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1 Milton	Wm. Fanton	27	29	25	13	28	30	10 a.m.
2 Oakville	R. Palmer	11	7	9	11	12	7	10 a.m.
3 Georgetown	L. Grant	17	13	15	4	18	13	9.30 a.m
4 Acton	J. Matthews	19	15	17	"	20	15	10 a.m.
5 Campbellville	S. R. Lister	6	2	4	"	7	2	9 30 "
6 Burlington	Jas. Robinson	10	6	8	10	11	6	11 "

General Sessions of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury, Tuesday 12th June, and 11th December, at 10 a.m.

County Court Sittings, without Jury, Tuesday, 3rd April, and 2nd October, at 10 a. m.

County Court Sittings—Formerly Terms—Monday, 2nd January, 2nd April, 2nd July, and 1st October at 10 a.m.

Audit of Criminal Justice Accounts—Tuesday, 3rd January, 3rd April, 3rd July & 2nd October.

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DICK'S SWEETHEART.

By the Author of "MILDRED TREVANION," "LOTS, LORD BERRESFORD," "PETULIA," "HOLLY BANK," ETC.

It is a week later; six whole days have grown and shrunk and died before men's gaze since first the terrible sense of loss unspeakable, the knowledge of desolation fell with crushing violence upon Miss Maturin and Bouverie. She has gone from them—the one they loved—gone for ever! Already their belief in her possible recovery grows languid; hope is almost at an end.

First there had been an incredulous amazement when her room was found vacant, and the hours came and went without bringing a sign from her who filled all their thoughts to overflowing. The little lace-edged bed had not been slept in—that they knew at once; the satin coverlet of palest blue was stretched out calmly, unwrinkled by lightest touch; her hat and cloak were missing. But all this was as nothing. She had probably passed a sleepless night, torn by distressful thought, and had gone out of the house in the early morning to clearer sad brain and refresh her tired spirit with the sweet satisfying dew. She would return presently and explain, and be happier doubtless for her slow night's communing, and stronger to bear up beneath this ill that had fallen upon her.

But she did not return; and, when morn had worn into afternoon, and that again had given place to signs of coming night, great fear smote upon Miss Maturin's heart.

"O kind, kind Being who ruleth over all, subdue and kill this torturing fear, and grant that her sweet body still holds within it the life we know and prize!" So she prayed.

Again her room was searched, in the hope that it might afford some clue to her disappearance; but even the orthodox few words always to be found upon the dressing-table of the newly flown were absent here, and there was literally nothing to give the mind food for further search. The servants, only a degree less interested than the principals in this sad drama, went about softly on tiptoe, whispering to each other at unfrequented turns in the many corridors, with faces pale and sympathetic.

As night fell upon that terrible day that rose upon Dolores's flight, Miss Maturin grew distracted. But Bouverie, who had not left her all day, except to wander wildly through the woods and such quaint spots as had drawn Dolores towards them in her careless wanderings by stream and lawn, had still professed himself passionately certain of her return.

But, as the dying hours waned and faded, and still no tidings of her reached them, Bouverie too became half maddened, and, rushing forth, penetrated far into the dense woodlands, seeking her who he could not yet believe had finally deserted him.

The morning light saw him at the railway-station; but the clerk at the ticket-office could tell him nothing. He had been absent yesterday, unavoidably detained by illness, and the young man who had filled his place was now many miles away, returned to his own post. He was not much of a young man—no persicuity, no nothing—so he ran on.

But Bouverie cared for none of these things; he thought only of what was next to be done. Could the young man be telegraphed for? Certainly. He was telegraphed for, but could not come until the next day; so that a whole valuable twenty-four hours was lost.

But when he did come he knew something. Yes, he remembered the young lady perfectly well—a young lady with a gray ulster and a face as white as death. She was small—short, he called it—with very fair hair. She seemed quite composed when asking for her ticket, but sad-like; and she—

For what place had she taken her ticket? For London. Oh, yes, there could be no doubt about that! He remembered it as clearly as though she took it only an hour ago. He had wondered a good deal at the time about the fact of a young lady starting for town at such an hour. But she was evidently a swell, and swells are for ever doing something "contrairy," and are not therefore to be wondered at at all.

Would he know her again? Why, surely, yes, unless his eyes played him false! Being shown a photograph of Dolores, he at once declared it was "herself, and no mistake," the young lady in the gray ulster with the sad face! When he had said this, Bouverie had fallen back a bit. She was alive then! Alive! He drew a deep breath, and grew even a shade paler. Emotion overcame him. A woman in the same circumstances would have burst into tears. But such poor comfort was denied him. To know even this however—that she still lived, although parted from them—it was a most blessed relief.

What horrible thoughts had been his during those past interminable hours he never divulged to any man.

