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A Terrible Temptation

OR, THE FAMILY RING

CHAPTER II.

Merlin Street, Bloomsbury, was not a very promising looking quarter of London, was Anderson thought as his neat brougham drew up before the door of 1,000 and he sprang out and rang the bell.

The street closely resembled hundreds of other streets in the metropolis, in its uniform greyness, uniform dullness, uniform dreariness.

Each house was the counterpart of every other house in the row, the only breaks in the general monotony being the varying arrangements of blinds and curtains according to the different fancies of the tenants. Here and there something approaching to taste was displayed in graceful draperies and soft muslins, and at long intervals in the grey line of houses an occasional window box could be seen, giving a touch of brightness to the otherwise universal gloom.

Miles, standing on the doorstep, waiting with what patience he might for a fairly answer to his ring, looked up and down the street, and wondered why the inhabitants did not die of the morbidness and general ennui which grew and general fatality over the middle of the road, the horse walking with down-beat head and melancholy gait, the driver sunk down on the box in a lethargic stupor too deep even to admit of him looking round in search of an errand.

An errand boy slouched by, apparently overwhelmed by the general depression and unable to whistle, as with the customary sangfroid of his kind; the milkman slowly down the middle of the road, the horse walking with down-beat head and melancholy gait, the driver sunk down on the box in a lethargic stupor too deep even to admit of him looking round in search of an errand.

The house before which Doctor Anderson stood was not one of those where an attempt had been made to counteract the grey monotony of the street. No boxes adorned its windows, the curtains in the lower room were of a dingy green material and very worn and faded; the windows themselves were thickly coated with dust, and the blinds were torn in more than one place, were only partially pulled up, and hung awry.

A depressed virgin crept climbed the house wall—its appearance led to the conclusion that it had been struggling upwards for years, but for some time—and a recent gale had torn away large parts of it, which no one had energy to nail up again, and they dragged forlorn lengths up on the pavement of the grimy area.

Two vigorous milk carts, laden with bread fruit of no result, and Anderson, waiting more impatient every moment, drew back to the top step and scanned the forbidding looking building from top to bottom, but no sign of life appeared at the shabby bell, and the blinds were torn in more than one place, were only partially pulled up, and hung awry.

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Her badly-made, ill-fitting frock hung round her in quaint folds, and was so shabby that it allowed an excellent view to be obtained of downy, wooden shoes full of holes and untidy stockings.

A brooch pinned crookedly into the neck of her gown seemed to be the only means of keeping it together, and she wore no waist-band.

Her hair, hanging in loose unkempt masses round her face, had evidently been combed hurriedly into a bun and speared through with a great silver dagger, the untidiness of the whole prevented Anderson from seeing how picturesque were those dusky masses of hair, and waves of soft and curly were the tendrils that lay upon her forehead.

He only saw that her head was untidy, and untidiness in a woman was to him an almost unadmissionable sin.

"Please to walk in, sir. Was there anything I could do for you?"

"There was so terrified an expression upon her face that Anderson was smitten with compunction and his tone grew gentle.

"Have you a little girl lodging here, the child of a Mrs. James?" he asked. "Little girl?" the woman looked at him rather blankly; "oh! Mrs. James' daughter? Yes—she lodges here—she and then, her poor mother being" took the opportunity, which no doubt you've heard of, to make 'Ope on 'ere, doin' me best to make 'er comfortable, as I'm sure she'll tell you—she and me."

"Yes—yes," Anderson broke in impatiently; "the point is that I want to see the little girl—Mrs.—I don't know your name."

"Brooks, sir. My name is Brooks—my husband we've kept these rooms for."

"Please take me into a sitting-room and bring the little girl to me," the doctor said slowly, with difficulty repressing his renewed longing to hit that dirty face zone overgrown with ar. unctious smile. "Can I go in here?" and he touched the handle of a door on his right.

Mrs. Brooks hastened to open the door for him, holding it wide that he might pass into an apartment of the most typical lodging-house type.

"I'll send Miss Hope down," she said, subdued again by the look in his eyes, and deterred by it from speaking another word, much as she yearned to lead him into a fresh stream of explanations.

Anderson, left alone, glanced round the room with a little shiver. It smelt musty and close, obviously long ages had passed by since any one had opened the dusty window.

A cold shiver against one wall, it leaped forlornly over, being one leg short, its springs were broken, and a large patch of white lining showed through the torn horsehair which covered it.

He noticed that her complexion was pale, but he failed to see that her eyes were remarkable and wonderful green in color, and with wonderful lights and shades in them, which might have reminded a less prejudiced being of the changing deeps and shallows of a mountain stream.

Because she repelled him he drew back a little from her touch; because he remembered the news he brought her, profound pity awoke in him, and he looked down at her more kindly.

