[C]HANCES FOR MAIDS

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The Canadian Champion

VOLUME 46. MILTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1906. No. 28

COUNTY OF HALTON
LOCAL COURTS CALENDAR
FOR 1907

Place of Sitting	Day of Sitting	Hours of Opening	Jan.	Mar.	May	July.	Sept.	Nov.	1908 Jan.
1 Milton	Friday	10.30 a.m.	11	8	10	12	13	8	10
2 Oakville	Tuesday	12.30 p.m	8	[illegible]	7	9	10	5	7
3 Georgetown	Wednesday	10.00 a.m	9	6	8	10	11	6	8
4 Acton	Thursday	10.15 a.m.	10	7	9	11	12	7	9
5 Campbellville	Saturday	9.30 a.m.	12	9	11	13	14	9	11
6 Burlington	Monday	11.00 a.m.	7	4	6	8	9	4	6

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF CLERKS—1. Wm. Panton, Milton; 2. Arthur Hilmer, Oakville; [3. Lac]hlan Grant, Georgetown; 4. R. J. McNabb, Acton; 5. W. I. Dick (pro tem), Milton; [6. ...] Springer, Burlington.

[Gener]al Sessions of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury, 11th [June an]d 10th December, on opening days at 1 p.m.

[C]ounty Court Sittings, without Jury, 2nd April and 1st October, and so often at other [times as] may be required for the despatch of business.

[Surrogat]y Court Sittings—formerly Terms—7th January, 1st April, 2nd July and 7th October.

[Audit] of Criminal Justice Accounts, 2nd January, 2nd April, 3rd July and 1st October.

By order W. I. DICK, Milton,
Clerk of the Peace.

Canadian Champion

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Sunday School and Bible Class: 2.30 p.m.
Epworth League: Monday, at 8 p.m.
Prayer Meeting: Wednesday, at 8 p.m.
Pastor's Class: Friday, at 7.30 p.m.

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Rev. W. M. McKAY, Minister.
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W.F.M.S. meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 3 p.m.
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Travellers' Guide.

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GOING EAST.
[illegible] a.m. 9.03 a.m. 11.15 a.m. 8 10 p.m.

GOING WEST.
[illegible] a.m. 5.24 p.m. 6.50 p.m. 9.06 p.m.

SUNDAY—
West 9.02 a.m., 9.07 p.m. East 7.22 a.m., 8.01 p.m.

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We can supply you with anything you may desire in the Jewellry line, from a $1.50 Watch to a $100 one.

You will find our store well stocked with a beautiful line of Watches, Block Silverware, Jewellery, China, &c.

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1906

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In sooth he was a man of moods and contradictions, changeable as an April sky, and none the less quick-tempered and hard because he knew that everybody was terribly afraid of him. And he had a tongue, too, a lashing, cutting tongue that burnt and blistered. Sometimes he would be quite meek and angry under the reproaches of the vicar, and yet the same day history records it that he got off his horse and administered a sound thrashing to the village poacher. Sometimes he got the best of the vicar, and sometimes that worthy man scored. They were good friends, these two, though the vicar never swerved in his fealty to Lady Littimer, whose cause he always championed. But nobody seemed to know anything about that dark scandal. They knew that there had been a dreadful scene at the castle seven years before, and that Lady Littimer and her son had left never to return. Lady Littimer was in a madhouse somewhere, they said, and the son was a wanderer on the face of the earth. And when Lord Littimer died every penny of the property, the castle included, would go to her ladyship's nephew, Mr. Reginald Henson.

In spite of the great cloud that hung over the family Lord Littimer did not seem to have changed. He was just a little more caustic than ever, his tongue a little sharper. The servants could have told a different story, a story of dark moods and days when the bitterness of the shadow of death lay on the face of their master. Few men could carry their grief better, and because Littimer carried his grief so well he suffered the more. We shall see what the sorrow was in time.

There are few more beautiful places in England than Littimer Castle. The house stood on a kind of natural plateau with many woods behind, a trout stream ran clean past the big flight of steps leading to the hall, below were terrace after terrace of hanging gardens, and to the left a sloping, ragged drop of 200ft. into the sea. To the right lay a magnificently-timbered park, with a herd of real wild deer—perhaps the only herd of this kind in the country. When the sun shone on the grey walls they looked as if they had been painted by some cunning hand, so softly were the greys and reds and blues blended.

