THE EASTON STAR
T. K. ROBSON, Editor.

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Easton, July 5,81tf

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AND WANT TO
GET
WELL QUICKLY,
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Miscellaneous.

DONALD DARKE,
The Baltimore Detective;
OR,
THE MYSTERY OF No. 19
By George W. Goode.

CHAPTER I.
THE CHALLENGE.

"Hartley Brandon, I brand you as a liar!"

A silence like death ensued in the assembly-room of the Crystal Lake Boat Club as these words, uttered in a calm but forcible tone, rang through the hall.

Hushed was all conversation now, and all eyes were turned upon the speaker, who stood with his back to the closed door of the spacious apartment.

Tall and erect was his handsome figure, and betokening, in every inch of its muscular proportions, wire and strength most remarkable.

The chestnut curls were thrown carelessly back from the lofty brow, and the firm, unflinching blue eyes flashed defiance upon the object of his wrath.

Hartley Brandon, the recipient of the rather pointed compliment, confronted the speaker with an angry attitude, his short, stocky form drawn up to its fullest height, and his coarse, bloated visage working with fierce expressions of hatred and malevolence.

Both were members of the club, the first by name Thomas Hathaway, the son of a poor but honest church-going machinist. Hartley Brandon was old Wesley Brandon's son, the richest man in Fairview, one who also bore the by no means enviable name of the meanest.

It was the occasion of the final meeting of the club previous to its great regatta, to be held the following day. All the members were present, and the president was about to rap the assembly to order, when Thomas Hathaway's forcible exclamation resounded through the apartment.

Instantly things became upon the *qui vive*, and all turned in the direction of the excitement.

Trouble was rightly anticipated, for the members of the Crystal Wave Club were, without exception, young men of blood, and who would never allow an insult to go unavenged.

"Hartley Brandon, I brand you as a liar!"

Hartley Brandon drew back as though shot by a bullet, and then a frightful gleam of malevolence shot into his dark eyes, and his right arm was raised in a menacing attitude.

"Dare you call me a liar, Thomas Hathaway?"

"Hartley Brandon, I speak but the truth. You lie, and you know it, if you say that I fouled you in last year's races. You know that you turned my stake instead of your own, so forcing me almost to the farther shore, and in truth fouling me."

"Thomas Hathaway, I did not turn your stake, and did not foul you. You have no proof of it, and furthermore for calling me a liar, a title which belongs to you——"

"Hold!" cried Tom Hathaway, angrily. "Do not give me the lie, Hartley Brandon, or you may rue it to the last day of your life. Just control your bull temper a moment, and let me argue a little with you. You may have been too heated and excited in the race to notice which stake you turned, but as Heaven is my witness it was mine. And as for crossing your bow and giving you my back water, I was obliged to do so in order to prevent striking a buoy."

"Enough said. It is a mere waste of time to argue. I know how the affair was as well as you, and also am well aware of the fact that you played a mean game, for which you will be repaid before you die."

Tom's face flushed hotly.

"Perhaps you may feel inclined to repay it upon the spot?"

"I accept the challenge," cried Brandon, wheeling upon his foe. "And, as the challenged one has the right to appoint the time, place and weapons. If you are not a coward, you will not now back out. Here is my card."

Tom Hathaway's blue orbs quivered for a moment with suppressed passion. But for a moment, however, did this last, and then he drew back a step, while his face turned to an ashy pallor.

Even in the heat of his passion he was not unmindful of the voice of prudence, which was whispering in his ear at that moment. Not that Tom was a coward, that is, except morally. No, indeed; but he well knew what a disgrace would be visited upon him, and the family as well, if he accepted Hartley Brandon's challenge and fought the duel.

And innate within our hero, was a sense of family pride which, in spite of his poverty, would at times like the present assert itself.

But, alas! a few hasty words the next moment drowned effectually the prompt ings of conscience, and impulsive Tom Hathaway made the greatest, and well nigh most fatal mistake of his life.

"Ah!" cried Hartley Brandon, his dark face assuming a triumphant expression. "He hesitates—he dare not accept the challenge. Any cur would have resented that."

"Hold!" cried Tom, the fires of terrible anger seething within his breast. "Hold, Hartley Brandon! Were ten thousand devils at your back I would make you retract the insult. Even the worm will squirm when he is trod upon. I accept your challenge. My card. You will find my second at the clubhouse to-morrow morning at ten."

The first person on whom Tom's eyes rested as he turned away, and with but one thought, that of leaving the room to make his way home, was a slender-built youth of some eighteen summers.

