

THE DURHAM CHRONICLE

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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J. G. Hutton, M. D., C. M.

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WM. JOHNSTON, C. L. GRANT,
Chairman. Secretary.

me think about her a lot more than loving her did. I was always afraid of her finding me out and trying to do for me again, or getting at me by poisoned letters or something. So that I never stayed at any place long and was always drinking and gambling, that I mightn't think of her horrid face and malevolent eyes.

"From the time I left her in Paris I never saw her again until that night at the music-hall when you interfered. Then I met her in the park with that other fellow, who you say was your brother, and after that, with you at the regatta. The sight of her unnerved me and makes me ill for weeks. I tell you that woman has ruined me—ruined me! Her face haunts me—I can't get it out of my sight night or day. I see her figure in dark corners of the room and I fight with it for hours sometimes—it seems to wrap itself around me and stifle me—"

He broke off, and, burying his face in his hands on the table, burst into hysterical and unmanly tears. Shocked by the sight, Dudley did his best to reason with him, but time was precious.

After handing Francesca's husband a receipt in full for the sum he had won from him at play and a cheque to meet his present needs, Dudley hurried from the train for England. He could not bring himself to face the little mother, yet while her son's cold-blooded murder remained unavenged, and he therefore left France without seeing her.

Late in the afternoon of a still September day he stopped his cab on his way from Carling Cross to Waterloo in order to purchase a revolver, which he placed in the breast-pocket of his overcoat.

Fortune seemed all on his side. On the platform at Waterloo station a handsome foreign-looking youth, hurrying out of a train which had just arrived from Hampton Court, ran against him, and at first Dudley hardly recognized Joseph Weldon in this over-dressed, perfumed little dandy, with an enormous nose in his button-hole, and a gold watch-chain, which had formerly been the property of Victor Revelsforth, adorning his waistcoat.

He laid his hand upon the lad's collar. At first Joe started and turned pale at the unexpected meeting. Then he speedily recovered himself, and tried to carry off matters with a high hand.

"I'm not your servant," he said in a thick voice. "I was Mrs. Revelsforth's man, and I shouldn't mind being Francesca's, if she wasn't going to marry you. But I won't be yours!"

Dudley glanced at the station clock. "My train is due," he said "and, as I have a good deal to say to you, you must travel down in the same carriage as I. If you give me the least trouble, I will at once hand you over to the police for stealing my brother's watch-chain."

"I didn't mean to steal it," whimpered Joe, cowed at once. "I only wanted to wear it at the theatre, like I've sometimes done before. And you wouldn't treat me so unkindly if you knew how much I know—"

"About what?"

"About the lady you're going to marry."

"That's just what you have got to tell me," observed Dudley coolly, as he seized the boy again by the collar and half flung him into a first-class compartment. "I shall get the guard, who knows me, to lock this door; and I may tell you that I have a loaded revolver in my overcoat pocket."

Whatever moral suasion Dudley employed, certain it is that Joseph Weldon left the train at Kingston Station in a very different spirit from the jaunty self-possessed defiant mood he had exhibited an hour before. He looked pale and frightened, his legs trembled under him, and he cast nervous glances to right and left, as though he were afraid of being followed.

"She'll murder me if she knows I've rounded on her," he whimpered to Dudley. "I daren't go home, or she'd find it out by looking at me. I told her I'd do it if she was to marry you; and she told me I'd better say my prayers and make my will first. She sorter laughed; but I know she meant it, and I daren't go home."

Turning scornfully away from the lad, Dudley walked in the booking office and bought him a single ticket for London. Then he scribbled an address and a few words on his card and handed it to the frightened Joseph.

"That is Mr. Simpson's private house in Baywater," he said. "Take this card to him. I've asked him to keep you with him until I send for you. I may want you later as a witness."

"A witness! Not against her," Joe was beginning in terrified accents, when Dudley cut him short by hurrying him along the platform and into the train.

Much—very much—still remained to be done; but Dudley had learned a good deal by the confession he had wrung from Joseph Weldon, and his plans for needed revision in consequence. For nearly forty-eight hours he had almost dispensed with rest and food. His eyes burned, and his head ached with the prolonged strain and incessant travelling; but he was borne up by a passionate excitement and a fierce determination to unmask and punish the villainy which had compassed his brother's death, and he scarcely seemed capable of feeling fatigue.

Before seven o'clock he was standing in Kingston market-place. Revelsforth House could be reached in a few minutes; but it would be dinner-time there, and to make even a pretence of breaking bread with Francesca he felt would be impossible.