And now his search for Dolores was begun in earnest. Even the vastness and vagueness of the field of labour did not dishearten him. London—that huge reservoir for all sorts and conditions of men—how should he find her there?

CHAPTER XXVII.

Day after day passes, and still there is no result. It is now the seventh day since Dolores's flight; and, tired and worn both in body and spirit, Bouverie enters the drawing-room at Greylands. He has returned from a second unsuccessful search in London, and feels despondency making its prey of him as he quietly sinks heavily into a chair.

"No news again?" says Miss Maturin, rising unconsciously from her seat. There is no expectancy in her voice, only a mute protest against the oviliness of her fate.

She looks old and thoroughly broken down. No one but he or she who has undergone it can fully appreciate the absolute horror of inactive suspense, the wearing anxiety, the enforced quietude, the turmoil of flying thoughts linked to the trembling body so eager for pursuit, yet so cruelly compelled to be inert.

All this Miss Maturin has learned to endure; but the study of it has told upon her. Whilst Bouverie has been hurrying hither and thither with wild and restless persistency, she has had to sit impatiently at home waiting for what may never come, watching each day fading into night, each night brightening into day, without bringing her any hope. If she too were to quit Greylands and enter on the search, how would the end be? What if the child should return in her absence, and find no one there to receive or welcome her?

Detectives have been employed—nay, are still and will be ever employed, until such time as hope shall be proved to be without foundation. They have been singularly kind and sympathetic, touched no doubt by the genuine grief of those who have employed them. They have now and then even held out hopes; but London certainly was troublesome, deep—very deep. No knowing what dodge the party might be up to when the lair was London! Eventually no doubt they would come upon her tracks; but the field was wide. It was an artful thought. Still there was hope, *et-cetera*. It was poor comfort, and the word "artful" went to Miss Maturin's soul.

She advances now towards Bouverie, looking jaded and heart-sick. His tale is soon told—a very barren one. No comfort in it; as regards hope it is poverty-stricken in the extreme.

"I bring you nothing, you see," he says at last, flinging out his arms with a certain recklessness. "You should get somebody else to help you. I am evidently out of luck. All my love for her does not bring me one jot nearer to her; I am beginning to despair."

"Oh, not that, Dick!" she entreats feverishly. "If you do that, what is left to me?" It is a tacit acknowledgment that despair has been hers long since. "In your belief I live, and"—passionately—"there still is hope—there must be!"

"Where then," demands he half irritably—"in what direction does it lie? Seven whole days, and neither word nor sign from her! Can it be that she would wilfully condemn us to the torture of misery we are enduring? If it be proved so, I shall know that the girl I called Dolores never existed."

"Do not wrong her!" exclaims Miss Maturin, shrinking as if from a blow.

"Not now when we know so little! Afterwards"—she pauses, and her hands involuntarily meet and clasp each other—"afterwards," she says in a sinking tone, "you may regret it."

"I do not wrong, I do not blame her," says the young man hastily. "As you say, we know so little. But to live, and let us suffer like this, seems——"

"Ay, if she lives," murmurs Miss Maturin.

The agony in her face is so vivid that it startles him; it angers him, the more terribly in that her awful insinuation seems to give life and reality to the haunting dread that has been consuming his own soul all these past dreary days and hours. In the sudden horrible fear that now seizes him, he lets his ungovernable rage against fate turn upon her.

"If," he repeats, with a frowning vehemence that would be abominable if it were not so sadly miserable—"if"? Why should there be a doubt thrown upon it? Of course she lives! It only wants time to find her—time and patience—nothing more."

"We shall never find her," says Miss Maturin, a curious monotony in her tone, turing her haggard eyes to his—"never; she is dead!" She raises her hand in a somewhat aimless fashion to her forehead, and then lets it fall again. "Dead!" she repeats; and then her tone grows sharper. "Oh, my little one," she cries aloud, "my pretty child, my little gentle, pretty girl!"

"She is not dead!" exclaims Bouverie fiercely. Rising to his feet, as though it were impossible to him longer to sit still, he begins with rapid strides to pace the room. "How can you let such a thought pass your lips? There is no truth in it. To lose hope, even the last shred of it—is to lose all. Life then would cease to be a possibility. It was absurd, my speaking of despair just now. There shall be no such word for me." His short-lived courage dies, and his tone changes. "It is this cruel inaction that is so terrible!" he cries presently. "I wish I had not left town; but I knew you would be craving to see me. I would I were back again in those full but friendless streets, walking up and down, up and down, as it were, for ever! In the very moving hope seemed to lie. Morning, noon, and night I trod those hot pavements, looking for her and waiting for news from the detectives, until every wretched stone in the neighbourhood seemed burnt into my brain."