Inside the place was a veritable art gallery. There were hundreds of pictures and engravings there. All round the grand staircase ran a long, deep corridor, filled with pictures. There were alcoves here fitted up as sitting-rooms, and in most of them some gem or another was hung. When the full flood of electric light was turned on at night the effect was almost dazzling. There were few pictures in the gallery without a history.

Lord Littimer had many hobbies, but not one that interested him like this. There were hundreds of rare birds shot by him in different parts of the world; the corridors and floors were covered by skins, the spoil of his rifle; here and there a stuffed bear pranced startlingly; but the pictures and prints were the great amusement of his lordship's lonely life.

He passed along the corridor now towards the great oriel window at the end. A brilliant sunlight filled the place with shafts of golden and blue and purple as it came filtered through the stained glass. At a table in the window a girl sat working a typewriter. She might have passed for beautiful, only her hair was banded down in hideously Puritan fashion on each side of her delicate, oval face, her eyes were shielded by spectacles. But they were lovely, steady, courageous blue eyes, as Littimer did not fail to observe. Also he had not failed to note that his new secretary could do very well without the glasses.

The typewriter and secretary business was a new whim of Littimer's. He wanted an assistant to catalogue and classify his pictures and prints, and he had told the vicar so. He wanted a girl who wasn't a fool, a girl who could amuse him and wouldn't be afraid of him, and he thought he would have an American. To which the vicar responded that the whole thing was nonsense, but he had heard of a Boston girl in England who had a passion for that kind of thing and who was looking for a situation of the kind in a genuine old house for a year or so. The vicar added that he had not seen the young lady, but he could obtain her address. A reply came in due course, a reply that so pleased the impetuous Earl that he engaged the applicant on the spot. And now she had been just two hours in the house.

"Well," Littimer cried, "and how have you been getting on?"

Miss Christabel Lee looked up smilingly.

"I am getting on very well indeed," she said. "You see, I have made a study of this kind of thing all my lifetime, and most of your pictures are like old friends to me. Do you know, I fancy that you and I are going to manage very well together?"

"Oh, do you? They say I am pretty formidable at times."

"I shan't mind that a bit. You see, my father was a man with a villainous temper. But a woman can always get the better of a bad-tempered man unless he happens to be one of the lower classes who uses his boots. If he is a gentleman you have him utterly at your mercy. Have you a sharp tongue?"

"I flatter myself I can be pretty blistering on occasions," Littimer said, grimly.

"How delightful! So can I. You and I will have some famous battles later on. Only I warn you that I never lose my temper, which gives me a tremendous advantage. I haven't been very well lately, so you must be nice to me for a week or two."

Littimer smiled and nodded. The grim lord of the castle was not accustomed to this kind of thing, and he was telling himself that he rather liked it.

"And now show me the Rembrandt," Miss Lee said, impatiently.

Littimer led the way to a distant alcove lighted from the side by a latticed window. There was only one picture in the excellent light there, and that was the famous Rembrandt engraving. Littimer's eyes lighted up quite lovingly as they rested upon it. The Florentine frame was hung so low that Miss Lee could bring her face on a level with it.

"This is the picture that was stolen from you?" she asked.

"Yes, that's the thing that there was all the fuss about. It made a great stir at the time. But I don't expect that it will happen again."

"Why not?" Miss Lee asked. "When an attempt of that sort is made it is usually followed by another, sometimes after the lapse of years. Anybody getting through that window could easily get the frame from its two nails and take out the paper."

"Do you think so?" Littimer asked, uneasily.

"I am certain of it. Take my advice and make it secure. The panels behind are hard wood—thick black oak. Lord Littimer, I am going to get four brass-headed stays and drive them through some of the open ornamental work into the panel so as to make the picture quite secure. It is an iron frame, I suppose."

"Wrought iron, gilt," said Littimer. "Yes, one could easily drive four brass-headed stays through the open work and make the thing safe. I'll have it seen to."

But Miss Lee insisted that there was no time like the present. She had discovered that Littimer had an excellent carpenter's shop on the premises; indeed, she admitted to being no mean performer with the lathe herself. She flitted down the stairs light as thistle-down.

