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THE LADY OF LYNN.

By SIR WALTER BESANT.

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CHAPTER XIII.

A RESPIRE.

LIVAS as one who carries a respite for a man already in the cart and on his way to Tyburn, or I was as one who himself receives a respite on the way to Tyburn, for if the charges in those letters were true there could be no doubt as to the result of an inquiry. Nor could there be any doubt that Lord Fyningdale in such a case would refuse an inquiry. I ran, therefore, as if everything depended on my speed, and I arrived breathless.

Molly was alone, walking about the garden restlessly. The sun was now set, but the glow of the sky lingered, and her face was flushed in the western light. "Jack," she cried, "I thought we had parted this afternoon! What has happened? You have been running. What is it?"

"A good deal has happened, Molly. For one thing, you will not be married tomorrow morning."

"Why not? Is my lord ill?"

"Not that I know of, but you will not be married tomorrow morning."

"You talk in riddles, Jack."

"Would you like to put off the wedding, Molly?"

"Alas, if I could put it off altogether! I am downhearted over it, Jack. It weighs me down like lead. But there is no escape."

"I think I have in my pocket a means of escape—a respite at least—unless there are worse larks in the world than those we have at Lynn."

"Larks at Lynn, Jack? Who are they? Oh, Jack, what has happened?"

I sat down on a garden bench. "Molly," I said, "you hold the private character of Lord Fyningdale in the highest esteem, do you not?"

"There is no better man living. This makes me ashamed of being so loath to marry him."

"Well, but, Molly, consider. Who has bestowed this fine character upon his lordship?"

"Everybody who knows him—Sam Semple for one. He is never weary of singing the praises of his patron."

"He is a grateful soul and, on his own account, a pillar of religion. I will show you presently what an ornament he is to religion. Who else?"

"The Rev. Benjamin Purden, once his tutor. Surely he ought to know."

"Surely. Nobody ought to know better. I will show you presently how admirable a witness to character this reverend divine must be esteemed."

"There is Sir Harry Malynes, who assured us that his lordship is thought to be too virtuous for the world of fashion."

"He is himself, like the parson, a fine judge of character. Is that all?"

"No. The Lady Anastasia herself spoke to me of his nobility."

"She has also spoken to me of other things. See here, Molly," I lugged out the two letters. "What I have here contain the characters of all these excellent persons—the latest scandals about them, their reputations and their practices."

"But, Jack, what scandals? What reputations?"

"You shall see, Molly. Oh, the allegations may be false, one and all. For what I know Sam may have the wings of an archangel, and Mr. Purden may be already overripe for the new Jerusalem. But you shall read."

I offered her the letters. "No," she said. "Read them in yourself."

"The first, then, is from my father's first cousin, Zackary Pentecost, a bookseller in Little Britain, which is a part of London. He is, I believe, a respectable, God-fearing man. You will observe that he does not touch for the truth of his information."

I then read at length the letter which you have already heard.

"What do you think, Molly?"

"I don't know what to think. Is the world so wicked?"

"Here is another letter, concerning the Rev. Benjamin Purden. Observe that this is another and an independent witness." So I read the second letter, which you have also heard.

"What do you think of this worthy gentleman, Molly?"

"Oh, Jack, I am overwhelmed! Tell me more, what it means!"

"It means, my dear, that a ruted gambler thought to find an heiress who would know nothing of his tarnished reputation. She must be rich. All he wanted was her money. She must not have her money tied up; it must be all in his own hands, to do with it what he chose—that is to say, to dissipate and waste it in riot and raking and gambling."

"Lord Fyningdale? Jack, think of his face, think of his manners. Are they such as you would expect in a rake?"

"There are perhaps different kinds of rakes. Tom Rising would spend the night drinking and bawling songs. Another kind would practice wickedness as eagerly, but with more politeness. What do I know of such men? Certain I am that Lord Fyningdale would not scour the streets and play the Mohawk, but that he has found other vices more pleasant and more, apparently, polite is quite possible."

