msa_sc3326_scm8207-0274 ©Maryland State Archives

MY LADY'S MONEY

By WILKIE COLLINS.

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG GIRL.

PART THE FIRST.

THE DISAPPEARANCE.

PART THE SECOND.

THE DISCOVERY.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the day after Isabel left Lady Lydiard's house, Mr Troy set forth for the head office in Whitehall to consult the police on the question of the missing money. He had previously sent information of the robbery to the Bank of England, and had also advertised the loss in the daily newspapers.

The air was so pleasant and the sun was so bright that he determined on proceeding to his destination on foot. He was hardly out of sight of his own offices when he was overtaken by a friend, who was also walking in the direction of Whitehall. This gentleman was a person of considerable worldly wisdom and experience; he had been officially associated with cases of striking and notorious crime, in which government had lent its assistance to discover and punish the criminals. The opinion of a person in this position might be of the greatest value to Mr. Troy, whose practice as a solicitor had thus far never brought him into collision with thieves and mysteries. He accordingly decided, in Isabel's interests, on confiding to his friend the nature of his errand to the police. Concealing the names, but concealing nothing else, he described what had happened on the previous day at Lady Lydiard's house, and then put the question plainly to his companion:

"What would you do in my place?"

"In your place," his friend answered, quietly, "I should not waste time and money in consulting the police."

"Not consult the police!" exclaimed Mr. Troy, in amazement. "Surely I have not made myself understood? I am going to the head office, and I have got a letter of introduction to the chief inspector in the detective department. I am afraid I omitted to mention that."

"It doesn't make any difference," proceeded the other, as coolly as ever. "You have asked for my advice, and I give you my advice. Tear up your letter of introduction, and don't stir a step farther in the direction of Whitehall."

Mr. Troy began to understand. "You don't believe in the detective police?" he said.

"Who *can* believe in them who reads the newspapers and remembers what he reads?" his friend rejoined. "Fortunately for the detective department, the public in general forgets what it reads. Go to your club and look at the criminal history of our own time recorded in the newspapers. Every crime is more or less a mystery. You will see that the mysteries which the police discover are, almost without exception, mysteries made penetrable by the commonest capacity, through the extraordinary stupidity exhibited in the means taken to hide the crime. On the other hand, let the guilty man or woman be a resolute and intelligent person, capable of setting his (or her) wits fairly against the wits of the police—in other words, let the mystery really *be* a mystery—and cite me a case if you can (a really difficult and perplexing case) in which the criminal has not escaped. Mind, I don't charge the police with neglecting their work. No doubt they do their best, and take the greatest pains in following the routine to which they have been trained. It is their misfortune, not their fault, that there is no man of superior intelligence among them—I mean no man who is capable, in great emergencies, of placing himself above conventional methods and following a new way of his own. There have been such men in the police—men naturally endowed with that faculty of mental analysis which can decompose a mystery, resolve it into its component parts, and find the clew at the bottom, no matter how remote from ordinary observation it may be. But those men have died or have retired. One of them would have been invaluable to you in the case you have just mentioned to me. As things are, unless you are wrong in believing in the young lady's innocence, the person who has stolen that bank note will be no easy person to find. In my opinion there is only one man now in London who is likely to be of the slightest assistance to you, and he is not in the police."

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Troy.

"An old rogue, who was once in your branch of the legal profession," the friend answered. "You may, perhaps, remember the man; they call him 'Old Sharon.'"

"What! the scoundrel who was struck off the roll of attorneys years since? Is he still alive?"

"Alive and prospering. He lives in a court or a lane running out of Longacre, and he offers advice to persons interested in recovering missing objects of any sort. Whether you have lost your wife or lost your cigar case, Old Sharon is equally useful to you. He has an inbred capacity for reading the riddle the right way in cases of mystery, great or small. In short, he possesses exactly that analytical faculty to which I alluded just now. I have his address at my office, if you think it worth while to try him."

"Who can trust such a man?" Mr. Troy objected. "He would be sure to deceive me."

"You are entirely mistaken. Since he was struck off the rolls Old Sharon has discovered that the straight way is, on the whole, the best way, even in a man's own interests. His consultation fee is a guinea; and he gives a signed estimate beforehand for any supplementary expenses that may follow. I can tell you (this is, of course, strictly between ourselves) that the authorities at my office took his advice in a government case that puzzled the police. We approached him, of course, through persons who were to be trusted to represent us without betraying the source from which their instructions were derived, and we found the old rascal's advice well worth paying for. It is quite likely that he may not succeed so well in your case. Try the police, by all means; and if they fail, why there is Sharon as a last resource."

This arrangement commended itself to Mr. Troy's professional caution. He went on to Whitehall, and he tried the detective police. They at once adopted the obvious conclusion to persons of ordinary capacity—the conclusion that Isabel was the thief.

Acting on this conviction, the authorities sent an experienced woman from the office to Lady Lydiard's house to examine the poor girl's clothes and ornaments before they were packed up and sent after her to her aunt's. The search led to nothing. The only objects of any value that were discovered had been presents from Lady Lydiard. No jewelers' or milliners' bills were among the papers found in her desk. Not a sign of secret extravagance in dress was to be seen anywhere. Defeated so far, the police proposed next to have Isabel privately watched. There might be a prodigal lover somewhere in the background, with ruin staring him in the face unless he could raise five hundred pounds. Lady Lydiard (who had only consented to the search under stress of persuasive argument from Mr. Troy) resented this ingenious idea as an insult. She declared that if Isabel was watched the girl should know of it instantly from her own lips. The police listened with perfect resignation and decorum, and politely shifted their ground. A certain suspicion (they remarked) always rested in cases of this sort on the servants. Would her ladyship object to private inquiries into the characters and proceedings of the servants? Her ladyship instantly objected, in the most positive terms. Thereupon the "inspector" asked for a minute's private conversation with Mr. Troy. "The thief is certainly a member of Lady Lydiard's household," this functionary remarked, in his politely positive way. "If her ladyship persists in refusing to let us make the necessary inquiries our hands are tied, and the case comes to an end through no fault of ours. If her ladyship changes her mind perhaps you will drop me a line, sir, to that effect. Good morning."

So the experiment of consulting the police came to an untimely end. The one result obtained was the expression of purblind opinion by the authorities of the detective department, which pointed at Isabel or at one of the servants as the undiscovered thief. Thinking the matter over in the retirement of his own office, and not forgetting his promise to Isabel to leave no means untried of establishing her innocence, Mr. Troy could see but one alternative left to him. He took up his pen and wrote to his friend at the government office. There was nothing for it now but to run the risk and try Old Sharon.

CHAPTER IX.

The next day Mr. Troy (taking Robert Moody with him as a valuable witness) rang the bell at the mean and dirty lodging house in which Old Sharon received the clients who stood in need of his advice.

They were led up stairs to a back room on the second floor of the house. Entering the room, they discovered, through a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, a small, fat, bald-headed, dirty old man in an arm chair, robed in a tattered flannel dressing gown, with a short pipe in his mouth, a pug dog on his lap and a French novel in his hands.

"Is it business?" asked Old Sharon, speaking in a hoarse, asthmatical voice, and fixing a pair of bright, shameless black eyes attentively on the two visitors.

"It *is* business," Mr. Troy answered, looking at the old rogue who had disgraced an honorable profession as he might have looked at a reptile which had just risen rampant at his feet. "What is your fee for a consultation?"

"You give me a guinea and I'll give you half an hour." With this reply Old Sharon held out his unwashed hand across the rickety, ink-splashed table at which he was sitting.

Mr. Troy would not have touched him with the tips of his own fingers for £1,000. He laid the guinea on the table.

Old Sharon burst into a fierce laugh—a laugh strangely accompanied by a frowning contraction of his eyebrows, and a frightful exhibition of the whole inside of his mouth. "I'm not clean enough for you, eh?" he said, with an appearance of being very much amused. "There's a dirty old man described in this book that is a little like me." He held up his French novel. "Have you read it? A capital story—well put together. Ah, you haven't read it? You have got a pleasure to come. I say, do you mind tobacco smoke? I think faster while I smoke—that's all."