"A charming girl!" Littimer said, cynically. "I wonder why she came to this dull hole? A quarrel with her young man, perhaps. If I were a young man myself I might—— But women are all the same. I should be a happier man if I had never trusted one. If——"

The face darkened; a heavy scowl lined his brows as he paced up and down. Christabel came back presently with hammer and some brass-headed stays in her hand.

"Don't utterly destroy the frame," Littimer said, resignedly. "It is reputed to be Quentin Matsy's work, and I had it cut to its present fashion. I'll go to the end of the gallery till the execution's over."

"On the contrary," Miss Lee said, firmly, "you will stay where you are told."

A little to his own surprise Littimer remained. He saw the nails driven firmly in and finished off with a punch so that there might be no danger of hammering the exquisitely wrought frame. Miss Lee stood regarding her work with a suggestion of pride.

"There," she said, "I flatter myself a carpenter could have done no better."

"You don't know our typical carpenter," Littimer said. "Here is Tredwell with a telegram. For Miss Lee? I hope it isn't an intimation that some relative has died and left you a fortune. At least, if it is, you mustn't go until we've had one of those quarrels you promised me."

Christabel glanced at the telegram and slipped it into her pocket. There were just a few words in the telegram that would have been unintelligible to the ordinary understanding. The girl did not even comprehend, but Littimer's eyes were upon her, and the cipher had to keep for a time. Littimer walked away at an intimation that his steward desired to see him.

Instantly the girl's manner changed. She glanced at the Rembrandt with a shrewd smile that meant something beyond a mere act of prudence well done. Then she went down to the library and began an eager search for a certain book. She found it at length, the "David Copperfield" in the "Charles Dickens" edition of the great novelist's works. For the next hour or so she was flitting over the pages with the cipher telegram spread out before her. A little later and the few jumbled, meaningless words were coded out into a lengthy message. Christabel read them over a few times, then with the aid of a vesta she reduced the whole thing, telegram and all, to tinder, which she carefully crushed and flung out of the window.

She looked away down the terrace she glanced at the dappled deer knee deep in the bracken, she caught a glimpse of the smiling sea, and her face saddened for a moment.

"How lovely it all is," she murmured. "How exquisitely beautiful and how utterly sad! And to think that if I possessed the magician's wand for a moment I could make everything smile again. He is a good man—a better man than anybody takes him to be. Under his placid, cynical surface he conceals a deal of suffering. Well, we shall see."

She replaced the "Copperfield" on the shelf and turned to go again. In the hall she met Lord Littimer dressed for riding. He smiled as he passed.

"Au revoir till dinner-time," he said. "I've got to go and see a tenant. Oh, yes, I shall certainly expect the pleasure of your company to dinner. And now that the Rembrandt——"

"It is safe for the afternoon," Christabel laughed. "It is generally when the family are dining that the burglar has his busy time. A pleasant ride to you."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Lord Littimer returned, as he declared, with the spirits and appetite of a schoolboy. All the same, he did not for one moment abandon his usual critical analysis. He rattled on gaily, but he was studying his guest all the same. She might have been the typical American lady student; but he was not blind to the fact that the plain muslin and lace frock she wore was made in Paris or that her manners and style must have been picked up in the best society. She sat there under the shaded lights and behind the bank of flowers like as to the manner born, and her accent was only sufficiently American to render her conversation piquant.

"You have always been used to this class of life?" Littimer asked.

"There you are quite mistaken," Christabel said, coolly. "For the last few years my existence has been anything but a bed of roses. And your remark, my lord, savours slightly of impertinent curiosity. I might as well ask you why your family is not here."

"We agree to differ," Littimer responded. "I recollect it caused me a great deal of annoyance at the time. And my son chose to take his mother's part. You knew I had a son?"

"Yes," said Christabel, without looking up from the peach she was peeling. "I have met him."

"Indeed. And what opinion did you form of my son, may I ask?"

"Well, I rather liked him. He seemed to me to be suffering from some great trouble, and trouble I am sure that was not of his own creating."

