

The Vicar's Nephew; or The Orphan's Vindication

CHAPTER XI.—(Cont'd.)

They went out in silence, while Mrs. Penning stood amazed. On the door-step Molly turned to her brother, her nostrils quivering.

"Those women are spies," she said.

He accepted the statement in grave silence, acquiescing, and they walked on without further speech.

"Do you know what I came to London for?" she began at last.

"I know nothing, Molly; not even what sort of sister I have."

"I came to see you."

"I know nothing," she said, and looked at her. Her face was hard and resentful.

"I don't know what sort of brother I have, either, and I thought it was time to find out. I have more curiosity than you, it seems."

His mouth set in a sudden line, and the girl, watching him from under level brows, saw that she had struck him. He paused an instant before answering.

"I am glad you came," he said.

Molly flashed another look at him.

"Are you? I'm not sure I am. It depends on you."

She broke off, then plunged on recklessly.

"Such as you are, whatever you are, you're the only near relative I've got. Don't you think we might, as well as know anything about each other first-hand, now we're both grown up, instead of taking things for granted through other people? Or do you think blood relationships are all rubbish?"

"No, I don't think that, and, Molly, I have taken nothing for granted."

"Nothing? Not when you refused an invitation to come and see me after 'how long' was 'it'—Seven—eight years?"

"It was an invitation to Uncle's house. As for seeing you, I had waited so long for that that I could have patience a little longer till you could come to me rather than—"

"After a little pause he added slowly:

"I couldn't go into his house. If I ever get to know each other well, you'll understand why; but I can't explain."

"Jack! she burst out, suddenly; "What was it between you and uncle? No, don't tell me, if you don't want to. I had no right to ask; it's not my business. But she hears bits and scraps of things—all sorts of things."

"You have every right to ask," he answered gravely. "But I don't think I have any right to tell you."

"Do you think that's fair to me?"

"No, but that's not a fair position all round. I think, while you are accepting anything from uncle he has a right to ask that his enemies should not tell you things against him. Don't you?"

"Does that mean that you are his enemy? In the real sense of the word? Have you nothing to tell me but things against him?"

"Nothing."

"And nothing about Aunt Sarah? Are you the enemy too?"

He paused a moment.

"I have nothing to say about her one way or the other."

"Jack, whatever the thing was that happened, it's more than ten years ago, and she lies awake at night and cries about you still. Last winter when she had pleurisy, and we thought she was going to die, she clung to me and kept on repeating that she had done her best for you. I don't believe Aunt Sarah ever harmed a fly in her life. Granted, you may have something against uncle; but why should you hate her?"

He put the subject aside.

"I don't hate her."

"You despise her then," the girl broke in quickly.

"That I can't help. She's lukewarm like the angel of Laodicea; I would she were hot or cold. Her passionate tears glittered in Molly's eyes.

"You will make me hate you!" she said, in her suppressed, vehement way. "An old woman, as broken down and feeble as she is; and you will let her go on worrying and fretting over some dead-and-gone quarrel of your schoolboy days. She asked me the other day to forgive her if she made mistakes in bringing me up. To forgive her, the only person in the world that ever cared for me! She's got it into her head that you were made what she calls 'wicked' by being unhappy at home, and that it was somehow her fault. Were you so unhappy, Jack?"

"Unhappy?" He repeated the word with a quick throb in his voice that made the girl start and look round at him. "Look here, Molly; I've had my share of trouble, but I've had nothing against Aunt Sarah, except that she was a coward and passed by on the other side. Anyhow, if she's been kind to you, I'm grateful to her for that, and she needn't worry about the rest. As for uncle, I haven't anything to say except what's better—"

"If you want to know why I couldn't come to the house—well, I tried to kill him once, and that's reasonable enough."

"I asked him about it one day, and he told me you—"

"Don't!" he interrupted. "I don't want to hear anything from you, or to tell you anything. Don't get your impressions of him from me—they wouldn't be just. And judge of me by what you see yourself, not by what any one has told you; if I'm a bad lot you'll soon find it out without any telling."

She turned to him with a smile.

"No one told me you were bad; and if they did, I shouldn't believe it at second hand. There are some things I remember—"

She broke off.

"Tiddles?" he asked.

"My life has been spent in keeping up my fiction. She's getting old now, and it's wearing thin; and she's scowled at the truth underneath it, and miserable."

"The truth?"