He entered a hotel and mechanically ate some food which was placed before him. At eight o'clock he called for his bill, and, ordering a conveyance, was driven rapidly towards the old house on the Green.

A host of recollections crowded upon him as the ivy-bring walls of Revelsforth House came in sight. Less than six months before he and his brother Victor had journeyed thither for the first time in a light-hearted mood, and, standing on the bridge at the bend of the road, Victor had jested as to which of them should win "the beautiful countess Francesca."

"And, coming back," he muttered to himself, "we were on the threshold—the demon who murdered him!"

He was seized by a sudden fear of himself if Francesca should meet him now with these thoughts in his mind, if she should open the door to him and

greet him with a smile upon her trying lips, might he not be tempted beyond control to draw out the revolver from his pocket and lay her dead at his feet? He hardly dared to look up at the door was opened; but he experienced a feeling of relief at the sound of Betty Mannington's voice.

"Dudley! Back already! We did not expect you. Have you had any dinner? I am so glad I stayed at home and let Mr. O'Meara take Francesca on the river instead of me!"

"She is out, then? Thank Heaven!"

"She is out; and we cannot find her Weldon anywhere; and—Dudley! What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened yet, dear," he said, drawing her arm within his and the platform at Waterloo Station a leading her to the billiard-room. "But a good deal is going to happen. I have had my dinner—I want nothing of that sort. But now, before Francesca returns, you must take me up-stairs to Mrs. Harold's room and you must express no surprise at anything I may say to her. Do you understand, dear?"

"Yes."

"I have had no sleep for two nights, and I shall go to bed very early. I want you, when you go to bed, to lock the door of your room as usual, and not to open it, whatever you may hear, unless I actually call you."

"I will do as you wish; but Dudley—"

"Wait!"

"Your face frightens me! You—you have found out something—something dreadful, I can see. Oh, Dudley, remember—she is a woman, and she—loves you!"

"I will remember," he said, "and I will show all the mercy she has shown."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Within three days' time, by special license, I hope to make your daughter Francesca my wife." This was what Dudley had been so anxious to say to Mrs. Harold before Francesca's return.

Betty Mannington regarded the hideous face, as it appeared through the splinters. The "thing" recoiled from him, strove to free itself, fought and writhed like an infuriated cat under his grasp, threw itself upon the ground and strove to wriggle free, and finally buried its sharp teeth in his other hand.

The pain made Dudley drop the revolver, but he did not relax his hold of his enemy; and, without the weapon, he was the better able to cope with this wild creature that bit and tore and kicked and struggled with him in dead silence in his arms, and, rushing to the window, tore aside the curtains, tore down the blind, and let the moonlight stream in and reveal to him what he held.

And then, distorted with rage, and rendered the more hideous by the luminous paint upon her wizened cheeks and the pearl-decked yellow wig awry upon her gray elf-locks, with her fierce black eyes ablaze with a frenzy of baffled rage and hate, and her hands cut and bleeding from the broken glass clawing the air in impotent fury, he beheld, as he knew he should behold the ape-like face of the woman who had sought his aunt's hospitable roof at Francesca's mother, Mrs. Harold Revelsforth!

"You are admirable, charming in every way," purred the old woman in return; "but a marriage so soon after our beloved Victor's death is out of the question. His mother would be shocked, and so should I—"

"It will be quite a private affair," interrupted Dudley. "And Francesca and I have made up our minds, so you really must not oppose us. We both want a change of scene, and will take it together. To-night," he continued, rising as he spoke, "I very much fear that I shall not see her. I look a deplorable object after so much traveling and after two sleepless nights I am so sleepy that I can scarcely keep my eyes open, and must go to bed at once."

"Poor boy—you must indeed be tired!" murmured Mrs. Harold, fixing her keen gaze upon his pale haggard face.

"And thirsty," assented Dudley, turning towards her with a pleasant smile. "I am going to petition you, Betty, for a jug of thaticed water which Vernon condemns so strongly, to place by my bedside in the American fashion. I feel as if I could drink up the sea!"

Not a muscle of Mrs. Harold's face moved. "Both Dudley and Betty feared that they caught a sudden gleam in her sunken eyes.

She parted from the young man affectionately.

"In three days' time you will be my son," she said, and gave him her clammy cold hand.

"In three days' time!" he returned, gallantly bending over the hooked fingers.

"Oh, Dudley, it was all horrible!" Betty whispered, as soon as they found themselves in the passage outside.

"This is only the first act," he returned sardonically. "There is much worse to come. And now go downstairs, dear, and make and send me up some of the strongest and blackest of coffee—coffee that would keep the Seven Sleepers wide-awake!"

