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1	Milton	Wm. Panton.	27	9	25	13	23	30	10 a.m.
2	Oakville	R. Balmer	11	7	9	11	12	7	10 a.m.
3	Georgetown	L. Grant	17	13	15	4	15	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.
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DICK'S SWEETHEART.

By the Author of "MILDRED TRAVERSE," "LORD BERKELEY," "PHYLLIS," "MOLLY BAWN," Etc.

"Dick," she says softly, tremulously, "I want to say something to you. You may have thought perhaps—at times—that I did not like you. You are your mother's son, you know; but that is nothing to me now—nothing—nothing! I loved her—Dolores! I, who never before loved any woman, let all my heart go out to her. After dad, I think I loved her best. Oh, the sweet, little manner of her!" She covers her face with her hands and a tearless sob escapes her.

"What are you crying about?" asks Bouverie with sudden roughness, through which a crushing anguish is discernible. "One would think she was dead, the way you speak!" He stops short, and a gray pallor spreads itself over cheek and brow. "What a horrible thought!" he says faintly. "Who gave rise to it—you?" He moistens his lips, and struggles to say something more, but speech dies from him.

"If I had," says Audroy, "if I have begun at last to think of that little saint as being in heaven, who shall blame me? Is she not happier there? What home so meet for her? She is dead," she says solemnly. "I feel it. She was too gentle a soul to bear the buffeting of a careless world. Yes"—dreamily—surely she is dead!"

"Be silent!" exclaims Bouverie savagely. "How dare you speak so lightly of what means ruin to at least two people—Miss Maturin—and—me?" He throws up his head hurriedly. "She is all I have," he says slowly—"all—all!"

"Nay, Dick, do not be angry," says she, sobbing. "Remember, I loved her too."

"I remember," he returns more quietly. Then he walks away from her, and, as she makes no effort to stay him, soon disappears behind the low encircling hills.

Walking ever hurriedly onward, scarce knowing whither he goes, he comes at last to a large patch of water, deep, yet scarcely wide enough in circumference to be given the title of a lake. Something in the fascinating stillness of its surface attracts him. He stops, and gazes curiously down upon the unfathomable blankness of its bosom.

Here, in such a place as this, she might have sought and found her death. A shudder convulses him. She, his pretty love! He stoops over the bank and peers into the motionless waters, and fancies how her sweet dead face would look there staring up at him, without knowledge or remembrance of that strange great love that lay between them. Poor sweet dead face—almost he sees it!

"Sweet still, but now not red,
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died;
And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade;
And great curled eyelids that withhold her eyes;
And sweet, but like spoilt gold,
The weight of colour in her tresses weighed;
And sweet, but as a vesture with new dye,
The body that was clothed with love of old."

A cry breaks from him. Encircling the sapling oak near him with a trembling arm, he gives himself up to saddest thought. His eyes are riveted upon the swaying water; his brain, unsettled by its lengthened vigils, hurries from thought to thought, having for the ground-work of its imaginings only her—only Dolores.

Alas, the little graceful head, with its bright sunny curls, its soft windtossed locks, shall he ever again behold it? Never, never! low in the earth it lies, its glories sullied, its beauties shorn.

"Ah, dear Heaven, why must such things be? I, who have believed, have trusted in Thee; have pity now on me! See, Lord, how in my secret soul, when many men of my generation have turned from Thee and reviled Thee, I have held firm. I have clung to Thee, found pleasure in Thee; now—now do not Thou forsake me, now in my sorest need; and hear me, Lord! It is but a little thing I crave of Thee, one poor, frail, most sweet life! Oh, have mercy—mercy!"

He lets his tired head fall forward on his arms, and a dry agonised sob bursts from him that seems to rend his soul from body.

Can nothing be done? Is money, that great lever, powerless in this case to lift the veil that hides her from him and betray to him the spot wherein she is? Is this habitable globe so large that one's hiding-place is safe, secure? Or is it, as he fears, that death has crept in and borne his darling from earth's woes and joys?

"Oh that it were but possible
For one short hour to see
The soul we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be!"

But that it is not possible comes home to him with a bitter certainty. A great gulf that may not be crossed lies between the living and the dead. No, there is no hope. She is gone from him for ever. The dreary days must pass him one by one, and still hope may not be his. Desolate winters, joyless summers he will endure; but, as for her——

Be flings himself down amongst the fallen leaves and buries his face out of sight; his overtired spirit has forgotten that time is running on, that trains wait for no man; he thinks only of her, his lost love. A groan breaks from him, a sigh is lifted upon the evening breeze and born onward into space—

"Dolores, Dolores! Oh, my heart's idol, shall I see thee never again?"

* * * * * * * *

By that sad lake's waters Bouverie lingers, dwelling upon the lost joys of his life, until he grows sad as those poor Israelites whose griefs are known to all.