"That she despises him in her heart."

"Was that why you couldn't come to Paris?" he asked abruptly.

"I couldn't leave her; you don't know what a desolate house it is. They go through life avoiding each other's eyes; they are like people haunted by a ghost. Uncle keeps up an elaborate pretence of having forgotten that you ever existed, and she pretends he's not pretending."

"And you?"

"I pretend not to see. And the neighbors pretend there was never any old scandal about you. We all pretend."

"Molly, don't you see how all that will end? Some day you'll come to a split with uncle, a deadly split. That's inevitable, because you're a live human creature."

"Possibly; but it won't be in her lifetime."

"She's not so old; she may live another thirty years. And what do you suppose she'd do then?"

"Whatever he told her to do."

"And if he told her to turn you out?"

"She'd do it, of course. But it would kill her. And it won't happen. Remember, I'm just all she's got in the world, even if she is lukewarm. Poor thing, she can't help it if she was born that way; I don't suppose the man in Laodicea could. Why didn't the Lord give him more courage, instead of abusing him for being a coward?"

He laughed softly. "At least no one will accuse you of being 'born that way,' my dear."

They walked back like old friends, talking of his plans for future work. Since Helen died he had not spoken so confidentially to one.

For the next month London wore a sunny face to Jack. He relaxed the grind of his work a little, and spent happy afternoons wandering about Westminster Abbey and the National Gallery with Molly. Sometimes, however, they would find themselves saddled with Mildred Penning, and all their pleasure froze to death under hard, inquisitive, disapproving eyes. It was in order to escape from her that Molly one day proposed spending the next Saturday afternoon at Jack's lodgings. After a short and stormy scene with Mrs. Penning, the brother and sister climbed on to the roof of an omnibus together, unchaperoned.

"I suppose she'll write to uncle and complain of you?" said Jack. She shrugged her shoulders.

"I dare say. I've given up a good deal for uncle; but I'm not going to give up my only brother for him, and the sooner he understands that the better. He'll be angry for a bit, and then give in. He always does when he sees I really mean a thing."

Jack's heart beat quicker as he took out his latch-key. The thing that he had longed for, toiled for, waited for, the close intimate sister-love, had become an actual possibility at last.

"Come in, Molly; I've only a bed-sitting-room, you know. Oh, Mrs. Smith has made a fire! That was thoughtful of her."

Then he drew back suddenly and stood on the threshold, staring blankly into the room.

"Tico was stretched at full-length on the hearth rug, watching the dance of shadows on the fire-lit ceiling.

"Hullo, Jack."

They never needed to scramble to his feet; getting up, after lying flat on the floor, he seemed merely to change one appropriate and graceful attitude for another.

"My sister," said Jack. "Theodore Miraki."

"His own voice sounded dull and harsh in his ears.

"I thought you were in Vienna," he said.

"Jonah can't come, and they telegraphed, asking me to play instead of him at St. James's Hall to-morrow."

was glad enough of the chance to see you. Why, Jack, I never saw you look so well, or so sulky. Don't you want me? You can turn me out, Miss Raymond, if I'm in the way."

"I'm afraid it's I that am in the way," said Molly. Her voice fell like a little icicle into their midst, chilling even Theo.

Jack did his conscientious best to smooth away the queer awkwardness between his visitors. But, looking from Molly to Theo and back again to Molly, he realized how hopeless it was. The miserable effort at small-talk failed at last, hopelessly; and Jack looked up from the red coals with a desperate feeling that something must be done to end the silence before it became unbearable.

"Theo," he said, "I wish you'd play. My sister has never heard you."

The musician rose at once, and fetched his instrument.

"What do you want?" he asked, curling himself down on the hearth-rug with his violin against his neck. "Golkoson? They don't want accompaniments."

"Slavonic ones, if you will. Did you ever hear a Polish folk-song, Molly?"

"You know I've never heard anything."

She leaned back, drawing the fire-screen forwards; her brow a little contracted, her eyes grave and wise, in a shadowed, listening face, while the folk-song trailed their low sound through the half-darkened room like disembodied ghosts of music buried long ago.

"Jack," said Theo, laying the violin down on his knee, "do you remember a fancy mother had just before she died, about the crocus-flowers in the grass? Well, I—I've been seeing that in my head lately, and it's come to me for orchestra, and it's come. I must play you some bits. Miss Raymond, did you ever look at a crocus, I mean, really look at it?"