"Perhaps some of the pity that slipped at his heart showed in his face, for a sudden terror leapt into her eyes, she was smitten by a quick foreboding of evil.

"What is it?" she said, catching her breath, "is mother worse?" If she was worse, you must take me to her at once—at once, and this time she not only put her hand upon his arm but shook it impatiently. "Don't you hear?" she reiterated, when he did not answer directly, not knowing how to get into the room, for this impetuosity child the great trouble that was to overwhelm her.

"Yes—I hear, Miss James," he said at last, speaking slowly and painfully, "and I am afraid that I am not bringing you good news." He chose his words with the utmost care, only anxious now to let the shock come to her as lightly as might be, "the moment only consumed by the futile wish that he had not all his life strive to find after self-repression that words were almost impossible to him.

"What do you mean?" the girl gasped, her eyes growing wide and startled; "mother really worse, oh! who are you?" "Do tell me quickly, you are so slow—so dreadfully slow!"

Again her small hands seized and shook his arm, and he realized that she was shivering all over with fear and excitement, whilst her teeth chattered and her body shook.

"I want to help you to hear what I will tell you," Miles said gently, and taking her hand into his. "An Doctor Anderson—your mother was my patient."

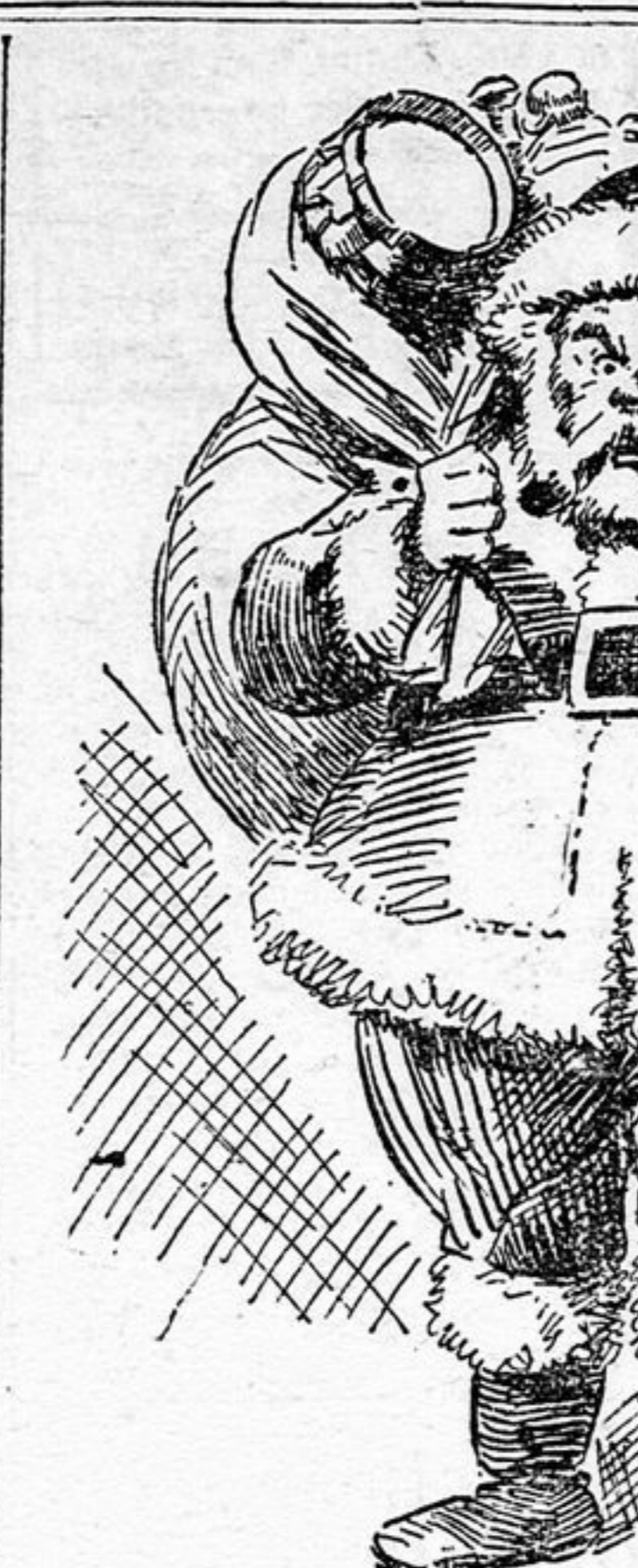
"Was—was—she caught at the ominous word, and her hands gripped at his with a grasp that positively hurt him. "Why do you say that?"

"She was—she was very young, very bad news to tell you. This afternoon your mother became suddenly much worse—nothing so sudden had been in the color of her eyes, and her cheeks and lips, leaving them so white that Miles stretched out his arm towards her, fearing that she would faint.