At length a sudden fear, even more painful than those gone before, stirs him into remembrance of the living moment. He springs to his feet. Glancing at his watch, it tells him that he has overstayed his time, and that the compelling of sad thought has drawn him from his allegiance to the passing hour. Already five o'clock has struck within the village-tower. The train for London has started. He is late for his journey-to-day.

This knowledge in his present strained state of mind is terrible to him. He has been false to his trust, a laggard at his post—he, who has so sworn to find her, be she alive or dead!

And now—even now she may have been found, may be awaiting him. A curious certainty that at last she has been discovered—just when he has proved himself apparently cold in his search—takes full possession of him. To get to town by any means is his first thought; but action, he soon discovers, is beyond him. To charter a special train would not be possible in this small place, to drive to town would be more impossible still, with any hope of getting there in time; there is therefore nothing for it but to wait for the night-mail. But how to bear the suspense to be endured between then and now? Still half dazed in mind and wearied in body, he retraces his steps to Greylands, the only home he knows.

* * * * * * *

Audrey, after her encounter with Bouverie, turns aside from her intended visit to Greylands, and wanders idly away into the deepening woods upon her left, lost in sad thoughts of her own making. But, as the shadows grow longer and ever longer, and evening thrusts itself upon her, she rouses herself from her gloomy dreamings, and, mindful again of her original purpose, once more with hurrying footsteps hastens to Miss Maturin.

Almost at the gates of Greylands she raises her eyes, to encounter Anthony Vyner. She is feeling dull and disheartened, and it is without a greeting smile that she extends her hand to him.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" asks he, regarding her attentively.

"Thinking!" returns she, with a sigh.

He has never seen her in this mood before, and there is a touch of surprise now in the gaze he has not withdrawn from her.

"I shall walk up the avenue with you," he says presently; "but I never go in now; I can't bear intruding upon her grief."

"No; every one distresses her, I think."

"Except you," says Vyner quickly.

"I think perhaps she knows how I loved Dolores—in truth, almost as well as she deserved to be loved. And, you see, she must talk to some one."

"There is Bouverie."

"Yes; but one wants a woman sometimes."

"That is true," says he. There is a little silence between them after this, and then—"I would go even farther than you," he says; "I should say there are one or two people who want some particular woman, not sometimes, but always."

"Ah, perhaps!"—she sighs again, and goes with him after that all the length of the goodly avenue, without vouchsafing him another word.

She seems lost in thought, and, glancing at her from time to time, he cannot but see that such thought for him contains no place.

As they reach the flight of stone steps that leads up to the hall door, a woman disappears through the portals into the dusky hall beyond; a young man is about to follow her, but something—perhaps the crushing of the gravel beneath their feet—causes him to turn his head. Recognising them, he runs down the steps again and up to them.

Is it Sir Chicksy Chaucer, in a high state of heat and excitement.

"So glad you've come," he says, addressing Audrey in a voice ecstatically pitched and very nervous—"so glad! You ought to know, you know. Always been a friend of hers. Yes, yes—such a day as we've been having!" He stops short and wipes his softened brow. "Yes of course you really ought to know, you know," he repeats impressively.

"We? Of whom are you talking—of Dolores?" asks Audrey, growing very pale; her voice trembles perceptibly. "Is—is she with you?"

"No, no, bless me—not at all! It is Mrs. Wemyss, you know. Excellent woman Mrs. Wemyss—so superior, so sensible, so—everything, you know!"

"I can't see what it is I need further know about Mrs. Wemyss," says Audrey coldly. Her sudden hopes have died as sudden a death.

"You don't understand!" exclaims Sir Chicksy, struggling wildly with his fragile intellect. "We've brought home the story, she and I. Such a chance as it was! Yes, you really ought to know. You know. Come up, come up stairs; she'll tell you all about it—she's got her wits about her."

"Thank heaven!" says Mr. Vyner, with a sigh of heartfelt gratitude to beneficient Nature.

"Tell us what?" demands Audrey, in an agony. "Is Dolores dead? What is it? What have you heard?"

She is so pale now and so imperious in manner that the miserable little baronet loses the last remaining fragment of that poor thing he calls his mind. He grows visibly distracted; he appeals vaguely to Vyner, who is regarding him with unexampled amazement.

"She ought to be prepared," he says, "she ought indeed; shocks are very bad things. Now do be prepared," he entreats feebly, turning again to Audrey.

It is quite plain to both his listeners that he has altogether forgotten what it is he wants to say.

"Ah, then it is all over!" murmurs Audrey brokenly.

"No, no, not yet—not quite; it may never be all over," says Sir Chicksy, gesticulating madly. "We don't know, we can't say, we can't be sure; but you ought to be prepared."

