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-THE-

By FRED M. WHITE Author of "Tregarthen's Wife," "The Robe of Lucifer,' Etc.

Copyright, 1905, by R. F. Fenno & Coy. S Twe got what you want," David mid. "Now come in to breakfast." There was a pile of letters on the table, and on the top a telegram. It 733 a long message, and Bell watched Steel's face curiously.

"From Littimer Castle," he suggested. "Am I right?" "As usual," David cried. "My little scheme over that diamond star has worked magnificently. Miss Chris tells me that she has-by Jove, Bell, just listen-she has solved the problem of the cigar-case; she has found out the whole thing. She wants me to meet her in London to-morrow, when she will tell me everything."

CHAPTER XLVL

Lord Littimer sat on the terrace. shaded from the sun by an awning over his deck-chair. From his expres--sion he seemed to be at peace with all the world. His brown, eager face had lost its usually keen, suspicious look: he smoked a cigarette lazily. Chris sat opposite him looking as little like a hard-working secretary as

As a matter of fact, there was nothing for her to do. Littimer had already tired of his lady secretary idea and had Chris not interested and amused him he would have found some means to get rid of her before now. But she did interest and amuse and angule him. There was something charmingly reminiscent about the girl. She was like somebody he had once known and cared for, but for the life of him he could not think who. "Really, you are an exceedingly

clever girl," he said. "In fact, we are both exceedingly clever." Chris replied, coolly. "And yet nobody is ever quite so clever as he imagines himself to be. Do you ever make bad mistakes, Lord Littimer?" "Sometimes," Littimer said, with a touch of cynical humor. "For instance, I married some years ago. That was bad. Then I had a son, which was

"At one time you were fond of your

"Well, upon my word, you are the only creature I ever met who has had the audacity to ask me that question. Yes, I was very fond of my wife and my son, and, God help me, I am fond of them still. I don't know why I talk to you like this."

no way to blame; you imagine that ! fancied that your son was a vulgar thief. And I am under the impression that Lady Littimer had money." "She had a large fortune," Littimer

Chris laughed unsteadily. She was

to catch Littimer in this mood. And "Lady Littimer was very rich," she

Went on, "and she was devoted to ! ed a large sum of money very badly, "What fond mother wouldn't?"

the point. Your son wanted money, and he robbed you when he could have had taything for the asking from his "Sound logical," Littimer said, flip-

Matly. "Who had the money?" The same man who stole Prince Rupert's ring-Reginald Henson." tat upright in his chair. He was keen and alert enough now. There were tion, Lord Littimer?" traces of agriction on his fano

"That is a serious accusation," he "Not more serious than your accusa-

pro-

he In-

t the

"Well, perhaps not," Littimer admitted "But why do you take up Frank's cause in this way? Is there any romance budding under my unconscious

"Now you are talking nonsense," Chris said, with just a touch of color in her cheeks. "I say, and I am going no prove when the time comes, that Reginald Henson was the thief. I am sorry to pain you, but it is absolutely lecessary to go into these matters. When those foolish letters, written by



a foolish girl, fell into your hands, your son vowed that he would get them back, by force if necessary. He made that rash speech in hearing of Reginald Henson. Henson probably-lurked about until he saw the robbery committed. Then it occurred to him that he might do a little robbery on his own account, seeing that your son would get the credit of it. The safe was open, and so he walked off with your ring

and your money." "My dear young lady, this is all mere

"So you imagine. At that time Reginald Henson had a kind of home which he was running at 218, Brunswick Square, Brighton. Lady Littimer had just relinquished a similar undertaking there. Previously Reginald Henson had a home at Huddersfield. Mind you, he didn't run either in his own name, and he kept studiously in the background. But he was desperately hard up at the time in consequence of his dissipation and extravagance, and the money he collected for his home went got wind of the matter, and Reginald Henson discreetly disappeared from Brighton just in time to save himself from arrest for frauds there and at Huddersfield. A member of the Huddersfield police is in a high position at Brighton. He has recognized Reginald Henson as the man who was 'wanted' at Huddersfield. I don't know if there will be a prosecution after all these years, but there you are."

"You are speaking from authority?" "Certainly I am. Reginald Henson, as such, is not known to Inspector Marley, but I sent the latter a photograph of Henson, and he returned it her. this morning with a letter to the effect that it was the man the Huddersfield police were looking for."