"But I thought—"

"Ah, that's just what you must not do! Good night, Betty!"

But, tired as Dudley had declared himself to be, when he reached his own room, he made no attempt to go to bed. Instead, during the earlier portion of the night, he paced restlessly backward and forwards in his slippers from his own room to that recently occupied by his brother.

The mystery of the shadowy hand beheld by Betty was now partly cleared to him, for a close examination of the wooden partition between the head of Victor's bed and the haunted room had revealed to him the fact that a portion of the panelling was loose and had recently been cut neatly out, and that afterwards narrow strips of wallpaper had been deftly pasted over the edges of the cut-out portion, so that the wall should again present a uniform appearance.

"But I will not give any one the trouble to make a hole in the wall in order to poison me," he said to himself with a sombre smile, as at eleven o'clock he extinguished the light and got, fully dressed, into bed.

Close to his bedside he had placed a small table, upon which stood in a conspicuous position the jug of iced water for which he had made request, a glass, a candle, and a box of matches while under his pillow lay the loaded revolver.

The room was very dark, for, although the moon shone brilliantly, the green blind and the heavy window-curtains effectively shut out the light. More than once Dudley thought about the house caused Dudley to grasp the revolver; but it was not until after the hour of midnight had sounded from the clock on the adjacent stables that anything happened to rivet his attention.

He had purposely left the door of his room unlatched, and more than an hour before he had heard Francesca

retire to her room, which was next to his, after bidding her foster-mother "Good night." Preternaturally wakeful and alert, the sound which first caught his ears after midnight was the stealthy opening of a door and the withdrawal and insertion of a key in a lock.

He started up in bed to listen. He imagined that the sound proceeded from Francesca's room. Then there was silence, followed shortly by a slow rustling, as of a person in a dress or stiff brocade moving along the corridor.

His heart beat loud and fast. In his mind's eye he could already see the baleful figure which had so terrified Betty, the malignant "thing" that glided in and out of old Margaret Revelsforth's room, had left death behind it and whose claw-like hands, thrust through the panelling of the haunted room, had brought death to his unsuspecting brother.

Dudley's teeth were clenched, his hand was on his revolver, when "creak"—the sound came for which he had been waiting, and the "thing" was in the room with him.

By almost super-human self-control he lay still and drew his breath as regularly as he could to resemble the breathing of a sleeping person. This creature's tread was noiseless, and only a slight, a very slight rustling betrayed its presence. But, as he strained his eyes to pierce the darkness, a luminous patch revealed itself to him at a height of less than five feet from the ground.

He knew what it meant, and laughed to himself.

"It will guide my aim," he thought, and waited.

At length, after another spell of perfect stillness, there fell upon his ear the sound of the slow dripping of liquid into the jug of iced water at his bedside.

This was the signal for which he had waited.

Thrusting out his hand, he caught the fingers of the unknown object in a grasp so savage that the phial they held was shattered into a thousand splinters. The "thing" recoiled from him, strove to free itself, fought and writhed like an infuriated cat under his grasp, threw itself upon the ground and strove to wriggle free, and finally buried its sharp teeth in his other hand.

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THE DOUKHOBORS.

Brother Glendinning of the Swan River Star, in scoring the Winnipeg Free Press for upholding the Doukhobor sect as a people, has this to say:—

In its issue of Aug. 28th the Free Press devotes a column editorial to prove that the photo published in the Globe three years ago of Doukhobor women hitched to a plough was the exception and not the rule. From what the editor of the Press says we would infer that the Doukhobor women had planned a pleasant surprise for their lovers and husbands when they returned from working on the railway in having considerable breaking done, and these Doukhobor Lords and masters would be "righteously" indignant with them for doing so.

That the whole editorial was written in a Winnipeg office by one who had never seen a Doukhobor, who either was not aware of the facts, or took a whole column to try to conceal them, is quite evident.

We have never personally seen Doukhobor women plowing, but there must be a lot of liars in Swan River valley if Doukhobor women are not in the habit of drawing the plough. It doesn't require any great stretch of imagination to believe that women who can draw a heavily laden wagon 40 miles could also draw the plough.