Mr. Troy's respectable hand waived a silent permission to smoke, given under dignified protest.

"All right," said Old Sharon. "Now, get on."

He laid himself back in his chair and puffed out his smoke, with eyes lazily half closed, like the eyes of the pug dog on his lap. At that moment, indeed, there was a curious resemblance between the two. They both seemed to be preparing themselves, in the same idle way, for the same comfortable nap.

Mr. Troy stated the circumstances under which the five hundred pound note had disappeared in clear and consecutive narrative. When he had done Old Sharon suddenly opened his eyes. The pug dog suddenly opened his eyes. Old Sharon looked hard at Mr. Troy. The pug looked hard at Mr. Troy. Old Sharon spoke. The pug growled.

"I know who you are—you're a lawyer. Don't be alarmed; I never saw you before, and I don't know your name. What I do know is a lawyer's statement of facts when I hear it. Who's this?" Old Sharon looked inquisitively at Moody as he put the question.

Mr. Troy introduced Moody as a competent witness, thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances, and ready and willing to answer any questions relating to them. Old Sharon waited a little, smoking hard and thinking hard. "Now, then!" he burst out, in his fiercely sudden way, "I'm going to get to the root of the matter."

He leaned forward with his elbows on the table, and began his examination of Moody. Heartily as Mr. Troy despised and disliked the old rogue, he listened with astonishment and admiration, literally extorted from him by the marvelous ability with which the questions were adapted to the end in view. In a quarter of an hour Old Sharon had extracted from the witness everything, literally everything, down to the smallest detail, that Moody could tell him. Having now, in his own phrase, "got to the root of the matter," he relit his pipe with a grunt of satisfaction, and laid himself back again in his old arm chair.

"Well," said Mr. Troy, "have you formed your opinion?"

"Yes; I've formed my opinion."

"What is it?"

Instead of replying Old Sharon winked confidentially at Mr. Troy, and put a question on his side.

"I say! is a ten pound note much of an object to you?"

"It depends," answered Mr. Troy, "on what the money is wanted for."

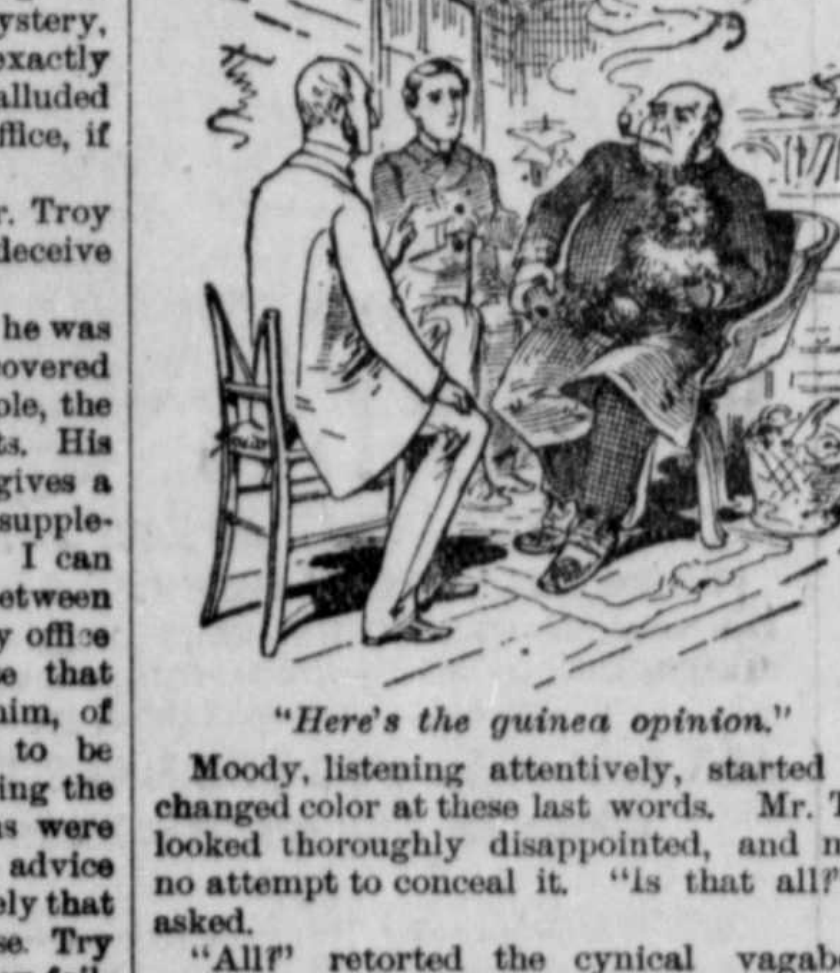
"Look here," said old Sharon; "I can give you an opinion for your guinea; but, mind this, its an opinion founded on hearsay—and you know as a lawyer what that is worth. Venture your ten pounds—in plain English, pay for my time and trouble in a baffling and difficult case—and I'll give you an opinion founded on my own experience."

"Explain yourself a little more clearly," said Troy. "What do you guarantee to tell us if we venture the ten pounds?"

"I guarantee to name the person, or the persons, on whom the suspicion really rests. And if you employ me after that, I guarantee (before you pay me a half penny more) to prove that I am right by laying my hand on the thief."

"Let us have the guinea opinion first," said Mr. Troy.

Old Sharon made another frightful exhibition of the whole inside of his mouth; his laugh was louder and fiercer than ever. "I like you," he said to Mr. Troy; "you are so devilish fond of your money. Lord! how rich you must be! Now listen. Here's the guinea opinion: Suspect, in this case, the very last person on whom suspicion could possibly fall."



"Here's the guinea opinion."

Moody, listening attentively, started and changed color at these last words. Mr. Troy looked thoroughly disappointed, and made no attempt to conceal it. "Is that all?" he asked.

"All!" retorted the cynical vagabond. "You're a pretty lawyer! What more can I say when I don't know for certain whether the witness who has given me my information has misled me or not? Have I spoken to the girl and formed my own opinion? No! Have I been introduced among the servants (as errand boy, or to clean the boots and shoes, or what not), and have I formed my own judgment of *them*? No! I take your opinions for granted, and I tell you how I should set to work myself if they were *my* opinions too; and that's a guinea's worth—a devilish good guinea's worth to a rich man like you!"

Old Sharon's logic produced a certain effect on Mr. Troy in spite of himself. It was smartly put from his point of view—there was no denying that.

"Even if I consented to your proposal," he said, "I should object to your annoying the young lady with impertinent questions, or to your being introduced as a spy into a respectable house."

Old Sharon doubled his dirty fists and drummed with them on the rickety table in a comical frenzy of impatience while Mr. Troy was speaking.

"What the devil do you know about my way of doing my business?" he burst out, when the lawyer had done. "One of us two is talking like a born idiot, and (mind this) it isn't me. Look here! Your young lady goes out for a walk, and she meets with a dirty, shabby old beggar—I look like a shabby old beggar already, don't I? Very good. This dirty old wretch whines and whimpers and tells a long story, and gets sixpence out of the girl, and knows her by that time, inside and out, as well as if he had made her—and, mark! hasn't asked her a single question, and, instead of annoying her, has made her happy in the performance of a charitable action. Stop a bit. I haven't done with you yet. Who blacks your boots and shoes? Look here!" He pushed his pug dog off his lap, dived under the table, appeared again with an old boot and a bottle of blacking, and set to work with tigerish activity. "I'm going out for a walk, you know, and I may as well make myself smart." With that announcement he began to sing over his work—a song of sentiment, popular in England in the early part of the present century—"'She's all my fancy painted her, she's lovely, she's divine; but her heart it is another's, and it never can be mine! Too-ral-loo-ral-loo.' I like a love song. Brush away! brush away! till I see my own pretty face in the blacking. Hey! Here's a nice, harmless, jolly old man! sings and jokes over his work, and makes the kitchen quite cheerful. What's that you say? He's a stranger, and don't talk to him too freely. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak in that way of a poor old fellow with one foot in the grave. Mrs. Cook will give him a nice bit of dinner in the scullery, and John Footman will look out an old coat for him. And when he's heard everything he wants to hear, and doesn't come back again the next day to his work, what do they think of it in the servants' hall? Do they say, We've had a spy among us? Not they! you know better than that by this time. The cheerful old man has been run over in the street, or is down with the fever, or has turned up his toes in the parish dead house—that's what they say in the servants' hall. Try me in your own kitchen, and see if your servants take me for a spy. Come, come, Mr. Lawyer! out with your ten pounds, and don't waste any more precious time about it!"

