. Can you tell me you think she is?"  
Bob granted inarticulately an obvious, but not a skilful evasion of the question.  
"And anyhow," Harry pursued, "the thing's at an end. I shan't marry her. Now if that suggests any action on your part—I well, I shall be glad I came to

breakfast." He got up and went to the window, looking out on the neat little garden and to the paddock beyond.  
In a moment Bob Brodley's hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned and faced him.  
"What a thing for you! You—you lose it all!"  
"I can't realize it, you know. The chance—"  
"I have given it all up."  
"Couldn't you have made a fight for it?"  
"Yes, a deuced good fight. But I chose to let it go. Now, don't go on looking as if you didn't understand the thing. It's simple enough."  
"But Lady Tristram—your mother—must have known—"  
"The question didn't arise as long as my mother lived," said Harry quickly. "Her title was all right, of course."  
"There was another question on the tip of Bob's tongue, but after a glance at Harry's face he did not put it; he could not ask Harry if he had known.  
"I'm hanged!" he muttered.  
"Yes, but you understand why I came here?"  
"Yes. That was kind."  
"Oh, no. I want to spike the major's guns, you know." He laughed a little.  
"And, well, yes, I think I'm promoting the

secret out of her before, and resenting the humiliation of the memory, stiffened her neck once more.  
"I've nothing to say. You must do as you think best," she said.  
"You must be made to speak."  
Iver's threats alarmed, where Duplay's only annoyed. He spoke calmly and with weight.  
"Who can make me speak?" she cried, more angry from her fear.  
"The law. When we have reached a certain stage in the inquiry, we shall be able to compel you to speak."  
"I thought you couldn't move a step without me."  
Iver was rather set back, but he braved it out.  
"The difficulties are immensely increased, but they're not insuperable," he said.  
"I shan't say to be questioned and bullied. I shall go abroad."  
Iver looked at the major; the major returned his glance; they were both resolute men.  
"No, you won't go away," declared Iver solemnly.  
"The Imp was frightened; she was an ignorant young woman in a land of whose laws she knew nothing. Neeld would have liked to suggest something soothing about the liberty of the individual and the habeas corpus act. But he dared show no sympathy—beyond nodding at her unobserved. The red told her nothing.  
"You'll stop me?" Still she tried to sneer defiantly.  
Another glance passed between Iver and Duplay. A shrewd observer might have interpreted it as meaning, "Even if we can't do it, shall we let her go?"  
"We shall," said the major, executing the bluff on behalf of himself and his partner.  
The Imp thought of crying—not for her uncle—which would be hopeless—but for Iver. She concluded it would be hopeless, too. So she laughed again instead. But the laugh was a failure and Iver was sharp enough to see it.  
"In this country people aren't allowed to play fast and loose in this fashion," he remarked. "I'll tell you one way in which you would be compelled to speak. I must assume you would tell the truth. I refuse to suppose you would commit perjury."  
"I should hold my tongue," said Mina.  
"Then you'd be sent to prison for contempt of court."  
The bluff worked well. Mina knew nothing at all of what Harry Tristram would do or might do, or must do, or what the law would or might, or might not do, in the circumstances supposed. And Iver spoke as though he knew everything, with a weighty confidence, with an admirable air of considered candor. She was no match for him; she grew rather pale, her lips twitched and her breath came quick. Tears were no longer to be treated merely as a possible policy; they threatened to occur of their own accord.  
What wonder that a feeling of intolerable meanness attacked Mr. Jenkinson Neeld? He was on the wrong side of the table, on the bench instead of in the dock. He sat there juggling; his proper place was side by side with the criminal, in charge of the cellular questions at all, and I don't think it's wise of me to come and cross-question me about them."  
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ness between you and Harry Tristram is all over. It ought never to have gone so far, you know."  
"Are you out of your mind today, Bob?"  
"And now what about the major, Miss Zabriska?"  
She flushed red in indignation, perhaps in guilt, too. "How dare you? You've no business to—"  
"I don't know the right way to say things, I dare say," he admitted, but with an abominable tranquillity. "Still I expect you know what I mean, and I don't think you do you accuse me of having encouraged Major Duplay?"  
"I should say you'd been pretty pleasant to him. But it's not my business to worry myself about Duplay."  
"The door of the room opened abruptly, and in the doorway stood Mrs. Iver. Little need to dilate on the situation as it appeared to Mrs. Iver. Had she known the truth the thing was bad enough. But she knew nothing of Harry Tristram's letter. After a moment of consternation Janie ran to her, crying:  
"I'm not engaged any more to Harry Tristram, mother."  
Mrs. Iver said nothing. She stood by the open door. There was no mistaking her meaning. With a shamefaced look, struggling with an unruly smile, Bob Brodley got through it somehow. Janie was left alone with Mrs. Iver.



## BREAKING BACKS

IN OMAHA.

Backs that are bowed down with pain and suffering—backs that are the victims of sick kidneys. Being cured every day—being made strong and well—Never a failure— Hundreds of Omaha people say so.

### DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS

The Little Conquerors of Kidney Pills don't know what it is to fail.

Cure every kind of kidney ill—backache, lame back, urinary troubles, diabetes—

Want proof? Read what an Omaha woman says.