"Who is to prepare me?" exclaims Audrey, in a tone of deep grief largely mingled with irritation. "Oh, let me get to somebody who can speak English!"

She rushes past the bewildered Chaucer, who is still combating with his unfruitful brain, and enters the house.

"Look at that—look at that now!" exclaims he accusingly, turning a hostile glance upon Vyner. "She's quite upset by all this; she ought to have been prepared. I said so. Why didn't you tell her?"

"Tell her what?"—"Why, all about it!"

"All about what?" almost roars Vyner.

"About what we've been talkin' of, of course!" shouts back the small baronet indignantly.

"Oh, go to the deuce!" says Vyner; and, pushing him to one side, he follows Audrey up the broad oaken staircase to the pretty sitting-room above, where instinct tells them both Miss Maturin and her visitor are to be found.

Here a little scene presents itself that is never afterwards forgotten by Audrey. Mrs. Wemyss, pale and impassioned, with the pretty gaiety that usually distinguishes her thrust into the background, and with tears starting from her eyes, is standing opposite to Miss Maturin upon the hearthrug. She is talking to her in a low and rapid tone, and is using a good deal of expressive gesture.

Miss Maturin, gazing intently at her, is as one turned into stone. Is she glad or sorry? Of that Audrey, regarding her eagerly from the doorway with a view to ending her own suspense, cannot be sure. She looks so still, so mute, so inexpressive; she has her hands tightened upon the back of the chair close to her, and the pressure put upon them has reduced the nails to an absolute snowy whiteness.

Audroy moves forward. The sound of her coming and the steps of those who follow her break up the unnatural quietude that has seized upon Miss Maturin and loosen the tension of her nerves. A great wave of emotion, too long suppressed, sweeps over her face. She loses all self-control, and, sinking upon a lounge near her, covers her face with her hands.

"Oh, if there should be any mistake!" she murmurs, in a tone of terrible fear.

"There is none," declares Mrs. Wemyss triumphantly—"at least so far as Sir Chicksy and I have gone. What lies beyond our discovery is of course as yet unknown. But I look for a happy ending to our beginning; and, at all events, there is hope."

"Audrey, do you hear that?" cries Miss Maturin, holding out her trembling hands. "There is hope, they tell me. Hope! Oh, most blessed word!"

"Hope?" stammers Audroy, who cannot yet divest herself of the fear caught below from Sir Chicksy's blundering explanation.

"Yes; didn't I tell you so?" whispers that youth at her elbow.

"They have brought me tidings of my child," says Miss Maturin, with deep agitation. "She may yet be found. There is hope, I tell you—hope!"

She clings to the word. It seems as though she is determined not to lose her hold upon the sacred thing that for so long has been denied to her. She recurs to it again and again.

"You have had news of Dolores?" falters Audrey; and then all suddenly her proud reserve vanishes from her; she turns aside, as though with a vain desire to hide herself, and bursts into tears.

They are the first tears any one there has ever seen her shed. Some people seem born to shed tears; to others it seems impossible that such sad weaknesses can ever be known. Audrey, proud, reserved, insolent, has passed amongst her kind as being one of those who are literally devoid of feeling for the joys and woes of their fellow-creatures. Her grief now is a revelation. To one of those standing in Miss Maturin's boudoir, the girl—thus bowed with tender solicitude for her friend—looks sweeter far than ever yet she seemed to him in her brighter, gayer hours.

"Tell her all!" says Miss Maturin, laying her hand on Audrey's arm.

The touch seems pleasant to the girl. She acknowledges it, and, sinking upon her knees beside Miss Maturin's chair, hides her face in her gown. To see Audrey now—thus clinging with such an utter abandonment of herself—one would hardly recognise her.

"There is so little to tell," says Mrs. Wemyss, who is still gladly excited. "But I cannot help thinking even this little may lead to something good. You see, I had started to see a friend at Loans. This morning I went, and at the station met Sir Chicksy. He seemed so idle that I asked him to come with me—most fortunately I asked him!" says this good-natured woman. "He came. We arrived at Loans. I didn't quite know the way to my friend's house; so I sent Sir Chicksy to make inquiries of the station-master. Instead of that, he fell into conversation with the station-master's wife, and—well—yes, she—Dolores—had been seen by her—she had been seen there—a pretty creature in a dust-coloured ulster and a white gown. What led to the conversation between the woman and Sir Chicksy has never transpired; but I went back myself and cross-examined her, and it was certainly all true. The description exactly answered to Dolores—the little fragile figure, the nervous childish manner. Yes, yes"—Mrs. Wemyss breaks down a little—"I know it was she," she says, with a suppressed sob; "and so I rushed back to tell you all of this faint clue to her hiding place."

