

THE VICAR'S GOVERNESS

"When there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly, that there is fire there."—Leighton.

Long before the night has set in he comes; and as he enters the room where his uncle sits awaiting him, Lord Sartoris tells himself that never before has he seen him so handsome, so tall, so good to look at.

"Your telegram made me uneasy," he says, abruptly, "so I came back sooner than I had intended. Had you mine?"

"Yes; some hours ago."

"Did you want me Arthur?"

"Yes; but not your return here. I sent my telegram principally to learn your address, as I had made up my mind to go up to town. You have frustrated that plan."

There is a meaning in his tone that puzzles Dorian.

"You going to trust yourself alone in our great Babylon?" he says raising his brows. "Why the world must be coming to an end. What business had you there that I could not have managed for you?"

"My business was with you?"

"Anything wrong?" says the young man, impatiently, tapping a table lightly with his fingers, and frowning somewhat heavily. "Your tone implies as much. Has anything happened in my absence to cause you annoyance. If so let me know it at once, and spare me any beating about the bush. Suspense is unpleasant."

"It is," says Sartoris, rising from his chair, and moving a few steps nearer to him. "It is slowly murdering poor John Annersley!"

"I am still hopelessly in the dark," says Dorian, shrugging his shoulders. "What has suspense got to do with old Annersley?"

"Are you really ignorant of all that has occurred? Have you not heard of Ruth's mysterious disappearance?"

"Ruth's disappearance? I have heard nothing. Why, where can she have gone?"

"That is exactly what no one knows, except she herself, of course, and—another." Then, turning impulsively to face his nephew, "I thought you could have told me where she is," he says, without giving himself time to think of all the words may convey to Dorian.

"What do you mean?" demands Branscombe, throwing up his head, and flushing darkly. His eyes flash, his nostrils dilate. "Am I to infer from your last remark that you suspect me of having something to do with her disappearance?"

"I do," returns Sartoris, slowly, but with his eyes upon the ground. "How can I do otherwise when I call to mind all the causes you have given me to doubt you? Have you forgotten that day, now some months ago, when I met you and that unhappy girl together on the road to the village? I, at least, shall never forget the white misery of her face, and the unmistakable confusion in her manner, as I greeted her. Even then the truth began to dawn upon me."

"The truth?" says Branscombe, with a short and bitter laugh. "At that time I was unwilling to harbor unkind doubts of you in my breast," goes on Sartoris, unmoved, nay, rather confirmed in his suspicions by Branscombe's sneer; "but then came the night of the Hunt ball, when I met you alone with her, in the most secluded part of the grounds, and when you were unable to give me any reasonable explanation of her presence there; and then, a little later, I found a handkerchief (which you yourself acknowledge having given her) lying on your library floor; about that, too, you were dumb; no excuse was ready to your lips. By your own actions I judge you."

"Your suspicions make you unjust, my lord," says the young man, haughtily. "They overrule your better judgment. Are such paltry evidences as you have just put forward sufficient to condemn me, or have you further proofs?"

"I have,—a still stronger one than any other I have mentioned. The last place in which Ruth Annersley was seen in this neighborhood was in Hurston Wood at eight o'clock on the evening of her departure, and—you were with her!"

"I was?"

"The man who saw you will swear to this."

"He must be rather a clever fellow. I congratulate you on your man." "Do you deny it?" There is something that is almost hope in his tone. "If not there last Tuesday, at that hour, where were you?"

"Well really, it would take me all my time to remember. Probably dining; got to my fish by that time, no doubt. Later on I was at Lady Chetwoode's crush; but that—with a sarcastic laugh—"is a very safe thing to say, is it not? One can hardly prove the presence of any one at a gathering together of the clans, such as there were at her 'at home.' I wouldn't believe I was there if I were you."

He laughs again. Sartoris flushed hotly all over his lean earnest face.

"It is needless lying," he says slowly. "The very coat you wore—a light overcoat,—probably (pointing to it) 'the one you are now wearing—was accurately described.' Dorian starts visibly. "Do you still hope to brave it out?"

"A coat like this do you say?" asks Branscombe, with a nervous attempt at unconcern, laying his hand upon his sleeve.

