

* A DAUGHTER OF JUDAS. *

By the Author of "Sir Lionel's Wife," "The Great Moreland Tragedy," Etc

CONCLUDED.

"Noble! By Jove! I should think it is. But I always knew what he was. I took the measure of that man from the very first. I'll tell you what, Pollicie, this is the best news I've heard for years. Where is he? Fetch him in, my girl, I've got a bit of news, too, and you shall hear it now."

Nothing loath, Marie went away to fetch her lover, and, in less than a couple of minutes, Sir Patrick—his honest, handsome face aglow with happiness—was shaking hands with Mr. Muggleton, with a fervour and heartiness altogether indescribable.

"Well, now, look you here," said Mr. Muggleton, as soon as the hand shaking was satisfactorily over. "I've no idea of letting you out-do me in generosity if I can help it, Sir Patrick. You've come and laid your fortune at the feet of my girl, and so it's only fair that, in return, her bit of a fortune should be yours. I've heard that money's a needed thing at that castle of yours, over in Ireland. Whatever you want, let it be done. There's no need to stint yourself at all; for, what I said a year ago, I'll stand to now. I said then, that my girls would have, from first to last, a matter of a million each, and I'm not the man to go back from my word. You'll have to put up with a rich wife after all, Sir Patrick, for Marie's fortune will be a million pounds."

"But I thought you had lost your money!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, while Marie, pale now with excitement, looked at her father in breathless wonder.

"Yes; a good many folks thought that said Mr. Muggleton, dryly. "My own wife and daughters among them. Look here, you may as well know the whole truth. The time has pretty well come for it to be told. When these girls of mine begin to get billing and cooing, I thought myself it would be a rare pity if they should be married for the sake of their fortunes, and have never a bit of love to keep the heart warm. I'm not a sentimental man, but I'm old enough to understand the value of a loving heart, and to know it's a thing that stocks and shares can't buy. Young Rolleston I had faith in, and I didn't altogether misjudge Sir Granville. But that false hound of a Tiptaft—well he stuck in my throat, and in my mind, I took a solemn oath to show him up in his true colors to this silly girl."

Marie flushed rosy red; but her Irish lover simply drew her a little nearer to him, and gave her a look which showed how perfectly they had contrived to understand each other in the course of one short half-hour.

"I made up my mind deliberately to pass myself off as a ruined man," went on Mr. Muggleton, "just in order to see how these young fellows would behave. I had dropped a bit of money—I'm not denying that—over those South African mines. As a matter of fact, I lost something over a million in 'em; but then, as I was really a good deal richer at the start than most folks thought, I can still give my girls the fortunes I promised."

"There, that's the whole truth of the matter. I've acted the thing pretty well, I consider; but it's been a bit of a nuisance and a trouble, and I'm heartily glad to get it off my mind."

"And now, Sir Patrick, just give me your hand again, if you please, and let me tell you how proud I am to get you for a son-in-law."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

FURTHER TRIALS OF POOR MR. TIPTAFT

The Reverend Mr. Tiptaft, as sprucely attired as ever, emerged from the rectory-gate, the next morning, and walked slowly in the direction of the handsome stone house which was the home of Mrs. Darling, the fascinating widow with the eighty thousand pounds.

Although his black was of the best, and his linen a perfect marvel of immaculateness, the worthy gentleman did not carry himself with quite such a dignified and self-satisfied air as he had been used to wear.

This last fortnight had been a trying time for him.

Although Mr. Muggleton had not sought an interview with him, and even Marie had not replied to his letter, the poor man's mind was not perfectly easy on the score of his broken engagement.

A good many people were beginning to look askance at him.

Sir Granville Grantly had passed him with a cold nod, a day or two ago, and Harry Rolleston had not hesitated to cut him dead.

Mr. Tiptaft, like many another good man before him, discovered that this is a censorious world, and that our best friends are not too apt to give us credit for perfectly pure and disinterested motives when we show a laudable desire for our own welfare.

It was of these things the reverend gentleman was thinking, sadly enough, as he wended his way to Mrs. Darling's the morning after that declaration of Mr. Muggleton's to Sir Patrick.

The Reverend Augustus was asking himself what the censorious tongues would say if it became known that he was already wooing Mrs. Darling, the charming widow with eighty thousand pounds.