He was the youngest member of the Crystal Lake Club, by name Herbert Sinclair, and particularly attached to Tom; for in younger days Tom had rescued him from drowning in the lake.

Sinclair worshiped the very ground upon which Tom Hathaway walked, and when Tom's eyes fell upon him, he felt instinctively that he had a friend whom he could trust.

"Tom," said Sinclair, his eyes meeting his friend's in a look of sympathy, "must you fight that boor?"

"Also it seems," said Tom, in a half sullen manner. "I'm very sorry my anger carried me so far. I wish I were well out of the scrape."

"Why," exclaimed Sinclair, in suprise, "you are not afraid of Hartley Brandon? Everybody knows he is a coward."

"Afraid! Eddie, all the inmates of the lower region could not frighten Tom Hathaway. No, it is not that. What will father and mother say? And then, supposing I should kill him?"

"Yes, it's bad," assented Sinclair. "But then you are the challenged party."

"He has it the other way."

"Did you challenge him?"

"No."

"Then how can that be?"

"Because he chose to construe a remark of mine as a challenge."

"I am sorry for you, Tom."

"I am, and in truth, Eddie, I wish I had never gone into the race with him."

"Is he not in your race to-morrow?"

"He is; and I have a strong presentiment that it would be better to withdraw."

"No," cried Sinclair, "do not, Tom. The fact of his being in the same race need not debar you. All the interest of the day will be lost, for nearly all the village folk will go to see you row."

Tom did not reply, but stood for a few moments gazing down upon the floor in dreamy meditation. Then he raised his head, and suddenly grasped Sinclair's hand. The other knew what was coming.

"Sinclair, you are a friend of mine—will you stand by me now in my hour of need?"

"I will, Tom."

"I will not forget the favor, and will stand your friend forever!"

"I will be your friend, Tom."

"Enough! I hope you may never be sorry for it."

When the meeting of the club was dismissed that night, Tom Hathaway made his way homeward in a not comfortable frame of mind.

There were other reasons besides these of mere reputation and an unenviable notoriety which led him to dread the coming duel.

CHAPTER II.
THE LOVERS.

Back from the main street of lovely Fairview stood a substantial stone mansion, whose style of architecture would proclaim it a dwelling of some age—more after the old Elizabethan pattern.

The storms of many years had howled about its ancient gables and chimneys, yet it was apparently able to stand the weather of another century ere succumbing.

It was surrounded by a noble growth of oaks and cedars, and from this latter fact derived its name, Cedarcroft.

Its *demesnes* extended far back from the street or avenue upon which it stood, embracing in all some hundred acres of wood land, merging finally upon a lower country road upon the shores of Crystal Lake.

The proprietor of this lordly estate was a New York speculator in Wall street, by name Howard Stockwell. The family consisted of two children, the mother having died five years previous to the opening of this story.

The children were a boy and girl, both now pretty well matured, especially the former, Ralph Stockwell, who was a tall, splendidly proportioned young man, generally beloved by all who knew him, and who held the by no means unimportant position of president of the Crystal Wave Boat Club.

But of all the fair girls of Fairview, and there were not a few, to tell the truth, pretty Minnie Stockwell was fairer and gentler than all, and the acknowledged belle of the town.

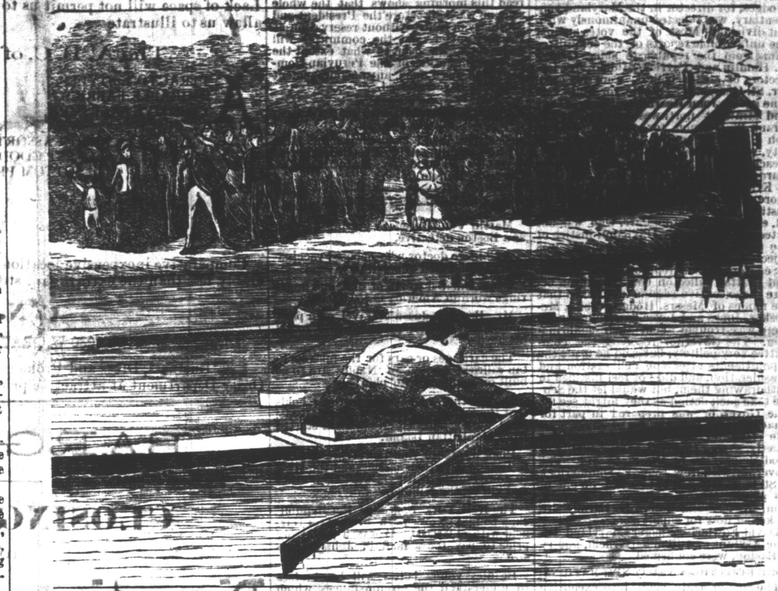
She was in figure about the average height, but graceful in her movements, which lent additional charms to her fair person. Her complexion was light but fresh and rosy, and indicative of blooming health.