"I don't understand, Jack. All the gentlemen like Mr. Rising drink and sing. Do all gentlemen who do not drink practice other vices?"

"Well, Molly, you have seen the vicar taste a glass of wine. He will roll it in the glass; he will hold it to the light, admiring the color; he will inhale the fragrance; he will drink it slowly, little by little, sipping the contents, and he will not take more than a single glass or two at the most. In the same time Tom Rising would have gulped down a whole bottle. One man wants to gratify many senses; the other seeks only to get drunk as quickly as he can. So, I take it, with the forbidden pleasures of the world. One man may cultivate his taste; the other may be satisfied with the coarse and plentiful debauchery. This is not, however, talk for honest folk like you and me."

"Go on with your story, Jack. Never mind the different ways of wickedness."

"Well, he heard of an heiress. She belonged to a town remote from fashion—a town of simple merchants and sailors. She was very rich; much richer than he at first believed."

"Who told him about this heiress?"

"A creature called Sam Semple, whom the captain once cudgeled. Why, Molly, it is revenge. In return for the cudgeling he would place you and your fortune in the hands of a man who would bring misery upon you and ruin on your fortune. Heavens, how the thing works out! And it happened just in the nick of time that a spring was found in the town—a spring whose medicinal properties—Ha! I jumped to my feet."

"Molly, who found that spring? Sam Semple. Who wrote to the doctor about it? Sam Semple. Who spread abroad a report that the physicians of London were sending their patients to Lynn? Sam Semple. How many patients have come to us from London? None, save and except only the party of those who came secretly in his lordship's train to sing his praises and to work his wicked will. Why, Molly— I burst into a laugh, for now I understand, as one sometimes does understand, suddenly and without proof other than the rapid conclusion, the full meaning of the whole."

"Molly, I say, there has never been any medicinal spring here at all. The doctor's well is but common spring water. There are no cures. The whole business is a plan, a bite, an invention of Sam Semple!"

"Jack, have a care. How can that be when the doctor has a long list of cures?"

"I know it, but I do know that Sam Semple invented the spa in order to bring this invasion of sharpers and gamblers and heiress hunters. Oh, what a liar he is! What revenge!"

"This letter I folded, sealed, addressed and dropped into my pocket. Then I bade Molly good night, entreated her to be thankful for her escape and so left her with a light heart. Verily it seemed as if the address of the last two months had been wholly and suddenly lifted, and on my way back to the Crown I passed the Lady Anastasia's lodging just as her chair was brought to the house. I opened the door for her and stood in hand."

"Why, it is Jack!" she cried. "It is the sailor Jack, the constant rover. Have you anything more to tell me?"

"Only that Molly will not keep that appointment of tomorrow evening."

"Oh, that interesting appointment in St. Nicholas' church. May a body ask why the ceremony has been postponed?"

"Things have been disclosed at the last moment, fortunately in time."

"What things, and by whom?"

"By letter. It is stated as a fact well known that Lord Fyningdale is nothing better than a ruted rake and a notorious gambler."

"Indeed! The excellent Lord Fyningdale! Impossible! Quite impossible! The illustrious example of so many virtues! The explanations will be, I am sure, complete and satisfactory. Ruted; a rake; a notorious gambler! What next will the world say? Does his lordship know of this discovery? Did you not? Well, my friend, I am much obliged to you for telling me. You are quite sure Molly will not be there? Very good of you to tell me. For my own part I start for London quite early—at 5 o'clock. Goodby, Jack!"

Then I went into the Crown, where I learned that the captain had been reading another letter containing accusations as bad as those in the other two.

So we fell to talking over the business, and it was resolved that the captain should demand explanations by letter, that he should refuse to receive the villain Sam Semple or his lordship and that the vicar should, if necessary, proceed to London and there learn what he could concerning the past history and the present reputation of the noble sutor. Meantime I said no more about the intended marriage at St. Nicholas' church and the abandonment of the plan. As things turned out, it would have been far better had I told the captain and had we both planted ourselves as sentinels at the door, so as to be quite sure that Molly did not go forth at 6 in the morning.