Something very malicious, he was quite certain; and hence he made up his mind, that if the widow was willing, such wooing

as he proposed doing ought to be done, as much as possible, in secret.

At the same time, it was necessary that the wooing should be done with all allowable expedition.

And for reasons of a sufficiently obvious kind.

Eighty thousand pounds and a handsome wife might be desirable possessions in other eyes as well as his; and widows, as he well knew, were the last women in the world to tolerate a policy of shilly-shally on the part of any man.

Such were the considerations which exercised the good man's guileless mind, as he wended his way to the abode of the estimable lady, whose attractions, both personal and otherwise, had captivated his susceptible heart.

Arrived at Mrs. Darling's house, he was ushered into her presence without a moment's delay.

The lady had, in reality, been expecting this visit.

She received him with the sweetest of smiles, and even invited him to take the vacant seat on the couch beside herself, an invitation of which he availed himself with becoming diffidence.

The truth was, Mrs. Darling had quite made up her mind to become Mrs. Tiptaft, and that without any unreasonable delay.

She had taken the man's measure quite accurately; knew why he had jilted Marie Muggleton, and why he was now wooing her fair self; but, nevertheless, she thought he would make her a suitable husband.

"And this for several reasons. He had a fine figure, and she had a weakness for fine figures."

That was reason number two. Best of all, he was the nephew of a peer, and Mrs. Darling—who had been the daughter of a wealthy provision-dealer—had a great ambition to talk to her friends about "our uncle, the earl."

How aristocratic it would sound! Hence she was quite prepared to accept Marie Muggleton's recent lover—so willing, that on this particular morning, she had made up her mind to get a proposal out of him before he went away.

She was successful. Who can wonder at it?

Indeed, when are such women otherwise than successful in such efforts?

But she had not the slightest difficulty in effecting her purpose, for the reverend and utterly unselfish gentleman was equally resolved that he would propose.

In less than a quarter of an hour, Mr. Tiptaft was kissing her plump white fingers in speechless rapture, and she was murmuring her willingness to become Mrs. Augustus Tiptaft.

Naturally, the reverend wooer remained to luncheon with his new fiancée, and, naturally, too, he left her house with a step, and a more erect head, than those with which he had entered it.

Was there not every reason for it? It was clear to him that he was a man whom women must needs love and admire, and this, of course, was a highly pleasing thought, even to a meek and apostolically-minded clergyman such as himself.

Then the widow had shown herself so thoroughly sensible in the matter of Marie Muggleton, and had even anticipated his request that the engagement should be kept a secret for some time.

That was a comforting consideration. Then, again, he had pledged her more than once in a glass of champagne, and Mrs. Darling's champagne was very good and very elevating.

For all these excellent reasons Mr. Tiptaft was in the highest of spirits when he left the widow's gate, and walked, almost jauntily, in the direction of his own home. He was fated however, not to reach that home without serious and very unexpected interruptions.

The first interruption appeared in the person of Sir Granville Grantly's aunt, the Dowager Lady Cantrip.

She was driving herself in her little pony phaeton, and she pulled up immediately at the sight of the rector of Little Cleeve, with an expression on her face which denoted that she had a very interesting and important piece of gossip to retail.

"Mr. Tiptaft have you heard the news?" she demanded, as he stepped up to the phaeton in obedience to her somewhat imperative gesture.

The rector's face underwent an immediate change of expression.

"What news he asked guilily, of his newly-formed engagement, and wondering how long it would be before she drove about the country asking people if they had heard of that?"

Lady Cantrip literally beamed as she made reply—

"Why, about Mr. Muggleton. He hasn't lost his money, or, at any rate, hardly any of it. He's just been playing a trick on people—making believe he's a ruined man, so as to find out for himself whether his daughters' suitors were really as disinterested as they professed to be. He can still afford to give a million apiece to his daughters. A good thing for my nephew, I needn't tell you, Mr. Tiptaft."

This startling announcement had almost the same effect as that which would have attended the unexpected advent of a bomb shell.

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated the unfortunate rector, opening his mouth, as well as his eyes, in his amazement and dismay, "You don't mean it, Lady Cantrip; you surely cannot mean it."

"It's as true as the Gospel," protested

the old dowager, taking a malicious pleasure in noting his crestfallen looks. "I suppose you'll be sorry, now, that you didn't stick to Miss Marie?"

The rector winced.

