

# FATE'S INSTRUMENTS.

## CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

"I shall have to do it," he said to himself, as he sat moodily in his chamber. "They're all at me—uncle Roger, Tommy Myles, Isabel—all of them. I'm shot if I ever interfere with anybody's marriage again."

The defection of Isabel rankled in his mind worst of all. That she, of all people, should turn against him, and, as a last insult, send him upbraiding messages through Tommy Myles! This she had done, and George was full of wrath.

"A note for you sir," said Timms, entering in his usual silent manner. Timms had no views on the controversy, being one of those rare people who mind their own business; and George had fallen so low as to be almost grateful for the colourless impartiality with which he bore himself towards the quarrel between his masters.

George took the note. "Mr. Gerald been here, Timms?"

"He looked in for letters, sir; but went away directly on hearing you were here."

Timms stated this fact as if it were in the ordinary way of friendly intercourse, and withdrew.

"Well, I am—I!" exclaimed George and paused.

The note was addressed in the handwriting he now knew very well, the handwriting of the Bournemouth character.

"Dear Mr. Neston,  
"I shall be alone at five o'clock to-day. Will you come and see me?"

Yours sincerely,  
"Neera Witt."

"You must do as a lady asks you," said George, "even if she does steal shoes, and you have mentioned it. Here goes! What's she up to now, I wonder?"

Neera, arrayed in the elaborate carelessness of a tea-gown, received him, not in the drawing-room, but in her own snuggerly. Tea was on the table; there was a bright little fire, and a somnolent old cat snoozed on the hearth-rug. The whole air was redolent of what advertisements called a "refined home," and Neera's manner indicated an almost pathetic desire to be friendly, checked only by the self-respecting fear of a rude rebuff to her advances.

"It is really kind of you to come," she said, "to consent to a parley."

"The beaten side always consents to a parley," answered George, taking the seat she indicated. She was half sitting, half lying on a sofa when he came in, and resumed her position after greeting him.

"No, no," she said quickly; "that's where it's hard—when you're beaten. But do you consider yourself beaten?"

"Up to now, certainly."

"And you really are not convinced?" she asked, eyeing him with a look of candid appeal to his better nature.

"It is your fault, Mrs. Witt."

"My fault?"

"Yes. Why are you so hard to forget?" George thought there was no harm in putting it in a pleasant way.

"Ah, why was Miss—now is it Game or Games?—so hard to forget?"

"It is, or rather was, Game. And I suppose she was hard to forget for the same reason as you—would be."

"And what is that?"

"If you ask my cousin, no doubt he will tell you."

Neera smiled.

"What more can I do?" she asked. "Your people didn't know me. I have produced a letter showing I was somewhere else."

"Excuse me—"

"Well, well, then a copy of a letter."

"What purports to be a copy?"

"How glad I am I'm not a lawyer! It seems to make people so suspicious."

"It's a great pity you didn't keep the original."

Neera said nothing. Perhaps she did not agree.

"But I suppose you didn't send for me to argue about the matter?"

"No, I sent for you to propose peace. Mr. Neston, I am so weary of fighting. Why will you make me fight?"

"It's not for my pleasure," said George.

"For whose then?" she asked, stretching out her arms with a gesture of entreaty. "Cannot we say no more about it?"

"With all my heart."

"And you will admit you were wrong?"

"That is saying more about it."

"You cannot enjoy the position you are in."

"I confess that."

"Mr. Neston, do you ever think it's possible you are wrong. But no, never mind. Will you agree just to drop it?"

"Heartily. But there's the Bull's-eye."

"Oh, bother the Bull's-eye! I'll go and see the editor," said Neera.

"He's a stern man, Mrs. Witt."

"He won't be so hard to deal with as you. There, that's settled. Hurrah! you shake hands, Mr. Neston?"

"By all means."

"Oh, yes. I retract nothing."

"Then it is peace?"

"Yes."