"A light overcoat. Such was the description. But" (with a longing that is terribly pathetic) "many overcoats are alike. And—I dare say you have not worn that one for months."

"Yes, I have. I wear it incessantly; I have taken rather a fancy to it," replies Branscombe, in an uncompromising tone. "My persistent admiration for it has driven my tailor to despair. I very seldom (except, perhaps at midnight revels or afternoon bores) appear in public without it."

"Then you deny nothing?"

"Nothing!"—contentiously, making a movement as though to depart. "Why should I? If, after all these years that you have known me, you can imagine me capable of evil such as you describe so graphically, it would give me no

pleasure to vindicate myself in your eyes. Think of me as you will; I shall take no steps to justify myself."

"You dare not!" says Sartoris, in a stifled tone, confronting him fully for the first time.

"That is just as you please to think," says Branscombe, turning upon him with flashing eyes. He frowns heavily, and, with a little gesture common to him, raises his hand and pushes the end of his fair mustache between his teeth.

Then, with a sudden effort, he controls himself, and goes on more quietly: "I shall always feel regret in that you found it so easy a matter to believe me guilty of so monstrous a deed. I think we can have nothing further to say to each other, either now or in the future. I wish you good-evening."

Sartoris, standing with his back almost turned to his nephew, takes no heed of this angry farewell; and Dorian, going out, closes the door calmly behind him.

Passing through the Long Hall, as it has been called from time immemorial, he encounters Simon Gale, the old butler, and stops to speak to him, kindly, as is his wont, though in truth his heart is sore.

"Ah! Simon! How warm the weather grows!" he says, genially, brushing his short hair back from his forehead. The attempt is praiseworthy, as really there is no hair to speak of, his barber having provided against that. He speaks kindly, carelessly,—if a little wearily. His pulses are throbbing, and his heart beating hotly with passionate indignation and disappointment.

"Very warm, sir," returns the old man, regarding him wistfully. He is not thinking of the weather, either of its heat or cold. He is only wondering, with a foreboding sadness, whether the man before him—who has been to him the apple of his eye—is guilty or not of the crime imputed to him. With an effort he recovers himself, and asks, hastily, though almost without purpose, "Have you seen my lord?"

"Yes, I have only just left him."

"You will stay to dinner, Mr. Dorian?" He has been "Mr. Dorian" to him for so many years that now the more formal Mr. Branscombe is impossible.

"Not to-night. Some other time, when my uncle—" He pauses.

"You think him looking well?" asks the old man, anxiously, mistaking his hesitation.

"Well! Oh, that doesn't describe him," says Branscombe, with a shrug, and a somewhat ironical laugh. "He struck me as being unusually lively,—in fact, 'strong as Boreas on the main.' I thought him very well indeed."

"Ay, he is so. A goodly youth brings a peaceful age; and that was that. He has lived a good life, and now is reaping his reward."

"Is he?" says Dorian, with a badly-suppressed yawn. "Of course I was mistaken, but really it occurred to me that he was in the abominable temper. Is a desire to insult every one part of the reward?"

"You make light of what I say," returns Simon, reproachfully, "yet it is the very truth I speak. He has no special sin to repent, no lasting misdeed to haunt him, as years creep on. It were well to think of it," says Simon, with a trembling voice, "while youth is still with us. To you it yet belongs. If you have done amiss, I entreat you to confess, and make amends for it, whilst there is yet time."

Dorian, laying his hand upon the old servant's shoulders, pushes him gently backward, so that he may look the more readily into his face.

"Why, Simon! How absolutely in earnest you are!" he says, lightly. "What crime have I committed, that I should spend the rest of my days in sackcloth and ashes?"

"I know nothing," says old Gale, sadly. "How should I be wiser than my master? All I feel is that youth is careless and headstrong, and things once done are difficult of undoing. If you would go to your grave happy, keep yourself from causing misery to those who love you and—trust in you."

His voice sinks, and grows tremulous. Dorian, taking his hands from his shoulders, moves back from the old man, and regards him meditatively, stroking his fair mustache slowly, in a rather mechanical fashion, as he does so.

