



JAMES PARK

"What kind of a find is it now, Jerry?" he asked. "Any one very careful?" "It must be a mistake," the other said in a low voice. "And yet how could such a mistake happen? Look at this!" and he pointed with his finger to a line in the book.

PROLOGUE.

THE STORY OF THIRTY YEARS AGO.

"And you are certain of the year he was married in?" "Perfectly—there is no possibility of my being mistaken. He was married on New Year's Day, 1859; I was born in May, '59."

"It is strange, certainly. But there is one solution of it—it is not possible that, even if this is he, the lady registered as his wife might not have been so. In fact she could not have been, otherwise he could never have married your mother."

Two men, both about the same age, twenty-five, were seated in a private room at an inn, known as the Hotel Bellevue, at Le Voeu, a dreary fishing town with a good though small harbor, a dozen miles west of Havre. On a fine day the bay that runs in from Barleur to Pecamp is gay and bright, but on this day it was a melancholy appearance.

"What the deuce are we to do to prevent ourselves from dying of ennui, Philip?" the one asked the other.

"Jerry," the other answered solemnly, "I know no more than you do. There is nothing left to read, and none—very none, alas!—there will be nothing left to smoke but the caper obtainable in the village. That, however, might poison us and end our miseries."

"But you don't see the curious part of it, Philip? It is the words of the son. My father had no wife in 1854! He never had a wife until 1859, my mother, and then he was Lord Penlyn and no longer known as Gervase Oocleve."

"And then followed the conversation with which this story opens—"It is a strange thing," Philip said, "but it must be a mistake."

"Perfectly," Gervase answered; "but I want to ask you a question. Will you be seated?" And then when the landlord had taken a chair—still looking intently at him—he went on:

"I understand you to say, then, that I bear such a likeness to my son, whose name is inscribed here, as to recall him vividly to you?"

"He became Lord Penlyn later in life, and at his death his title came to me." "Bien compris! And so he is dead! He can scarcely have lived the full space of man's years. And Madame, your mother? She is well?"

"It is not a thing one can easily forget," the other answered. "The landlord had given me a description of what he remembered of the Gervase Oocleve whom he had known thirty years ago, but what he had told them had not thrown much light upon the subject. He described how Gervase Oocleve had first come there in the summer of '54 accompanied by his wife (he evidently had never doubted that they were married) and by his son, 'the Monsieur' as he was called, as he said innocently. They had lived very quietly, occupying the very rooms in which they were now sitting, he told the young man; roaming about the sands in the day, or driving over to the fishing towns and villages, or sailing in a boat that Mr. Oocleve hired by the month. They seemed contented and happy enough, he said, and stayed on and on until the autumn's lamp and rain, peculiar to that part of the coast, drove them away. It was strange, he thought, that Milor did not remember anything about that period; but it was true, he was but a little child."

"Then, in the following summer they returned again, and again spent some months there—and then, he never saw nor heard of them more. But, so well did he remember Mr. Oocleve's face, even after all these years, that, since Lord Penlyn had been in the house, he had been puzzling his brains to think where he had seen him before. He certainly should not, he said, have remembered the child he had played with so often, but that his likeness to his father was more than striking. To Madame, his mother, he saw no resemblance at all."

"But I did not tell him," he said to himself afterwards, as he sat in his parlor below and sipped at his wine meditatively, "I did not tell him that on the second summer a gloom had fallen over them, and that I often saw her in tears, and heard him speak harshly to her. Why should I? A quo pro to disturb the poor young man's meditations on his dead father and mother?"

"It is the story of thirty years ago," his friend answered. "And it is not you who did the wrong. Why let it go, then, as 'I cannot help it.' And—I don't say you will think me a fool—but I cannot help wondering on which of my father's children—upon that other nameless and unknown one, or upon me—his aims will be visited?"

"I promised her mother when she lay dying," he said to himself, "that my life should be devoted to her, and I have kept my vow to the best of my power. I am not going to break it now. Besides, it is part of a father's duty to see his daughter well married; and I suppose Penlyn is a good match. At any rate, there are plenty of other fathers and mothers who would like to have caught him for their girls."