Neera sat up and gave him her hand, and the peace was ratified. But it so chanced that Neera's sudden movement roused the cat. He yawned and got up,

arching his back, and digging his claws into the hearth-rug.

"Bob," said Neera, "don't spoil the rug."

George's attention was directed to the animal, and, as he looked at it, he started. Bob's change of posture had revealed a serious deficiency: he had no tail, or the merest apology for a tail.

It was certainly an odd coincidence, perhaps nothing more, but a very odd coincidence that George should have seen in the court-yard at Peckton Gool no less than three tailless cats! Of course there are a good many in the world; but still most cats have tails.

"I like a black cat, don't you?" said Neera. "He's nice and satanic."

The Peckton cats were black, too,—black as ink or the heart of a money-lender.

"An old favourite?" asked George, insidiously.

"I've had him a good many years. Oh!"

The last word slipped from Neera involuntarily.

"Why 'oh!'"

"I'd forgotten his milk," answered Neera, with extraordinary promptitude.

"Where did you get him?"

Neera was quite calm again. "Some friends gave him to me. Please don't say I stole my cat, too, Mr. Neston."

George smiled; indeed, he almost laughed. "Well, it is peace, Mrs. Witt, he said, taking his hat. "But remember!"

"What?" said Neera, who was still smiling and cordial, but rather less at her ease than before.

"A cat may tell a tale, though he bears none."

"What do you mean?"

"If it is ever war again, I will tell you. Good-bye, Mrs. Witt."

"Good-bye. Please don't have poor Bob arrested. He didn't steal the boots—oh, the shoes, at any rate."

"I expect he was in prison already."

Neera shook her head with an air of bewilderment. "I really don't understand you. But I'm glad we're not enemies any longer."

George departed, but Neera sat down on the rug and gazed into the fire. Presently Bob came to look after the forgotten milk. He rubbed himself right along Neera's elbow, beginning from his nose, down to the end of what he called his tail.

"Ah, Bob," said Neera, "what do you want? Milk, dear? Good for evil, milk for—"

Bob purred and capered. Neera gave him his milk, and stood looking at him.

"How would you like to be drowned, dear?" she asked.

The unconscious Bob lapped on Neera's stomach her foot. "He shan't! He shan't!" she exclaimed. "Not an inch! Not an inch!"

Bob finished his milk and looked up. "No, dear, you shan't be drowned. Don't be afraid."

As Bob knew nothing about drowning, and only meant that he wanted more milk, he showed no gratitude for his reprieve. Indeed, seeing there was to be no more milk, he pointedly turned his back, and began to wash his face.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"I never heard anything so absurd in all my life," said Mr. Blodwell, with emphasis.

George had just informed him of the treaty between himself and Neera. He had told his tale with some embarrassment. It is so difficult to make people who were not present understand how an interview came to take the course it did.

"She seemed to think it all right," George said weakly.

"Do you suppose you can shut people's mouths in that way?"

"There are other ways," remarked George, grimly, for his temper began to go.

"There are," assented Mr. Blodwell; "and in these days, if you use them, it's five pounds or a month, and a vast increase of gossip into the bargain."

"What does Gerald say?"

"Gerald? Oh, I don't know. I suppose Mrs. Witt can manage him."

"Do you? I doubt it. Gerald isn't over easy to manage. Think of the position you leave him in!"

"He believes in her."

"Yes, but he won't be content unless other people do. Of course they'll say she squared you."

"Squared me!" exclaimed George, indignantly.

"Upon my soul, I'm not sure she hasn't."

"Of course you can say what you please, sir. From you I can't resent it."

"Come, don't be huffy. Bright eyes have their effect on everybody. By the way, have you seen Isabel Bourne lately?"

"No."

"Heard from her?"

"She sent me a message through Tommy Myles."

"Is he in her confidence?"

"Apparently. The effect of it was, that she didn't want to see me till I had come to my senses."

"In those words?"

"Those were Tommy's words."

"Then relations are strained?"

"Miss Bourne is the best judge of whom she wishes to see."