"The whole world seems dyspeptic to-day," he says, ironically. Then, "It would be such a horrid bore to make any one miserable that I dare say I shan't try it. If, however, I do commit the mysterious serious offense at which you broadly hint, and of which you plainly believe me fully capable, I'll let you know about it."

He smiles again,—a jarring sort of smile, that hardly accords with the beauty of the dying day,—and, moving away from the old man, crosses the oaken flooring to the glass door that lies at the further end of the room, and that opens to a graveled path outside, on which lilies are flinging broadcast their rich purple bloom. As he moves, with a pale face and set lips (for the bitter smile has faded), he tramples ruthlessly, and without thought for their beauty, upon the deep soft patches of coloring that are strewn upon the flooring from the stained-glass windows above.

Throwing open the door, he welcomes gladly the cool evening air that seems to rush to meet him.

"Pat!" he says, almost loud, as he strides onward beneath the budding elms. "To think after all these years, they should so readily condemn! Even that old man, who has known me from my infancy, believes me guilty."

Then a change sweeps over him. Instincts to himself are forgotten, and his thoughts travel onward to a fear that for many days has been growing and gaining strength.

Can Horace have committed this base deed? This fear usurps all other considerations. Going back upon what he has just heard he examines in his mind each little detail of the wretched history imparted to him by his uncle. All the suspicions—lulled to rest through lack of matter wherewith to feed them—now come to life again, and grow in size and importance, in spite of his intense desire to suppress them.

On Tuesday night the girl had left her home. On Tuesday morning he had been to Horace's rooms, had found him there, had sat and conversed with him for upward of an hour on different subjects,—chiefly, he now remembers, of Clara's Peyton.

The day had been warm, and he had taken off his coat (the light overcoat he had affected for the past month), and had thrown it on a chair, and—left it there when going!

The next morning he had called again, and found the coat in the very self-same place where he had thrown it. But in the mean time, during all the hours that intervened between the afternoon of one day and the forenoon of another, where had it been?

"The very coat you wore was minutely described."—The words come back upon him with a sudden rush, causing him a keener pang than any he has ever yet known. Must he indeed bring himself to believe that his own brother had made use of the coat with the deliberate intention (should chance fling any intruder in the way) of casting suspicion upon him—Dorian?

In the dusk of the evening any one might easily mistake one brother for the other. They are the same height; the likeness between them is remarkable. He almost hates himself for the readiness with which he pieces his story together, making doubt merge with such entirety into conviction.

The evening is passing fair, yet it brings no comfort to his soul; the trees towering upward lie heavily against the sky; the breath of many flowers make rich the air. Already the faint moon, arising, throws "her silver light over half the world," and makes more blue the azure depths above.

"Star follows star, though yet day's golden light Upon the hills and headlands faintly streams."

The far-off grating sound of the corn-crake can be heard; the cuckoo's tuneless note, incessant and unmusical, tires the early night. The faint sweet chirrup of many insects come from far and near, and break upon the sense with a soft and lulling harmony:

"There is no stir, nor breath of air; the plains Lie slumbering in the close embrace of night."

All nature seems sinking into one grand repose, wherein strife and misery and death appear to have no part.

To Dorian the under solemnity of the scene brings no balm. To go again to town by the night mail—to confront Horace and learn from him the worst—is his one settled thought, among the multitude of disordered ones; and upon it he determines to act.

But what if he shall prove innocent, or deny all knowledge of the affair? What then can clear Dorian in his uncle's eyes? And even should he acknowledge the fact that he had enticed the girl from her home, how can it benefit Dorian? He is scarcely the one to defend himself at another's expense; and to betray Horace to clear himself would be impossible to him.

He grows bewildered and heart-sick. Reaching home, he orders his dog-cart to be brought round, and, by taking it a good deal out of his good gray mare, manages to catch the evening train to town.

Lord Sartoris, sitting brooding over miserable thoughts in the library at Hythe, has tidings brought him of his nephew's speedy return to London, and endures one stab the more, as he feels more than ever convinced of his duplicity.

Arrived in town, Branscombe drives to Horace's rooms, hoping against hope that he may find him at home. To his surprise he does so find him,—in the midst of papers, and apparently up to his eyes in business.

