A Dark Night's Work.

BY PAUL INGELOW.

Continued from 1st page. Le Britta had determined to learn what had become of the missing Vernon fortune. This man, Darius Meredith. had received it from the tramp, undoubtedly, and had misappropriated it. It was, furthermore, probable that, having driven the tramp away and denied ever having received the money, he would not convert it immediately to his own use for fear a later investigation might trace it. He possibly had it hidden somewhere, and, acting upon this conjecture, Le

Britta prepared himself to find out

Meredith received him cordially. He was a shrewd man. While Le Britta was cultivating his friendship diligently so as to win his confidence, the scheming wolf in sheep's clothing fancied he was getting in his clutches a new victim to pluck. Le Britta seemed to have plenty of money, he had acted the innocent. inexperienced and inoffensive society idler to perfection. Meredith had invited him to his house to treat him well, to profess great friendship for him, and later, to lead him into gambling, when he would fleece him of all his available cash. Le Britta found preparation for a pleasant evening in the cozy library. The shades were drawn, the gas brilliantly lighted, and wine, cigars and cards were near at hand. He never smoked, drank nor gambled, but, even at the risk of slight nausea, he took a few puffs at a havana, his mental excuse being the exigencies of the occasion, and was soon

engaged in a brisk conversation with his The latter discussed business, society and politics. Then he began descanting on the rare good fortune attending some of his recent speculations. Then he drifted to cards.

"A quiet game, once in a while, is a relaxation," remarked Meredith. "A small stake makes it still more interesting. I had quite a run of luck with the governor's adjutant a few evenings since. Won enough to invest in a new diamond pin. Am having it reset now. By the way, Le Britta, suppose we have a round at poker, just to while the time away" Le Britta ascertained that the conversation had reached a critical point. He never played cards, in fact, he was ignorant of the details of any game of chance. If he confessed this Meredith

would probably shorten the interview peremptorily and defeat his intentions. On the other hand, if he feigned to play, Meredith would win his money, and Le Britta could scarcely afford to lose anything, even in pursuit of a cherished

purpose.

"I'll try my experiment," he murmured, decisively. "Now or never!"

Meredith had arisen to secure a cardcase from the side board. His half-filled glass of wine on the table stood temptingly near to Le Britta. Quick as a flash the latter drew the

tiny phial from his pocket. Deftly he uncorked it. With a rapid movement he reached over and reversed the little bottle. Only a part of its contents fell into the wine glass, but he felt sure there was sufficient to affect his intended Meredith resumed his seat, all un-

conscious of this little side-play. H began shuffling the cards. "Oh! by the way" remarked Le Britta "You were speaking of diamonds"

"Did you ever notice this ring As he spoke the photographer showed a small but exquisitely chiseled diamond on a finger of his left hand

"No, not particularly" To Le Britta's satisfaction as Meredith turned his eyes upon the circlet in question he mechanically raised the wine glass to his lips and drained its contents. He started slightly with a quick grimace, and seemed to detect the peculiar flavor of the liquor, but Le Britta hastened to divert his attention from the drugged wine by removing his finger-ring. He held the gleaming gem in the full radiance of the light, and

"Just keep your eyes fixed on the diamond, Mr. Meredith, and observe how peculiarly the facets reflect the

Now, this was a ruse. Understanding the modus operandi of hypnotism, Le Britta was proceeding in a line with the system adopted by its most skilful exponents. They fascinate a subject's gaze first, and then centralizing all their mesmeric strength endeavor to force the subject into hypnotic sleep.

Le Britta brought all the energy of his will to subjugate Meredith. He was disappointed at the result, however, for Meredith puffed coolly at his cigar, and there was not a particle of evidence in the hard, evil face that he was affected by either the drug or the mesmeric

efforts of his guest. Suddenly, about to turn his eyes away from the diamond with some indifferent remark as to its beauty, Meredith started. Caused by some sudden dizzying effect of the medicine, an observation of Le Britta's steady glance or a latent taste of the drugged liquor in his mouth, Meredith shot a penetrating look at his com-

Le Britta, engrossed in hypnotizing him, did not observe the suspicious movement. Meredith veiled his glance with a grim expression. Then, noticing the spot on the table, where half the contents of the phial had been spilled, his lips

He fixed his eyes again on the diamond ring extended by Le Britta, the cigar dropped to the table, he drew back, and then—his eyes began to close.