"What an interesting girl you are," Littimer murmured. "Always so full of rocks below, his hand clutching at his surprises. Our dear Reginald is even a greater rascal than I took him for." "Well, he took your money, and that saved him. He took your ring, a fac- Chris! And they told me--" simile of which he had made before for some ingenious purpose. It came with a vengeance. Then Claire Carfax

discretion and folly." "Go on. Rub it in. Never mind about

"I'm not minding," Chris said, cool- ed her warm red cheeks with his finly. "Henson saw his game and played it boldly. I could not have told you all this yesterday, but a letter I had this morning cleared the ground wonderfully. Henson wanted to cause family differences, and he succeeded. Previously he got Dr. Bell out of the way fate had done that for her, and she was by means of the second Rembrandt. not sorry. It was a cruel trick they had You can't deny there is a second Rembrandt now, seeing that it is locked up in your safe. And where do you with a loving little gesture. think Bell found it? Why, at 218, Brunswick Square, Brighton, where dear?" she asked, sweetly.

"I'm blind still," Littimer said, curt- could do no more than gaze into her ly. "And I'm going to tell you all about ly. "My dear young lady, I admit that eyes with rapture and amazement. | it." you are making out a pretty strong There was plenty of time for explanamid. faintly. "Miss Lee, do you know | case; indeed, I might go farther, and | tions. mat I have a great minor to four say that you have all my sympathy. "Let us go into the arbor," Frank But what you say would not be taken suggested. "No, I am not going to reas evidence in a court of law. If you lease your hand for a moment. If I do ritt's face, a suggestion that he did not hands the day he was assaulted. I recolborribly frightened, though she did not produce that ring, for instance—but thow it. She had been waiting for days that is at the bottom of the North Sea." | Chris, why did you serve me so?" Chris took a small cardboard box

she did not feel disposed to go back from her pocket, and from thence problack pearls on either side, and had some inscription inside. "Look at that," she said. "It was

Frank, your son. Now, if he had want- sent to me to-day by my-by a friend of mine. It is the ring which Reginald and had gone to his mother, she would Henson shows to Lady Littimer when had to come. And we have Henson in have given it to him without the slight- he wants money from her. It was lost our power at last." by Henson a night or two ago, and it fell into the hands of someone who is true. But tell me everything from the "I am obliged to you for conceding interested, like myself, in the expos- beginning. I am as dazed and confused ure and disgrace of Reginald Henson." as a tired man roused out of a sound Littimer examined the ring carefully. "It is a wonderfully good imitation,"

he said, presently. "So I am told," said Chris. "So good that it must have actually been copied Littimer dropped his cigarette and he possessed the original? Will you be of Chris's voice and looking into her

Littimer could do no more than gaze

at the ring in ms nana ror some time. "I could have sworn-indeed, I am tion against your son," Chris retort 1 mady to swear—that the real ring was Laver in anybody's possession but mine from the day that Frank was year old till it disappeared. Of course, scores of people had looked at it, Henson amongst the rest. But how did Claire Carfax-"

"Easily enough. Henson had a first copy made from a description. I don't know why; probably we shall never know why. Probably he had it done when he knew that your son and Miss

Carfax had struck up a flirtation. It was he who forged a letter from Frank to Miss Carfax, enclosing the ring. By that means he hoped to create mischief which, if it had been nipped in the bud, could never have been traced to him. As matters turned out he succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. He had got the real ring, too, passionately to those of Chris. When which was likely to prove a very useful thing in case he ever wanted to make terms. A second and a faithful copy was made-the copy you hold in your hands-to hold temptingly over Lady Littimer's head when he wanted large sums of money from her."

of course?" "He does. To my certain knowledge me quite a nice sense of superiority. he has had nearly £70,000. But the And you, sir?" case is in good hands. You have only The last words were uttered a little to wait a few days longer and the man ' sternly. Frank had risen. His face was will be exposed. Already, as you see, I pale, his manner resolute and respecthave wound his accomplice, the Rev- ful. erend James Merritt, round my finger. "I came here to ask Miss Lee a ques-Of course, the idea of getting up a ba- tion, sir, not knowing, of course, who zaar has all been nonsense. I am only she was." waiting for a little further information, "And she betrayed herself, eh?" and then Merritt will feel the iron hand "I am sorry if I have done so," Chris under the velvet glove. Unless I am said, "but I should not have done so un- question. His eyes were fixed on space;

Van Sneck is in our grasp."

"Van Sneck! Is he in England?" 'He is. Did you read that strange case of a man being found half murdered in the conservatory of Mr. Steel, the novelist, in Brighton? Well, that was Van Sneck. But I can't tell you any more at present. You must wait and be content."