"Working so late?" says Dorian involuntarily, being accustomed to think of Horace, at this hour, as one of a chosen band brought together to discuss the lighter topics of the day over soup and fish and flesh. In truth, now he is on the spot and face to face with his brother, the enormity of his errand makes itself felt, and he hardly knows what to say to him.

"You Dorian?" Horace, raising his eyes, smiles upon him his usual slow impenetrable smile. "Working? Yes; we others, the moneyless ones, must work or die; and death is unpopular nowadays. Still, law is dry work when all is confessed." He presses his hand to his forehead with affected languor, and for an instant conceals his face. By the bye, it is rather good of you to break in so unexpectedly upon my monotony. Anything I can do for you?"

"Let me speak to you," says Dorian impulsively, laying his hand upon his arm. "If I am wronging you in my thoughts I shall never forgive myself, and you, in all probability, will never forgive me either; yet I must get it off my mind."

"My dear fellow, how you have flung away undoubted talent! Your tone out-irving Irving; it is ultra-tragic. Positively you make my blood run cold. Don't stand staring at me in that awful attitude, but tell me, as briefly as you can, what I have done."

He laughs lightly.

Dorian regards him fixedly. Has he wronged him? Has instinct played him false?

"Where is Ruth Annersley?" he asks, awkwardly, as though getting rid of the question at any price and without preamble. He has still his hand upon his brother's arm, and his eyes upon his face.

"Ruth Annersley?" reiterates Horace, the most perfect amazement in his tone. If purposely done, the surprise is very excellent indeed. "Why? What has happened to her?"

"Have you heard nothing?"

"My dear fellow, how could I? I have not been near Pullingham for a full month; and its small messes fail to interest our big city. What has happened?"

"The girl has left her home; has not been heard of since last Tuesday. They fear she has willfully flung up happiness and honor to gain—misery."

"What a charitable place is a small village!" says Horace, with a shrug. "Why should the estimable Pullinghamites imagine so much evil? Perhaps, finding life in that stagnant hole unendurable, Ruth threw up the whole concern, and is now seeking a subsistence honorably. Perhaps, too, she has married. Perhaps—"

"Why do you not suppose her dead?" says Dorian, tapping the table with his forefinger, his eyes fixed moodily on the pattern of the maroon-colored cloth.

"All such speculations are equally absurd. I hardly came to London to listen to such vain imaginings."

"Then—I think I barely understand you," says Horace, amiably; "you came because you—?"

"Because I fancied I had here the best chance of hearing about her," interrupts Dorian, bluntly, losing patience a little.

"How fearfully you blunder!" returns Horace, still quite calmly,—nay, in even a tone that might be called amused. "If you mean that I have had anything to do with her vamoose, I beg to say your imagination has run wild. You can search the place if you like.

The old lady who attends to my wants will probably express some faint disapprobation when you invade the sanctity of her chamber, but beyond that no unpleasantness need be anticipated. This is her favorite hour for imbibing brandy—my brandy, you will understand (she takes it merely as a tonic, being afflicted—as she tells me—with what she is pleased to term 'nightly trimbles'); so if, in the course of your wanderings, you chance to meet her, and she openly molests you, don't blame me."

(To Be Continued.)

AMONG DIAMOND DIGGERS

SCENES IN THE COMPOUND IN WHICH THEY DWELL.

Precautions Against Theft—Cleanliness in Spite of Obstacles—It Is No Trouble to Tell the Diamonds from Pebbles.

There can be no doubt that the most interesting sight in the great De Beers mine at Kimberley is the compound, says a Johannesburg letter. The compound of a South African mine, be it a gold or a diamond mine, is the place where the miners live, the miners being the Kaffirs of the native tribes.

The De Beers compound is a vast triangular space, enclosed on each side by a long, mud-built shed of one story, furnished with an overhanging roof to keep off the sun, and cut up into innumerable little rooms. In the centre is a huge bathing tank, while overhead from side to side and from end to end of the compound, is a network of wires, the meshes being not more than an inch in width.