That evening, after leaving me, Lady Anastasia sent a note to Lord Fyningdale. "I am leaving Lynn early tomorrow morning. I expect to be in London in two days. Shall write to Molly."

"But afterward, Jack? What shall we do afterward? If he is innocent, he will take offense. If not—"

"If you were engaged to marry a young merchant, Molly, or to a skipper, or you heard rumors of bankruptcy, drink or evil courses, what would you do?"

"I would tell him that I had heard such and such about him, and I should ask for explanations."

"Then do exactly the same with Lord Fyningdale. He is bound to inquire. Why, the vicar himself says that he would, if necessary, in order to ascertain the truth, travel all the way to London, there to learn the foundations, if any, for these charges, and afterward into Gloucestershire, where his country mansion stands, to learn on the spot what the tenants and the people of the country know of him."

"But suppose he refuses explanations. He is too proud to be called to account."

"Then send him packing. Lord or no lord, proud or humble, if he furnishes explanations, if these things are untrue, then—why, then you will consider what to do. But, Molly, I do not believe that any explanations will be forthcoming and that your noble lover will carry it off to the end with the same lofty pride and cold mien."

"Let us go into the parlor, Jack. There are the captain's writing materials. Help me to say what is proper. Oh, is it possible? Can I believe it? Are these things true? That proud man, raised above his fellows by his virtues and his rank and his principles! Jack, he risked his life for me!"

"Ask no more questions, Molly. We must have explanations. Let us write the letter."

It was Molly's first letter—the only letter, perhaps, that she will ever write in all her life. Certainly she had never written one before, nor has she ever written one since. Like most housewives, her writing is only wanted for household accounts, recipes for puddings and pies and the labeling of her bottles and jars. I have the letter before me at this moment. It is written in a large, sprawling hand, and the spelling is not such as would satisfy my father.

Naturally she looked to me for advice. I had written many letters to my owners and to foreign merchants about cargoes, and the like, and was therefore able to advise the composition of a letter which should be justly expressed and to the point:

"Honored Lord—This is from me at the present moment in my guardian's parlor—writing parlor when I as mate of the ship should have written port of harbor. It is to inform you that intelligence has been brought by letters from London and Cambridge. Touching the matters referred to in these letters, I have to report for your satisfaction that they call your lordship in round terms a gambler and a ruted rake and your companions at the rickety old Beau and the colonel—simple rogues, common cheats and sharpers. Shall not, therefore, meet your lordship at the church tomorrow morning as instructed. Awaiting your lordship's explanations and commands, your most obedient, humble servant."

"MOLLY."

Fyningdale. He is accused of certain things. The captain must make inquiry. He is bound to inquire. Why, the vicar himself says that he would, if necessary, in order to ascertain the truth, travel all the way to London, there to learn the foundations, if any, for these charges, and afterward into Gloucestershire, where his country mansion stands, to learn on the spot what the tenants and the people of the country know of him."

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Miscellaneous Reading.

A BLACK TYRANT'S TREASURE.

Hope of Finding It Springs Eternal in Hayti.

According to tradition in the West Indies, the buried treasure of Captain Kidd is small in value compared with that which was hidden by the Black Napoleon of Hayti. As there are men who hope to find Kidd's ill-gotten gains, there are others who dig on the chance of discovering Christophe's millions. Popular report numbers these at fifteen and makes them, in great part, of Spanish coins of gold and silver. Kidd, both as a collector of wealth and a destroyer of life, was a tyro in comparison with Christophe. Kidd, at times, had bowels of compassion, though they were shrunken. King Henri I of Hayti knew not such a word as pity.