All the gallants of aristocratic Fairview were madly infatuated with this beautiful maiden, who, indeed seemed as unmindful of the fact, as though she were not reminded of it a hundred times a day.

But though wealth, pomp and beauty paid respective homage to her charms, and it was an undisputed fact that, had the capricious maiden so willed, she might have made her choice among the vast company of the young scions of wealth who fawned upon her, and who would give their all for a single ray of hope, she coldly turned from them, and though maintaining her habitual air of gentleness, offered no encouragement.

And this very "eccentricity," as it might be called, only served to draw the luckless yet vainly hoping throng of ardent suitors on, only to have their ambition most cruelly wrecked by some new and characteristic move of the capricious maiden.

This fact finally led a disappointed, despairing swain, who had plied his suit most ardently and gained a signal defeat, which very naturally served to make him not a very little wrathy and vexed in spirit, to exhibit



WITH LIGHTNING STROKES HE SHOT UP NEARER TO HIS ADVERSARY.

"By the great horn spoon! never since Diana was there created such a woman. I could have sworn, a week ago, that I was the luckiest and most favored man in Fairview; but now, ye gods! I'm the most miserable. She is a perfect riddle."

But the riddle was one easily read by a Prosaic mind.

Born and bred from infancy in the midst of affluence, pretty Minnie Stockwell had become tired and heartily sick of the vain pomp and display of the wearying society life she led, the empty compliments and fawning flattery which awaited her wherever she went, and longed for that mode of life which, though humbler, was, nevertheless, in itself the assurance of more genuine happiness.

In truth, she was heart-sick of the present life, whose dross was hateful to her, and sighed for a change, but looked in vain for her ideal of a man.

That was the hero of this story—impulsive yet noble-hearted Tom Hathaway.

But though Minnie Stockwell felt that such a man she could love and be content to share life's burdens with, yet she was withal possessed of a certain degree of dignity and reserve which served to keep her from betraying this fact to him.

For Tom Hathaway was about the only man in gay Fairview who had not cast himself before the shrine which had proved so disastrous to so many of the proudest representatives of wealth and society, and this fact had impressed capricious Minnie singularly.

But it was not because Tom had not noticed and admired the grand capitalist's daughter; no, indeed, for Tom Hathaway had as true an eye for a pretty girl as any man, but the fact of there existing a wide gulf between the stations of the two.

He was but the penniless scape-grace son, figuratively speaking, of a poor machinist, while she was the daughter of one of the millionaires of aristocratic Fairview—a wide difference in the eyes of society. This was why, namely, the mere fact that he felt it would be hopeless—that had kept reckless Tom from participating in the tourney of love, and this very thing it was which insured him a better chance of becoming winner than any who had yet essayed the contest.

The proud capitalist's daughter was led into making him a study whenever she met him, and the result convinced her that in handsome yet penniless Tom there was more of her ideal than she had yet met.

But, haughty by nature, she would not reveal this to him, and he, equally haughty, despite his poverty, and, indeed, on that very account, would not betray himself.

Thus the two lovers, for such they were in soul, were kept at everlasting loggerheads, a state of feeling which would have existed, mercy knows how long, had it not been for a lucky happening which happily served to bring about an understanding between them.

A horseback party had been planned by the ladies of the Crystal Lake Club, and Tom was one of the escorts upon a certain damsel, by name Miss Frothingham.

Lively and talkative she proved, and also an admirable horsewoman, managing the high spirited thorough-bred which she rode with a skillful hand.

Minnie Stockwell, with Hartley Brandon as an escort, led the cavalcade, and a gay party they formed, as in their bright hunting costumes, they galloped across the fields. About Fairview extended an admirable tract of country for the hunt, and of this Fairview was well aware and took due advantage.

Their ride upon the present day led out over the old turnpike to Baltimore, and though a trifle dusty, was, nevertheless, a pleasant gallop.

After getting well out into the country, the party broke up in couples, some going ahead and some falling behind.

Miss Frothingham was a lively rider, and soon Tom found himself well in advance of the main party and at a part of the road but a mile and a half from a series of steep descents, into what was called the Devil's Gorge, a deep cut between the hills through which ran a foaming torrent.