"I will consider, and let you know," said Mr. Troy.

Old Sharon laughed more ferociously than ever, and hobbled round the table in a great hurry to the place at which Moody was sitting. He laid one hand on the steward's shoulder, and pointed derisively with the other to Mr. Troy.

"I say, Mr. Silent-man! Bet you £5 I never hear of that lawyer again!"

Silently attentive all through the interview (except when he was answering questions), Moody only replied in the fewest possible words. "I don't bet," was all he said. He showed no resentment at Sharon's familiarity, and he appeared to find no amusement in Sharon's extraordinary talk. The old vagabond seemed actually to produce a serious impression on him. When Mr. Troy set the example of rising to go, he still kept his seat and looked at the lawyer as if he regretted leaving the atmosphere of tobacco smoke reeking in the dirty room.

"Have you anything to say before we go?" Mr. Troy asked.

Moody rose slowly and looked at Old Sharon. "Not just now, sir," he replied, looking away again, after a moment's reflection.

Old Sharon interpreted Moody's look and Moody's reply from his own peculiar point of view. He suddenly drew the steward away into a corner of the room.

"I say!" he began, in a whisper. "Upon your solemn word of honor, you know—are you as rich as the lawyer there?"

"Certainly not."

"Look here! It's half price to a poor man. If you feel like coming back, on your own account, five pounds will do from *you*. There! there! Think of it—think of it."

"Now, then!" said Mr. Troy, waiting for his companion, with the door open in his hand. He looked back at Sharon when Moody joined him. The old vagabond was settled again in his armchair, with his dog in his lap, his pipe in his mouth, and his French novel in his hand, exhibiting exactly the picture of frowzy comfort which he had presented when his visitors first entered the room.

"Good day," said Mr. Troy, with haughty condescension.

"Don't interrupt me," rejoined Old Sharon, absorbed in his novel. "You've had your guinea's worth. Lord! what a lovely book this is! Don't interrupt me."

"Impudent scoundrel!" said Mr. Troy, when he and Moody were in the street again. "What could my friend mean by recommending him? Fancy his expecting me to trust him with £10! I consider even the guinea completely thrown away."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Moody, "I don't quite agree with you there."

"What! you don't mean to tell me you understand that oracular sentence of his—'Suspect the very last person on whom suspicion could possibly fall'? Rubbish!"

"I don't say I understand it, sir. I only say it has set me thinking."

"Thinking of what? Do your suspicions point to the thief?"

"If you will please to excuse me, Mr. Troy, I should like to wait a while before I answer that."

Mr. Troy stood suddenly still, and eyed his companion a little distrustfully.

"Are you going to turn detective policeman on your own account?" he asked.

"There's nothing I won't turn to, and try, to help Miss Isabel in this matter," Moody answered, firmly. "I have saved a few hundred pounds in Lady Lydiard's service, and I am ready to spend every farthing of it if I can only discover the thief."

Mr. Troy walked on again. "Miss Isabel seems to have a good friend in you," he said. He was (perhaps unconsciously) a little offended by the independent tone in which the steward spoke, after he had himself engaged to take the vindication of the girl's innocence into his own hands.

"Miss Isabel has a devoted servant and slave in me," Moody answered, with passionate enthusiasm.

"Very creditable; I haven't a word to say against it," Mr. Troy rejoined. "But don't forget that the young lady has other devoted friends beside you. I am her devoted friend, for instance. I have promised to serve her, and I mean to keep my word. You will excuse me for adding that my experience and discretion are quite as likely to be useful to her as your enthusiasm. I know the world well enough to be careful in trusting strangers. It will do you no harm, Mr. Moody, to follow my example."

Moody accepted his reproof with becoming patience and resignation. "If you have anything to propose, sir, that will be of service to Miss Isabel," he said, "I shall be happy if I can assist you in the humblest capacity."

"And if not?" Mr. Troy inquired, conscious of having nothing to propose as he asked the question.

"In that case, sir, I must take my own course, and blame nobody but myself if it leads me astray."

Mr. Troy said no more; he parted from Moody at the next turning.

Pursuing the subject privately in his own mind, he decided on taking the earliest opportunity of visiting Isabel at her aunt's house, and on warning her in her future intercourse with Moody, not to trust too much to the steward's discretion. "I haven't a doubt," thought the lawyer, "of what he means to do next. The infatuated fool is going back to Old Sharon!"

CHAPTER X.

Returning to his office, Mr. Troy discovered, among the correspondence that was waiting for him, a letter from the very person whose welfare was still the uppermost subject in his mind. Isabel Miller wrote in these terms:

THE LAWN, SOUTH MORDEN, THURSDAY.

DEAR SIR: My aunt, Miss Pink, is very desirous of consulting you professionally at the earliest opportunity. Although South Morden is within little more than half an hour's railway ride from London, Miss Pink does not presume to ask you to visit her, being well aware of the value of your time. Will you, therefore, be so kind as to let me know when it will be convenient to you to receive my aunt at your office in London? Believe me, dear sir,

Respectfully yours,
ISABEL MILLER.

P. S.—I am further instructed to say that the regretable event at Lady Lydiard's house is the proposed subject of the consultation.

Mr. Troy smiled as he read the letter. "Too formal for a young girl," he said to himself. "Every word of it has been dictated by Miss Pink." He was not long in deciding what course he should take. There was a pressing necessity for cautioning Isabel, and here was his opportunity. He sent for his head clerk, and looked at his list of engagements for the day. There was nothing set down in the book which the clerk was not quite as well able to manage as the master. Mr. Troy consulted his railway guide, ordered his cab and caught the next train to South Morden.

South Morden was then (and remains to this day) one of those primitive agricultural villages, passed over by the march of modern progress, which are still to be found in the near neighborhood of London. Only the slow trains stopped at the station; and there was so little to do that the station master and his porter grew flowers on the embankment, and trained creepers over the waiting room window. Turning your back on the railway, and walking along the one street of South Morden, you found yourself in the old England of two centuries since. Gabled cottages, with fast-closed windows; pigs and poultry in quiet possession of the road; the venerable church surrounded by its shady burial ground; the grocer's shop which sold everything, and the butcher's shop which sold nothing; the scarce inhabitants who liked a good look at a stranger, and the unwashed children who were pictures of dirty health; the clash of the iron-chained bucket in the public well, and the thump of the falling nine-pins in the skittle ground behind the public house; the horse pond on one bit of open ground and the old elm tree with the wooden seat round it on the other—these were some of the objects that you saw and some of the noises that you heard in South Morden, as you passed from one end of the village to the other.

About half a mile beyond the last of the old cottages modern England met you again under the form of a row of little villas, set up by an adventurous London builder who had bought the land at a bargain. Each villa stood in its own little garden, and looked across a stony road at the meadow lands and softly rising wooded hills beyond. Each villa faced you in the sunshine with the horrid glare of new red brick, and forced its nonsensical name on your attention, traced in bright paint on the posts of its entrance gate. Consulting the posts as he advanced, Mr. Troy arrived in due course of time at the villa called The Lawn, which derived its name apparently from a circular patch of grass in front of the house. The gate resisting his efforts to open it, he rang the bell.

Admitted by a trim, clean, shy little maid servant, Mr. Troy looked about him in silent amazement. Turn which way he might, he found himself silently confronted by posted and painted instructions to visitors, which forbade him to do this, and commanded him to do that, at every step of his progress from the gate to the house. On one side of the lawn a label informed him that he was not to walk on the grass. On the other side a painted hand pointed along a boundary wall to an inscription which warned him to go that way if he had business in the kitchen. On the gravel walk at the foot of the house steps words, neatly traced in little white shells, reminded him not to "forget the scraper." On the door step he was informed, in letters of lead, that he was "Welcome!" On the mat in the passage bristly black words burst on his attention, commanding him to "wipe his shoes." Even the hat stand in the hall was not allowed to speak for itself: it had "Hats and Cloaks" inscribed on it, and it issued its directions imperatively in the matter of your wet umbrella—"Put it here!"