"Which means to say you feel rather sorry for Frank. But when you say the trouble was not of his own creating you are entirely mistaken. It is not a nice thing to say, Miss Lee, but my son was an utter and most unmitigated young scoundrel. If he came here he would be ordered out of the house. So far as I am concerned, I have no son at all. He sides with his mother, and his mother has a considerable private fortune of her own. Where she is at the present moment I have no idea. Nor do I care. Seems odd, does it not, that I should have been very fond of that woman at one time, just as it seems odd to think that I should have once been fond of treacle tart?"

Littimer spoke evenly and quietly, with his eyes full upon the girl. He was deceiving himself, but he was not deceiving her for a moment. His callousness seemed to be all the more marked because the servants were in the room. But Christabel could see clearly what an effort it was.

"You love your wife still," she said, so low that only Littimer heard. His eyes flashed, his face flamed with a sudden spasm of passion.

"Are we to quarrel so early as this?" he whispered.

"I never quarrel," Christabel said, coolly; "I leave my antagonist to do that. But I have met your son, and I like him. He may be weak, but he is a gentleman. You have made a mistake, and some day you will be sorry for it. Do you grow those orchids yourself?"

Littimer laughed, with no sign of anger remaining. All the same, Christabel could see that his thin brown hand was shaking. She noticed the lines that pain had given under those shrewd black eyes.

"You must see my orchids," he said. "Most of the specimens I obtained myself. They tell me I have at least three unique kinds. And now, if you will permit me, I am going to smoke. The drawing-room is at your disposal, though I rarely enter it myself. I always retire at eleven, but that need not bind you in any way. It has been altogether a most delightful evening."

But Christabel did not dally long in the drawing-room. As she went upstairs and along the corridor she heard the snapping of the electric lights all over the house as the servants were preparing to retire. She paused just a moment in the alcove where the precious Rembrandt was and located carefully the position of the switch there. Then she retired to her own room, where she changed her dress for a simple black gown. A big clock somewhere was striking twelve as she finished. She looked out of her door. The whole house was in darkness, the silence seemed to cling like a curtain.

She paused for a moment as if afraid to take the next step. If it was fear, she shook it aside resolutely and crept into the corridor. She carried something shining in her hands—something that gleamed in the dim, uncertain light from the big window. She stood just for an instant with a feeling that somebody was climbing up the ivy outside the house. She felt her way along until she came to the alcove containing the Rembrandt and then she stopped. Her hand slid along the wall till her fingers touched the switch of the electric light.

She stood for a long time there perfectly motionless. It was a still night outside, and there was nothing to account for the rustling of the ivy leaves. The rattling came in jerks, spasmodically, stopping every now and then and resuming again. It was no longer a matter of imagination, it was a certainty. Somebody was climbing up the ivy to the window.

Leaning eagerly forward, Christabel could hear the sound of labored breathing. She seemed to see the outline of an arm outside, she could catch the quick rattle of the sash, she could almost see a bent wire crooked through the beaded edges of the casement. Yes, she was right. The window swung noiselessly back and a figure stood poised on the ledge outside.

With a quick breath and a fluttering of her heart Christabel felt for the switch.

"It will be all right," she murmured; "the other one will fancy that the light is necessary. Courage, my dear, courage, and the game is yours. Ah!"

The intruder dropped inside and pulled the window behind him. Evidently he was on familiar ground, though he seemed to be seeking an unfamiliar object. Christabel's hand stole along to the switch; there was a click, and the alcove was bathed in brilliant light. The intruder shrank back with a startled cry. He rubbed his dazed eyes.

"Why not come in through the front door, Mr. Littimer?" Christabel drawled, coolly.

Frank Littimer had no words for a moment. He was wondering who this woman was and what she was doing here. American, evidently, by her accent, and also by the revolver that she handled so assuredly.

"That is the way you used to enter," Christabel proceeded, "when you had been out contrary to parental instructions and the keepers expected to have a fracas with the poachers. Your bedroom being exactly opposite, detection was no easy matter. Your bedroom has never been touched since you left. The key is still outside the door. Will you kindly enter it?"

"But——" Frank stammered. "But I assure you that I cannot——"

"Take the Rembrandt away? You cannot. The frame is of iron, and it is fastened to the wall. It would take an experienced carpenter quite a long time to remove it. Therefore your mission has failed. It is very annoying, because it puts the other man in a very awkward position. The position is going to be still more awkward presently. Please go to your room."