** A quick flush of delight sprung to Le Britta's cheek. Not for a moment did he doubt but that the combined mesmeric influence and the drug had conduced to bring his companion under his influence

"Success!" he breathed, fervently. "My man is hypnotized!"

CHAPTER XXXV.-DUPED! "And now for his secret!"

Le Britta arose cautiously and approached Meredith, who had sank back in his chair until his body had assumed a half-recumbent position. He imitated professional hypnotists, by making several passes before the subject; then he stroked his eyes; they opened. The unsuspicious photographer was satisfied that his experiment had succeeded in every particular. Meredith was certainly in a mesmeric trance. His appearance indicated the fact plainly. Le Britta kept his eye fixed upon him in silence for a moment or two. Then he directed, in a low, steady tone of voice:—
"Turn that wine glass upside down."
Meredith put forth his hand and obeyed.

"Arise to your feet." Meredith struggled to an erect position, steadying himself on the back of the chair.

"Will you answer me some questions?"

was the next query. "Yes."

"You know a man named Dave Wharton, a tramp? "I do." "He was your former business

Meredith swayed slightly, and he hesitated a moment or two before replying. His eyes were rather clear and intelligent for a person under mesmeric spell, but be finally said:— "Yes, he was"

"Have you seen him lately?" No reply

"Did he net come to you a little over a week ago?" Stubborn silence "Answer!" ordered Le Britta

"He may have done so"

"And brought a package of money? It was intrusted to your keeping He returned for it. You denied having it Speak!" "Ah !"

Meredith uttered the ejaculation with energy; his eyes dilated
"That package you must give to me
Do you understand?" It seemed as if Meredith was about to spring upon Le Britta. His eyes glared, his fingers worked nervously. Then, of a sudden, his face resumed its

vacant expression, and he murmured.
"You want it?" armly. "It is in the house?"

"I must have it!" rejoined Le Britta, The lamp still burned on the table. "Probably." "In this room?"

"No." "Where, then?" "Shall I lead you to it?" "Yes."

"Come!" Meredith started for the door, Le Britta followed him. In the hall, he took up a lighted lamp. Down a corridor he proceeded, stopped at a door, took a key from his pocket, unlocked it, and

7 4 0

entering the apartment, placed the lamp on a little table in the center of the

Le Britta gazed curiously about the apartment. It seemed to be a sort of study or business room, for it had a desk, and, sunk in the wall of one side, a huge iron door resembling that of a bank vault. This door had the conventional combination lock and knob. Meredith swayed dreamily. He really appeared like a man under the combined influence of narcotics and mesmeric force. "Is it here that I shall find the package belonging to the tramp?" queried Le Britta, sharply

The other nodded affirmatively "Where?" Meredith pointed to the vault door "It is in there?"

Le Britta sprang to the door, but found it secured. "Can you open it?" he queried, eagerly. "I can." "Do so."

Meredith approached the door, set the it against the indented disc figures, ide it once or twice, and the door wung back. Sherres and cases showed within,

crammed full of papers. "Go and get t. . package," ordered Le Britta. Meredith took a step forward. Then he reeled, recoiled, and sank to a chair

His head fell upon his breast Le Britta, alarmed at a fear of failure in his mission when so vitally near to apparent success, seized his arm roughly "Arouse yourself, I order you." spoke, hurriedly and with force

Meredith only mumbled a few incoherent words "Get the package!" "No!"

"You must!" "I cannot. You get it."

"The drug has dalled the mesmeric intelligence, ' murmured Le Britta, apprehensively. "Come Meerdith! You tell me to get the package?" "Yes.