Mr. Tiptaft's defection, was known over half the county, and Lady Cantrip was a plain spoken woman.

Sorry!

That was no word to express the reverend gentleman's feelings.

Sorry! He was wild, frantic, almost beside himself.

For one mad moment he even began to wonder whether it would be possible to shake off Mrs. Darling, and lure Marie back again; but Lady Cantrip's next words dispelled that hope for ever.

They gave him, too, almost as great a shock as that which had been the effect of her first announcement.

"The strangest thing of all is, that Sir Patrick Donovan came back to England yesterday, and, believing Mr. Muggleton was quite a poor man, went straight to The Towers, and made Miss Marie an offer of his hand. She accepted him, and when her father heard of it, he very quietly to him he would have to have a rich wife after all, for he meant to stick to his word, and give each of his girls a million pounds."

There seemed to be a flavour of malice about every word that came from the dowager's lips.

She revelled in the agony of mind she was causing her hearer.

"Oh, I think it can't be true! He hasn't it to give, you know," said Mr. Tiptaft, forcing a truly ghastly smile, while all manner of evil passions raged, like wild beasts, beneath his perfectly-fitting black coat.

"Ah, but he has!" said Lady Cantrip, greatly enjoying his mortification and discomfort. "You may rely on it—it's quite true, Mr. Tiptaft. I had it from my nephew, Sir Granville, who was at The Towers last night. Very delighted I was to hear it, I can tell you. Well good morning. The ponies are a little fresh, you see. I can hardly hold them in. If I don't let them have their heads they'll bolt."

Away went Lady Cantrip with a chuckle that was almost audible.

And the miserable Mr. Tiptaft, left alone, leaned against a gate, and deplored the cruelty of Fate.

What a hard lot was his! Mrs. Darling's eighty thousand looked so unspcakably poor and mean by the side of Miss Muggleton's million; and then, to think that that million had been actually within his grasp, and that, with his own hand, he had thrust it from him!

It was horrible.

Worst of all, to know that the hated and despised Sir Patrick was to be the winner of the golden prize—that addle-headed Irishman, whom he had checkmated, so successfully a year ago!

He to win the heir, with her million of money!

Oh, it was too cruel!

It was even heart-breaking.

The reverend gentleman felt it was almost more than he could bear.

He groaned aloud, and almost fell.

While he was still leaning against the gate, in this wretched frame of mind, an approaching step fell on his ear, and, the next moment, he saw Sir Patrick Donovan, his countenance absolutely beaming with happiness, coming down the lane.

It there was a drop of venom in the heart of the virtuous Mr. Tiptaft, it was stirred into activity at the sight of his successful rival, coming so jauntily towards him.

Indeed, for the moment, it may be questioned whether he did not feel an insane longing to fly at Sir Patrick's throat, and strangle him then and there.

But, at any rate, if he did, he was sensible enough not to attempt to act upon it.

Pulling himself together, he emerged from the shadow of the gateway, and stepped, with gloomy dignity, into the middle of the lane, just in front of his hated rival.

"Ah! how d'ye do Tiptaft?" said Sir Patrick, carelessly. "I should like to have a word with you, if you please."

Mr. Tiptaft scowled—there is no other word for his look—scowled blackly on the impudent braggart who had dared to step

into his shoes in regard to Miss Muggleton's million of money.

"I am at a loss to know what you have to say to me," he said, with magnificent fraternal dignity, and he continued to scowl most blackly at his rival.

"Well, it's soon said. I simply want to know by what authority you told Miss Marie Muggleton, last year, that I was engaged to be married."

Sir Patrick spoke very quietly, but there was no mistaking the determination in his voice.

That one drop of venom in Mr. Tiptaft's bosom was stirred into fullest activity, and all but overflowed its bounds.

Mrs. Darling's champagne was inflaming his brain, and making him, for the moment, forget the meekness of spirit incumbent on a Christian and a parish priest, whose example should have more weight with his parishioners than even his precept.

"I decline to name my authority to you, Sir Patrick Donovan," he said haughtily. "Indeed, I consider it a great impertinence in you to presume to come and ask me such a question. Men like yourself, who are mere adventurers, must Ramour to make busy with their name. In my own mind, I am quite convinced you were engaged to some other Lady last year, and that you have simply thrown her off now because you saw a chance to snap a Miss Muggleton's fortune."