"My dear lady, if my father knows that I am in the house——"

"He is not going to know that you are in the house, at least not for some little time. And when you see him it will be better not to say more than is necessary. Later on you will recognize what a friend I am to you."

"You are not showing it at present," Littimer said, desperately.

"The patient rarely sees any virtue in his medicine. Now, please, go to your room. I can hear the other man muttering and getting anxious down below. Now, if you approach that window again I am pretty certain that my revolver will go off. You see, I am an American, and we are so careless with such weapons. Please go to to your room at once."

"And if I refuse your ridiculous request?"

"You will not find my request in the least ridiculous. If you refuse I shall hold you up with my weapon and alarm the whole house. But I don't want to do that, for the sake of the other man. He is so very respectable, you know, and anything unconventional may be so awkward for him. Yes, it is just as I expected. He is coming up the ivy to investigate himself. Go!"

The revolver covered Littimer quite steadily. He could see into the blue rim, and he was conscious of strange cold sensations down his spine. A revolver is not a pretty thing at the best of times; it is doubly hazardous in the hands of a woman.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"My dear man, I want to do nothing with you. Only do as you are told and —there! The other man is coming up the ivy. He can't understand the light and you not returning. He imagines that you are looking in the wr[ong] place. Please go."

Littimer backed before the weapon backed until he was in the doorway. Suddenly the girl gave him a push, shut the door to, and turned the key in the lock. Almost at the same instant another figure loomed large in the window-frame.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Something bulky was struggling to get through the window. Half hidden in the shadow, Christabel watched with the deepest interest. If she had been afraid at first that sensation had entirely departed by this time. From the expression of her face she might have been enjoying the novel situation. It was certainly not without a suggestion of the farcical.

The burly figure contrived to squeeze through the narrow casement at length and stood breathing loudly in the corridor. It was not a pleasant sight that met Christabel's gaze—a big man with a white, set face and rolling eyes and a stiff bandage about his throat. Evidently the intruder was utterly exhausted, for he dropped into a chair and nursed his head between his hands.

"Now what has become of that fool?" he muttered. "Ah!"

He looked round him uneasily, but his expression changed as his eyes fell on the Rembrandt. He had the furtive look of a starving man who picks up a purse whilst the owner is still in sight. He staggered towards the picture and endeavored to take it gently from the support. He tried again and again, and then in a paroxysm of rage he tore at the frame-work.

"I guess that it can't be done," Christabel said, drawlingly. "See, stranger?"

Reginald Henson fairly gasped. As he turned round the ludicrous mixture of cunning and confusion, anger and vexatious alarm on his face caused the girl to smile.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered.

"I said it can't be done," the girl drawled, coolly. "Sandow couldn't do it. The frame is made of iron and it is fixed to the wall by four long stays. It's a neat job, though I say it myself; I persuaded Lord Littimer to have it done. And when I heard you two prowling about down there I was glad. I've got the other one safe."

"Oh, you've got the other one safe?" Henson said, blankly.

He would have liked to have burst out into a torrent of passion, only he recognized his position. The thing was shamefully funny. It was anything but nice for a man of his distinguished position to be detected in an act suspiciously like vulgar burglary. Still, there must be some plausible way out of the difficulty if he could only think of it. Only this girl with the quaint, pretty face and spectacles did not look in the least like a fool. He would have to try what blandishments would do.

"Are you aware who I am?" he asked, blandly.

"What does it matter? I've got the other one, and no doubt he will be identified by the police. If he doesn't say too much he may get off with a light sentence. It is quite easy to see that you are the greater scoundrel of the two."

"My dear young lady, do you actually take me for a burglar?"

There was a note of deep pain in Henson's voice. He had dropped into a chair again, with a feeling of utter weakness upon him. The girl's resolute mien and the familiar way in which she handled her revolver filled him with the deepest apprehension.

"I am a very old friend and relative of Lord Littimer's," he said.

"Oh, indeed. And is the other man a relative of Lord Littimer's also?"

"Oh, why, confound it, yes. The other man, as you call him, is Lord Littimer's only son."

Christabel glanced at Henson, not without admiration.

"Well, you are certainly a cool hand," she said. "You are two clever thieves who have come here for the express purpose of robbing Lord Littimer of one of his art treasures. I happen to catch one, and he immediately becomes the son of the owner of the place. I am so fortunate as to bag the other bird, and he resolves himself into a relative of my host's. And you really expect me to believe a Hans Andersen fairy story like that!"