Coming to a stand-still before the mantelpiece he leans upon it, and lets his face fall forward upon his arms.

"Dick," says Miss Maturin anxiously, unnerved by his sudden breakdown. They all at once her own fortitude forsakes her, and she bursts into tears.

It is all so miserable. Is the child sane-sleep, or cruel to leave them to suffer for untold torments thus; or is it, as she truly believes, that she has passed beyond the world's ken. Its love, its care, its tenderness, for evermore? Is she now lying cosily within her grave, arms folded, hands quietly upon the marble breast, and sunny hair all dull and fading?

A sharp exclamation breaks from her.

"Oh, Dick! Oh, the sweet smile of her!" she cries out, trembling and paling. "I see her now before me as she used to be in her little white frock, and with her gentle pensive expression and her loving eyes. No, no, no; I tell you, were she living, her tender heart would hold her back from inflicting this pain upon us. She would have written. There would have been some kindly word, however vague. But there is nothing. She is dead, I tell you, dead."

"If she were, I should know it," says Bouverie coldly, growing however ghastly pale. "With my mind fixed so immovably upon her, it is impossible but that I should feel some sense of irretrievable loss as her spirit fled from earth to heaven. And I have felt nothing yet but the same cold uniform misery. No; she is hidden away somewhere in that great Babylon of ours, alone, friendless perhaps, but living." Then he turns suddenly, and forces himself to meet Miss Maturin's eyes. "What—what money had she?" asks he suddenly, compelling the hateful question to pass his white lips.

Dear Heaven, to picture her to himself without money in those crowded garish streets. To what indignities might she not have been subjected. What soiling winds must have rushed past her pure white soul. He sets his teeth hard, and a strong shudder shakes him.

"She could not have had much," returns Miss Maturin wretchedly. "Whenever she wanted money she asked for it and got it; but she was such a simple child, that he wants were few, and, as, for her gowns, when she chose them, I paid for them. She hated bills, she used to say; and all indeed she ever wanted a cheque for was to help some poor soul out of trouble or render the hearts of little children glad. She had a most sweet and perfect nature," murmurs Miss Maturin, a spasm crossing her face.

"Why do you say 'had'? What perversity it is!" cries Bouverie, with a second burst of unreasonable anger. "I tell you she still lives; this very moment, as I idle here, there may be news for me." He glances nervously at his watch. "I must go," he says impatiently, although there is still quite a long hour before the next train can start. "I may hear news of her; and, when she is found"—turning eagerly to Miss Maturin—"let me impress this upon you—she must not be chidden. No unkind word, no reproach, however delicately veiled, must be administered to her. Has she not known unhappiness enough? What are our sufferings to hers?"

"Alas!" says Miss Maturin, just looking at him.

"I know what you would say," he hurries on feverishly—"that my chances of recovering her are small; yet I still cling to my faith in the belief that if she were—were gone from us, I should know it. She is surely alive in London—somewhere——"

"Is there any greater consolation in that thought?" asks she, in a low voice, her head sunk upon her breast. "In the long night-watches my eyes seem ever striving to follow her, and sometimes I see her lying quietly with folded hands within her shroud——"

"Oh, no, no!" interrupts he wildly. "And sometimes she is wandering, weary, footsore, lost, through the dimly-lighted streets. I have seen tears falling from her eyes in these nightly vigils; I have seen her little gentle gracious figure shrinking from the touch of passers-by, and yet moving ever onward seeking for rest and peace, one pure white spot on the dark ground of the picture. I think I shall go mad," murmurs Miss Maturin very softly rising suddenly to her feet and raising her hand to her head.

"This is no time for madness," says Dick gently, drawing down her arms again, and regarding her fixedly—"for work, rather, and untiring energy."

"The energy is all yours. You do not comprehend what it is to stay here as I do, counting the hours as they pass, and wearing out my heart with gnawing anxiety. Oh, the thought of that gaudy town, with its glare and its false glitter, and my little tender girl wandering through it! Who was there to pity her, to give her shelter? The world is hard. When I think of her—raising her worn face to Bouverie—as I ever do, first finding herself alone in that cruel town, when I see the dawning terror on her young face, I tell you——"

"Don't!" interrupts Bouverie sharply. "Are we not already bad enough without such imaginings as those? I cannot endure them. I too have felt maddened when I thought of her alone—there." He, draws his breath with difficulty. "Surely the intolerable anguish we are bearing now is enough?" he says again more quietly.

"It is not!" cries Miss Maturin vehemently. "There is another thing that weighs upon me; I must speak of it. If she is dead, why do I live? Am I insensate, heartless, that I can so easily discuss even her probable death with you? Oh"—smiting her hands together—"how is it that I still draw breath, whilst she——"

"She lives!" repeats Bouverie doggedly.