"Yes," she answered from the shadow of the screen. "But not often."

Her brother glanced at her in wonder; it was as if Helen had softly, his eyes still on the girl's face. After a while he drifted unconsciously into improvisation, pausing now and then with lifted bow and filling the spaces with low, rhythmic speech. The violin, with its faint waiting, its dim, inadequate murmur, the flicker of the fire; the shabby, dingy, lodging-house room; all lost their separate characteristics, merged into a common background of dreams. To listeners of visionary warriors, the sight and sound of a great army marching, were an actual presence, living and immense.

Silence followed, and Theo sat with bent head, trembling a little, the violin still in his hand. It was Jack who spoke first, rising to light the lamp.

"Old man," he said, "I'm sure you might try to remember now and then."

"Yes?" Theo murmured vaguely.

"Only that ordinary mortals are your fellow creatures, after all, and can sometimes see when you guide their eyes even though they're not crowned kings by right divine."

Molly made a sudden passionate movement, as though he had hurt her. Theo started up, a sort of horror in his face.

"Kiss by—Jack, how can you! Just because I can see things in my head! Do you think I wouldn't give it all—fiddle and everything—to do things and be things like you? What's nearer to being a king by right divine—to see God's warrior flowers, or to be as they are? What am I but a fiddle?"

He turned away, his voice quivering with bitter discouragement, as with suppressed tears. Molly raised her head slowly and looked at her brother.

(To be continued.)

KHVESTOFF A BIG MAN IN RUSSIA

WILL ELIMINATE GERMAN INFLUENCE THERE.

He Exposed German Plots to Spread Confusion in Russia After War Began.

How little truth there is in the stories to the effect that the pro-German party, such as it is, has acquired the upper hand at Petrograd and a dominant influence over Emperor Nicholas is best shown by his appointment of M. Khvostoff, former Governor of Nijni-Novgorod and more recently one of the leaders of the party of the Right in the Duma, to the post of Minister of the Interior in the place of Prince Cherbatoff, who had only held the office for a few weeks. For M. Khvostoff, who is a very remarkable man, of great force of character, is the acknowledged head of that particular group in the Duma which aims at the complete de-Germanization of Russia and the elimination of all Teuton forces and influences from Muscovite commerce, finance, industry, agriculture, art, science, and literature, and, indeed, from Muscovite life generally.

He regards the German element in Russia, which has been a powerful factor there for the last 200 years, as a blight and as a curse on the nation. He is bent upon the emancipation of his countrymen from everything Teuton. That is the great aim of all his policies. That is what he stands for in public life. That is the cause that he has championed above every other in the Duma. So it will be readily understood what his appointment by the Czar to the Department of the Interior, the most important of all the Ministerial posts at Petrograd, the post formerly filled by Stolypin and by Pichev, really means.



M. Khvostoff.

Three months ago M. Khvostoff delivered in the Duma the most popular and remarkable speech of the entire session, upon the machinations of the Germans in the internal affairs of Russia. Among his extraordinary revelations, which created a widespread sensation throughout the Empire, was one to the effect that more than half of the shares of the great National Bank of Siberia, controlling that powerful financial institution, were owned by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin.

German Plots.

He further brought to light the fact that more than half the shares of the biggest of the ordnance and munitions concerns in Russia, the immense Putiloff works, which until the beginning of the war enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the production of munitions, ordnance, and small arms, were owned jointly by the Krupp, at Essen, and by the Skodas, which are the Krupp's counterpart in Austria. Thanks to this dominating interest of the Krupp and of the Skodas in the Putiloff Company, thousands of the latter's skilled workmen were dismissed, and the remainder put on a five-hour-day basis, when they should have been working without any interruption, in day and night shifts, after the outbreak of the war.

M. Khvostoff also exposed the particulars of how the Germans, by means of a controlling interest in the Russian Bank of Exterior Trade, in the Mezhdunarodnyy Bank and in a long list of similar institutions, not only organized corners in indispensable commodities since the beginning of the war, but had slowed down the output of war supplies of every kind, by diverting and withholding both imported and native coal from the factories. Khvostoff made many other revelations of the same kind during a speech that lasted for more than a couple of hours, and which was listened to with rapt attention, indeed, open-mouthed, in astonishment, and punctuated with exclamations of indignation by the members.