Giving the trim little servant his card, Mr. Troy was introduced to a reception room on the lower floor. Before he had time to look round him, the door was opened again from without, and Isabel stole into the room on tiptoe. She looked worn and anxious. When she shook hands with the old lawyer the charming smile that he remembered so well was gone.

"Don't say you have seen me," she whispered. "I am not to come into the room till my aunt sends for me. Tell me two things before I run away again. How is Lady Lydiard? And have you discovered the thief?"

"Lady Lydiard was well when I last saw her, and we have not yet succeeded in discovering the thief." Having answered the questions in those terms, Mr. Troy decided on questioning Isabel on the subject of the steward while he had the chance. "One question on my side," he said, holding her back from the door by the arm. "Do you expect Moody to visit you here?"

"I am *sure* he will visit me," Isabel answered, warmly. "He has promised to come here, at my request. I never knew what a kind heart Robert Moody had till this misfortune fell on me. My aunt, who is not easily taken with strangers, respects and admires him. I can't tell you how good he was to me on the journey here, and how kindly, how nobly, he spoke to me when we parted." She paused, and turned her head away. The tears were rising in her eyes. "In my situation," she said, faintly, "kindness is very keenly felt. Don't notice me, Mr. Troy."

The lawyer waited a moment to let her recover herself.

"I agree entirely, my dear, in your opinion of Moody," he said. "At the same time, I think it right to warn you that his zeal in your service may possibly outrun his discretion. He may feel too confidently about penetrating the mystery of the missing money, and, unless you are on your guard, he may raise false hopes in you when you next see him. Listen to any advice that he may give you, by all means; but before you decide on being guided by his opinion, consult my older experience and hear what I have to say on the subject. Don't suppose that I am attempting to make you distrust this good friend," he added, noticing the look of uneasy surprise which Isabel fixed on him. "No such idea is in my mind. I only warn you that Moody's eagerness to be of service to you may mislead him. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir," replied Isabel coldly; "I understand you. Please let me go now. My aunt will be down directly, and she must not find me here." She courtesied with distant respect and left the room.

"So much for trying to put two ideas together into a girl's mind," thought Mr. Troy, when he was alone again. "The little fool evidently thinks I am jealous of Moody's place in her estimation. Well, I have done my duty, and I can do no more."

He looked round the room. Not a chair was out of its place, not a speck of dust was to be seen. The brightly perfect polish of the table made your eyes ache; the ornaments on it looked as if they had never been touched by mortal hand; the piano was an object for distant admiration, not an instrument to be played on; the carpet made Mr. Troy look nervously at the soles of his shoes; and the sofa (protected by layers of white crochet-work) said as plainly as if in words, "Sit on me if you dare!" Mr. Troy retreated to a bookcase at the farther end of the room. The books fitted the shelves to such absolute perfection that he had some difficulty in taking one of them out. When he had succeeded, he found himself in possession of a volume of the "History of England." On the fly-leaf he encountered another written warning: "This book belongs to Miss Pink's Academy for Young Ladies, and is not to be removed from the library." The date, which was added, referred to a period of ten years since. Miss Pink now stood revealed as a retired schoolmistress; and Mr. Troy began to understand some of the characteristic peculiarities of that lady's establishment which had puzzled him up to the present time.

He had just succeeded in putting the book back again when the door opened once more, and Isabel's aunt entered the room.

If Miss Pink could, by any possible conjuncture of circumstances, have disappeared mysteriously from her house and her friends, the police would have found the greatest difficulty in composing the necessary description of the missing lady. The acutest observer could have discovered nothing that was noticeable or characteristic in her personal appearance. The pen of the present writer portrays her in despair by a series of negatives. She was not young, she was not old; she was neither tall nor short, nor stout nor thin; nobody could call her features attractive, and nobody could call them ugly; there was nothing in her voice, her expression, her manner or her dress that differed in any appreciable degree from the voice expression, manner and dress of five hundred thousand other single ladies of her age and position in the world. If you had asked her to describe herself, she would have answered, "I am a gentlewoman;" and if you had inquired which of her numerous accomplishments took highest rank in her own esteem, she would have replied, "My powers of conversation." For the rest, she was Miss Pink, of South Morden; and when that has been said, all has been said.

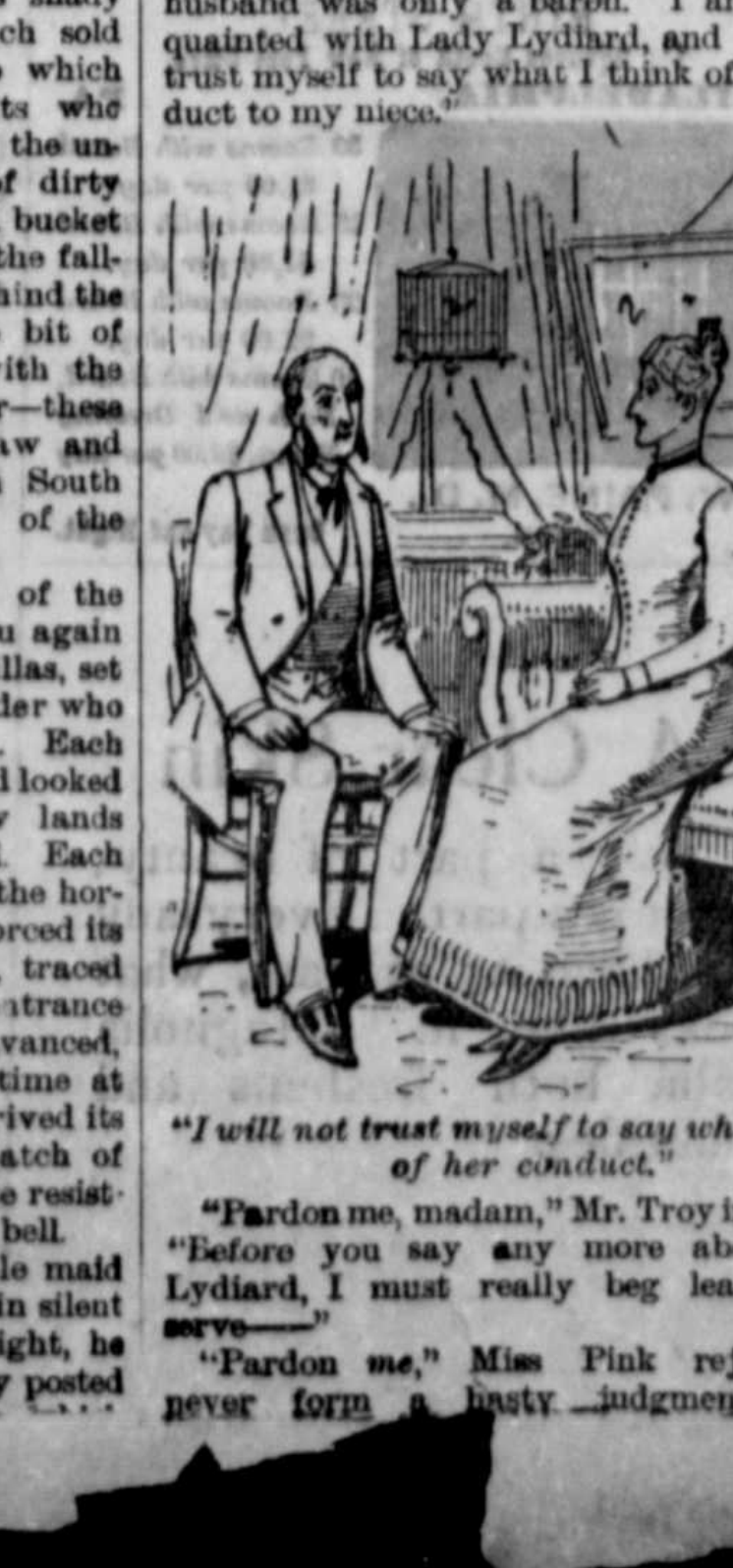
"Pray be seated, sir. We have had a beautiful day after the late long-continued wet weather. I am told that the season is very unfavorable for wall fruit. May I offer you some refreshment after your journey?" In these terms, and in the smoothest of voices, Miss Pink opened the interview.