"That she should have made a sensation during her first season was not thing to astonish Sir Paul, nor, indeed, any one else. Ida Raughtes was as thoroughly beautiful a girl, when first she made her appearance in London society, as any who had ever taken their place in its ranks. Tall and graceful, and possessed of an exquisitely shaped head, round which her Auburn hair curled in thick locks; with bright hazel eyes, whose expression varied in accordance with his owner's thoughts and feelings, sometimes sparkling with laughter and mirth, and sometimes saddened with tears as she listened to any tale of sorrow; with a nose the line of which was perfect, and a mouth, the smallness of which, disguised, though it could not hide, the eyes, white teeth within, no one could look at Ida without acknowledging how lovely she was. Even other and rival debutantes granted her lordliness, and the woman who can obtain such a concession as this from her sisters, has fairly established her rights of homage."



AND YOU DO LOVE ME? I DO.

settled marriage, she was wondering if one life before her would be as bright and happy as the one she was leaving behind for ever. That—with the exception of the death of her mother, a sorrow which time had mercifully tempered for her—had been without alloy. Would the future be so? There was no reason to think otherwise, she reflected, no reason to doubt it. Lord Penlyn was young, handsome, and sunny, the very thing an honored name, and well endowed with the world's goods. Yet that would not have weighed with her had she not loved him."

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some years of his life, attending to the mines, seeing to the arrangements of shipping, of machinery and order, going for days in the hills with no companion but the Mission and the Indians, and helping his uncle to garner up more and more wealth that was eventually destined to be his. Once or twice in the space of ten years he came to Europe, generally with the object of increasing their connection with London or Continental cities, and of looking up and keeping touch with his old schoolfellows and friends."

"And then, at last, two or three years before this story opens, and when his uncle was dead, it came to be said about London that Walter Cundall, the richest man from the Pacific to the Gulf of Honduras, had taken a house in Grosvenor Place, and meant to make London more or less permanently his residence. The other places that have been mentioned were purchased one by one, and he used all his possessions—sharing them with his friends—by turns; but London was, as people said, his home. Occasionally he would go off to Honduras on business, or would rush by the Orient express to St. Petersburg or Vienna; but he loved England better than any other spot in the globe, and never left it unless he was obliged to do so."

"This was the man whom gossip had said was the future husband of Ida Raughtes—this tall, dark, handsome man, who was, when in England, a great deal to be seen. But gossip is a rather staggered when it heard that, during Mr. Cundall's last absence of six months in the tropics, she had become the affianced wife of Lord Penlyn! It wondered what he would say when he came back, as it heard he was about to do very shortly, and it wondered why on earth she had taken Penlyn when she might have had Cundall. It talked it over in the drawing-rooms and the ball-rooms, and in the parlors on the lawn at Sandringham, but it did not seem to arrive at any conclusion satisfactory to itself."

"I suppose the fact of it is that Cundall never asked her," one said to another, "and she got tired of waiting." "You should have waited a bit longer on the off chance," the other said; "Cundall is a fifty times richer fellow than Penlyn, and there's no comparison between the two. The one is a man of the world and a splendid fellow, and the other is only a boy." "And that's a fact," the first said, "and a fact, 'good-looking, and all that. And,' he continued seriously, 'he has the pull in age. That's what tells! He is about twenty-five, and Cundall's well over thirty, isn't he?"

"Why is so such great age," said the first one, who, being over forty himself, looked upon Cundall also as almost a boy, "and, for my part, I think she has made a mistake!"

"And that was what the world said: 'She had made a mistake! Did she think as herself, as she sat there that bright afternoon? No, that could not be possible! Ida Raughtes was a girl with too pure and honorable a heart to take one man when she could get another. And we know what the gossip did not know, that no word of love had ever passed between her and Walter Cundall. The world was indulging in needless speculations when it debated in its mind why Ida had not taken as husband a man who had never spoken one word of love to her!"

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