"Tell me one thing, and I will wait as long as you like. Who are you?" Chris shook her head, merrily. great relief had been taken off her mind. She had approached a delicate and difficult matter, and she had suc ceeded beyond her expectations. That she had shaken the man opposite he sorely was evident from his face. The hardness had gone from his eyes, his lips were no longer bitter and cynical.

"I may have been guilty of a great wrong," he murmured. "All these years I may have been living under a misapprehension. And you have told me what I should never have suspected, although I have never had a high opinion of my dear Reginald. Where is my

"She is still at Longdean Grange You will notice a great change in her a great and sorrowful change. But it is not too late to-"

Littimer rose and went swiftly to wards the house. At any other time the action would have been rude, but Chris fully understood. She had touched the man to the bottom of his soul, and he was anxious to hide his emotion.

"Poor man," Chris murmured. "His hard cynicism conceals a deal of suffering. But the suffering is past; we red property, and for no eye but have only to wait patiently for day- minelight now."

strolled along the terrace to her favor- I had." ite spot looking over the cliffs. There regarding intently. She was quite heedless of the fact that somebody lips and kissed it tenderly. "Poor Frank," she murmured. "Poor

fellow, so weak and amiable. And yet with all your faults-" Chris paused, and a little cry escaped her lips. Frank Littimer, looking

came to see you because-" The words died away. He staggered back, pale as the foam beating on the

left side as if there was some mortal

"Chris," he murmured. "Chris, Chris, He could say no more, he could only stand there trembling from head to foot, fearful lest his mocking senses committed suicide, thanks to your inwere making sport of him. Surely, it was some beautiful vision he had come upon. With one unsteady hand he touched the girl's sleeve; he press-

> "Darling," he whispered, eagerly. "Dearest, what does it mean?" Chris stood there, smiling rosily. She had not meant to betray herself; proved upon Frank, but It had been

necessary. Chris held out her hand

"Are you not going to kiss me, Henson had to leave it seven years | Frank Littimer needed no further ago when the police were so hot upon invitation. It was quiet and secluded "I do," Chris said, gently. "It is be- his trail. He was fearful lest you and there, and nobody could possibly see cause unconsciously you yearn for Bell should come together again, and them. With a little sigh Chris felt her sympathy. And you fancy you are in that is why he came here at night to lover's arms about her and his kisses steal your Rembrandt. And yet you warm on her lips. The clever, brilliant | you." you acted in the only way consistent trusted that man blindly all the time girl had disappeared; a pretty, timid with your position and dignity. You your own son was suffering on mere creature stood in her place for the suspicions. How blind you have been!" | time. For the moment Frank Littimer

now. The task must be accomplished duced a ring. It was a ruby ring with Reginald Henson. But it was hard the moment the impulse to shuffle was Square." work the other night." "You mean when I came here

you needn't explain. I know that you | gue between my teeth."

"I am afraid that is too good to be

beginning of all things. It was an exceedingly interesting and exciting narrative to Frank Littimer, and he follow- terest. from the original. Now, how could ed it carefully. He would have remain-Henson have had a copy made unless | ed there all day listening to the music good enough to answer me that ques- eyes. He had come there miserable and downcast to ask a question, and behold he had suddenly found all the joy and sweetness of existence.

"And so you have accomplished all this?" he said, at length. "What a glorious adventure it must have been, and how clever you are! So is Mr. David Steel. Many a time I have tried to break through the shackles, but Reginald has always been too stron

"Well, he's shot his bolt, now," Chris smiled. "I have just been opening your father's eyes." Frank laughed as he had not laugh-

ed for a long time. "Do you mean to say he doesn't know who you are?" he asked. "My dear boy, he hasn't the faintest idea. Neither had you the faintest idea when I made you a prisoner the other night. But he will know soon."

"God grant that he may," Frank said, fervently. He bent over and pressed his lips he looked up again Lord Littimer was standing before the arbor, wearing

his most cynical expression. "He does know," he said. "My dear young lady, you need not move. The expression of sweet confusion on your face is infinitely pleasing. I did not "The scoundrel! He gets the money, imagine that one so perfectly self-possessed could look like that. It gives

where Prince Rupert's ring is. Already [was so hot that I had taken off my glasses and put my hair up. Then Frank came up and surprised me."

"You have grown an exceedingly pretty girl, Chris," Littimer said, critically. "Of course, I recognize you now. You are nicer-looking than Miss Lee." Chris put on her glasses and rolled her hair down resolutely.

"You will be good enough to understand that I am going to continue Miss Lee for the present," she said. "My task is a long way from being finished yet. Lord Littimer, you are not going to send Frank away?"