"I admit that appearances are against me," Henson said, humbly. "But I am speaking the truth."

"Oh, indeed. Then why didn't you come in through the front door? The violent exercise you were taking just now must be dangerous to a man of your build!"

"I am afraid I shall have to make a clean breast of it," Henson said, with what he fondly imagined to be an engaging smile. "You may, perhaps, be aware that yonder Rembrandt has a history. It was stolen from its present owner once, and I have always said that it will be stolen again. Many a time have I urged Lord Littimer to make it secure."

"How grateful you should be to me [illegible] having done so!"

"Ah, you are cynical still, which is a bad thing for one so young and—er—charming. I came down here to see my very noble relative, and his son accompanied me. I came to try and make peace between father and son. But that is a family matter which, forgive me, I cannot discuss with a stranger. Our train was late, or we should have been here long ago. On reaching the castle it struck me as a good idea to give Lord Littimer a lesson as to his carelessness. My idea was to climb through the window, abstract the Rembrandt, and slip quietly into my usual bedroom here. Then in the morning, after the picture had been missed, I was going to tell the whole story. That is why Mr. Littimer entered this way and why I followed when I found that he had failed to return. It was a foolish thing to do, and the denouement has been most humiliating. I assure you that is all."

"Not quite," Christabel drawled. "There is something else."

"And what may that be, my dear young lady?"

"To tell your story to Lord Littimer before you sleep. That kind of romance may do for Great Britain, but it wouldn't make good family reading in the States."

"But, my dear young lady, I beg of you, implore you—"

"Come off the grass! I'm to let you go quietly to bed and retire myself, so that when morning arrives you will be missing together with as much plunder as you can carry away. No, sir."

Henson advanced angrily. His prudence had gone for the time. As he came down upon Christabel she raised her revolver and fired two shots in quick succession over Henson's shoulder. The noise went echoing and reverberating along the corridor like a crackling of thunder. A door came open with a click, then a voice demanded to know what was wrong.

"Now I guess the fat is in the fire," Christabel said.

Henson dropped into a chair and groaned. Lord Littimer, elegantly attired in a suit of silk pyjamas and carrying a revolver in his hand, came coolly down the corridor. A curious servant or two would have followed, but he waved them back crisply.

"Miss Lee," he said, with a faint, sarcastic emphasis, "and my dear friend and relative, Reginald Henson—Reginald, the future owner of Littimer Castle!"

"So he told me, but I wouldn't believe him," said Christabel.

"It is a cynical age," Littimer remarked. "Reginald, what does this mean?"

Henson shook his head uneasily.

"The young lady persisted in taking me for a burglar," he groaned.

"And why not?" Christabel demanded. "I was just going to bed when I heard voices in the forecourt below and footsteps creeping along. I came into the corridor with my revolver. Presently one of the men climbed up the ivy and got into the corridor. I covered him with my revolver and fairly drove him into a bedroom and locked him in."

"So you killed with both barrels?" Littimer cried, with infinite enjoyment.

"Then the other one came. He came to steal the Rembrandt."

"Nothing of the kind," the wretched Henson cried. "I came to give you a lesson, Lord Littimer. My idea was to get in through the window, steal the Rembrandt, and, when you had missed it, confess the whole story. My character is safe."

"Giddy," Littimer said, reproachfully. "You are so young, so boyish, so buoyant, Reginald. What would your future constituents have said had they seen you creeping up the ivy? They are a grave people who take themselves seriously. Egad, this would be a lovely story for one of those prying society papers. 'The Philanthropist and the Picture.' I've a good mind to send it to the Press myself."

Littimer sat down and laughed with pure enjoyment.

"And where is the other partridge?" he asked, presently.

Christabel seemed to hesitate for a moment, her sense of humor of the situation had departed. Her hand shook as she turned the key in the door.

"I am afraid you are going to have an unpleasant surprise," Henson said.

Littimer glanced keenly at the speaker. All the laughter died out of his eyes; his face grew set and stern as Frank Littimer emerged into the light.

"And what are you doing here?" he asked, hoarsely. "What do you expect to gain by taking part in a fool's trick like this? Did I not tell you never to show your face here again?"