Mr. Troy made a polite reply, and added a few strictly conventional remarks on the beauty of the neighborhood. Not even a lawyer could sit in Miss Pink's presence and hear Miss Pink's conversation without feeling himself called upon (in the nursery phrase) to "be on his best behavior."

"It is extremely kind of you, Mr. Troy, to favor me with this visit," Miss Pink resumed. "I am well aware that the time of professional gentlemen is of especial value to them, and I will therefore ask you to excuse me if I proceed abruptly to the subject on which I desire to consult your experience."

Here the lady modestly smoothed out her dress over her knees, and the lawyer made a bow. Miss Pink's highly trained conversation had perhaps one fault—it was not, strictly speaking, conversation at all. In its effect on her hearers it rather resembled the contents of a fluently conventional letter, read aloud.

"The circumstances under which my niece Isabel has left Lady Lydiard's house," Miss Pink proceeded, "are so indescribably painful—I will go further, I will say so deeply humiliating—that I have forbidden her to refer to them again in my presence, or to mention them in the future to any living creature besides myself. You are acquainted with those circumstances, Mr. Troy, and you will understand my indignation when I first learned that my sister's child had been suspected of theft. I have not the honor of being acquainted with Lady Lydiard. She is not a countess, I believe? Just so! her husband was only a baron. I am not acquainted with Lady Lydiard, and I will not trust myself to say what I think of her conduct to my niece."



"I will not trust myself to say what I think of her conduct."

"Pardon me, madam," Mr. Troy interposed. "Before you say any more about Lady Lydiard, I must really beg leave to observe——"

"Pardon *me*," Miss Pink rejoined, "I never form a hasty judgment. Lady Lydiard's conduct is beyond the reach of any defense, no matter how ingenious it may be. You may not be aware, sir, that in receiving my niece under her roof her ladyship was receiving a gentlewoman by birth as well as by education. My late lamented sister was the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England. I need hardly remind you that, as such, she was a born lady. Under favoring circumstances, Isabel's maternal grandfather might have been archbishop of Canterbury, and have taken precedence of the whole house of peers, the princes of the blood royal alone excepted. I am not prepared to say that my niece is equally well connected on her father's side. My sister surprised—I will not add shocked—us when she married a chemist. At the same time, a chemist is not a tradesman. He is a gentleman at one end of the profession of medicine, and a titled physician is a gentleman at the other end. That is all. In inviting Isabel to reside with her, Lady Lydiard, I repeat, was bound to remember that she was associating herself with a young gentlewoman. She has *not* remembered, this, which is one insult; and she has suspected my niece of theft, which is another."

Miss Pink paused to take breath. Mr. Troy made a second attempt to get a hearing.

"Will you kindly permit me, madam, to say two words?"

"No!" said Miss Pink, asserting the most immovable obstinacy under the blandest politeness of manner. "Your time, Mr. Troy, is really too valuable. Not even your trained intellect can excuse conduct which is manifestly inexcusable on the face of it. Now you know my opinion of Lady Lydiard, you will not be surprised to hear that I decline to trust her ladyship. She may, or she may not, cause the necessary inquiries to be made for the vindication of my niece's character. In a matter so serious as this—I may say, in a duty which I owe to the memories of my sister and my parents—I will not leave the responsibility to Lady Lydiard. I will take it on myself. Let me add that I am able to pay the necessary expenses. The earlier years of my life, Mr. Troy, have been passed in the tuition of young ladies. I have been happy in meriting the confidence of parents, and I have been strict in observing the golden rules of economy. On my retirement, I have been able to invest a modest, a very modest, little fortune in the funds. A portion of it is at the service of my niece for the recovery of her good name; and I desire to place the necessary investigation, confidentially, in your hands. You are acquainted with the case, and the case naturally goes to you. I could not prevail on myself—I really could not prevail on myself—to mention it to a stranger. That is the business on which I wished to consult you. Please say nothing more about Lady Lydiard; the subject is inexpressibly disagreeable to me. I will only trespass on your kindness to tell me if I have succeeded in making myself understood."

Miss Pink leaned back in her chair at the exact angle permitted by the laws of propriety, rested her left elbow on the palm of her right hand, and lightly supported her cheek with her forefinger and thumb. In this position she waited Mr. Troy's answer—the living picture of human obstinacy in its most respectable form.

If Mr. Troy had not been a lawyer—in other words, if he had not been professionally capable of persisting in his own course in the face of every conceivable difficulty and discouragement—Miss Pink might have remained in undisturbed possession of her own opinions. As it was, Mr. Troy had got his hearing at last; and no matter how obstinately she might close her eyes to it, Miss Pink was now destined to have the other side of the case presented to her view.

"I am sincerely obliged to you, madam, for the expression of your confidence in me," Mr. Troy began; "at the same time, I must beg you to excuse me if I decline to accept your proposal."

Miss Pink had not expected to receive such an answer as this. The lawyer's brief refusal surprised and annoyed her.

"Why do you decline to assist me?" she asked.

"Because," answered Mr. Troy, "my services are already engaged in Miss Isabel's interest by a client whom I have served for more than twenty years. My client is——"

Miss Pink anticipated the coming disclosure. "You need not trouble yourself, sir, to mention your client's name," she said.

"My client," persisted Mr. Troy, "loves Miss Isabel dearly——"

"That is a matter of opinion," Miss Pink interposed.

"And believes in Miss Isabel's innocence," proceeded the irrepressible lawyer, "as firmly as you believe in it yourself."

Miss Pink (being human) had a temper, and Mr. Troy had found his way to it.

"If Lady Lydiard believes in my niece's innocence," said Miss Pink, suddenly sitting bolt upright in her chair, "why has my niece been compelled, in justice to herself, to leave Lady Lydiard's house?"

"You will admit, madam," Mr. Troy answered, cautiously, "that we are all of us liable, in this wicked world, to be the victim of appearances. Your niece is a victim—an innocent victim. She wisely withdraws from Lady Lydiard's house until appearances are proved to be false, and her position is cleared up."

Miss Pink had her reply ready. "This is simply acknowledging, in other words, that my niece is suspected. I am only a woman, Mr. Troy, but it is not quite so easy to mislead me as you seem to suppose."

Mr. Troy's temper was admirably trained, but it began to acknowledge that Miss Pink's powers of irritation could sting to some purpose.

"No intention of misleading you, madam, has ever crossed my mind," he rejoined warmly. "As for your niece, I can tell you this: In all my experience of Lady Lydiard, I never saw her so distressed as she was when Miss Isabel left the house."

"Indeed?" said Miss Pink, with an incredulous smile. "In my rank of life, when we feel distressed about a person, we do our best to comfort that person by a kind letter or an early visit. But then I am not a lady of title."

"Lady Lydiard engaged herself to call on Miss Isabel in my hearing," said Mr. Troy. "Lady Lydiard is the most generous woman living."

"Lady Lydiard is here!" cried a joyful voice on the other side of the door.

At the same moment Isabel burst into the room in a state of excitement which actually ignored the formidable presence of Miss Pink. "I beg your pardon, aunt. I was up stairs at the window, and I saw the carriage stop at the gate. And Tommie has come, too! The darling saw me at the window!" cried the poor girl, her eyes sparkling with delight, as a perfect explosion of barking made itself heard over the tramp of horses' feet and the crash of carriage wheels outside.

Miss Pink rose slowly, with a dignity that looked capable of adequately receiving, not one noble lady only, but the whole peerage of England.

"Control yourself, dear Isabel," she said. "No well-bred young lady permits herself to become unduly excited. Stand by my side—a little behind me."