It is only too common here to see wagons with Doukhobor women hitched like oxen to them. To-day we saw a train of them, women and men; they must have come over twenty miles. They would make the round trip, over forty miles, in two days. We would like to see that train passing up Main street in Winnipeg and still more to analyse the emotions excited in each spectator as they passed. They have committed so many ridiculous excesses lately that it is no longer matter for surprise what they do. They have discovered that it is wrong to work horses or cattle, wrong to use milk or butter, wrong to use in any way the product of an animal. It is amusing the straits some of them are driven into in order to appear consistent. Some wear wooden shoes, others shoes made from bark, and others shoes made from bags. Their customs are just as varied. Their diet has become what may be called restricted; they won't eat flesh of any kind, fish, butter, cheese or eggs. Everything that is the product of an animal is "unclean." Their latest fad is that man is the only animal spoken of in the Bible as having to work, therefore all animals should have their liberty. Following out this peculiar theory, last week they decided to give their live stock freedom and turned out over 500 head of stock, horses, cattle and sheep, to wander at their own sweet will. Land Agent Harley, drove over to their villages on Monday to endeavor to try his persuasive powers on them and if possible obtain their consent to allow the Government to dispose of them.



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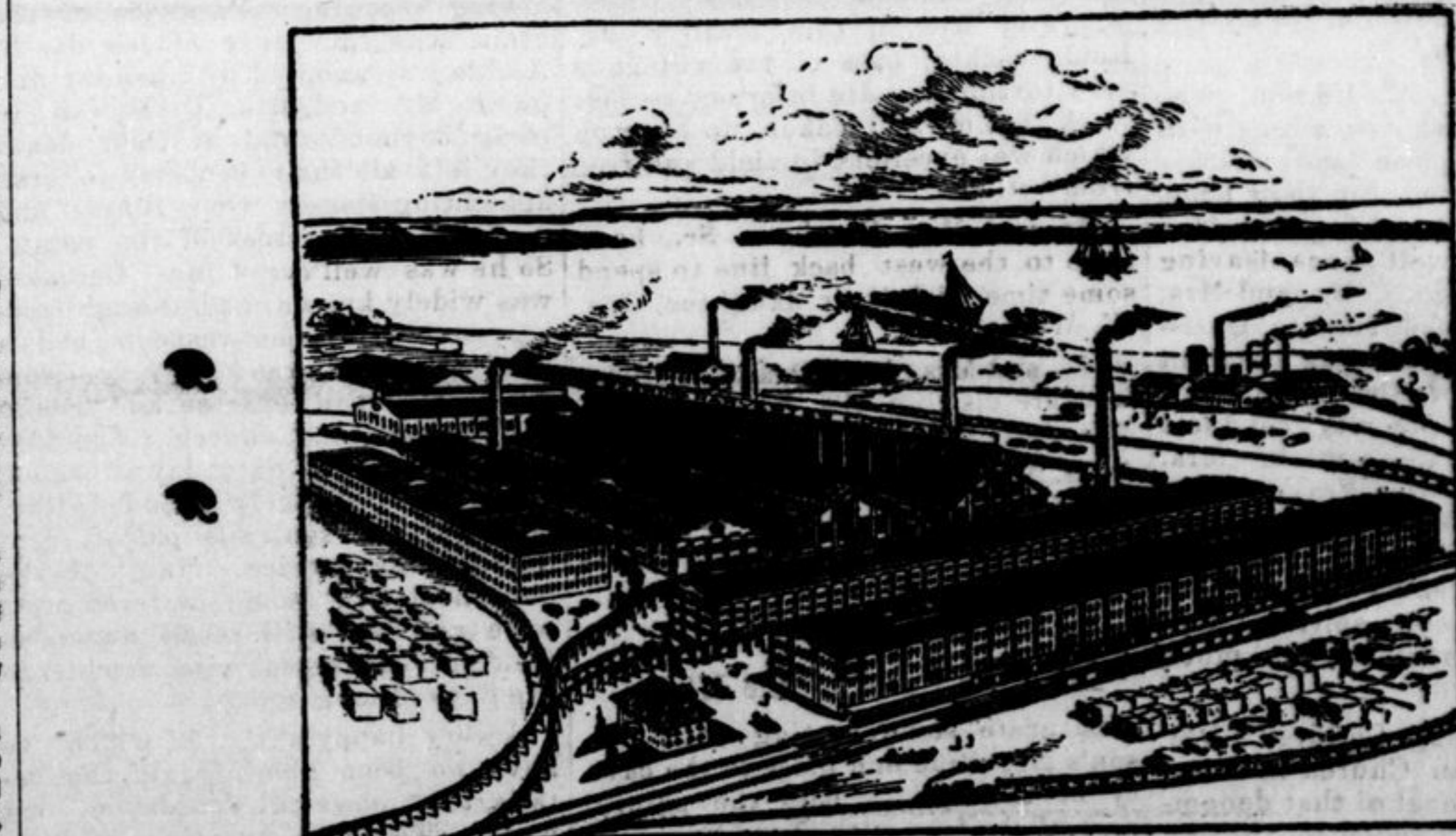
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