But all at once, and to his unspoken amazement, she turned fiercely upon him.

"You ought to have told me!" she said passionately; "how could you let her die, alone, in a strange place without me! How could you! How could you!"

"I would have told you, if I had known," Miles answered, finding his voice at last, "yes—I have come from your mother."



"Whew, here I am with presents for little boys and girls."

Christmas Fare

CHRISTMAS CAKES.

Farmers' Fruit Cake.—Chop fine half a pint of dried apples; cover with half a pint of cold water and let them soak over night.

The grave voice, the stern manner, and the firm clasp of his hands produced the effect he desired; and though she still sobbed softly under her breath, the wild hysterical crying ceased, and she looked up at him with frightened eyes, and quivering lips subdued into silence.

"Come and sit here," he went on, drawing her on to the sofa. "I want to tell you what were your mother's last wishes about you."

"Did she tell you?" Hope asked, a curious, incredulous expression flitting over her face, for the man beside her was strangely unlike any one who had come to see her mother in their wretched lodgings, indeed altogether different from the very few men Hope had ever known.

"Yes, I was with her at the end, all her last words were about you, and I think she died with the thought of you in her mind."

"I don't know what to do," she spoke to me very anxiously about you, and I promised her that I would do all I could for you. I have promised to take care of you."

The magnitude of the task he had undertaken flashed across Miles' brain at that moment, and a thousand unforeseen difficulties forced themselves into prominence, as he looked down at the girl.

If she had been the child he had pictured her to himself, those difficulties would have been solved by sending her to a good school, and supervising her education. But as things were, he suddenly realized that the problem before him had assumed gigantic proportions, and that he had not the dimmest idea in the world what to do with a hysterical girl of eighteen!

"To be continued."

Mr. Christmas Shopper suddenly remembers that he has not paid last year's coal bill.

with white icing; when this has hardened dip a wooden skewer into melted chocolate and draw the lines and make the dots of the dominos. Children always are delighted with these little cakes.

Sand Tarts.—Beat half a pound of butter to a cream and add half a pound of granulated sugar; then add the yolks of three eggs and the whites of two, beaten together; add a teaspoonful of vanilla and just a little grated nutmeg. Mix in sufficient flour to make a dough. Dust your baking board thickly with granulated sugar. Take out a piece of dough, roll with a thin sheet, cut with round cutters and bake in a moderate oven until a light brown. Dust the top of the sheet with sugar instead of flour to prevent the roller from sticking. By adding half a pound of cleaned currants to the above recipe you will have Shrewsbury currant cakes.

CHRISTMAS CANDIES.
Confectionery is one of the prerequisites of childhood and is looked for as Christmas by people of all ages, and as choice French candies are beyond the capacity of many a purse, and cheap ones are often made unwholesome, if not positively dangerous, by adulteration, home-made candies have become popular, many delicious and attractive varieties being as easily made as any other toothsome dainties.

Preparation called fondant—made by removing boiled syrup from the fire just before it will harden is the foundation of nearly all French candies, and when once the art of making this is mastered, a large variety of candies are easily made.

Fondant.—To one pound of sugar add one-half pint cold water and one-fourth teaspoonful cream of tartar and boil rapidly for ten minutes without stirring. Dip the fingers into ice water, drop a little of the syrup into cold water, then roll it between the fingers until it forms a soft, creamy, inelastic ball. If not hard enough boil a little longer, and if too hard add a little water, boil up and test again. Set aside in the kettle to become lukewarm, then stir the mass with a ladle until it is white and dry at the edge. It should then be taken out and kneaded, exactly as one would knead dough, until it is creamy and soft, by covering with a damp cloth and keeping in a cool place it will keep well for several days, and several times this amount may be made at one time, by making several pounds if it is better to divide the mass before kneading, and each part may be flavored differently.

Chocolate Creams.—Dust the moulding board with as little flour as possible and roll a piece of fondant into a cylindrical shape. Cut in one regular shaped piece, roll between the palms of the hands until round, lay on paraffin paper, and let harden until the next day. Melt a cake of chocolate in a rather deep vessel that has been set in a pan of hot water, add a couple of paraffin half as large as the amount of the fondant, and one-fourth teaspoonful of vanilla. Roll the cream in this by using a steel fork or crochet needle, and place again on paraffin paper.

Nut Rolls.—Take equal parts of what-ever variety of nut meats you prefer and fondant. Mix well and form into a roll. Cover this with plain fondant, roll in granulated sugar, and let harden until next day, then cut crosswise.