Isabel obeyed. Mr. Troy kept his place, and privately enjoyed his triumph over Miss Pink. If Lady Lydiard had been actually in league with him, she could not have chosen a more opportune time for her visit. A momentary interval passed; the carriage drew up at the door; the horses trampled on the gravel; the bell rang madly; the uproar of Tommie, released from the carriage and clamoring to be let in, redoubled its fury. Never before had such an unruly burst of noises invaded the tranquility of Miss Pink's villa.

CHAPTER XI.

The trim little maid servant ran up stairs from her modest little kitchen, trembling at the terrible prospect of having to open the door. Miss Pink, deafened by the barking, had just time to say, "What a very ill-behaved dog!" when a sound of small objects overthrown in the hall, and a scurrying of furious claws across the oil cloth, announced that Tommie had invaded the house. As the servant appeared, introducing Lady Lydiard, the dog ran in. He made one frantic leap at Isabel, which would certainly have knocked her down but for the chair that happened to be standing behind her. Received on her lap, the faithful creature half smothered her with his caresses. He barked, he shrieked, in his joy at seeing her again. He jumped off her lap and tore round and round the room at the top of his speed, and every time he passed Miss Pink he showed the whole range of his teeth, and snarled ferociously at her ankles. Having at last exhausted his superfluous energy, he leaped back again on Isabel's lap, with his tongue quivering in his open mouth, his tail wagging softly, and his eye on Miss Pink, inquiring how she liked a dog in her drawing room.

"I hope my dog has not disturbed you, ma'am?" said Lady Lydiard, advancing from the mat at the doorway, on which she had patiently waited until the raptures of Tommie subsided into repose.

Miss Pink, trembling with terror and indignation, acknowledged Lady Lydiard's polite inquiry by a ceremonious bow, and an answer which administered by implication a dignified reproof. "Your ladyship's dog does not appear to be a very well trained animal," the ex-schoolmistress remarked.

"Well trained?" Lady Lydiard repeated, as if the expression were perfectly unintelligible to her; "I don't think you have had much experience of dogs, ma'am." She turned to Isabel, and embraced her tenderly. "Give me a kiss, my dear. You don't know how wretched I have been since you left me." She looked back again at Miss Pink. "You are not, perhaps, aware, ma'am, that my dog is devotedly attached to your niece. A dog's love has been considered by many great men (whose names at the moment escape me) as the most touching and disinterested of all earthly affections." She looked the other way, and discovered the lawyer. "How do you do, Mr. Troy? It's a pleasant surprise to find you here. The house was so dull without Isabel that I really couldn't put off seeing her any longer. When you are more used to Tommie, Miss Pink, you will understand and admire him. *You* understand and admire him, Isabel, don't you? My child, you are not looking well. I shall take you back with me when the horses have had their rest. We shall never be happy away from each other."

Having expressed her sentiments, distributed her greetings, and defended her dog—all, as it were, in one breath—Lady Lydiard sat down by Isabel's side, and opened a large green fan that hung at her girdle. "You have no idea, Miss Pink, how fat people suffer in hot weather," said the old lady, using her fan vigorously.

Miss Pink's eyes dropped modestly to the ground—"fat" was such a coarse word to use, if a lady *must* speak of her superfluous flesh!

"May I offer some refreshment?" Miss Pink asked, mincingly. "A cup of tea?"

Lady Lydiard shook her head.

"A glass of water?"

Lady Lydiard declined this last hospitable proposal with an exclamation of disgust. "Have you got any beer?" she inquired.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," said Miss Pink, doubting the evidence of her own ears. "Did you say—beer?"

Lady Lydiard gesticulated vehemently with her fan. "Yes, to be sure! Beer! beer!"

Miss Pink rose, with a countenance expressive of genteel disgust, and rang the bell. "I think you have beer downstairs, Susan?" she said, when the maid appeared at the door.

"Yes, miss."

"A glass of beer for Lady Lydiard," said Miss Pink, under protest.

"Bring it in a jug," shouted her ladyship, as the maid left the room. "I like to froth it up for myself," she continued, addressing Miss Pink. "Isabel sometimes does it for me, when she is at home; don't you, my dear?"

Miss Pink had been waiting her opportunity to assert her own claim to the possession of her own niece from the time when Lady Lydiard had coolly declared her intention of taking Isabel back with her. The opportunity now presented itself.

"Your ladyship will pardon me," she said, "if I remark that my niece's home is under my humble roof. I am properly sensible, I hope, of your kindness to Isabel; but while she remains the object of a disgraceful suspicion, she remains with *me*."

Lady Lydiard closed her fan with an angry snap.

"You are completely mistaken, Miss Pink. You may not mean it but you speak most unjustly if you say that your niece is an object of suspicion to me or to anybody in my house."

Mr. Troy, quietly listening up to this point, now interposed to stop the discussion before it could degenerate into a quarrel. His keen observation, aided by his accurate knowledge of his client's character, had plainly revealed to him what was passing in Lady Lydiard's mind. She had entered the house, feeling (perhaps unconsciously) a jealousy of Miss Pink as her predecessor in Isabel's affections, and as the natural protectress of the girl under existing circumstances. Miss Pink's reception of her dog had additionally irritated the old lady. She had taken a malicious pleasure in shocking the school mistress' sense of propriety, and she was now only too ready to proceed to further extremities on the delicate question of Isabel's justification for leaving her house. For Isabel's own sake, therefore—to say nothing of other reasons—it was urgently desirable to keep the peace between the two ladies. With this excellent object in view, Mr. Troy seized his opportunity of striking into the conversation for the first time.

"Pardon me, Lady Lydiard," he said, "you are speaking of a subject which has been already sufficiently discussed between Miss Pink and myself. I think we shall do better not to dwell uselessly on past events, but to direct our attention to the future. We are all equally satisfied of the complete rectitude of Miss Isabel's conduct, and we are all equally interested in the vindication of her good name."

Whether these temperate words would of themselves have exercised the pacifying influence at which Mr. Troy aimed may be doubtful. But, as he ceased speaking, a powerful auxiliary appeared in the shape of the beer. Lady Lydiard seized on the jug, and filled the tumbler for herself with an unsteady hand. Miss Pink, trembling for the integrity of her carpet, and scandalized at seeing a peeress drinking beer like a washerwoman, forgot the sharp answer that was just rising to her lips when the lawyer interfered. "Small!" said Lady Lydiard, setting down the empty tumbler, and referring to the quality of the beer. "But very pleasant and refreshing. What's the servant's name? Susan? Well, Susan, I was dying of thirst, and you have saved my life. You can leave the jug; I dare say I shall empty it before I go."

Mr. Troy, watching Miss Pink's face, saw that it was time to change the subject again. "Did you notice the old village, Lady Lydiard, on your way here?" he asked. "The artists consider it one of the most picturesque places in England."

"I noticed that it was a very dirty village," Lady Lydiard answered, still bent on making herself disagreeable to Miss Pink. "The artists may say what they please; I see nothing to admire in rotten cottages and bad drainage and ignorant people. I suppose the neighborhood has its advantages. It looks dull enough, to my mind."

Isabel had hitherto modestly restricted her exertions to keeping Tommie quiet on her lap. Like Mr. Troy, she occasionally looked at her aunt, and she now made a timid attempt to defend the neighborhood, as a duty she owed to Miss Pink.

"Oh, my lady! don't say it's a dull neighborhood," she pleaded. "There are such pretty walks all round us. And when you get to the hills the view is beautiful."

Lady Lydiard's answer to this was a little masterpiece of good-humored contempt. She patted Isabel's cheek, and said, "Pooh! pooh!"

"Your ladyship does not admire the beauties of nature," Miss Pink remarked, with a compassionate smile. "As we get older, no doubt our sight begins to fail——"

"And we leave off canting about the beauties of nature," added Lady Lydiard. "I hate the country. Give me London, and the pleasures of society."

"Come! come! Do the country justice, Lady Lydiard!" put in peace-making Mr. Troy. "There's plenty of society to be found out of London—as good society as the world can show."

"The sort of society," added Miss Pink, "which is to be found, for example, in this neighborhood. Her ladyship is evidently not aware that persons of distinction surround us whichever way we turn. I may instance, among others, the Hon. Mr. Hardyman——"

Lady Lydiard, in the act of pouring out a second glassful of beer, suddenly set down the jug.