"I don't know," he said. "Frank, I have heard a great deal to-day to cause me to think that I might have done you a grave injustice. And yet I am not sure. . . . In any case, it would be bad policy for you to remain here. If the news came to the ears of Reginald Henson it might upset Miss Machiavel-

"That had not occurred to me for the moment," Chris exclaimed. "On the whole, Frank had better not stay. But I should dearly like to see you two

gesture, and then he drew back. "I'd-I'd rather not," he said. "At least, not until my character has been fully vindicated. Heaven knows I have suffered enough for 2 boyish indiscre-

Littimer said gravely. "Whereas I---" "I know, I know. It has been terrible all round. I took those letters of poor Claire's away because they were spe-

'No eye but yours saw them. I was Chris rose restlessly in her turn and | going to send them back again. I wish | Amsterdam hurriedly, being wanted by | a large box of the "All-Healing Salve"

into his own pocket. Then the police was nobody about; it was very hot stroyed them. But I take Heaven to Crimson Blind, and I had to burgle there. The girl removed her glasses | witness that I touched nothing else be | that as well; and I had to get into Dr. and pushed back the banded hair from sides. If it was the last word I ever ut- Bell's room and put the second copy thereby make a little bigger profit. her forehead. She had drawn a photo- tered-what is that fellow doing here in his portmanteau. Why? Ask somegraph from her pocket which she was in that garb? It is one of Henson's body wiser than me. It was all some most disreputable tools."

was coming along the cliffs towards | race. He paused suspiciously as he | the game was. I got my money and reher. She raised the photograph to her | caught sight of Frank, but Chris, with | turned to London, and till pretty rea friendly wave of her hand, encour- cently I saw no more of Henson." aged him to come on.

"It is all part of the game," she said. said Littimer. "I sent for our friend Merritt, but when I did so I had no idea that Frank down to Brighton. I was told as Bell would be present. Since you are here | had got hold of the second Rembrandt very wild and haggard, stood before you might just as well stay and hear owing to Henson's carelessness, and a little more of the strange doings of that he was pretty certain to bring it "I beg your pardon," he began. "I Reginald Henson. The time has come here. He did bring it here, and I tried to let Merritt know that I am not the to stop him on the way, and he half clever lady burglar he takes me for." killed me." Merritt came up doggedly. Evidently the presence of Frank Littimer dis

wiles selles sails "You are very punctual," she said. to know where that gun-metal diamond- delay and tell Henson so. I came, and sold it to Rutter's people. Also we And that's all I know about it." want to know wify Van Sneck purchasgers, and with that touch his manhood; ed a similar cigar-case from Walen's, said Littimer. of Brighton."

> Merritt's heavy jaw dropped, his face turned a dull yellow. He looked | pawned-" round helplessly for some means of es- | "At your request, miss. Don't go for cape, and then relinquished the idea to say as you've forgotten that."

a woman, too! A smart woman, I ad- about the cigar-case." mit, but a woman all the same. And yet | Merritt looked blankly at the speakwhy didn't you-" Merritt paused, lost in the contemplation of a problem beyond his intel-

lectual strength. "You have nothing to fear," Chris said, with a smile. "Tell us all you know and conceal nothing, and you chased by Van Sneck from Walen's in will be free when we have done with | Brighton. Come, rack your brains a

Merritt wiped his dry lips with the back of his hand. "I come peaceable," he said, hoarse-

CHAPTER XLVII.

There was an uneasy grin on Mer- course! Why, I saw it in Van Sneck's you will fly away again. Chris, dear altogether trust those around him. lect asking him where he got it from, Hard experience in the way of the and he said that it was a present from "It was absolutely necessary," Chris | wicked had taught him the folly of put- | Henson. He was going off to meet Henreplied. "It was necessary to deceive ting his confidence in anyone. Just for son then by the corner of Brunswick

"If I say nothing, then I can't do any harm," he remarked, sapiently, "Best, "Tried to steal the Rembrandt. Oh, on the whole, for me to keep my ton-

"Mr. Henson is a dangerous man to cross," Chris suggested. "He is that," Merritt agreed. "You

don't know him as I do." Chris conceded the point, though she of case that they give away with had her own views on that matter. seven cigars for a shilling. I asked him Lord Littimer had seated himself on if he had seen Henson, and he said Chris proceeded to explain from the the broad stone bench along the ter- | that he had. He seemed pretty full up race, whence he was watching the against Henson, and said something scene with the greatest zest and in- about the latter having p a nim a

> "You imagine Mr. Henson to be 2 friend of yours?" Chris asked. Merritt nodded and ginned. So long | thing for Henson to play it low down as he was useful to Henson he was fairly safe.