Mrs. Catherine Heaton of 1815 Inard street says: "I was not well for four or five years. My back ached across the small part and sharp twinges caught me in the kidneys when stooping or rising. The Kidney secretions were irregular and contained brick dust deposit. When I read about Doan's Kidney Pills I got a box at Kuhn & Co.'s drug store, corner 15th and Douglas streets. They sent me a right off and in my case proved a splendid remedy. I recommend them to any one who has symptoms of kidney trouble."

Doan's Kidney Pills are for sale at all drug stores—50c a box—Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

## SUFFERING WOMEN

I am so grateful to you for your valuable medicine, Wine of Cardui. It is wonderful and should be brought to the attention of all suffering women. They have become regular and have the right color. The pains are not severe and I am strong. The blindness has left me. I feel all right and I know your medicine has cured me.

CORA ANN GARRETT.

March 1, Texas, Aug. 12, 1900.

There are many more sick women than there are well ones in this city today. The duties which without and motherhood impose too often break the health years before a woman should be past her prime. In thousands of homes every month brings dreadful days spent in suffering the agonies of disordered menses. Nature never intended as necessary and important a function as menstruation to be the cause of pain. We say emphatically and positively that this suffering can be avoided. There is no excuse for racking menstrual pains when Wine of Cardui, the great natural emmenagogue, will bring a quick cure.

### WINE OF CARDUI

regulates the menstrual flow perfectly. It not only banishes the pain but forestalls and cures distressing cases of leucorrhoea. Every woman knows the cutting, burning pains of falling of the womb that shoot through the entire body. Wine of Cardui has cured a million such cases. Theford's Black-Draught is a valuable laxative made to assist Wine of Cardui by regulating the bowels and invigorating the torpid liver. No woman taking Wine of Cardui and Theford's Black-Draught has failed of a permanent cure of menstrual troubles when the medicines were used according to directions. Read again what Mrs. Garrett wrote. Your druggist sells Wine of Cardui and Theford's Black-Draught.

For advice and literature address, giving symptoms, "The Ladies' Advisory Department," The Chattanooga Medicine Co., Chattanooga, Tenn.

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unfairly, without a name, an acre, or, so far as I know, a shilling. She can help me. She shan't. You think her right. Neeld!"  
"Yes, I do," said the old gentleman with the promptness of desperation.  
"Then your idea of friendship differs diametrically from mine. I desire no such friend as that."  
It is to be hoped that the sting of Iver's remark was somewhat mitigated by Mina's covertly telegraphed gratitude. Yet Neeld was no happier after his effort than before it. A silence fell on them all. Mina glanced from her uncle's face to Iver's. Both men were stern and gloomy. Her sense of heroism hardly supported her; things were so very uncomfortable, if Harry could know what she suffered for him it would be something. But Mina had an idea that Harry was thinking very little about her.  
At this point—the doleful demand by the canon of art having been reached by the force of circumstances and the clash of wills—enter the deus ex machina in the shape of a pretty parlor maid in a black gown and white apron, with a bow of pink ribbon at the neck; instead of the car, a silver salver, and on it a single letter.  
The Imp was in no mood for ceremony; one glance at the handwriting, and she tore the envelope open eagerly. Iver was whispering to Duplay. Neeld's eyes were fixed on the letter, because he did not know where else he could direct them with any sense of safety.  
Mina read. A gasp of breath from her brought Neeld's eyes down from their refuge and stayed Iver and the major's whispered talk. She gazed from one to the other of them. She had flushed red; her face was very agitated and showed a great stress of feeling. Duplay, with an exclamation of surprise, put out his hand for the letter. But Mina kept hers on it, pinning it immovably to the table. For another minute she sat there, facing the three, then all composure failed her; she burst into tears, and, bowing her head to meet her arms on the table, covering the letter with her hair, she sobbed violently.  
"I can't help it, I can't help it," the man heard her say between her sobs.  
"The sobs dominated these timid utterances. Was it they who had brought her to this state, or was it the letter? Iver stirred uneasily in his chair, his business manner and uncharitable shrewdness suddenly seeming out of place. "Give her time," he said gently. "Give her time, poor girl."  
Mina raised her head; tears ran down her cheeks; she was weeping. "Time's no use," she groaned. "It's all over now."  
Neeld caught at the state of affairs by an intuition to which his previous knowledge helped him.  
"What? You show us the letter?" he asked gently.  
"Oh, yes. And I'll tell you anything you like now. It doesn't matter now. She looked at Neeld; she was loyal to the end. "I am the only person who knew it," she said to Iver.  
That was too much. "Mind he might be, even to the point of cowardice; but now, when the result of confession would be no harm to anybody but himself, Neeld felt he must speak if he were to have any chance of going on thinking himself a gentleman—and it is an unpleasant thing for a man to realize that he has none.  
"I must correct Miss Zabriska," he said. "I knew it, too."  
"What?" cried Duplay. Iver turned quick, scrutinizing eyes on his friend.  
"You know, too? You knew what?" he demanded.  
"The facts have been endeavoring to obtain from Mrs. Zabriska."  
"The facts about—?"  
"Oh, it's all in the letter," cried Mina. In a fresh burst of impatience. "There it is."  
(To be Continued.)