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Milton	Wm. Panton	29	26	28	9	24	25	10 a.m.
Oakville	R. Palmer	6	3	5	3	11	8	10 a.m.
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Milton	J. Matthews	13	11	13	8	16	11	10 a.m.
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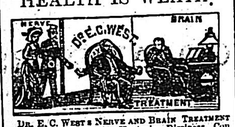

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138 Yonge St., Toronto.

VANITY HARDWARE.

By ALAN MUIR.

CHAPTER XXII.

TUMBLEDOWN FARM IN FLAMES.

What followed was dreadful indeed. Hardware flung off the detectives with a fury

Hardware flung off the detectives.

which caused these two strong men to fall back like weakly boys. A narrow twisted flight of stairs led to the room above, and these stairs were shut off from the room by a wooden door. The fugitive opened this door, sprung through, and shut it upon himself with a crash; and they heard a bolt drawn, which signified that he had fastened himself in. And then, for the first time, the detectives seemed to recover their presence of mind. It takes time to tell all this, but I should say that ten seconds before the old grumbling antiquity was peeping over his newspaper unsuspected. Had he not misunderstood the officer all would have been safe now.

The detectives, I say, recovered their presence of mind. The chief ran outside, and shouted to the watchers that they must look after the windows, and then both set themselves to break open the staircase door. The big man hurled himself at it, and the old wood gave way with a crash, and through the splintered panels the way upstairs lay open; only a man, while working his way upward, could have been shot like a rat. The detective hesitated a moment, as the bravest man might, and immediately a powerful odor filled the lower room. Meanwhile the detective, looking up, saw Hardware standing at the top of the stairs, holding in one hand a lighted candle and a revolver, and in the other a huge drinking glass.

"Come down here!" the detective shouted. "If you were fifty men you can't escape. Drop the pistol, and don't put a rope round your neck for the sake of another quarter hour by yourself in that room."

Cool language, all things considered.

Hardware answered with a roar of laughter.

"Come down!" he cried. "No, thank you; I am master here. Come up, you. The way is narrow, and you are behind enough. Still, if I blow candles, I may miss you; I may not make your wife a widow; come along and try."

"Now, my good man," the officer said, with a reassuring sly, but watching Hardware narrowly, and making ready to dart back if he should fire, "you are a clever fellow, and you *know* the game's up. You have played well, but you *know* the game's up. Don't be a madman."

"A madman! a madman!" roared Hardware, catching at the word with another terrible laugh. "Come up-stairs, mister; up into the madman's room. Don't be afraid of catching the complaint. I promise you it will be safe enough before your foot is on the top step. Up to the madman's room, and let's have a dance."

The officer hesitated.

"Have your good health!" shouted Hardware. "May you never die until you taste blue plum. Your health; my man! your health! your very good health!"

The detective was meditating how he could break his way through, or whether he could coax his man down, when Hardware, having drained his tumbler, hurled it savagely at the officer. Quick as the detective was, he saved himself only by a hair's breadth; and the glass was flung with such fury that it scarcely made a crash as it shivered upon the floor.

"Your health for forty years!" roared Hardware, with his diabolical laugh, "and after that, your lifetime! Walk upstairs and have a chat with the old man!"

In the moment while the officer drew back Hardware must have carried out his awful scheme, for when the detective looked up the stairs again all was raging flame. Hardware had deluged the place with kerosene, or some inflammable liquid of the sort, and had set the whole on fire. At the top he stood as before, looking now like some gigantic fiend.

"Come up to the madman's room!" he yelled again. "Hot flame, cold lead!" all ready! Up to the madman's room!"

"Water! water!" the detective shouted to his companions; "water here, or the whole house will be afire!"

Another roar of laughter came from above.

"Won't you come up! won't you join me in a glass! I am going to have another. A glass with the madman! a glass in the fire with the madman!"