Christophe was born a slave on one of the English islands of the West Indies. Though not of large frame, he had great physical strength. He also had a furious temper, but this he was taught with whips and irons to govern. The monotony of existence under the Union Jack palled upon him to such an extent before he was full grown that he ran away. His mecca was Hayti. Slavery had been abolished there and the fame of Toussaint L'Ouverture had spread widely among blacks as well as whites. After the capture through treachery of L'Ouverture by Gen. Leclerc, of the French army of occupation, Christophe attached himself to the fortunes of Dessalines. His bravery and cunning as a guerrilla attracted attention while his monstrous cruelty was overlooked by those of his own side. Dessalines, also a black and ex-slave, gave Christophe high commands and trusted him as close as one Haytian ever trusts another.

Unlike many of his countrymen, Christophe was highly charged with energy. As a slave he envied those who indulged in a daily alest; as a freeman he slept little and never when others were awake.

When Dessalines had himself crowned as emperor in 1804, the thought occurred to Christophe that he could rule a people as easily as command a regiment. It required all his tact to escape the suspicious attention of Dessalines. As an emperor the latter played the part of jury, judge and executioner, and from his decision there was no appeal, except a successful cry to arms. This cry was heard in Hayti in 1806, and while its echoes were still young the first black emperor of Hayti was ready for burial.

There was no time to be lost in securing a grip upon the direction of affairs and none was lost by Christophe. His command was well drilled for Haytian troops and had boundless confidence in his chief. By threatening and cajoling he increased his little army until he was strong enough to proclaim himself ruler of the northern part of Hayti. In the southern part the Spanish residents made a brave fight. The war was prolonged for four years, but among the Spaniards there was no leader of the calibre of Christophe and they capitulated finally.

Upon those who remained on the island Christophe practiced the most savage cruelties. He had an insatiate lust for gold, as well as power, and it was from the Spaniards that he wrenched the foundation and even the bulk of an enormous fortune. Full of suspicion and trusting none except, perhaps, his wife, he decided to build a fortress in which he could intrench himself in time of danger; also a palace which would rival the royal palaces of Europe. Under his direction Sans Souci was built, and, though in ruinous condition today, is beautiful still. But the great monument of his power, energy and savagery is La Ferriere, a huge fortress perched on a mountain top and accessible only by a steep and difficult trail.

Before the first stone of La Ferriere was laid Christophe had himself proclaimed King of Hayti, under the title of Henri I. As a ruler he was ruthless. Some of his projects were magnificent, but wholly out of proportion to the size of his kingdom or the wealth of his people.

This wealth, however, it was his design to possess himself. He levied and collected taxes and these were so graded that no man was asked to pay more than he possessed, or the king thought he possessed. No man might labor for himself undone. Thousands of tons of stone in huge blocks were needed for La Ferriere. They were provided, though each block cost a life. Hills were levelled and ravines were filled to the tops. Steadily and not slowly grew the frowning walls of La Ferriere. There was no water on the mountain top from which La Ferriere frowned. A well was dug deep into its heart and from an ice-cold source water gushed. The garison was safe from thirst.

Dungeons many, deep, dark, were constructed. Of these the bottle-necked dungeons were built upon specifications provided by Christophe. There are four of these bottle-necked dungeons in a row. The fall to the bottom of the first is fifteen feet, the second twenty feet, the third thirty feet, while the bottom of the fourth is in the heart of the mountain. The latter is a sepulchre filled with the bones of those who perished under the rule of Christophe, otherwise Henri I.

It is estimated that in the building and equipping of La Ferriere 30,000 lives were sacrificed. Those who built it received no pay and had the privilege of "finding themselves." The work was equivalent to a quick shrift. Three hundred pieces of ordnance were pulled up the mountain and mounted. Many of these are in place today. In Christophe's day it took a regiment a full day to drag a 32-pounder up the mountain-side.