Suddenly upon the hearing of the two smote a series of frightened screams and the hoarse halloo of excited men.

Then the next moment behind them came the thunder of hoofs, and ere they could realize the nature of the trouble there leaped past them with frightful speed the white faced bay thoroughbred of Minnie Stockwell, the broken bits dangling from the lower jaw, while upon his back, with fearfully pallid face, sat the peerless beauty of Fairview clinging resolutely yet despairingly to the saddle.

As she swept past Tom her face was turned upon him, and in its wild terror there was an expression of pleading and faith which seemed to say to him:

"You are a man—you can save me."

With a groan of horror, and a terrible resolution uppermost in his breast, Tom Hathaway dug both spurs deep into his thoroughbred's flanks.

Like an arrow the noble animal responded and shot forward in pursuit.

It was a terrible race for life or death, and Tom, well realizing it, rode as he never rode before.

Nearer he drew, gaining momentarily, such was the superior speed of his own horse.

Out of sight of the rest of the party they swept.

Now the black is alongside of the little bay.

A rise in the stirrups and Tom extends his powerful arm, encircling the waist of the proud capitalist's daughter; she is plucked skillfully clear of the saddle and landed safe upon the withers of the black, who now beneath the double weight slackened his speed.

The haughty beauty was saved, and by the very man whom she in secret loved above all others.

What was the result?

Her haughty spirity broke down, and she lay limp upon his broad bosom, while the choking tears flowed in torrents

We will not depict the scene which followed on the verge of Devil's Gorge before the rest of the party came up, but suffice it to say in brief that from that moment there existed between the two a perfect understanding.

And this is why our hero dreaded the denouement of the disgraceful duel into which he had been unwisely drawn, not from its criminal consequences so usual, as the reproach he knew he would merit and receive from the one girl whom he loved on all the wide earth.

CHAPTER III.
THE REGATTA.

The sun rose brightly in a cloudless sky upon the morning of the day set apart for the Crystal Lake Boat Club Regatta, and the members and all the village folk in force, who took uncommon interest in the affair, hailed the welcome fact gladly.

From early hours extensive preparations were made for the great event. Pavillions were erected, a substantial grand stand constructed, and the boat-house put in order.

The boat house, from whence the contestants were to start, was gaily decorated with flags, and banners, and festoons of red and blue cloth, the colors of the club, and the immense dance-hall which it contained was put in readiness for the evening ball after the sports of the day were over.

Such a carnival Fairview had seldom before experienced, and was not again to witness for many a day.

Nearly all the contestants in the different races were upon the river early taking their customary exercise.

Hartley Brandon was among them in his costly cedar shell, made by one of the most experience boat builders in the State, and which had cost its owner a good round sum.

Brandon was undeniably a good oars man, indeed being counted the crack of the club by many, and had been coached many weeks by one of the most experienced boating men in Maryland.

But an expert would find a certain lack in what is called in boating parlance, his "delivery," that is the manner in which he made his stroke. Professionals generally made a fuller and less jerky stroke, not allowing the oar to leave the water so soon.

Of this Brandon had been warned by his trainer, but in his usual puffy manner the son of Fairview's great magnate had affirmed that he believed he knew what stroke he could make the most speed at, and that was in fact the stroke he wanted and intended to adhere to.

It was really not a bad stroke, and would have required no ordinary professional to equal it, and among the gamblers Brandon was the favorite.

There were three pitted against him, one of whom was Tom Hathaway, and Reckless Tom was the only opponent Brandon had cause to fear.

It was not really known whether Tom would participate in the race or not, nothing having been learned from him since the previous night.

He was not upon the river this morning at the customary pull, and this fact gave Brandon much satisfaction.

"The impudent puppy," he muttered, as he rounded the upper two-mile stake and glanced homeward over the clear shimmering surface of the lake. "One thing in my favor, he will not be in practice. Perhaps he will not make an appearance when the race will surely be mine. I hope though that he will be present, for I know that I can beat him, and it will be a great satisfaction for me to do so."

Tom at that moment was pacing the shore at Crystal Lake below the boat-house in a terrible whirl of perplexity and doubt.

It was not the approaching race that troubled his mind, but the prospective duel which weighed most heavily upon his conscience.

Gaudenay, whispered to relieve his mind, somewhat, but contented himself fairly sullenly, but an exulting gleam of honor and love-pride lighted him onward to the verge of the fearful abyss.

He dreaded to meet Minnie Stockwell, although it was not possible that news of the affair had as yet reached her ears.

But he felt an overwhelming sense of guilt, and long himself that he could never dare look her in the face again.