Then they heard another loud crash, the meaning of which was evident the next instant. Hardware must have thrown a great glass vessel down the stairs filled with kerosene, for immediately after the crash a stream of liquid flame ran into the room. Another crash followed, and another, and now the room began to swim in fire.

Until this moment no one had thought of wounded Vanity; and there she lay on the ground. But now the flame, running across the floor, had just set fire to her dress, when the detective caught her up in his arms and dragged her out of the house. Indeed, the whole party had only time to rush out before the fire filled the room.

And, no sooner were they in the little garden than Hardware flung open the window and glared out upon the group with a face from which every expression except triumph, defiance and hatred had vanished. He held his revolver in his hand.

"Five chambers!" he shouted out, "and only one wanted within door. Which shall I have first?"

He glared round wildly and saw Gracious Me, and his face lit up with a diabolical recognition.

"Ah, my friend! my little friend Peeping Tom! Why not begin with Peeping Tom! Let the ugliest in the company be helped first."

He pointed his revolver at wretched Gracious Me, who was too frightened to run away, and fell on his knees pleading for life with fearful energy. Meanwhile the smoke began to rush out of the window in clouds, and half hid the awful face of Hardware. But he roared afresh with laughter, and did not fire at first, seeming to enjoy the terror of the wretch below. How many lives that little . . . saved no man can say.

"Let the ugliest be helped first!" cried Hardware again. "Oho, Peeping Tom! Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what somebody sends you!"

Little Gracious, paralyzed with agony and fear, poured out his entreaties for mercy, and Hardware answered with that awful laugh, which seemed defiance of God and man.

Crack went the pistol, and down, without a sound, dropped little Gracious Me, and then, from the angle of the house, they heard a yell of rage from Hardware, for, in that instant, his other victims had got out of reach, and the smoke began to roll out in volumes, and, in less time than it takes to pen these lines, the whole of old Tumbledown Farm was in flames. And yet (to count the time again) it was not more than five minutes since that old blind, deaf, decrepit figure had been groping over his newspaper in the corner. But Hardware's plan were all laid long before. It was plain that the man was resolved never to be taken alive. The summer air grew dark with smoke, and every room in the Farm was full of fire.

But within the most profound silence prevailed. None were able to tell whether or not Hardware had fired another shot. He must have done so, for the last that was ever seen or known of him was when he discharged his revolver at Gracious Me. The detectives made some pretense of trying to enter the burning house, but they soon abandoned the attempt. Willie Snow dashed down the hill to Hampton for assistance, but what was assistance good for? Why, in ten minutes, somebody whispered with salon lips that the fire was going out.

CHAPTER XXIII.

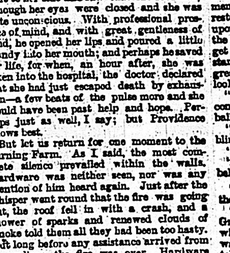
POOR VANITY HARDWARE.

For a few moments, in that wild and hurried excitement, Vanity was forgotten. She lay upon a grassy bank, and none asked if she were alive or dead. But the detectives went to her side and saw that she breathed, although her eyes were closed and she was quite unconscious. With professional promptness of mind, and with great gentleness of hand, he opened her lips and poured a little brandy into her mouth; and perhaps he saved her life, for when, an hour after, she was taken into the hospital, the doctor declared that she had just escaped death by exhaustion—a few beats of the pulse more and she would have been past help and hope. Perhaps just as well, I say; but Providence knows best.

But let us return for one moment to the burning Farm. As I said, the most complete silence prevailed within the walls. Hardware was neither seen, nor was any mention of him heard again. Just after the blaze was round that the fire was going out, the roof fell in with a crash, and a shower of sparks and renewed clouds of smoke told them all they had been too hasty. It long before the engines arrived from the village, the fire was over. Hardware had made elaborate preparations for a conflagration; and the fire ran from room to room, and seemed to meet foul everywhere. Its rapidity was equaled by its heat and fury; for when the ruins were searched, there was absolutely nothing but a charred mass. Within the four blackened walls of old Tumbledown Farm nothing was left but thin ashes. All that raging flames could consume had vanished. It seemed as if you could carry away what remained of the furniture and other property in one small coal-scuttle. And there the old walls stood that day in the blue summer air, and there they stood for long enough in the balmy sunshine and in dark winter storms, like the monument of a blasted life, saying to us all that the way of transgressors is hard.

