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The Middle of Things

BY J. S. FLETCHER

Author of "Black Money," "Scarhaven Keep," etc.

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Cont'd.)

"He's gone down there," Millwaters said. "Now, Mr. Perkwite, if you please, we'll separate. You take the right of that street—I'll take the left. Keep a lookout for my gentleman's Homburg hat and keep the tail of your eye on me, too."

Cave's headgear was easily followed down the squalid street until its owner finally turned into a shabby thoroughfare. Then the clerk hurried across the road, attracted Perkwite's attention, and whispered two or three words:

"Wait—by the street-corner!"

Perkwite pulled up, and Millwaters went down the dismal street. Presently he came back.

"Ran him to earth—for the time being, anyway," he said. "He's gone into a surgery down there—a Dr. Martincoole's."

"Well?" demanded Perkwite. "What next? You know best, Millwaters."

The clerk jerked a thumb down the side of the dismal street on which they were standing.

"There's a public house down there," he said, "almost opposite this surgery. Better sip in there and look quietly out."

Perkwite followed his companion down the street to the tavern.

"Hang about here and watch," whispered the clerk.

Some time had passed, and Millwaters had been obliged to repeat an order for bottled Bass before anything took place in the street outside. Suddenly he touched his companion's elbow.

"Here's a taxicab coming along and slowing up for somewhere about here," he whispered. "And—Lord, if there aren't two ladies in it—in a spot like this! And when it's on the move, excitedly. "Do you see 'em, Mr. Perkwite? The young un's Miss Wickham, who came to our office about this Ashton affair."

Perkwite drew away from the window, pulling Millwaters by the sleeve.

"Careful!" he said. "There's something seriously wrong here, Millwaters! What's Miss Wickham being brought here for? See, they've gone into that surgery, and the car's going off. I'm going out to the police!"

Millwaters put out a detaining hand. "I'll tell you a better plan than that, sir," advised Millwaters. "Find the nearest telephone-box and call Mr. Carless, tell him what you've seen and get him to come down and bring somebody with him."

Perkwite ran off up the street and toward the Whitechapel Road, anxiously seeking for a telephone booth. Twenty minutes had elapsed by the time he got back to the dismal street. At its corner he encountered Millwaters, lounging about hands in pockets. Millwaters wagged his head.

"Here's another queer go!" he said. "There's been another arrival at Number 23—not five minutes since. Viner came. Rang at Number 23 and was let in."

"By George, Millwaters," Perkwite exclaimed, "what if this is some infernal plant—trap—something of that sort? Lord man, Miss Wickham may be in real peril!"

"Viner's in there," Millwaters reminded him. "Wait!"

And Perkwite waited, chafing. Suddenly a car came along and from it sprang Mr. Carless, Lord Ellingham, and two men in plain clothes, at the sight of whom Perkwite heaved a huge sigh of intense relief.



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was alone in his office when Viner and his companion were shown in.

"Well, Mr. Viner!" he said. "You were right and I was wrong. It wasn't that young fellow Hyde who killed Mr. Ashton."

"But do you know who did?" asked Viner eagerly.

"I do," answered Drillford.

"Who, then?" exclaimed Viner.

"He's in the cells at the back, now," said Drillford. "Dr. Cartelyon, of your square!"

Viner stared silently at Drillford as if he scarcely comprehended his meaning.

"Cartelyon's the man!" repeated Drillford. "And it all came about quite suddenly, this afternoon. Through your aunt, Mr. Viner—Miss Penkridge. Smart lady, sir!"

"My aunt!" exclaimed Viner. "Why, how on earth—"

"She went round to Bigglesforth, the stationer, and made some inquiries. Bigglesforth, when he'd got to know the main features of the case, was willing enough to help, and your aunt immediately brought him round here to see me. He told me that he'd supplied stationery to Dr. Cartelyon for some time, and he'd no doubt that the paper and envelope described by Miss Penkridge was some which he'd specially secured for the Doctor. But he told something far more important: Six months ago, Bigglesforth sold Cartelyon a second-hand typewriter. The machine was perfect in all respects, but that one of the letters was defective—broken. That was the same letter, Mr. Viner, which was defective in the document which Cave showed to you gentlemen. I was so absolutely certain of the truth of Miss Penkridge's theory that I got a number of our best men—detectives, of course—and we went round to Cartelyon's house back and front. We made straight for Cartelyon's surgery, and we were on him and the other two, Cave and Mrs. Killenhal, before they'd time to move, literally. It was all an affair of a moment—and, of course, they saw it was all up. Mrs. Killenhal and Cave at once denounced Cartelyon as the mainspring, and the woman got me aside and whispered that Cartelyon actually killed Ashton himself, unaided, as he let him out of his back door into Lonsdale Passage!"

"So—that's settled!" exclaimed Viner.

When Mr. Carless, Mr. Pawle and Lord Ellingham arrived Viner drew them aside to show them the documents found in Cartelyon's possession. These established beyond a doubt Miss Wickham's right to the title, Countess of Ellingham.

"Here is the full story of the case," said Carless who was glancing over the papers. "He must have been a very good business man, this unfortunate Ashton, poor fellow! But what's this he's put at the end, as a sort of note?"