He had come down to the lake to take his regular exercise at the oars, but so troubled was the state of his mind that he could not compose himself sufficiently to enter the boat-house, and so he sought the solitude of a little strip of sandy beach just below the boat house, where a growth of oak came down to the water's edge.

He paced restlessly up and down, regardless of the time passed until suddenly he heard a rustle in the shrubbery on the bank above his head, and lifting his head his heart almost stood still to behold Minnie Stockwell, the beauty of Fairview, and the pledged love, gazing down upon him in surprise.

"Why, Tom," exclaimed the beauty, "What are you doing here in this strange place. I have been looking all about for you. Your services are much needed at the boat-house. There is much decorating yet to be done, and nobody knows how to do that but you."

"Yes," said Tom, huskily, after several ineffectual efforts to clear his throat.—"Yes, Minnie, I will go now. I got into one of my thinking moods and forgot myself. By gracious, I did not know it was so late. One hour of noon, and the regatta is to commence at two o'clock."

Minnie, keen little maiden, gave Tom a searching glance as she scrambled down the bank to his side.

With a kind of womanly instinct she guessed that there was something weighty upon her lover's mind, but she betrayed not the knowledge.

"Yes, and my brave knight, it is even nigh time for you to don your armor and enter the lists. See, I have chosen your color, blue, for you. May it give you good luck."

"I pray [illegible] to win a glorious victory for [illegible] sake. I ought to hold forever [illegible] you for the good wish and will try to prove myself a worthy knight."

But his inadvertant tone had not escaped Minnie, and she was not deceived by his assumed air of gayety.

"Tom," she suddenly exclaimed, stopping ere they had got two-thirds of the way to the boat-house, "wait right here. What is the matter with you? Tell me right here. I surely have a right to know."

"Yes—no, nothing is the matter with me," stammered Tom, feeling very uncomfortable.

"Have you been betting heavily upon this race?"

Tom suddenly assumed a solemn expression of countenance.

"No, not one cent, Minnie. But, hang it, I might as well tell you what is the matter now as any time. Great Heaven! it is fearful! Minnie, you can be nothing more to me now."

Minnie Stockwell's beautiful face turned ashy pale.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"I—I have hopelessly disgraced myself."

"How?"

"In allowing myself to get mad and challenge Hartley Brandon to a duel."

"You challenged him?"

"He understood it so, and when he picked it up I could not back out.

"Oh, Tom!"

"I know it is an everlasting disgrace."

"I am very sorry."

Tom could not bear the term of reproach and he covered his face with his hands.

But only for a moment did our heroine assume a reproachful attitude; then she advanced and put both arms around her lover's neck.

"Why should I not be as much to you now as ever, Tom?"

"After disgracing myself," and Tom uncovered his face in surprise.

"Yes, Tom, I am very sorry that you were led into the duel. But were I not true to you in need I would be truly unworthy your love."

"Thank heaven!" was all impulsive Tom said, clothing the form of his true love in his strong arms and straining her to him in one passionate embrace.

And that afternoon no happier man pulled an oar to the starting-line on Crystal Lake than injudicious and hasty, yet generous and noble-hearted Tom Hathaway.

In the start, Hartley Brandon obtained the lead and kept it to the stake which he also turned first. Matters now looked as though he had an easy victory.

But an experienced eye would have perceived at a glance that the race was far from being decided. Tom Hathaway had been pulling a long, regular, careless stroke, keeping at a uniform distance, while Brandon, thinking himself hard pushed, had pulled for all he was worth, making truly a tremendous pace, and leaving the remaining two contestants far down the course and virtually out of the race. Tom smiled as he turned his stake and cut skillfully across Brandon's stern. Not until within half a mile of home did he begin to exhibit his tremendous powers.

Then he drew a long breath, straightened his broad shoulders, and with a couple of marvelous lightning strokes shot up a notch nearer to his adversary.

But Brandon rallied and bore down within a hundred yards of home a length in advance.

Now came the final scratch.

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Roaring rapture! Snodgrass heard a Boston girl say: "I think he looked like a perfect raving maniac in his uniform! He was awful heavenly!"

A little girl was teaching her brother the Lord's Prayer, the other night, and when she said "Give us this day our daily bread," he suddenly exclaimed, "Pony for baby, mamma, pony for baby too," and he could not be induced that it was going to give you a spoonful of Sines' Syrup of Tar, Wild Cherry and Hoarhound for your cold, which is a great deal better than daddy."

Advertisements frequently dim the glorious prospects imagination, in love in advance.