As Willie Snow came back with help a strange thing occurred. At a turn of the pleasant lane, under a shady tree where he and Vanity many a time had stood, there met him a party of bearers carrying his former sweetheart down to the hospital. Now, I don't by any means want to pile horror upon horror, and as Willie told it me there was no horror here; for she lay white and calm, beautiful beyond words, every trace of evil gone, the sweetest repose upon her face. He thought she was already dead. Why for her it, with such a face, so still, so sad, so full of whispers of forgiveness and peace beyond—Oh, well if, with such a face, she had in very truth passed out of this wicked world that she knew so well.

"Is she quite dead?" Willie gasped.



"Is she quite dead?" Willie gasped.

"No, but going fast enough," some one replied.

"God spare her life!" the young man cried. (For, you see, he could not but remember old times, married as he was.) "Oh, God, hear my prayer, and spare her life!"

Under the excitement of the time, I suppose, the detectives cast off their silent ways, and answered questions freely. Hardware was "wanted"; that everybody guessed. Wanted for what? Part has been told already. About two years ago there had been a most extraordinary jewel robbery at Birmingham. From "information received" that their cautious way of putting it—that is their cautious way of telling the police were led to believe that a man named Barnitt had been connected with the robbery, and this man they traced into connection with old Hardware and his daughter.

Now, in this place I had better relate what came out afterward, but was not at the time known to the police. Hardware was of respectable family, and had even been at Cambridge for one or two terms. But he turned to evil ways, drank, gambled and took to the race course. Subsequently it was found that he had "reformed," and had married the daughter of a clergyman. Ladies with small fortunes, beware of penniless gentlemen who have reformed! No sooner was Hardware in possession of this poor creature's little bit of money than he blazed off in every sort of riot and excess. One daughter was born to them, and the mother stuck to him through all his vicissitudes and prodigality. Barnitt had early in life been celebrated as an amateur actor, and now, in his life as an adventurer, he took to the stage and became a small manager. So he lived on for several years. His wife died; his daughter, whose beauty and vivacity were well known, went upon the stage, and for a time father and daughter did tolerably well. The last that was heard of him in that capacity was as a wooden theatre in Carlisle, where he was playing in the "Lady of Lyons," Miss Vanity by, under the name of Mabel Darrell, playing Pauline. After that, the two vanished, and when they reappeared, Miss Hardware had an aged father, very decrepit, but of excellent character, rather prone than otherwise, you observe, and particular about the ministry he sat under. Under this disguise throwing it off artfully and by slight, he had committed several burglaries, and left the police nowhere at all. It is fair to say that there never was any proof that his daughter was connected with his crimes, or even knew of them; but must she not have asked where the money came from?

Barnitt, or Hardware, had not only been in several burglaries, but there was little doubt that his was the hand which had shot one of the Birmingham police, who had tried to capture him. The detectives fully believed that Hardware—or Barnitt, rather—had learned that the police were on his track, and their "theory" was that he intended to set fire to the Farm, and to lead them to the belief that he and his daughter had perished in the flames; which would have been very easy, you observe, and might have been carried out by night. Off he would have gone to Spain or America with his pockets full of cat's-eyes and diamonds and such. But, clever as the scheme was, you observe, he could not accomplish it, for after all, as we said above, the way of transgressors is hard. Which applies even to the cleverest!

But will you mind my telling you one comic bit? I do not wish you to say old Dr. Book is nothing but a horror-maker. Yet perhaps you will say there is not much of comic in what follows, but can a man give more than he has got? You can't take a shilling out of your purse if it is not in, and you can't find fun in a story unless it has been put there first. However, perhaps you will smile over this, if you don't exactly laugh.