"Mr. Merritt," Chris asked, suddenly, "have you ever heard of Reuben

The effect of the question was electrical. Merritt's square jaw dropped with a click, there was fear in the furtive eyes that he cast around him. "I read about Reuben Taylor in one of our very smart papers lately," Chris

went on. "It appears that Mr. Taylor is a person who nobody seems to have seen, but who from time to time does a vast service to the community at large. He is not exactly a philanthropist, for he is well rewarded for his labors both by the police and his clients. Suppose Mr. Merritt here had done some wrong."

"A great effort of imagination," Littimer murmured, gently. "Had done something wrong, and an

enemy or quondam friend wants to 'put him away.' I believe that is the correct expression. In that case he does not go to the police himself, because he is usually of a modest and retiring disposition. No, he usually puts down a few particulars in the way of a letter and sends it to Reuben Taylor under cover at a certain address. Is not that quite correct, Mr. Merritt?" "Right," Merritt said, hoarsely. "Some day we shall find out who Tay-

"Never mind that. Do you know that the night before your friend Mr. Henson left the Castle he placed in the post-bag a letter addressed to Mr. Reuben Taylor? In view of what I read recently in the paper alluded to the name struck me as strange. Now, Mr. Merritt, is it possible that letter had anything to do with you?"

lor is, and--"

Merritt did not appear to hear the greatly mistaken Merritt can tell us less I had been taken by surprise. It there was a sanguine clenching of his nsts as it they had been about the

throat of a foe. "If I had him here," he murmured. "If I only had him here! He's given me away. After all that I have done for him he's given me away."

His listeners said nothing; they fully appreciated the situation. Merritt's presence at the Castle was both dangerous and hazardous for Henson. "If you went away to-day you might be safe?" Chris suggested

"Aye, I might," Merritt said, with a cunning grin in his eyes. "If I had a hundred pounds." Chris glanced significantly at Littimer, who nodded and took up the par-

"You shall have the money," he said. "And you shall go as soon as you have answered Miss Lee's questions." Merritt proclaimed himself eager to eas anything. But Merritt's informa-

tion proved to be a great deal less than

she had anticipated "I stole that picture," Merritt confessed. "I was brought down here purpose. Henson sent to London and said he had a job for me. It was to get Frank Littimer made an involuntary | the picture from Dr. Bell. I didn't ask any questions, but set to work

> once. "Did you know what the picture

was?" Chris asked "Bless you, yes; it was a Rembrandt engraving. Why, it was I who in the "And you have youth on your side," | first place stole the first Rembrandt from his lordship yonder, in Amsterdam. I got into his lordship's sittingroom by climbing down a spout, and I took the picture." "But the other belonged to Van

Sneck," said Chris. "It did; and Van Sneck had to leave the police. Henson told me that Van ! "Aye, so do I. I took them and de- Sneck had a second copy of "The deep game of Henson's, only you may Merritt was coming across the ter- be pretty sure he didn't tell me what

> "But you came into the game again," "Quite lately, your lordship, I went

> "Those half measures are so unsatisfortame! Tittimer smiled

turbed him. Chris motioned him to a Merritt grinned. He fully appreciated the humor of the remark. "That attack and the way it "I told you I wanted you to give Lord | brought about were suggested by Hen-Littimer and myself a little advice and son," he went on. "If it failed, I was assistance. In the first place we want to come up to the Castle here without mounted cigar-case, at present for sale he covered my movements whilst I in Rutter's window, came from. We pinched the picture. I took the picture want to know how it got there and who home, and two days later it vanished. "Lame and impotent conclusion!"

"Wait a moment," Chris cried. "You found the diamond star which you

"I have forgotten nothing," Chris "Done," he said. "Clear done. And by said with a smile. "I want to know

> er. Evidently this was strange ground to him. "I don't know anything about that," he said. "What sort of a cigar-case?" "Gun-metal set with diamonds. The

same case or a similar one to that purbit. Did you ever see anything of Van Sneck about the time of his accident? You know where he is?" "Yes. He's in the County Hospital at

Brighton. He was found in Mr. Steel's house nearly dead. It's coming back to me now. A gun-metal cigar-case set in diamonds. That would be a dull thing with sparkling stones all over it. Of

"Did you see Van Sneck again that

"Later on in the afternoon. We went into the Continental together. Van Sneck had been drinking." "You did not see the cigar-case

again?" No. Van Sneck gave me a cigar which he took from the common sort scurvy trick and he didn't like it, and that he'd be even yet. I didn't take any notice of that, because it was no new on his nals."

(To be Continued)

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