"Who is that you're talking of, Miss Pink?"

"I am talking of our neighbor, Lady Lydiard, the Hon. Mr. Hardyman."

"Do you mean Alfred Hardyman, the man who breeds the horses?"

"The distinguished gentleman who owns the famous stud farm," said Miss Pink, correcting the bluntly direct form in which Lady Lydiard had put her question.

"Is he in the habit of visiting here?" the old lady inquired, with a sudden appearance of anxiety. "Do you know him?"

"I had the honor of being introduced to Mr. Hardyman at our last flower show," Miss Pink replied. "He has not yet favored me with a visit."

Lady Lydiard's anxiety appeared to be to some extent relieved.

"I knew that Hardyman's farm was in this county," she said, "but I had no notion that it was in the neighborhood of South Morden. How far away is he—ten or a dozen miles, eh?"

"Not more than three miles," answered Miss Pink. "We consider him quite a near neighbor of ours."

Renewed anxiety showed itself in Lady Lydiard. She looked round sharply at Isabel. The girl's head was bent so low over the rough head of the dog that her face was almost entirely concealed from view. So far as appearances went, she seemed to be entirely absorbed in fondling Tommie. Lady Lydiard roused her with a tap of the green fan.

"Take Tommie out, Isabel, for a run in the garden," she said. "He won't sit still much longer, and he may annoy Miss Pink. Mr. Troy, will you kindly help Isabel to keep my ill-trained dog in order?"

Mr. Troy got on his feet, and, not very willingly, followed Isabel out of the room. "They will quarrel now, to a dead certainty," he thought to himself, as he closed the door. "Have you any idea of what this means?" he said to his companion, as he joined her in the hall. "What has Mr. Hardyman done to excite all this interest in him?"

Isabel's guilty color rose. She knew perfectly well that Hardyman's unconcealed admiration of her was the guiding motive of Lady Lydiard's inquiries. If she had told the truth, Mr. Troy would have unquestionably returned to the drawing room, with or without an acceptable excuse for intruding himself. But Isabel was a woman; and her answer, it is needless to say, was, "I don't know, I'm sure."

In the meantime the interview between the two ladies began in a manner which would have astonished Mr. Troy—they were both silent. For once in her life, Lady Lydiard was considering what she should say, before she said it. Miss Pink, on her side, naturally waited to hear what object her ladyship had in view—waited until her small reserves of patience gave way. Urged by irresistible curiosity, she spoke first.

"Have you anything to say to me in private?" she asked.

Lady Lydiard had not got to the end of her reflections. She said "Yes," and she said no more.

"Is it anything relating to my niece?" persisted Miss Pink.

Still immersed in her reflections, Lady Lydiard suddenly rose to the surface, and spoke her mind, as usual.

"About your niece, ma'am. The other day Mr. Hardyman called at my house and saw Isabel."

"Yes," said Miss Pink, politely attentive, but not in the least interested so far.

"That's not all, ma'am. Mr. Hardyman admires Isabel; he owned it to me himself in so many words."

Miss Pink listened, with a courteous inclination of her head. She looked mildly gratified, nothing more. Lady Lydiard proceeded.

"You and I think differently on many matters," she said, "but we are both agreed, I am sure, in feeling the sincerest interest in Isabel's welfare. I beg to suggest to you, Miss Pink, that Mr. Hardyman, as a near neighbor of yours, is a very undesirable neighbor while Isabel remains in your house."

Saying those words, under a strong conviction of the serious importance of the subject, Lady Lydiard insensibly recovered the manner and assumed the language which befitted a lady of her rank. Miss Pink, noticing the change, set it down to an expression of pride on the part of her visitor, which, in referring to Isabel, assailed indirectly the social position of Isabel's aunt.

"I fail entirely to understand what your ladyship means," she said, coldly.

Lady Lydiard, on her side, looked in undisguised astonishment at Miss Pink.

"Haven't I told you already that Mr. Hardyman admires your niece?" she asked.

"Naturally," said Miss Pink. "Isabel inherits her lamented mother's personal advantages. If Mr. Hardyman admires her, Mr. Hardyman shows his good taste."

Lady Lydiard's eyes opened wider and wider in wonder. "My good lady," she exclaimed, "is it possible you don't know that when a man admires a woman he doesn't stop there? He falls in love with her (as the saying is) next."

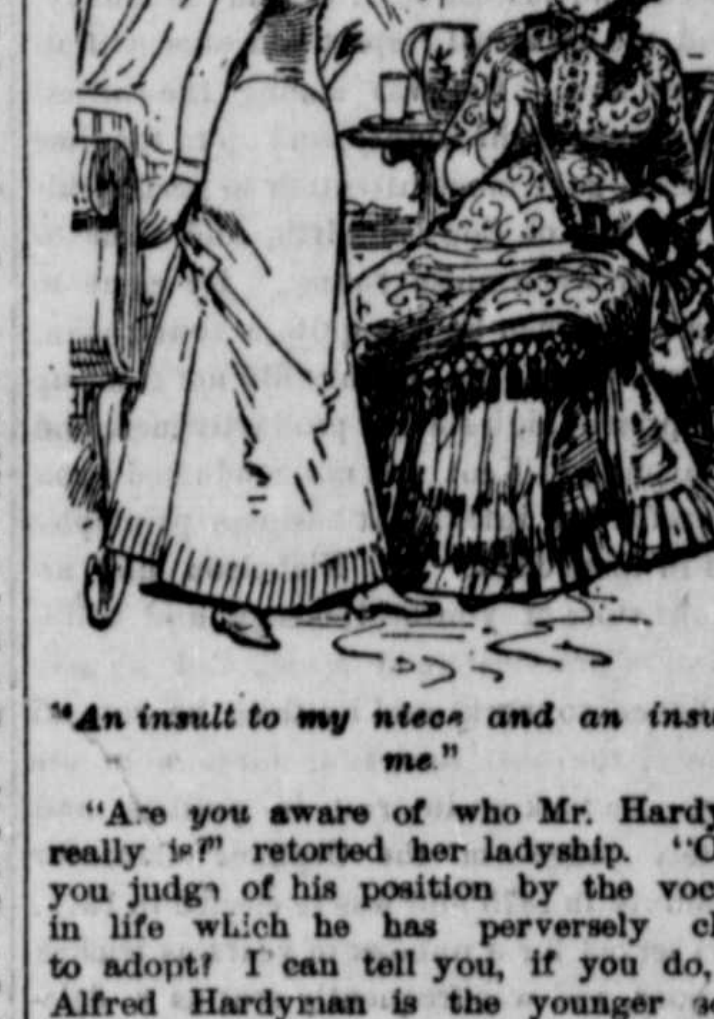
"So I have heard," said Miss Pink.

"So you have *heard*?" repeated Lady Lydiard. "If Mr. Hardyman finds his way to Isabel, I can tell you what you will *see*. Catch the two together, ma'am, and you will see Mr. Hardyman making love to your niece."

"Under due restrictions, Lady Lydiard, and with my permission first obtained, of course, I see no objection to Mr. Hardyman paying his addresses to Isabel."

"The woman is mad!" cried Lady Lydiard. "Do you actually suppose, Miss Pink, that Alfred Hardyman could by any earthly possibility marry your niece?"

Not even Miss Pink's politeness could submit to such a question as this. She rose indignantly from her chair. "Are you aware, Lady Lydiard, that the doubt you have just expressed is an insult to my niece and an insult to *me*?"



"An insult to my niece and an insult to me."

"Are you aware of who Mr. Hardyman really is?" retorted her ladyship. "Or do you judge of his position by the vocation in life which he has perversely chosen to adopt? I can tell you, if you do, that Alfred Hardyman is the younger son of one of the oldest barons in the English peerage, and that his mother is related by marriage to the royal family of Wurtemberg."

Miss Pink received the full shock of this information without receding from her position by a hair's-breadth.

"An English gentlewoman offers a fit alliance to any man living who seeks her hand in marriage," said Miss Pink. "Isabel's mother (you may not be aware of it) was the daughter of an English clergyman——"

"And Isabel's father was a chemist in a country town," added Lady Lydiard.