"Where is it?" "In the vault."

"Where?" "Left hand cabinet. Lower drawer." With an exultant cry, Le Britta sprang into the vault. The light from the outer room illumined its dark corners sufficiently to

show the cabinet described. Toward this the photographer advanced, his heart beating high with hope. Sudden darkness supervened. Suddenly, too, horror sent his blood curdling after-effects of the suffocation. in every vein. He dimly saw Meredith, his face wreathed with cunning triumph, spring

to the door. There was a crash and a damp, gruesome cellar of the isolated mocking, exultant laugh. Announcing defeat, peril, deep, decisive, unmasking the clever rogue who had penetrated his designs and led him

CHAPTER XXXVI. - A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

a shrewder man than himself.

The hypocritical scoundrel who posed before the community as a business man of probity and enterprise, and yet who was at heart a conscienceless villain, Darius Meredith, uttered a chuckling liquid laved the base of his brain, and cry of satisfaction. The ponderous iron door was shut with a crash. In a second more, clickclicketty-clack! went the tumblers shut

into their lock. "Caged" muttered Meredith. "I suspected his game. The drug and his looks betrayed him. I decoyed him here. Aye! yell my friend, you'll bide my will,

Meredith sat down at the table, a muffled sound echoed from behind the iron door, but he paid not the slightest attention to it. "I've got him safe," he reflected. "Now to think out this complication. What does it mean? Who is this man? A

detective in disguise? Scarcely, for his credentials come too straight. Yet he has shadowed me—has purposely cultiva-ted my acquaintance He knows my former business partner, the tramp, he knows that the package was intrusted to my keeping. How? Has Wharton told him? How far can they prove my possession of that money? I must think out this unexpected complication. I am forewarned. How much does this fel-

For fully ten minutes the plotter meditated, his sinister brows bent in a thoughtful scowl. "I have it!" he cried at last, arising suddenly to his feet. "I will release Le Britta, but at the point of a revolver. He will be weak, inert, passive from imprisonment in that close vault. I

will force him to tell me all he knows. Ah! what is that?" At a window something seemed to tap-to fade in the outer darkness as he glanced thither, startled. He ran to it, peered anxiously out, and then drew the shade closer, with the

careless remark:-"The wind blowing a branch of the oak against the panes.' Then he took out a revolver. Approaching the vault, the weapon in his hand, he unlocked its door. "Come out!" he ordered.

There was no answer. He threw the door wide open. "Con.e out, I say!" he repeated, loudly, "only, I am armed, and will shoot if you attempt to escape from this room

liello! The revolver went clauging to the floor Aghast, the plotter stood, rooted to the spot, in dismay and horror, Across the stone floor of the vault lay prostrate form-Le Britta The air-tight compartment had done

its deadly work Its victim lay motion-Meredith at last stooped over and turned the face of the prostrate man toward the light Its pallor terrified him. He examined the heart No pulsation "Mercy!" he gasped, tottering

like a drunken man. "I have killed him. It is-murder!" His face was the color of ashes, his nerveless hands began to tremble. What should he do? Here was crime. Here was peril. He shuddered as the gruesome shadows about him seemed to frame the somber outlines of a prison cell, the felon's dock, the scaffold!

Then fright, deadly fear, Impelled him to sudden, frantic action. He dashed from the room, out into the yard, into the stables. He hitched up a fast horse to a close buggy. Then back he sped to the vault apartment.

His victim lay as he had left him. He seized him in his arms, bore him down a dark corridor, out into the garden, through the stable, and, placing the limp form in the bottom of the buggy covered it with a horse-blanket. In five minutes he was traversing ac

unfrequented road leading to the suburbs. In half an hour he was in the open country. Once he halted the horse on a rustic bridge, and seemed about to lift the body of his victim and destroy all trace of his crime by casting it over the rail to the raging stream below.