The young man said nothing. He stood there looking down, dogged, quiet, like one tongue-tied. Littimer thundered out his question again. He crossed over, laying his hands on his son's shoulders and shaking him as a terrier might shake a rat.

"Did you come for anything?" he demanded. "Did you expect any mercy from——"

Frank Littimer shook off his grasp gently. He looked up for the first time.

"I expected nothing," he said. "I—I did not come of my own free will. I am silent now for the sake of myself and others. But the time may come—God knows it has been long delayed. For the present, I am bound in honor to hold my tongue."

He flashed one little glance at Henson, a long, angry glance. Littimer looked from one to the other in hesitation for a moment. The hard lines between his brows softened.

"Perhaps I am wrong," he muttered. "Perhaps there has been a mistake somewhere. And if ever I find out I have——pshaw, I am talking like a sentimental schoolgirl. Have I not had evidence strong as proof of Holy Writ that . . . Get out of my sight, your presence angers me. Go, and never let me see you again. Reginald, you were a fool to bring that boy here to-night. See him off the premises and fasten the door again."

"Surely," Christabel interfered, "surely at this time of the night——"

"You should be in bed," Littimer said, tartly. "My dear young lady, if you and I are to remain friends I must ask you to mind your own business. It is a dreadfully difficult thing for a woman to do, but you must try. You understand?"

Christabel was evidently putting a strong constraint on her tongue, for she merely bowed and said nothing. She had her own good reasons for the diplomacy of silence. Henson and Frank Littimer were disappearing in the direction of the staircase.

"I say nothing," Christabel said. "But at the same time I don't fancy I shall care very much for your distinguished friend Reginald Henson."

Littimer smiled. All his good humor seemed to have returned to him. Only the dark lines under his eyes were more accentuated.

"A slimy, fawning hound," he whispered. "A mean fellow. And the best of it is that he imagines that I ho[ld] the highest regard for him. Good night."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A little later, and Christabel sat before her looking-glass with her lovely hair about her shoulders. The glasses were gone and her magnificent eyes gleamed and sparkled.

"Good night's work," she said to herself with a smiling reflection. "Now the danger is passed and now that I am away from that dreadful house I feel a different being. Strange what a difference a few hours has made! And I hardly need my disguise—even at this moment I believe that Enid would hardly recognize me. She will be pleased to know that her telegram came in so usefully. Well, here I am, and I don't fancy that anybody will recognize Christabel Lee and Chris Henson as one and the same person."

She sat there brushing her hair and letting her thoughts drift along over the events of the evening. Reginald Henson would have felt less easy in his mind had he known what those thoughts were. Up to now that old scoundrel hugged himself with the delusion that nobody besides Frank Littimer and himself knew that the second copy of "The Crimson Blind" had passed into Bell's possession.

But Chris was quite aware of that fact. And Chris as Chris was supposed by Henson to be dead and buried, and was, therefore, in a position to play her cards as she pleased. Up to now it seemed to her that she had played them very well indeed. A cipher telegram from Longdean had warned her that Henson was coming there, had given her more than a passing hint what Henson required, and her native wit had told her why Henson was after the Rembrandt.

Precisely why he wanted the picture she had not discovered yet. But she knew that she would before long. And she knew also that Henson would try and obtain the print without making his presence at Littimer Castle obvious. He was bringing Frank Littimer with him, and was therefore going to use the younger man in some cunning way.

That Henson would try and get into the castle surreptitiously Chris had felt from the first. Once he did so the rest would be easy, as he knew exactly where to lay his hand on the picture. Therefore he could have no better time than the dead of night. If his presence were betrayed he could treat the matter aside as a joke and trust to his native wit later on. If he had obtained the picture by stealth he would have discreetly disappeared, covering his tracks as he retreated.

Still, it had all fallen out very fortunately. Henson had been made to look ridiculous; he had been forced to admit that he was giving Littimer a lesson over the Rembrandt, and though the thing appeared innocent enough on the surface, Chris was sanguine that later on she could bring this up in evidence against him.

"So far so good," she told herself. "Watch, watch, watch, and act when the time comes. But it was hard to meet Frank to-night and be able to say nothing. And how abjectly miserable he looked! Well, let us hope that the good time is coming."

To be continued.

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