Miss Maturin attempts no more to contradict him; she falls into a profound reverie. Presently however she raises her head and looks at him.

"You are tired?" she says.

"Yes"—wearily—"deadly tired."

"Let me give you something," exclaims she, contrition in her glance; "and forgive me if my mind, being so cruelly occupied at times, forgets. What shall it be?"

"Brandy then, if anything," replies he quietly.

"Oh, no, my dear, not that!" says Miss Maturin nervously. "Say something else—anything——"

"Pshaw!" interrupts he, with a short unmirthful laugh. "Do you think I shall come to harm of that sort? Nothing could affect me now—nothing—save news of her! However, as you will—some coffee then. I have touched nothing since yesterday."

"Come and have something to eat, Dick," says Miss Maturin, in a tremulous tone, an almost imploring tone, laying her fingers on his arm.

"I couldn't indeed. It is of no use asking me."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Nowhere," returns he briefly.

"And all those other nights? Have you been home?"

"I have no home," says Bouverie. "Do you think I could find rest beneath the roof of the woman who drove her into exile? Even to see her would be more than I could patiently endure. Believe me, we are better apart. There was one night I was wandering by the side of Dera Lake, and Mrs. Wemyss was driving by—she must have seen me from the road, I think. I can't remember now; it seems all a century ago," he says, pressing his hand distractedly to his forehead. "But I know she was very kind. She made me get into her carriage—she was returning from some dinner somewhere; I cannot recollect; but she was wonderfully kind; and she made me sleep at her house that night. The next morning I went up to town again; but she comforted me at the time—I can remember that; and she spoke so tenderly of Dolores. Yes, I remember all that!"

"For the future, Dick, this is your home," says Miss Maturin, "if you will take pity on a most unhappy old woman. I have no one to talk to about her, except you. Come to me whenever you can, and consider this house your own."

"It is the only place I ever think of as home," returns Dick brokenly. "Once it was here!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The morring has lengthened into noon. Through the jealously-guarded windows the garish sunlight is forcing its way, in spite of blinds and curtains closely drawn.

Two or three rakish little beams are frolicking upon the coverlet of the sick-bed, dancing over the small languid hand, and nestling cosily in the short masses of the sunny hair. They are no playing too upon the melancholy lips, but lightly, more delicately, as though in their own frivolous fashion they understand Dolores's sorrow and would fain grieve with her.

Now she opens her eyes. These last three weeks, in which she has lain battling with death, have been interminably long. She has fought with the Great Victor as only the young and strong can fight; and, when at last she woke to consciousness, it was to tell the anxious watchers 'round her that at last there was hope—a faint one. Pale as a little snowdrop, she lay speechless, exhausted, raising to them in silent but eager inquiry great hollow eyes that only served to render more emaciated the white face that held them.

"Ah, so you are awake!" says now a strong, but kindly voice that seems to come from behind the curtains. A face that suits the voice follows it, and looks with very interested eyes upon the spent and broken little form within the bed. "Well, you have had a nice long sleep, and"—with a scrutinising glance—"you are better—yes, decidedly better."

Dolores opens her lips, and turns wistfully towards her.

"No, not a word," says her new friend hurriedly. "It is forbidden." Then, seeing the growing anguish on the young face, she relents. "Well, get your question over as quickly as you can," she says begrudgingly. "Rest is the only thing allowed you—not speech, believe me."

"You," says Dolores feebly, fighting with her weak memory—"You came to me across the hall when——"

"When you sank fainting into my arms," interrupts Mrs. Edgeworth quickly. "Quite so. Goodness knows how you brought yourself to such a state of weakness; but never mind that. When you are stronger, you can tell me all about it."

"How long?" asks Dolores vaguely.

Speech, after all, she finds is difficult to her. She slowly stretches out one hand and feebly slips it into that of the housekeeper. Mrs. Edgeworth, in spite of the strong-mindedness written upon her broad brow, is not proof against this weak entreaty.

"Since you entered this house in such dismal fashion?" she supplies cheerily. "Why, three weeks, I should say, or a day more or less."

"Three weeks!" repeats Dolores, paling. "Three?"

"Yes, quite three," says Mrs. Edgeworth. "But"—noting the misery on the pretty emaciated face—"never mind that. Soon you will be able to write to your friends and tell them all about it."

She looks keenly at the girl as she says this, curiosity not being unknown to her; but Dolores, with a subdued cry, turns from her, and hides her face amongst the lavender-scented sheets.

Two days later finds her stronger, more able to converse on trying subjects.

"Who is in the house besides you?" she asks Mrs. Edgeworth one morning, detaining her as she receives from the housekeeper's hand the breakfast to which she now begins quite to look forward.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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