The approach of a pedestrian sent him speeding on, however. For miles he traveled a cheerless highway. Finally he made out a dismantled structure standing back from the road. It was a place familiar to him, a residence some years since devastated by fire. "Just the place!" he ejaculated. one goes there. I'll hide the body in the

cellur. It will never be discovered." He entered the house staggering under his burden He reappeared bearing the blanket, glancing apprehensively back ever and anon, and hurrying on the jaded steed once again in the vehicle "That disposes of him" he muttered "I did not mean to kill him. He brought it on himself No one will ever know

What a dolt! I forgot to lock up the vault Should a burgiar enter the house and find his way to that room he might Utterly heartless Darius Meredith grew

almost cheerful as he neared home again. A dangerous enemy had been removed from his path. The low-souled scoundret actually congratulated himself on his dark night's work. He entered the house and hastened to the apartment where Jera Le Britta had battled fate and had been defeated. The vault door was still open.

Entering the vault Meredith examined its interior. "All safe!" he muttered "and package"-He sought to make sure of it by pulling open a drawer and gazing into it. An awful cry escaped his lips as he

"Empty-gone" he gasped. "Robbed The money"-Was not there. He recled into the outer room. Almost fainting he felt a cold breath of air revice his tottering of it." sensibilities. With a wild cry he observed that a

window was open. And then the truth paralyzed mind and heart as it flashed across him with the intensity of a lightning shock. During his absence some one had opened a window and entering the apartment had stelen the treasured package! There could be no doubt of it and the plotter's heart stood still as he asked himself the question-Had this mysterious person as wel witnessed the crime, that proven, would send him to the gallows?

CHAPTER XXXVII.-THE BORDER-LAND.

There is no agent of death more potent and yet deceptive in its effects than that which induces dissolution by means of suffocation. In drowning and the results of smothering gases, no trace of violence exists. There is a certain painless fading into insensibility, and a suspension of the natural forces of the frame that is marked and alarming, even before death arrives. The shock to the system clogs the circulation, deadens the brain, chokes the

lungs. It is intense, and often, even where the victim has not absolutely reached the danger point, there seems to be an absolute cessation of vitality. The superficial examination of his victim made by Meredith after discovering Le Britta's insensibility in the vault. tended to satisfy him that the photog-rapher was dead. He could detect no pulse or respiration, while the bloodless

lips and leaden eyelids added a ghastly aspect to the face of his decoyed guest. During that long drive into the country, Le Britta did not betoken one sign of returning consciousness, and when he was lifted from the buggy and carried into the old dismantled building, he lay as inert a burden as ever in the arms of his seeming assassin.

Jera Le Britta was not dead, however. That trance-like coma, that semblance of dissolution was but the lingering deadening effect of the blighted, mephitic atmosphere of the close vault. Five minutes more confinement in that sealed safe would have resulted fatally. but as it was the precipitation of the

murderous schemer saved the photographer's life, for the quick rush to the open air relieved the poison-charged arteries, and the lingering inertia of body and mind was simply the deadening moved during that eventful ride, not a muscle moved as he was carried into the

But what air, jolting and time had failed to effect, another potent element of nature consummated. When Meredith placed his supposedly into a trap, a resounding echo told Le Britta that he was caged, in the toils of of the cellar, he dropped him directly

across a pool of water. Haunted with dread for the results of his terrible deed, and frightened by phantoms conjured by his craven mind in that dark cellar-way, the miscreant allowed Le Britte to slip roughly to the

lapped cheek and brow.

There was a deep-drawn sigh, a spasmodic flutter of the nerves, and then, like a man chained but gradually com-

ing back to life from a dense swoon, the photographer opened his eyes. Here and there, through breaks in wall and from sashless apertures, the faint light of the night permeated the place. He could feel the chili, the discomfort; he could discern that he was in some unfamiliar spet, and yet the last hideeus battle for life against the in-visible forces of nature in that ponderous iron vault was so strongly present in his mind that, with a shock and a groan, he closed his eyes again, believing him-self still to be a prisoner in the home of