Under the porches of the sheds, in the sheds themselves, and about the bathing tanks in the centre swarm hundreds and hundreds of Kaffirs. It is here for the first time that the traveler "up country" sees the Kaffir (for under the generic head "Kaffir" the South African groups all the surrounding tribes—Basutas, Shanghans, Zulus, Matabeles, &c.) in something approximating his original state. Most of them are naked to the waist, reckoning from whichever extremity you like.

One fellow that I was shown was drumming upon something that looked and sounded very much like a xylophone, little sticks of wood strung upon wires, and I declare the monotonous sequence of little

CLEAR LIQUID NOTES

sounded very well indeed. Another one, very old, his beard braided into a score of stiff little pigtails, was making anklets, rolling one bit of wire around another; for sixpence he gave me as many as I wanted to carry away. A third was smoking. Observe the manner of it. He had cut off about four inches of bullock's horn, bored a hole near the tip in which he inserted the mouthpiece, and had filled up the horn with some fearful unknown weed which sputtered and reeked when he drew upon it. As the smoke filled his throat and lungs he would cough and cough until the tears came into his eyes. "Unless it makes them cough," explained the timekeeper, who was my guide, "they don't like it."

A little further on, where the Basutas are quartered (for the tribes affect different corners of the compound, and rarely if ever mingle with each other), some great game was going on. "They get very excited over this game," said the timekeeper, "and gamble over it, but no white man has ever been able to learn it." It looked very much like a variation of checkers. They had cut regular hollows, some fifty I should say, into a heavy board; about half a dozen were playing, and as far as we could see the game consisted of removing certain handfuls of pebbles from one hollow to another.

But one of the most surprising things about these Kaffirs, especially those that were of Zulu origin, was their cleanliness. Fancy 850 Chinamen huddled together, or even the same number of the lower class of almost any nationality. They were ragged; they were (some of them) nearly naked. They lay prone upon the ground in the sun and they cooked and ate some very queer looking dishes, but they were wonderfully cleanly. A throng of them (especially such as had just come up from the mine) continually gathered about the great bathing tank in the centre of the compound, and upon going into the sheds, in each of which some half a dozen slept, there was no perceptible odor, not even that of stale bedding. But think of the condition of tenements in which people who claim to belong to the civilized nations dwell. I believe I said as much to the timekeeper.

"Ah, but you know," he answered, "the Zulus are a very superior race; they are much more intelligent than the Dutch Boers you find in Johannesburg. Cleanly? I should say so. Here's something you can tell your paper. You'll never see a Zulu finish a meal without washing his teeth very carefully afterward."

I answered that the detail would be duly reported, but that I would not answer for its acceptance as truth.

STEAL DIAMONDS

But the compound Kaffirs of the De Beers are human, sometimes, like Arthur Jones's Cabinet Ministers, very human, and they will

if they can get the chance. The mine regulations, however, governing the laborers would seem to have reduced the opportunities for theft to a minimum. The Kaffir who is taken on as a miner at the De Beers signs a contract whereby he allows himself to be kept practically a prisoner for the period covered by his contract—a month. During this time he is not allowed to pass beyond the limits of the mine, or to hold communication with any outsider. He is restricted rigidly to the precincts of the mine itself, and to the compound, an underground passage connecting the two places having been constructed for this special purpose. He is allowed to use only "compound money" brass tickets, each good for a shilling's worth of provisions, clothes, tobacco, groceries, &c., at the compound store. The overhead wire netting prevents him tossing diamonds over the walls of the pound, to be picked up by a confeder-

ate or by the nefarious "I.D.B." (illicit diamond buyer.) During the time he is in the service of the company he is fed and clothed at the company's expense. If he falls sick he is cared for at the hospital (and an admirable hospital it is), and if he is hurt in the mine his wounds are dressed and his welfare looked after by the company's surgeon.

At the end of his month he has the option of renewing his contract or throwing it up. If he throws it up he goes into what is called the "detention house." Here he is stripped to the skin and remains in that condition under constant surveillance for a week. Every act of his daily life is performed under the eye of the guards. Stealing diamonds by swallowing them is the most difficult and hazardous method a Kaffir miner can employ.