Christophe had a sense of humor as black as his complexion. He was at luncheon one day when he noticed a company of soldiers tugging at a gun. There were a hundred men in the company. Leaving the table he sent for the officer in command. In his softest manner he inquired why the men were so slow at their work. The gun was heavy, said the officer. He was told to parade his men. He did so. "Let every fourth man step to the front," said Christophe. The order was obeyed. He then ordered that those who had stepped to the front be shot. They were shot. "You are now seventy-five," said Christophe in his sulkiest tones to the survivors, "Let me see you pull the gun up." The seventy tried and failed. Once more they were paraded. Every third man stepped to the front in answer to Christophe's low command. They were shot. "You are now fifty men," he said; "let me see you pull the gun in place." With the desperation of despair the fifty men strained at the ropes and succeeded in their task. "I thought you could do it," said Christophe with a smile. Then he ordered the fifty men shot. They were shot and he resumed his luncheon.

He was walking on the battlements one day with a young man toward whom he had shown some kindness. "How far is it to the bottom?" he asked of his young companion, looking over the edge, which bordered a precipice. "Two thousand feet, sir," was the answer. "Let me see you jump over," said Christophe. The young man sprang into space. From the sides of the precipice grew some sturdy bushes and from top to bottom there were strong and elastic creepers. In some of these bushes the young man's body, as by a miracle, was caught. With wonderful agility he made his way to the bottom, then climbed the mountain trail, and, appearing before Christophe, torn, bleeding and breathless, murmured: "Your bidding has been done, sir."

"Let me see you do it again," said Christophe. Only one miracle was performed that day and he did not return. When Christophe heard of a subject who had money he sent for him. If he failed to produce as much as was expected, he was thrown over the battlements or dropped into a bottle-necked dungeon. When a majority of his subjects had given all they possessed to the Black Napoleon and his gains amounted to many millions, he had them buried, it is said, by some of his most trusted guards. In a short time the guards were seen no more. They disappeared one by one. "on secret missions," Christophe said. The Haytiens were long suffering, but they rose at last. Christophe was in his Palace of Sans Souci when he heard of the revolt. He called his guards, gave them money, which was not his custom, and told them to slay and spare not. Had he been able to accompany them he might have won one more battle, so great was the fear inspired by his presence. But he had been stricken with paralysis, for which he took baths of rum and pepper. His wife and daughter were with him when word was brought that his guards had joined the insurgents. He found strength to hobble into a vacant apartment of his palace. There he put a pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. His body was carried to La Ferriere by his wife and daughter and buried in the fortress, where, it is said, his millions lie hid.

The guard at La Ferriere is changed at short intervals to this day, that they may not find Christophe's millions. Official and unofficial digging for the buried treasure has been carried on from the day of Christophe's death until the present.

Some years ago a rumor flashed through the island that the treasure had been discovered. It was during the term of President Hippolyte. A young man appeared at one of the gaming tables at Cape Haytien and paid his losses in old Spanish doubloons. He gambled, lost and paid with the aid of one to whom money is dross. His manners and his money attracted much attention. The Haytiens are a born gossip and tales of Christophe's millions are so ripe that many were quick to suggest that the stranger had a tag to some purpose. The tale was borne to Hippolyte. The president sent for the stranger.

"Confide in me and become a general," said Hippolyte. In his suavest fashion the stranger said that he had nothing to confide. This was exasperating, but Hippolyte kept his temper and control and maintained a friendly attitude. For many days entertaining the stranger, who seemed quite at ease, finally Hippolyte grew tired of playing the gentleman-host and threatened the stranger betook himself to silence. The stranger betook himself to silence. He was thrown into prison. His jailer practiced arts upon him which were calculated to open his mouth and his coffers. They failed to extract a confession or a fortune. The prisoner was set at liberty and followed by spies day and night. He disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

In spite of the Haytian government and the attempts of thousands of private adventurers to find the buried treasure of the Black Napoleon, there is much of La Ferriere that remains unsearched. There are dungeons and gloomy passages into which the soldiers who are ever on guard there. There are thick and rusty iron doors, the creaking of which sends shivers through the poor wretches who open them to the few visitors whose strength and nerves are of a quality to carry them along the steep and tangled path that leads to the fortress. That Christophe possessed great wealth when he killed himself is no matter of doubt. There is no record that he smuggled it out of the country to a land of more stable government than his own, for he had too little faith in human nature to trust his fortune in other hands and in his day countries of stable government were less numerous than they are now.