"Quite so," said Mr. Blodwell, cheerfully. "At present she seems to wish to see Myles. Well, well, George, you'll have to come to your knees at last."

"Mrs. Witt doesn't require it."

"Gerald will."

"Gerald be— But I've never told you of my fresh evidence."

"Oh, you're mad! What's in the wind now?"

Five minutes later George flung himself angrily out of Mr. Blodwell's chambers, leaving that gentleman purple and palpitating with laughter, as he gently re-echoed.

"The cat! Go to the jury on the cat, George, my boy!"

To George in his hour of adversity, Mrs. Pocklington was as a tour of strength. She said that the Nestons might squabble among themselves as much as they liked; it was no business of her. As for the affair getting into the papers, her visiting-list would suffer considerably if she cut out everybody who was wrongly, or she added significantly, rightly abused in the papers. George Neston, might be mistaken but he was an honest young man, and for her part she thought him an agreeable one—anyhow, a great deal too good for that insipid child, Isabel Bourne. If anybody didn't like meeting him at her house, they could stay away. Poor Laura Pocklington protested that she

hated and despised George, but yet couldn't stay away.

"Then, my dear," said Mrs. Pocklington, tartly, "you can stay in the nursery."

"It's too bad!" exclaimed Laura. "A man who says such things isn't fit."

Mrs. Pocklington shook her head gently. Mr. Pocklington's Radical principles extended no more to his household than to his business.

"Laura, dear," she said, in pained tones. "I do so dislike argument."

So George went to dinner at Mrs. Pocklington's, and that lady, remorseless in parental discipline, sent Laura down to dinner with him; and, as everybody knows, there is nothing more pleasing and interesting than a pretty girl in a dignified pet. George enjoyed himself. It was a long time since he had flirted; but really now, considering Isabel's conduct, he felt at perfect liberty to conduct himself as seemed to him good. Laura was an old friend, and George determined to see how incapable her wrath was.

"It's so kind of you to give me this pleasure," he began.

"Pleasure?" said Laura, in her loftiest tone.

"Yes; taking you down, you know."

"Mamma made me."

"Ah, now you're trying to take me down."

"I wonder you can look any one in the face."

"I always enjoy looking you in the face."

"After the things you've said about poor Neera!"

"Neera?"

"Why shouldn't I call her Neera?"

"Oh, no reason at all. It may even be her name."

"A woman who backbites is bad, but a man—"

"Is the deuce?" said George inquiringly.

Laura tried another tack. "All your friends think you wrong, even mamma."

"What does that matter, as long as you think I'm right?"

"I don't, I think—"

"That it's great fun to torment a poor man who—"

"Who?"

"Who what?" said Laura, with deplorable weakness.

"Values your good opinion very highly."

"Nonsense!"

George permitted himself to sigh deeply. A faint twitching betrayed itself about the corners of Laura's pretty mouth.

"If you want to smile, I will look away," said George.

"You're very foolish," said Laura; and George knew that this expression on a lady's lips is not always one of disapproval.

"I am, indeed," said he, "to spend my time in a vain pursuit."

"Of Neera?"

"No, not of Neera."

"I should never," said Laura, demurely, "have referred to Miss Bourne, if you hadn't, but as you have—"

"I didn't."

Presumably George explained whom he did refer to, and apparently the explanation took the rest of dinner-time. And as the ladies went upstairs, Mrs. Pocklington patted Laura's shoulder with an approving fan.

"There's a good child! It shows breeding to be agreeable to people you dislike."

Laura blushed a little, but answered dutifully, "I am glad you are pleased, mamma. Most likely she did not impose on Mrs. Pocklington. She certainly did not on herself."

George found himself left next to Sidmouth Vane.

"Hallo, Neston!" said that young gentleman, with his usual freedom.

"Locked her up yet?"

George said Mrs. Witt was still at large. Vane had been his fag, and George felt he was entitled to take it out of him in after life whenever he could.