At the close thereof loud demands were made for the immediate organization in the Legislature of a National party, embracing all political factions and united with the one purpose of emancipating everything and everybody in Russia from German influences and control. It is this new party that M. Khvostoff heads in the Duma that is now once more about to

"Nothing But Leaves"

Not Tea Leaves intermixed with Dust, Dirt and Stems but all Virgin Leaves.

"SALADA"

has the reputation of being the cleanest, and most perfect tea sold. E147

BLACK, GREEN OR MIXED. SEALED PACKETS ONLY.

WAR PRISONERS REMOVE HILL.

British in Camp Near Berlin Engaged in Unusual Task.

A few miles east of Berlin are the Mullberg hills, near the village of Spreenhagen, where British and Scotch prisoners are engaged in a gigantic task. Up to twenty years ago this hill was built up from the waste material of Berlin, and its soil now is so rich that the German government recently decided to remove the entire hill and distribute its rich fertilizing soil over a large area of sterile land in its vicinity. The British and Scotch prisoners have been put at this task, and the Berlin Tageblatt reports that they are doing it with a will and enthusiasm that is highly gratifying.

A correspondent of the newspaper who recently made a trip to the Mullberg gives his observations. From six in the morning until five o'clock in the evening, he says, the prisoners are engaged with pick and shovel in dismantling the immense mound of rich soil. Other prisoners load the soil on wagons and cart it to a stretch of meadows near by, where it is evenly distributed preliminary to making this sterile region fruitful.

"The prisoners," says the correspondent, "are doing great work here. They are a fine looking lot of men—tall, athletic and with pleasing faces. They laugh and joke with one another while working, and respond quickly to orders. They are well taken care of. At noon they are served with a thick, nourishing soup, followed by meat and potatoes prepared in real Scotch style. Any one who still is hungry after this meal may go to the good natured cook and receive another portion. The prisoners receive many dainties from home—their favorite puddings, for instance, and tobacco, which they smoke in their short pipes.

That Khvostoff tolerates and even approves of legislative criticism of the Government is best demonstrated by the fact that since the beginning of the war he has repeatedly assailed the Administration, particularly the Ministers of Finance and Justice, in whom he has charged with favoring banks and syndicates at the expense of the consumers. A relative of the Minister of Justice, he is reputed to have a large commercial experience, acquired when Governor of Nijni-Novgorod, perhaps the greatest centre of trade in Russia, and is also an authority on banking institutions in the land of the Czars.

THE ARMY STEP.

The Longest Is That of the British Infantry.

There is a great difference in the length of the steps of the soldiers now engaged in war.

The longest step of all is that of the British infantry, which is thirty-one and a half inches. Germany and Switzerland come next, each doing thirty-one inches; and France, Italy, and Austria each step out twenty-nine inches. The shortest of all is found in the Russian Army. The Czar's soldier's step is twenty-seven and a half inches, and he only does a hundred and twelve to the minute.

This is beaten by the German, who does one hundred and fourteen to the minute. The Austrians step out at the rate of a hundred and fifteen; the French and Italian at a hundred and twenty.

It therefore follows that a Russian will take twenty minutes to march a mile, the Austrian eighteen and a two-thirds minutes, the French and Italian eighteen minutes, and the German ten or eleven seconds less.

WAR BRINGS WATER SUPPLY.

Lemnos Islanders Benefit by Sinking of Army Wells.

When the first British naval forces landed at Lemnos, near the entrance of the Dardanelles, they were surprised to find that the island which has an area of nearly 200 square miles and a population of 30,000, was practically destitute of drinking water, except for uncertain supplies from a few small springs. The allied troops were supplied with mineral water sent in shiploads through the generosity of a French woman in Marseilles.

The British authorities promptly sent to Canada for engineers, who are now engaged in sinking artesian wells, which will guarantee the people of Lemnos a reliable and abundant water supply.

AN IMMENSE TASK.

24,000 Cars Moved Factories From City of Riga.

The evacuation of the large cities that Russia has abandoned to the Germans is a task the immensity of which may be judged from figures now available concerning the partial evacuation of Riga. The population of Riga has not been seriously disturbed, the city having about as many inhabitants as at the beginning of the war, since many refugees have gathered there from the Baltic districts occupied by the Germans, but 400 factories, of which 30 belong to German subjects, have been transplanted to interior provinces. During the evacuation period from 150 to 200 loaded cars were dispatched daily, and in 24,000 carloads of machinery, metal and raw materials were shipped from Riga. The work continued for months.