These are the strange, uncanny hours of existence, these moments when a person finds himself face to face with the untried, the unknown, the dim, the vague, the mysterious. It is then that the senses recoil alarmed; it is then that the soul, forced alone to battle with what the mind cannot grasp and comprehend, is revealed in its strong intensity, and man knews that the essence of

immortality within him has a vivid existence and is a strong reality. So Le Britta, at that moment still thinking that the strong iron walls of the vault enclosed him, that he was yet a doomed prisoner of villainy, awakening to a last final gasp of ebbing vitality, saw the world fade, forgot momentarily its cares and its pleasures alike, and faced the inevitable, dreamily yet tan-All the good, all the bad his life had

known flashed across him mentally. The shuddering fear of death was robbed of its sting. What was a sharp pain, a choking moan, a last three of the overwrought nerves? But the soul! In that moment there came to Le Britta what comes to every good man when the final moment dawns, be it

slow or sudden, announced by lingering illness or speedily as a lightning's flash -peace; rare, calm, ineffable peace. And joy! It was hard to leave a busy, enticing changes; it was hard to leave and despondent to think of loved ones, to close human eyes on a away.' human world, radiant with beauty, flowers, bird-song and sunshine; but the hension of the heaven that lay beyond the borderland, enwrapt soul and sense

in a delirium of joy. Here was the Promised Land—here was the pledge old as the world, and sacred as only the word of divinity can be, that death had no sting, and the grave was robbed of victory, and life, real, final life, was vouchsafed to the man who had tried to do his duty because he loved humanity better than his own safety! Le Britta sighed. So near to the seeming portals of death, so blest by radiant pictures of the future, so full of faith that those he loved would be cared for by divine mercy, he seemed to knock at the gates of heaven, and long to be let

in upon the flawless fields of paradise. "Good-by, old world! I have tried to A last murmur, a last settling back to dissolution, and then-A harsh, discordant whistle, sharp, shrill, nerve-disturbing. It pierced the solemn silence like the

note of a bird of prey in a garden of Rudely shocked, vividly disturbed, Jera Le Britta opened his eyes, and glaring into the darkness and gloom, listened intently.

CHAPTER XXXVIII, -A NEW TRAIL Back to life in a flash, back to reality, to the earth-earthy, but with an experience that would impress his mind till his dying day, the startled Jera Le Britta

was roughly summoned. With clearer senses on the alert, he could readily discern now that he was not in the yault at Meredith's house. No, there was a damp cellar-way, and some one was approaching, the whistle announced it, the reflection of the rays of a lantern in some compartment near by plainly indicated it.

To a man who had given up his life as lost, and had bidden farewell to the world, the revulsion of an unexpected recall to earthly existence acted as decided shock.

Each moment the photographer's senses cleared. A thought of duty at hand. Tasks uncompleted flashed across his mind, and he took up the armor anew of perseverance and faith without a mur Meredith! What a villain - what depths of evil in his cruel nature! The

stolen treasure! Why, as never before, the issues of fate trembled in a perilous. uncertain balance. "This is some cellar, the cellar of the house where Meredith lives," cogitated Le Britta. "Scarcely, for it looks disused and dismantled. Where then?" That mysterious whistle was repeated, and around a corner of a stone partition the rays of the lantern again glinted Surely, you have cronies, frience across the slimy, damp foundations. There was something sinister in tha

whistle, and a thought of Meredith be safe?" caused Le Britta to hesitate as the im pulse came to cry out. He was glad that he checked it, for just then, as if in response to the first whistle, a second one echoed, and then a gruff voice exclaimed:-"Ah! you've come at last, have you?"

"Yes, on time, ain't I?" There was the click of a watch-case and the reply:-"Scarcely. The appointment was for

midnight, and it barely lacks an hour "Well, ain't that time enough?" "If we burry."

"Come on, then." "I've got a boat." "Then we can row to the Point." "Yes. Durand must have some mighty mysterious scheme on hand to go through all this secrecy and trouble.' "Durand!" gasped Le Britta.