The pulsator where the "pay dirt" is treated and where the diamonds are found is about a quarter of a mile away from the mine itself, and the work here is done by convict Kaffirs and a few white men. The pulsator is a contrivance that by a constant oscillating motion sifts out the heavy diamonds from the gravel and sand and rotten quartz. As a matter of course, a great deal of worthless chaff, bits of gravel, pyrites, crystals, and thousands of garnets pass through the pulsator along with the diamonds, and all this stuff has to go through a final process of sorting, where the diamonds have to be

PICKED OUT BY HAND.

This is the most interesting process of all, for you can stand at the sorter's elbow and see him pick up the diamonds with as much unconcern as if they were bits of iron.

I have been told all my life that diamonds in the rough looked like ordinary brown pebbles, that the inexperienced observer would pass them by without a second look, and that only an expert could tell a rough diamond when he saw one. It is not so at all. After watching the sorters five minutes I would undertake to change places with any one of them, and in a little while pick out diamonds as well as the best. A child could do the same. The diamonds of the De Beers may not look like cut diamonds, but they certainly do not resemble the brown pebbles that you have been told you must expect to see. They are brilliant enough. I don't think any debutante would take them for glass, and the only difference I could note between them and the finished stone was in the bluntness of the edges and in an occasional irregularity of shape.

That same afternoon I went down into the mine itself. The entrance to the shaft is half way down the tremendous Kopje. You are let down over the edge of the enormous pit in a flat car running on an inclined (horribly inclined) railway, with wire cables for tracks, and you try to talk of something else on the way down and endeavor to seem interested in the machinery while all the time you are looking out for soft spots on which you can jump if the cable should part.

The mine itself does not impress one as particularly interesting, being precisely like other mines which you may have visited. There is the same velvet—almost palpable—darkness, the same mud and water under foot, the same dripping rocks on the walls and roof, the same queer-tasting atmosphere, the same old smell of condensed air from the pneumatic drills.

BEN. FRANKLIN'S KITE.

With Which the Philosopher First Drove Lightning from the Clouds.

It was a square kite, not the coffin-shaped affair shown in story-book pictures. To the upright stick of the cross Franklin attached his pointed rod—a sharp wire, about a foot long—and provided himself with a silk ribbon and a key; the ribbon, to fasten to the string after he had raised the kite, as some possible protection—how much he did not know—against the lightning entering his body; and the key, to be secured to the junction of the ribbon and string to serve as a conductor from which he might draw the sparks of celestial fire—if it came.

When the thunder storm broke he went out on the open common near Philadelphia and faced death—faced the tremendous power of the lightning stroke, before which all people of all ages had quailed in terror; faced what most of the world then believed to be the avenging blow of an angered God. True, he believed that electricity and lightning were the same thing, and therefore had no different properties or effects; but he did not know it. The best existing theory which accounted for electrical phenomena at that time was his own. The laws of electrical conduction or resistance, now so familiar, were not even suspected. Who could predict that the lightning would obey any law? Besides, he had produced tremendous shocks with his Leyden jars in series, and had killed birds with them. More than that, he had been terribly shocked himself by the same means—stunned into insensibility and nearly killed. He had said, again and again, that an electric shock, if strong enough, would blot out life, though without a pang. If his idea was correct, if his conviction was true, he was now about to face an electric discharge beside which that of the most powerful of man-made batteries would seem weak and insignificant.

All the world knows what happened. The kite soared up into the black cloud, while the philosopher stood calmly in the drenching rain watching the string, until finally he saw the little fibres of the hemp raise themselves. Then without a tremor he touched his knuckle to the key—and lived. For a stark crackled and leaped to his finger as harmlessly as did that from his old familiar electrical machine, and allowed him to charge his jars with it with the same impunity. He sent the story of what he had done abroad, without a particle of trumpeting. He was not a discoverer for revenue. No stock market awaited the announcement of his claims; no newspaper stood ready to blaze forth his achievement in the zine for Oct. 19, 1752, and it has at its end only the initials B.F.

Most wild animals are fond of perfumes. Lions and tigers in captivity take a special delight in odors, such as those of roses and violets.