"Since arriving in England and making inquiries in London and about Marketstoke and Ellingham as to the character and abilities of the young man who is the present holder of the title and estates which are by right my ward's, I have had considerable doubt as to whether or not I should exercise the discretion extended to me by my father. Having nobody of my own, I have left her all my fortune, which is a handsome one, and she will be a rich woman. The young man seems to be an estimable and promising young fellow, and I am much exercised in my mind as to whether it might not be best if Cartelyon and I kept the secret to ourselves until our deaths."

Mr. Carless read this passage aloud, and then snote the desk heavily with his hand.

"There's the secret of the murder!" he exclaimed. "You see, gentlemen, Ashton, one holder of the secret, was honest; the other, Cartelyon, was a rogue. Ashton wanted nothing for himself; Cartelyon wanted to profit. Cartelyon saw that by killing Ashton he alone would have the secret; he evidently got two accomplices who were necessary to him, and he meant, by suppressing certain facts and enlarging on others, to palm off an impostor who—mark this!—could be squared by one hundred thousand pounds! Oh, a bad fellow! Keep him tight, Mr. Inspector, keep him tight!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SETTLEMENT.

Mr. Carless took Lord Ellingham's arm. "You know what this really means—to you?" he said. "You are willing to give up everything to Miss Wickham?"

Lord Ellingham laughed. "Of course!" he answered.

"Very well," said Mr. Carless. "Then—the question is—who is to tell her?"

The two lawyers and Viner looked from one another to Lord Ellingham—but Lord Ellingham was already eager and responsive.

"Gentlemen!" he said quickly. "I claim that right! If I am to abdicate in favor of another, let me have at any rate the privilege of first greeting the new sovereign!"

The gathering repaired to Viner's house, where they waited in the library while Viner went away to the drawing-room and presently brought Miss Wickham back with him. She looked from one solicitor to the other with something of a smile.

"More mystery?" she asked. Mr. Carless, with a courtly bow, took the girl's hand.

"My dear young lady," he said, "there is, this time, a mystery to be explained. And—allow me to hand you into this room—there is a young gentleman in there who will explain it, all of it, a thousand times better than we old fogies possibly could!"

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in connection with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' course of training to young women, having the required education, and desiring of becoming nurses. This Hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The nurse receives uniforms of the School, a monthly allowance and traveling expenses to and from New York. For further information write the Superintendent.

He closed the door on her, and turned to Mr. Pawle.

"I'll trouble you for a pinch of that old snuff of yours, Pawle!" he said. "Um—dear me! What extraordinary moments we do pass through! Viner my dear fellow, you're a book-collector, I know. To—er—pass the time, show me some of your treasures."

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, thirty minutes, went by, while Viner showed some of his most treasured possessions in the way of print and binding to the two old lawyers. And then, the door of the inner room was opened, and the two appeared on the threshold. And they were holding each other's hands.

"Gentlemen, our very good friends," said Lord Ellingham, "it is only right that we should take you into our confidence at once. I absolutely insist on resigning—what is not mine—to my cousin, the Countess of Ellingham. And—not in any return, gentlemen!—she has promised to give me something which I shall prize far more than any title or any estate—you understand? And now, if Mr. Viner will excuse me, there are just a few more things we have to say to each other."

He drew the girl back into the room and closed the door, and the three men, once more left to themselves, solemnly shook hands with each other.

(The End.)



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Indianapolis Market.

Behind heaped fruits in a jumbled row, Stand Josephine, Angeline, Antonio, Marie, Raphael, Mimi small, And tiny bamboo—a luscious stall—Laughing, gay, Neapolitan Children of Tony, the market man. Their skins are touched with the same warm gold

That gilded the oranges; their curls hold The purple sheen of grapes that grow in Italy's vineyards; their lips glow Vivid as ripe pomegranates do; And the veins on their temples are lapis blue

As the sky at Naples is in spring— The look of them's a singing thing— Their speech is music—hush, a breeze Stirs distant, dark-leaved olive trees, And boatmen's songs drift off the Bay, Lifting, lovely, far away. Warmth and laughter, melody, Color, romance—Italy! Their names are a poem—Josephine, Maria, Raphael, Angeline.

—Ethel Arnold Tilden, in "Quest and Acceptance."

Invitations.
Archie—"See how I am run after; all these invitations!"
Friend—"Good gracious! All invitations? Invitations to what?"
Archie—"To call and settle accounts."

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Friend: "I see you've been buying some new Table Linen"

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Larkspur.

But yesterday I looked upon the lot,—
This clump of green-gray stalks stood empty.

Spanning the intervening hours
Some chalice filled with heaven's blue

Pours out,—
Lo! the stalks are sprayed
With flower-cups

Of every shade of bine:
The blue my mother's eyes wear
When she looks at you;

Flax—sun hazed;
The gorgeous turquoise of a dragon-
fly;

Hills, far distant.

Ah! you and I well know
The hue of every
Steepled larkspur's eye.

—Gertrude S. McCalmont.

Minard's Liniment for burns.

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Nurse—"Willie, dear, don't you want to come to see the sweet, little sister a stork brought you?"

Willie—"No, I don't. I want to see the stork."

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