Gracious Me lay stretched on the grass, where he had fallen. At last, when the excitement had somewhat subsided, they went to examine the dead body, and were surprised to observe that the eyes remained open. Still more the observers were astonished to see the said eyes blinking in a curious way at a particular blade of grass which stood erect close to the nose of the corpse.

In short, examination led to the conclusion that Gracious Me had not yet breathed his last. Still closer examination suggested the hope that the wound might not be mortal, after all; and that with care and nourishment little Gracious might recover and be restored to his friends and the public. Hereupon, after several terrified inquiries as to the exact posture of affairs, Gracious tried to get on his feet, and the compassionate bystanders raised him and propped him up with great humanity. After which Gracious looked round with a stupid expression.

"Where were you hit?" inquired one of the compassionate persons.

"Which side did the bullet enter?"

"Neither side," said little Gracious, trembling.

"Then it lodged in the breast?"

"Not exactly," Gracious answered. "I believe it went over my head."

"Then you were not hit at all?" exclaimed the good Samaritan.

"You see, this is how it occurred," little Gracious said, recovering his spirits sometime. "I was here, and he was—there. He was going to fire, when it struck me—I can't tell why—that if I was to drop down, do you see, and lie quite still, the affair might blow over. So I did. Hit! bless you, no! Not within a yard of me!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISS AND I TALK THINGS OVER.

After all, the story of Tumbledown Farm must end with a sigh, and not a smile. Vanity Hardware was taken to the hospital, where for seven weeks she lay between life and death. Suddenly she began to mend. Then one morning, when some kind person called to ask after her, the reply was she had gone. Where? Nobody knew. Neither doctor nor chaplain could tell anything except that she was gone. Whipped off, I sky, like the brazen woman she was, without thanks or farewell, and no doubt she is now luring somebody into mischief with her wicked, beautiful eyes.

So the story ends. Think of that selfish, heartless, scheming young woman, and how she fascinated Willie Snow, and how near she went to ruining him! Observe, further, that the young man is now living respectably, with a reputable wife and two young children who promise to grow up credits to the village. Then you may be disposed to receive the moral of my novel of Tumbledown Farm, which is sound, if homely:

If ever a young man is in doubt what course he should take in life, being pulled by different reasons first this way and then that, let him ask which is the respectable course, and take that, and he will do well.

Look at the proof. Willie Snow is well and happy and prosperous to-day, and his wicked sweetheart is just where she ought to be—out of sight and out of mind!

As I read that last word, young miss turned to me. Until now she had looked out of window, which was a way she had.

"Is that all?"

"That is all, miss," I answered; "enough, too, I think."

Miss only turned to the window again and shook her head sadly.

"It was a sorrowful end for poor Vanity!"

"Sin brings sorrow, miss," I said; "when chapter first is sin, chapter last is sure to be sorrow."

She did not notice that; her heart seem xl full—full to the very brim.

Miss stood a long time, looking out of window again, and at last, to my great surprise, I saw a tear run down her cheek.

"Oh, miss," I said, "don't waste honest grief on such as her."

"But," she answered, in a broken voice, "I wanted Vanity to turn and live. I believed that after all she would turn and live."

"Ah, miss, Vanity was always on the downward road; now slow, now fast; now laughing, now crying; always on the downward road."

"Not always, doctor; Willie Snow could have saved her at the first."

"How could the young man have managed that, miss?"

"By loving her through all."

I shook my head.

"Oh, doctor," she said, answering me, so to speak, "do you understand a woman's heart?"

"Miss," said I, "I don't think I do—not altogether."

"Because, doctor, in the lowest depth of every woman's heart there lies love. Love will save a woman when nothing else can. If Willie had but loved her on, Vanity would have been saved. I am sure she would have been saved!"