—New York Sun.

Christophe had a sense of humor as black as his complexion. He was at luncheon one day when he noticed a company of soldiers tugging at a gun. There were a hundred men in the company. Leaving the table he sent for the officer in command. In his softest manner he inquired why the men were so slow at their work. The gun was heavy, said the officer. He was told to parade his men. He did so. "Let every fourth man step to the front," said Christophe. The order was obeyed. He then ordered that those who had stepped to the front be shot. They were shot. "You are now seventy-five," said Christophe in his sulkiest tones to the survivors, "Let me see you pull the gun up." The seventy tried and failed. Once more they were paraded. Every third man stepped to the front in answer to Christophe's low command. They were shot. "You are now fifty men," he said; "let me see you pull the gun in place." With the desperation of despair the fifty men strained at the ropes and succeeded in their task. "I thought you could do it," said Christophe with a smile. Then he ordered the fifty men shot. They were shot and he resumed his luncheon.

He was walking on the battlements one day with a young man toward whom he had shown some kindness. "How far is it to the bottom?" he asked of his young companion, looking over the edge, which bordered a precipice. "Two thousand feet, sir," was the answer. "Let me see you jump over," said Christophe. The young man sprang into space. From the sides of the precipice grew some sturdy bushes and from top to bottom there were strong and elastic creepers. In some of these bushes the young man's body, as by a miracle, was caught. With wonderful agility he made his way to the bottom, then climbed the mountain trail, and, appearing before Christophe, torn, bleeding and breathless, murmured: "Your bidding has been done, sir."

"Let me see you do it again," said Christophe. Only one miracle was performed that day and he did not return. When Christophe heard of a subject who had money he sent for him. If he failed to produce as much as was expected, he was thrown over the battlements or dropped into a bottle-necked dungeon. When a majority of his subjects had given all they possessed to the Black Napoleon and his gains amounted to many millions, he had them buried, it is said, by some of his most trusted guards. In a short time the guards were seen no more. They disappeared one by one. "on secret missions," Christophe said. The Haytiens were long suffering, but they rose at last. Christophe was in his Palace of Sans Souci when he heard of the revolt. He called his guards, gave them money, which was not his custom, and told them to slay and spare not. Had he been able to accompany them he might have won one more battle, so great was the fear inspired by his presence. But he had been stricken with paralysis, for which he took baths of rum and pepper. His wife and daughter were with him when word was brought that his guards had joined the insurgents. He found strength to hobble into a vacant apartment of his palace. There he put a pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. His body was carried to La Ferriere by his wife and daughter and buried in the fortress, where, it is said, his millions lie hid.

The guard at La Ferriere is changed at short intervals to this day, that they may not find Christophe's millions. Official and unofficial digging for the buried treasure has been carried on from the day of Christophe's death until the present.

Some years ago a rumor flashed through the island that the treasure had been discovered. It was during the term of President Hippolyte. A young man appeared at one of the gaming tables at Cape Haytien and paid his losses in old Spanish doubloons. He gambled, lost and paid with the aid of one to whom money is dross. His manners and his money attracted much attention. The Haytiens are a born gossip and tales of Christophe's millions are so ripe that many were quick to suggest that the stranger had a tag to some purpose. The tale was borne to Hippolyte. The president sent for the stranger.

"Confide in me and become a general," said Hippolyte. In his suavest fashion the stranger said that he had nothing to confide. This was exasperating, but Hippolyte kept his temper and control and maintained a friendly attitude. For many days entertaining the stranger, who seemed quite at ease, finally Hippolyte grew tired of playing the gentleman-host and threatened the stranger betook himself to silence. The stranger betook himself to silence. He was thrown into prison. His jailer practiced arts upon him which were calculated to open his mouth and his coffers. They failed to extract a confession or a fortune. The prisoner was set at liberty and followed by spies day and night. He disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

In spite of the Haytian government and the attempts of thousands of private adventurers