PLUM PUDDING.
One pound of butter, one pound of suet, chopped and free from strings, one pound of sugar, two and a half pounds of flour, two pounds of raisins, seeded and chopped, two pounds of currants, stemmed and washed, one-quarter pound of citron, shredded, one dozen eggs, yolks and whites beaten separately, one-half pint of milk, one cup of brandy, one-half ounce each of cloves and nutmeg, two graded nutmegs, Cream butter and sugar, and the yolks of the eggs, the milk, and brandy, and spice. After that the fruit, dredged with flour. Last of all pour in the whites of the eggs, alternately with the flour. Steam for five hours.

CHRISTMAS HINTS.
Beisins for Plum Pudding.—Remember that muscated raisins will give the puddings a richer flavor and better color. You can buy them cheaply if loose and not in bunches.

When Choosing the Turkey.—Medium sized turkeys really are far more tender than the huge birds so proudly displayed by poultrymen.

Christmas Pudding.—Allow the Christmas pudding to stand for at least five minutes before turning it out of the tin to sticking.

Currants.—When washing the currants for mince meat and Christmas pudding bear in mind that if left all damp they cause heaviness and if they are dried in a hurry before a quick fire their flavor is spoiled.

For the Boys.—When the housekeeping purse will allow it, an extra batch of perhaps plainer mince pie, etc., give great pleasure to the various errand boys and messengers who may come to the house during Christmas.

To Frost Holly Leaves.—For dessert dishes pick some nice leaves from the stalks of holly and wipe dry, then place them on a dish near the fire to get quite dry. Let the fire near to shrewdly dip them in melted butter, sprinkle to over them some coarsely ground sugar, and dry them before the fire.

Pudding.—A good recipe for Christmas pudding: One pound of raisins, one pound of currants, one pound of suet, one pound of sugar, one pound of flour, one pound of bread-crumbs, two ounces of candied peel, half ounce of bitter almonds, one ounce of sweet almonds, four eggs, one teaspoonful of allspice, one pint of milk, one egg and vanilla essence, one-half pound of butter, and one-half pound of suet.

DETERMINED.
"It's curious about the moon," said Mrs. Pringle, "I can't remember my head going without it for the right. It's a good thing, too. After this I shall be afraid I'll see the new moon over my left shoulder!"

FUN FOR CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS.

The following jolly game was recently played after this fashion: The guests were arranged in a circle around the room. One young man occupied a revolving chair in the centre of the circle, so that he could easily face any one in the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I am here for criticism, advice and condemnation. I am not sensitive, and it doesn't matter what I get, but the principal words of your answers must begin with my initials, J. C. F." Turning to the first one he said, "What sort of a chap am I?"

"Jolly, careful and frisky," was the prompt answer. "To her right-headed neighbor he said: 'What sort of a wife ought I to have?'" "Daintily, cunning and fast," was a rather disconcerting reply. "What ought I to eat?" he asked the next person.

"Jam, custard and fish," she answered. "What profession am I best fitted for?" "Janitor, carpenter or fisherman," was the reply.

"I don't agree with you," he exclaimed. "Appealing to the next person he said: 'What do you think I am best fitted for?'"

"A commercial lawyer or financier," was the more amusing answer. And so the game went on. When a person failed to make an answer he was obliged to change places with the questioner, and, giving his own initials, ask questions about himself. No question is allowed on any other subject or about any one else. Only two minutes is allowed for thinking of an answer.

DUMB GRAMBO.
To play this game the guests are divided into companies of six, who take turns in leaving the room. When the first six go out those remaining select a word, then a word rhyming with that one is mentioned to the outside party, who then re-enters the room, one or more, or all at once, and proceeds to ask other rhyming words, until they find the right one.

For instance, the company who first leaves the room were told that they must leave the room with a word that rhymed with "dell."

No," said the audience, "it is not bell."

It will be observed that the audience is obliged to guess what word the company is acting, while the company must guess the word the audience wishes to see.

SHYMMING COURTS.
The players in this game choose a judge and a sheriff. The judge takes a seal and the sheriff immediately runs after the rest of the players till one is caught. The prisoner is taken before the judge and the sheriff makes a charge. The charge may be anything. For instance, the sheriff may say, "I caught this person stealing some hay."

The prisoner must answer in such a way as to make a rhyme. Thus he may reply: "The sheriff's brain must be asray."

The sheriff makes a charge in rhyme with testimony, as, for instance: "Why, I saw the prisoner do it!" And the prisoner may answer: "The sheriff's brain must be asray."

"Discharge the sheriff for not being right." And if any of the other players can respond immediately with a rhyme, for example, "Give me his job and I'll work day and night," that player gets the office, while the prisoner is released and promoted to be assistant judge.

MAGIC CIRCLE.
Tell your audience that it is in your power to place any person present in the middle of the room and draw a circle round him, out of which, although his legs and arms are free, it will be impossible for him to escape without taking his coat off.

"I shall use absolutely no force to detain you," you must say, "but I shall not bid you in any way, but all the same you will not be able to get out of the ring, struggle as you will, without partially undressing."