That name acted upon him like a

shock. He sat up abruptly; he surprised away all the lingering weakness of the moment by struggling to his feet. Durand! Following up one branch of the case, he had accidentally stumbled across another, and both dovetailed. These men had spoken Durand's name: more than that, they referred to some mysterious mission for which he had engaged them-a midnight task, a sinister errand well in accordance with the usual evil methods of procedure of the villain who held the key to all the mysteries and counterplots that had grown

from Le Britta's championship of the cause of beautiful, persecuted Gladys Vernon. Arranging mentally the case as it stood, the photographer realized that here was a new diverging path in the case to follow, which might bring about great

The footsteps of the two men retreated. and the light from the lantern disap-Le Britta started cautiously after them. At first, his progress was dizzyheaded and uncertain, but, once in the

"They are going toward the river."

open air, his senses revived.

reflected Le Britta. "They have a boat, and they meditate about an hour's row. How shall I keep trace of them?" He cut across a thicket. Keeping slightly ahead of them, and never leaving a safe shelter to reveal himself to them. The boat to which one of the two men had referred lay moored there. It was a yawl, broad and long, and rather unwieldly for those waters. There was a cuddy at the bow, and as Le Britta saw the men nearing the spot, and felt sanguine that they would make their

decided on a rash exploit. To accompay them unsuspected, would be to trace them surely to the lair where they had announced they were to meet The photographer acted quickly. He

prospective voyage on that craft he

sprang into the yawl and crowded through the little door leading into the dark and low-ceilinged cuddy. It was close and damp but he mind those trifling discomforts, although he hoped no necessity would arise for the two voyagers to explore his hiding-They stepped aboard, at once took up

the oars, and devoted all their energies to smoking and rowing, scarcely uttering a word until they neared a high bluff. about five miles down the stream. The yawl grounded on the pebbly shore, the men secured it, sprang out, and one of them, with a glance at his watch, remarked:-

"Just in time. Midnight. Come. It's only a few steps now.' Those few steps Jera Le Britta fol lowed with anxious eagerness. They led the men to an old building that resembled a residence, only that it was in a state of considerable decay. The men went around to its side door. One of them tapped loudly. It was Le Britta, shrinking to the shelter of a

bush, saw them enter, but could not make out the man who had admitted In a few minutes, however, a light showed through the chinks in the blinds. Approaching them, Le Britta heard the sound of voices, and detected the odor of cigar smoke, so he knew that the windows beyond were missing or

He cautiously pressed an eye break in one of the shutters. His soul arose in arms, deflance and energy as he looked. For he had found the missing marplot of the drama begun at Hawthorne villa. and transferred to this lonely house by Destiny had led him, strangely but surely, on the trail of the man he most

Ralph Durand was before him! CHAPTER XXXIX.-PLOTTERS

wished to see of all men in the world.

IN COUNCIL. At a glance, Jera Le Britta discerned that the three men had met for an important consultation, and he prepared to listen to some enlightening revelations. They seemed to be the only occupants of the building, and Le Britta was apparently safe from discovery, for a

time at least. "What's the row, governor?" asked one of Durand's two visitors. "that we have to come nere at this unusual hour." "Work's the row," replied Durand, sharply-"work well paid for, so you

needn't grumble." "We don't, on that score, but"-"I generally act for the best," pursued the plotter. "You have had a remarkably easy time during the past week." "Yes, watching the house where the girl is with the old woman so she don't | Lineoleums, Jackets and Furs. by any mischance escape is no great labor," laughed one of the men.