"Wish you would," continued Mr. Vane. "That ass of a cousin of yours would jilt her, and I would wait outside Holloway or Clerkenwell, or wherever they put 'em, and receive her sympathetically—hot breakfast, brass band, first cigar for six months, and all that, don't you know, like one of those Irish fellows."

"You have no small prejudices."

"Not much. A girl like that, plus an income like that, might steal all Northampton for what I care. Going upstairs?"

"Yes; there's an 'At Home' on, isn't there?"

"Yes, so I'm told. I shouldn't go, if I were you."

"Why the devil not?"

"Gerald's going to be there—told me so."

"Really, Van, you're very kind. We shan't fight."

"I don't know about that. He's simply mad."

"Anything new?"

"Yes; he told me you'd been trying to square Mrs. Witt behind his back, and he meant to have it out with you."

"Well," said George, "I won't run. Come along."

The guests were already pouring in, and among the first George encountered was Mr. Dennis Espion, as overstrained as ever. Espion knew that George was aware of his position on the Bull's-eye.

"Ah, how are you, Neston?" he said, holding out his hand.

George looked at it for a moment, and then took it.

"I support life and your kind attentions, Espion."

"Ah! well, you know, we can't help it—a matter of public interest. I hope you see our position—"

"Yes," said George, urbanely; "I faut vivre."

"I don't suppose you value our opinion, but—"

"Oh yes; I value it at a penny—every evening."

"I was going to say—"

"Keep it, my dear fellow. What you say has market value—to the extent I have mentioned."

"My dear Neston, may I—"

"Consider this an interview? My dear Espion, certainly. Make any use of this communication you please. Good night."

George strolled away. "Suppose I was rather rude," he said to himself. "But, hang it, I must have earned that fellow fifty pounds!"

(To be Continued.)

## TOO SOON.

Old Grimes is dead, that good old man. He missed a heap of fun;

He died, and never rode a wheel

Or shot a ki-yun.

## YOUNG FOLKS.

### GOING TO UNCLE JOE'S.

'Tis a bright and balmy morning, when the roses are in bloom. The birds have awakened early and sing their sweetened tune, Us youngsters are all wide awake, except dear baby Rose, She sleeps because she doesn't know we're going to Uncle Joe's.

Oh, you should see us when we're dressed, our new clothes are a sight, But, baby looks the best of all, so dainty dressed in white. And, now here comes the wagon, and in it each one goes, And father says, "Now, hold on hard, we're off for Uncle Joe's."

There's a basketful of something, all covered nice and neat, And safely stowed away from sight, right underneath the seat. But, no matter what we take them, each one among us knows, 'Twill never come back empty, when it goes to Uncle Joe's.

And, now we're in the hollow, now going up the hill, And, now we cross the old long bridge, and hear the busy mill, And, now we're in the shaded lane, where each sweet wild flower blows, Oh, never was there such a road as leads to Uncle Joe's.

The squirrels and rabbits scamper, at times, across our way, And, humble-bees and butter-flies, are out for holiday, And, every time we meet a team, right well the driver knows, That we are gay and happy, 'cause we're going to Uncle Joe's.

Ah! now we've turned the corner, and can see the big red barn, And fields of grain, the like of which, are on no other farm, Then father says, "Just see that corn, how clean and straight the rows," But, we've no time to answer, for we're at Uncle Joe's.

Then, forth they come, from house and barn, all hasting us to greet, With, "how d'ye do's?" and happy smiles and words of welcome sweet. Aunt Louie takes the baby, with a "My! how fast she grows!" But, no one's arms can lift us down so well as Uncle Joe's.

We sit awhile within the house, and play with dolls and toys, Then, on with hats, and out of doors, both happy girls and boys. To see the chickens, ducks, and calves, to stroke the new colt's nose, There's always something more to see, when we're at Uncle Joe's.

We play at "hide and seek," and "tag." Oh, you should see us run, No children ever laughed so much, or had such jolly fun, And, then we go to meet the men, when loud the old horn blows, For well we know, both Dick and Tom, who lives at Uncle Joe's.