"Isabel's father," rejoined Miss Pink, "was attached in a most responsible capacity to the useful and honorable profession of medicine. Isabel is, in the strictest sense of the word, a young gentlewoman. If you contradict that for a single instant, Lady Lydiard, you will oblige me to leave the room."

Those last words produced a result which Miss Pink had not anticipated—they roused Lady Lydiard to assert herself. As usual in such cases, she rose superior to her own eccentricity. Confronting Miss Pink, she now spoke and looked with the gracious courtesy and the unpresuming self-confidence of the order to which she belonged.

"For Isabel's own sake, and for the quieting of my conscience," she answered, "I will say one word more, Miss Pink, before I relieve you of my presence. Considering my age and my opportunities, I may claim to know quite as much as you do of the laws and customs which regulate society in our time. Without contesting your niece's social position, and without the slightest intention of insulting you, I repeat that the rank which Mr. Hardyman inherits makes it simply impossible for him even to think of marrying Isabel. You will do well not to give him any opportunities of meeting with her alone. And you will do better still (seeing that he is so near a neighbor of yours) if you permit Isabel to return to my protection, for a time, at least. I will wait to hear from you when you have thought the matter over at your leisure. In the meantime, if I have inadvertently offended you, I ask your pardon—and I wish you good evening."

She bowed and walked to the door. Miss Pink, as resolute as ever in maintaining her pretensions, made an effort to match the great lady on her own ground.

"Before you go, Lady Lydiard, I beg to apologize if I have spoken too warmly on my side," she said. "Permit me to send for your carriage."

"Thank you, Miss Pink. My carriage is only at the village inn. I shall enjoy a little walk in the cool evening air. Mr. Troy, I have no doubt, will give me his arm." She bowed once more, and quietly left the room.

Reaching the little back garden of the villa through an open door at the farther end of the hall, Lady Lydiard found Tommie rolling luxuriously on Miss Pink's flower-beds, and Isabel and Mr. Troy in close consultation on the gravel walk. She spoke to the lawyer first.

"They are baiting the horses at the inn," she said. "I want your arm, Mr. Troy, as far as the village, and, in return, I will take you back to London with me. I have to ask your advice about one or two little matters, and this is a good opportunity."

"With the greatest pleasure, Lady Lydiard. I suppose I must say good-by to Miss Pink?"

"A word of advice to you, Mr. Troy. Take care how you ruffle Miss Pink's sense of her own importance. Another word for your private ear—Miss Pink is a fool!"

On the lawyer's withdrawal, Lady Lydiard put her arm fondly round Isabel's waist. "What were you and Mr. Troy so busy in talking about?" she asked.

"We were talking, my lady, about tracing the person who stole the money," Isabel answered, rather sadly. "It seems a far more difficult matter than I supposed it to be. I try not to lose patience and hope, but it is a little hard to feel that the appearances are against me, and to wait day after day in vain for the discovery that is to set me right."

"You are a dear, good child," said Lady Lydiard, "and you are more precious to me than ever. Don't despair, Isabel. With Mr. Troy's means of inquiring, and with my means of paying, the discovery of the thief can not be much longer delayed. If you don't return to me soon, I shall come back and see you again. Your aunt hates the sight of me; but I don't care two straws for that," remarked her ladyship, showing the undignified side of her character once more. "Listen to me, Isabel. I have no wish to lower your aunt in your estimation, but I feel far more confidence in your good sense than in hers. Mr. Hardyman's business has taken him to France for the present. It is at least possible that you may meet with him on his return. If you do, keep him at a distance, my dear—politely, of course. There! there! you needn't turn red; I am not blaming you. I am only giving you a little good advice. In your position you cannot possibly be too careful. Here is Mr. Troy. You must come to the gate with us, Isabel, or we shall never get Tommie away from you. I am only his second favorite; you have the first place in his affections. God bless and prosper you, my child! I wish to heaven you were going back to London with me! Well, Mr. Troy, how have you done with Miss Pink? Have you offended that terrible 'gentlewoman' (hateful word!), or has it been all the other way, and has she given you a kiss at parting?"

Mr. Troy smiled mysteriously and changed the subject. His brief parting interview with the lady of the house was not of a nature to be rashly related. Miss Pink had not only positively assured him that her visitor was the most ill-bred woman she had ever met with, but had further accused Lady Lydiard of shaking her confidence in the aristocracy of her native country. "For the first time in my life," said Miss Pink, "I feel that something is to be said for the republican point of view; and I am not indisposed to admit that the constitution of the United States *has* its advantages."

[To be continued.]

WRIGHT'S
INDIAN VEGETABLE
PILLS
CURE
All Bilious Complaints.

They are perfectly safe to take, being PURELY VEGETABLE and prepared with the greatest care from the best drugs. They relieve the sufferer at once by carrying off all impurities through the bowels. All druggists. 25c. a Box.

TUTT'S
PILLS
25 YEARS IN USE.
The Greatest Medical Triumph of the Age!
SYMPTOMS OF A
TORPID LIVER.
Loss of appetite, Bowels costive, Pain in the head, with a dull sensation in the back part, Pain under the shoulder-blade, Fullness after eating, with a disinclination to exertion of body or mind, Irritability of temper, Low spirits, with a feeling of having neglected some duty, Weariness, Dizziness, Fluttering at the Heart, Dots before the eyes, Headache over the right eye, Restlessness, with fitful dreams, Highly colored Urine, and
CONSTIPATION.
TUTT'S PILLS are especially adapted to such cases, one dose effects such a change of feeling as to astonish the sufferer. They Increase the Appetite, and cause the body to Take on Flesh, thus the system is nourished, and by their Tonic Action on the Digestive Organs, Regular Stools are produced. Price 25c. 44 Murray St., N.Y.
TUTT'S HAIR DYE.
GRAY HAIR or WHISKERS changed to a GLOSSY BLACK by a single application of this DYE. It imparts a natural color, acts instantaneously. Sold by Druggists, or sent by express on receipt of $1.
Office, 44 Murray St., New York.

THE
Cooley Creamer
JUNIOR AND SENIOR STYLE,
AND WITH ELEVATOR ATTACHMENT.
One of the Best Creamers made.
Call and get catalogue and price list, at
Aug. 6, 1885. J. K. ALDRIDGE & CO'S.

THE DAVIS SWING CHURN,
For sale by
J. K. ALDRIDGE & CO.

THE COLUMBIA
BOLSTER SPRING,
is the outcome of an effort to overcome all objections incidental to these springs. It combines *Ease, Lightness, Durability* and *Cheapness*.—They are for Farm, Truck and Peach Wagons, and will carry from 1,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds. It raises the bed or box of the wagon but four inches, which is of course correspondingly decreased by the weight carried. It can be put on and taken off with ease! It is complete as sold, and requires no alteration of the wagon in applying it. For sale by
J. K. ALDRIDGE & CO.

PEACH AND APPLE PARERS.
J. K. ALDRIDGE & CO.
Aug. 6, 1885.

SCHOOL BOOKS AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES.
We have just received our very Large Supply of School Books and School Requisites. I extend to all Parents, Teachers and Scholars an invitation to call and examine our stock.
Very respec tf
M. A. TOULSON,
Druggist

LIME! LIME!
No. 1 Wood Burnt Lime,
—FOR—
BUILDING AND WHITEWASHING
LOWEST PRICES
by J. B. SAPPINGTON

Writing Paper
Beautiful Boxes, the Nicest Assortment in town—at
STAM'S DRUG STORE.

HATS & CAPS—New fall and winter s
at J. H SIMPERS

Books for Children.
Choicest selections from English and American authors. The low prices will astonish you at
STAM'S DRUG STORE

NEW Stock of Horse-Collars and Bridles, Halters, Traces and Plow-Lines at
WROTH & ALDRIDGE

SMOKERS,
Those who would enjoy a FINE CIGAR
Call at
TOULSON'S APOTECARY

THE ROLAND FARM BELLS.
For sale by
March 27 J. K. ALDRIDGE

CIGARS! CIGARS!!
Come and try our Edward Allen Poe CIGARS.
March 27 M. A. TOULSON,
Druggis