"And she is safe?" bustling, happy life, with all its brisk, between you and I, governor, too crushed "Good!" commented Durand, "that suits me; I fancy she realizes that to glamor of a glimpse into the portals of another life - a sudden, certain compreserious trouble. Now, then, boys, you serious trouble. Now, then, boys, you understand enough of this affair to

realize that this same lover of hers, young Yance, is no friend of mine." "We can surmise it, governor." "It is in my power to send him to the gallows. On the other hand, once free, he might accuse me in turn of the murder of old Gideon Vernon. He is a disturbing ASK FOR element in my calculations, and the only one. I have laid my plans for the future, and I don't want them disturbed, so"-

"You want to get rid of the young man in question," slyly insinuated one of Durand's companions. "I must. While he is living and a prisoner, he is a menace to the girl. By threatening him, I keep her in my power. All this however may lead to troublesome complications further on, so

I have resolved on one grand final move." "What is it, governor?" "Money was my primal object in fighting for my position as guardian to Gladys Vernon. To my disappointment when I became legally appointed executor of the Vernon estates I found them girl or some of her friends know where this mortgage money is and are keeping it in hiding until she becomes of age. However even abandoning the hope of ever handling that ready cash I find I

can realize as much more by a bold move. "How's that?" "Sell the property at a sacrifice."
"Can you do it?" "With the girl's consent."

"Not without it?" "Scarcely. So I have resolved to marry her, and end the complication Dunlap Bros. & Co., summarily. To marry Gladys Vernon! The listening photographer thrilled at the revelation, more than that, he shuddered at the thought of that pure beautiful gi. wedded to a coarse, brutal villain, who by thus wrecking her fair, young life would silence her lips against him, would enforce the sacrifice under threat of doon and death for her lover, Sydney Vance "The day that occurs," went on the bold plotter, "I pay you each five hund red dollars."

"And how can we help you?" aske both the men in an eager breath. "The young man Vance"--"He is here?" "Near here. I have held him a clo prisoner. The day of the murder

pursued me. We met, I overpowe him. Since then, in one place or anot he has been my captive. I want removed. I dare not leave him al for fear of escape. I dare not trust in this district longer, for fear of di ery. To-night you are to remove a "Somewhere among the mining know of lonely caves, isolated hun

or that out-of-the-way spot where

"Dare she refuse?"

"I reckon we can find such a plan "I trust you to do it. You are to charge of him, but watch him closes "Never fear!" "If he escapes, you lose the reward have promised you. I leave him in you keeping. Then I shall propose marring to the girl." "Will she consent?"

"I tell you, the menace I hold against Vance terrorizes her completely. I may have to promise Vance his liberty-I may have to ask you to ... use him to

disappear mysteriously." The villain paused and glanced significantly at the two men. Both, murderous wretches that they were, sordid, conscienceless, the yellow glow of gold obliterated the lurid stain of blood for them, were the recompense only large and speedy.

"Once I wed Gladys Vernon," continued Durand, "I am sure of a fortune. Then, a new scene of life, a foreign or a distant land, and let her friends and my foes discover what they will! come.' "Where?" queried one of the men, and all three of the conspirators arose to Durand did not reply, but led the way

The interested and excited watcher at the window drew into the shadow of some shrubbery. The trio came out into the garden, Durand in the lead; they traversed its length, and disappeared in a stable. Le Britta got around to the building, and watched, keenly. In a few minutes a horse, attached to

a covered wagon, was driven out. This vehicle was formed of boards that inclosed all the back of the driver's seat completely, and was only accessible by two doors which opened at the rear. These were now open, but La Britta, peering past the corner of the stable could see that they were provided with a heavy iron staple, padlock and chain, for locking them securely. Further than that, he could make out

on the bottom of the wagon. One of the men approached the wagon and seized the doors, to close and lock them. Just at that moment, however, Durand spoke:-"Here, Tom, Bill! I ve got a bottle in the stable. Perhaps you'd like a sup before you start "

The man at the wagon doors abandoned his task at once, and he and his companion disappeared with Durand into the stable. "They have a man in that wagon-Vance!" ejaculated Le Britta, egginal What should he do? Secreely battle to three armed foes, and he hardly fit for a run of miles after

He glanced at the stable. At end, he could see the three co by the light of a lantero dri a bottle. They were not looki wagon, and his opportunity Springing forward the vent Britta decided on a da

ascertain the identity of ti

spirited steed.

the vehicle and rescue in i [To be Continued.]

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