We gather in the kitchen, where the dinner table's spread, And, sit quite still, with folded hands, until the "grace" is said. Then uncle on us, one and all, both food and smile bestows, Oh, dinner never tastes so good as at dear Uncle Joe's.

We ride home in the twilight, and all along the way, We're counting over all the joys of this most blissful day, And when we lay us down, our eyes in happy slumber close, With dreams such as we know but when we've been to Uncle Joe's.

### THE STOLEN LUNCH.

Poor little Peter! Do you see him at the schoolhouse pump? Oh, how he cries and howls!

Yesterday a little girl named Mary Owens came to the teacher and said: "Oh, Miss Ward, what shall I do? This is the third day that some one has eaten up all my lunch. I have been watching and trying to find out who can be the thief. But it is of no use."

So the poor child cried because she was so troubled at the loss of her dinner.

"Never mind, little Mary," said the teacher. "Do as I tell you, and we will catch the naughty child very soon."

So they said not a word more before the other scholars and quietly laid their plans. Next morning the teacher brought a tempting doughnut and placed it in Mary's lunch basket.

Just before the bell rang to dismiss the school at noon the scholars heard a noise and soon saw Peter standing by the well and working the pump handle in a lively fashion.

The doughnut had been filled with red pepper, and when poor Peter tasted it he knew he was found out. Oh, how it did burn! It seemed as if he could never get to the water. And worst of all the boys and girls now came running to him, shouting and laughing at him with all their might.

No doubt this will be the last time little Mary will lose her lunch.

### DOG AND GOOSE.

A dog and a goose on one occasion became fast friends, but the goose seems to have made the first advance. If the dog barked the goose would cackle and endeavor to bite any person she supposed the dog to be barking at. She would not roost in the usual way, but ran about the yard with the dog all night, and even when he went about the neighborhood the goose accompanied him, running and flying in order to keep pace with him.

What is very strange, however, when the dog was ill the goose would not leave him for a single moment, so food had to be placed in the kennel for both of them. The affection is supposed to have its origin in the dog's saving the goose from a fox.

In another case a dog tried to console herself for the loss of her family by adopting a brood of ducklings. When her little ones were taken from her, she was quite disconsolate, until she fell in with the ducklings. These she tended in the most affectionate manner and exhibited the greatest concern when they naturally took to the water. When

they came to land the dog seized them in her mouth and carried them home. Strange to say when robbed of her family she took charge of two cock-chickens, which she reared with great attention. When they began to crow she was evidently much annoyed and endeavored to suppress their noise.

### PUTS MONEY IN HIS PURSE.

Tommy Atkins Finds Many Ways to Add to His Soldiers' Salary.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the limit of a soldier's pay is a shilling a day. Where Tommy is a shrewd person and keeps his weather eye open there are a hundred and one methods for him to supplement his meagre pay by doing work outside his military duties. In fact, a very respectable sum may be realized by "doing a bit outside," or "taking on a civilian's job," as the operation is called.

In all garrison towns smoking concerts are often given in public houses, for which a chairman and pianist are engaged. These positions are often filled by soldiers, the landlord trusting to the popularity of the red coat to gain him a wider connection.

In many theatres, too, and music halls soldiers often get employment in the orchestra; and should a military drama be on the boards Tommy's services are in great requisition for parts where a martial appearance and very little speaking are required.

The writer knows of a case where a compounder in the army used to make a very handsome addition to his income by dispensing and making up prescriptions for a few hours every evening at a chemist's shop in the town in which his regiment was stationed. This was a somewhat unusual case, but in many garrison towns hotel proprietors, as far as possible, employ soldiers as waiters in the evening, and pay them well, too.

A very curious instance of "taking on a civilian's job," came under the writer's notice a short time ago. When passing a bootmaker's window he saw some pairs of boots as eagerly as if their lives depended on finishing the job quickly.

### WOMEN DOCTORS.

Last year's