Here Sir Chicksy, who is in a fever of excitement, breaks into the conversation:

"Most 'stornary thing!" he says. "I asked her if the girl she saw wore a white gown. A white gown, mind you! I remember how Miss Lorne always wore white. It fetched the old woman in a hurry. 'White?' says she. 'Yes; I saw her from the window as she talked to my man, and her gown was white, sure enough.' 'Stornary thing I should have thought of askin' that—eh? Leadin' question—eh? I declare to you, when I heard her answer an' thought of Miss Lorne," says Sir Chicksy, with tearful joy, "I was as glad as if I'd got And——. Ah—hem—ha!" coughs Sir Chicksy, retreating into melancholy and the background with his mistake and his confusion.

"You are a good fellow, Chaucer," says Vyner, grasping his hand and wringing it warmly.

"Yes, yes; when I heard all, I forgot my friend and hurried back to you," goes on Mrs. Wemyss. "But"—nervously—"this may be all! Do not dwell with too great certainty upon this tale we bring; disappointment following upon such certainty would be too terrible."

"Do not speak of disappointment!" exclaims Miss Maturin, rising suddenly to her feet. She has her hand still upon Audrey's arm, and by a slight pressure compels her also to rise from her kneeling position. "Where is Dick?" she asks, looking round upon them. "He must be found at once."

"He has gone up to town," says Audrey, conquering her emotion.

"He must be telegraphed for!"

"I'll do it," says Vyner, with such unwonted energy for him that they all stare. "Give me his address!"

But no one, it seems, is aware of his present address. His clubs are known of course; but then he would be unlikely to go to them with misfortune so full upon him and his heart and brain afire with ever-increasing misery.

"What is to be done?" demands Mrs. Wemyss, with nervous impatience. "What evil genius drove Mr. Bouverie to town this morning? Oh, if he were but here now, all might yet be well!"

Hardly has this oracular speech passed her lips, when the door is thrown open quickly, and Bouverie himself enters the room.

A little cry from Miss Maturin—a movement towards him! She makes a violent effort to speak, to explain; but words fail her.

"Tell him!" she says to Mrs. Wemyss; in a low whisper.

He has come slowly into the room, and, having greeted those nearest to him, has sunk into a chair, weary and dispirited.

"Dick" cries Audroy, coming up to him with her cheeks all aglow and her long lashes still moist with that strange shower of tears that fell from her a moment since—"Dick, they tell us there is news of Dolores!"

Bouverie starts as though shot.

"Oh; no!" he says, raising his hand, as though to ward off a blow. "One should not jest on such subjects. Why, you yourself, not an hour ago, told me she was dead!"

He sighs heavily, and, rising from his seat, moves towards the open window.

"But indeed it is true," says Mrs. Wemyss, half sobbing, coming up to him with her great soft eyes quite full of tears.

And then she tells him all her story—a strange story, and singularly incomplete; but it makes a new man of him. Already he looks ten years younger, and his eyes are all afire.

"The hour?" he asks, turning feverishly to Vyner, without even vouchsafing one word of thanks to Mrs. Wemyss—but she forgives all that. "When does the next train start?"

"In twenty minutes," says Sir Chicksy, chucking a *Bradshaw* he has been studiously examining into Vyner's hands as he speaks. It is a book he has taken from the waiting-room at Loans and has been studying ever since.

"If you hurry, you'll catch it, old man," says Vyner kindly.

But the words have hardly ceased upon the air when Bouverie is gone, leaving only the sound of his departing footsteps behind him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

As the train steams slowly into the little station at Loans, Bouverie steps out hurriedly and walks impatiently up and down the diminutive platform until at last the engine hurries on again, leaving the station-master free.

Going up to him, Bouverie lays his hand upon his arm. Now that he has come to the point, he feels cold and helpless and utterly out of heart. The station-master, turning to him with some surprise depicted upon his fat face, gazes curiously at the eager, haggard young man looking down at him.

"Yes, I distinctly remember having seen a young 'ooman—a child a'moss she was. This is the second time to-day I've been asked about her. Begging your pardon, sir, are you bound on the same inquiry errand as them that came in the morning?"

In a few of the most prosaic words in the language Bouverie gives the station-master to understand that his heart and soul are bent on the successful ending of the quest.

"Ah, just so! Well, I saw her sure enough! Only a minute, as it might be, she lingered on the platform, looking about her as if a bit bewildered. I went up and asked her if I could do anything for her, for she looked quite 'the lady' but she answered 'No' short-like, timid-like, and moved away from me. But, after a little while, she came back again to ask me where that road"—pointing to a dusty lane in the distance—"led to. 'To Dormister,' said I. 'A secluded place?' asked she, or something of that sort. 'Ay, all that,' said I; and then

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