Factory owners have received compensation from the Government treasury for the cost of removal, and most of the skilled workers of the factories have accompanied the employers to the new locations.

BRITISH PAY BIG TAXES CHEERFULLY

"IT'S BETTER TO PAY McKENNA THAN THE KAISER."

Many Trades Are More Prosperous Than Ever and Don't Care About Taxes.

Britishers are perfectly willing to pay for the war if thereby they can add to their chances of winning. "It's better for us to pay McKenna than the Kaiser," is the way they express it.

The duty on petrol is doubled, which does not please those who have been using their motor cars for pleasure, but satisfies the larger majority who think "joy riding" in any shape or form should be prohibited, when the country is at war. Automobiles sent into Great Britain from other countries will now have to pay a duty amounting to one-third of their value—which was put into the budget with an eye upon the profits, particularly of the American importers. They have been reaping a harvest since the British Government commandeered all automobiles factories in Great Britain to work for the army. Motorcycles, musical instruments, and cinema films sent into Britain from abroad will also have to pay duty amounting to one-third of their value.

The tax which appears to please the most people is that which takes 50 per cent. of the war profits from business firms, although the representatives in Parliament of the laboring people declaim against any profits being allowed at all in the necessities of the nation during war. Considering the huge returns which many war industries are reporting, the temptation was too great to the Exchequer in its dire need of money and more money. Not only shipping and such allied trades are flourishing as never before, but industries formerly monopolized by the Germans in supplying the wants of Great Britain in peaceful times have suddenly acquired wealth and importance after only a year of growth under Government subsidy.

Manufacturers Prosperous.

The Palmers Shipbuilding and Iron Company's report is a good example of most of the companies of that order, although several shipping firms have profited even more. The balance sheet this year shows an increase in net profits from \$325,480 to \$519,110. With money bags overflowing in this way, these concerns are not likely to Exchequer's share with particularly as Mr. McKenna's share with them upon the average of three or two years in the history of their business to put with the year of big war profits in getting the average.

Mr. McKenna not only has to collect new taxes from the British people, but he has to persuade them to loan the Government all their available cash and subscribe to the war loan, telling them frankly that \$500 pays for Britain's share in the war for only three seconds.

He must in addition finance Britain's allies, this being an obligation which Mr. Asquith's Cabinet has entered into with Russia, France, Italy and Greece if they will enter the war on the side of the entente. Then there is the question of war pensions which the Exchequer must settle, a vast field of finance by itself which an expert would ordinarily require several years to explore before presenting a new standard of pensions for the country to pay in additional taxation.

The problem of waste is also crowding upon Mr. McKenna's attention, since there appears to have been prodigal expenditure in almost every department of the army, as well as in the administration of affairs at home.

AN IMMENSE TASK.

24,000 Cars Moved Factories From City of Riga.

The evacuation of the large cities that Russia has abandoned to the Germans is a task the immensity of which may be judged from figures now available concerning the partial evacuation of Riga. The population of Riga has not been seriously disturbed, the city having about as many inhabitants as at the beginning of the war, since many refugees have gathered there from the Baltic districts occupied by the Germans, but 400 factories, of which 30 belong to German subjects, have been transplanted to interior provinces. During the evacuation period from 150 to 200 loaded cars were dispatched daily, and in 24,000 carloads of machinery, metal and raw materials were shipped from Riga. The work continued for months.

Factory owners have received compensation from the Government treasury for the cost of removal, and most of the skilled workers of the factories have accompanied the employers to the new locations.

Kirk Deacon: "When I look of the congregation seated in the pews I ask myself, 'Where is the pain? When I look at the collection at the close of the service I ask, 'Where are the

THREE VITAL QUESTIONS
Are you full of energy, vital force, and general good health? Do you get that good digestion, the foundation of good health? Pain and oppression in stomach and chest after eating, with constipation, headache, dizziness, are cure signs of Indigestion. Mother Seigel's Syrup, the great herbal remedy and tonic, will cure you.

MOTHER SEIGEL'S SYRUP
AND BANISH STOMACH TROUBLES

AFTER MEALS TAKE

Any Dispensary or direct on receipt of price, 50c and \$1.00. The large bottle contains three times as much as the smaller one. BOTTLED BY W. D. & CO. LITTLE ROCK, ARK. MADE IN GERMANY.