"But you see, miss," said I—for this point I could not yield—"Willie Snow was a respectable young man. It was not his place to be saving such as Vanity Hardware. He is married, miss, respectably, and has two children and a steady, thrifty wife, and a good income and good prospects."

"And the woman for whom he promised to live and die—oh, doctor, I cannot bear to think of it. I wish you had never told me the story at all."

"Well, miss," said I—and I confess that I sighed as I spoke—"perhaps I ought at the beginning to have warned you what was coming at—the end."

Yes, I spoke the word. But I was never so mistaken in my life. The story of Vanity Hardware was not more than half told. Strange facts came to light years after, and the novel cannot even be "concluded in our next."

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

WRITER TO DIE OR LIVE?

Since novel writing began, was there ever a story which, having been ended honestly and in good faith, all things duly wound up, should of its own persistency get off again? I had written "The End" truly believed that the last of the story had been told—yet here I sit, this sunny August morning, pen in hand, and my mind full of the most extraordinary sequel.

Why should I not give you an odd example? Suppose, strolling one summer day in Hampton churchyard, you read on a tombstone, "Here lie the mortal remains of Dr. John Book, who lived in the parish, boy and man, for a matter of sixty-five years, more or less." Presently (after delivering yourself of a sigh for said acquaintance you walk down the street. There, sauntering along the shady side in a new coat and hat, you must your humble servant. That would be a fine surprise, I take it. Now here, you observe, is the novel of Tumbledown Farm, which ended July 31, 1884, and was buried, tombstoned and forgotten; and behold Tumbledown Farm on foot again, trudging down the long lane of life, that seems to have many a turning, but never an end.

But how shall I tell the remainder of the story? Shall I tell it in the order of its occurrence to myself? or shall I, turn the narrative into the order of time, leaving you to guess how and when each bit came to my knowledge? I shall tell it in the order of time, and not trouble myself or you with explanations, which any one who thinks for an instant can supply for himself; while those who don't think, you observe, will never take the question.

Just one word in your ear. The first part of this story, I told you, was written by me, assisted by miss. Now, if the whole truth were told, this second part ought to be headed, "Written by miss, assisted by me;" for most of the facts following reached me through my young lady, and are related in her own pretty language. If you could just see her fine rounded handwriting of some leaves, and the crooked, crabbed pothooks and hangers of other leaves, you would feel no surprise when one paragraph reads like old Dr. Book's prime and the other like Miss Millicent Harvey's drawing room. Have I said enough?

Vanity had been dangerously wounded. The ball had entered her side, and the doctors had great trouble in extracting it. The patient suffered much; and from weakness she dropped into fever, and lay flushed and moaning and wandering in her mind right up to the time of the falling of the leaves. The physicians said she would die, in all probability; but she rallied, and with a weary heartsick look upon her face, turned, as it were, up the welcome road leading back from still death to the life that now is.

A lady was nursing in the hospital who I have tried to call a nun—only I believe now the saying is "sister," in consequence of belonging to our church, and not to the Papists. She was, in point of fact, a Puseyite. This lady had lived a life, being myself a member of the Protestant religion, and not caring for new-fangled ways during the matter of, let us say, five or ten years which I have to bra. Whether the Popish gown and bonnet made the face look brighter by contrast or not, I can't say; but, without a doubt, the lady was pleasant to see, providing, you observe, that you looked at her and not at what she wore. I never saw that woman out of temper. I never saw her in a hurry. Never saw her without a fine, healthy, hearty smile, as if, to put it in my way, she had eaten a good breakfast, and was ready for the day's work. And they do tell me that sometimes when there was a bad case, or one of great suffering, her goodness was uncommon, and that the very touch of her hand on a throbbing forehead seemed to cool it. The prayers she would say were wonderful; enough to make one think that all parties might find themselves right when they got right up to the doors of the good place. For all that, I, myself, prefer maintaining the Protestant religion.

This lady, then, was at the hospital when Miss Vanity was brought in, and she heard a lot of the awful stories and really she seemed to be drawn to the young woman by