This, from Mr. Tiptaft, was almost too much for our honest baronet.

His blue eyes flashed, with a warning light as he roared out—

"You lie, you false scoundrel! Why, your miserable cad, it wasn't for your parson's coat, I'd knock you down where you stand. Repeat the lie in my hearing, and I will knock you down."

There was not the slightest doubt that he would put his threat into execution should the stipulated provocation be forthcoming.

But Mr. Tiptaft shrugged his shoulders, and affected to look down at the choleric Irishman with lofty scorn.

In his heart he did not believe 'the fellow dared touch him."

That parson's coat of his was a kind of moralegis, in Mr. Tiptaft's eyes, a palladium that would protect him unflinchingly from the profane hands of such a man as Sir Patrick Donovan.

"I beg that there may be no brawling," he said, grandiloquently. "If you have come to disturb the peace of my parish, you would have been much better away. You will find, Sir Patrick, that Irish manners—the brawling and bullying you indulge in in your own country—will not go down here in these peaceful and law-abiding parts."

"Saints preserve us!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, out of all patience. "Does the fellow really think he can dictate to people because he happens to wear a black coat to cover his wickedness? His parish, indeed. Heaven help the poor souls that have come to church and be preached to by a pitiful liar and scoundrel like him."

"I have nothing further to say to you, sir," said Mr. Tiptaft, stretching out both his hands as though to ward off the very possibility of any contact with Sir Patrick. "You are a blustering, bullying Irishman. I can only regret that a lady, of whom I once thought so well as I did of Miss Muggleton, should have lowered herself to accept your offer of marriage. She must, indeed, have been in desperate straits for a husband, to pick up with a beggarly, lame adventurer like you."

With this last taunt, the reverend gentleman was about to turn away, and stalk, in solemn dignity, back to the peaceful seclusion of his victory.

But he had reckoned without his host, as he very speedily discovered.

There was a fiery ordeal for him to undergo before he reached that rectory-gate.

Sir Patrick's blood was fairly roused. He was boiling over with fury.

To be called a beggarly, lame adventurer, was a little too much for an honest Irish gentleman, who, but a few years ago, had been considered one of the bravest officers in Her Majesty's service.

No such insult could be borne with equanimity.

It deserved to be resented in the most emphatic manner—nay, more, it should be so resented.

He seized Mr. Tiptaft by the coat-collar—alas! that very coat to which he had trusted for protection—and, with the identical lame foot, which the reverend gentleman had held in such contempt, administered a terrific kicking to his sacred person.

For many days to come, Mr. Tiptaft felt the effects of the vigorous application of that lame foot which he had so inconsiderately derided.

"There, sir!" cried Sir Patrick, at length, flinging the black-coated figure from him, as if it had been a retriever dog. He was a little flushed with his pleasurable exertion; but his blue eyes held a truly leonine gleam, and his whole appearance betokened that, for the sake of anything as trivial as even 'two pins,' he would betake himself to the exercise again.

"There, sir!" he repeated standing above the horrified Mr. Tiptaft with that leonine flash still in his eyes; "I think you've had about enough to serve you for this time, at any rate. If you want another dose, you'll know where to come for it. Now go, and tell the whole county what a tremendous kicking you've just had and for Heaven's sake, don't forget to tell them also that the man who gave it to you was Sir Patrick Donovan."

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE END.

A few months later, when the Hampshire lanes were a glory of yellow, and gold and crimson, Kate Lisle became John Morewood's wife, and mistress of Beech Royal, as her friend Vi, had prophesied, from the first, she would be.

Kate's recovery to perfect health had been slow; but, thanks to the wise and

tender care of Dr. Browne and his brother, it had been more slow than sure.

Little by little, memory came fully back to her, and although she never knew the whole truth of her false friends' machinations against her, yet she knew enough to understand how fearful, in its results, might have been that one estrangement between her and the lover she loved so dearly.

It has taught her a life-long lesson. Never again will she disobey an earnestly expressed wish of Morewood.

Never again will she suffer one thought of jealousy to disturb her peace.

And Morewood, upon his part, has learned to be more gentle with her, to make allowance for her woman's pride, which is, in truth, a woman's weakness.

In their married life his are tenderly expressed wishes, never stern commands. Happiness stretches, bright and fair, before them both, in spite of the tragedy that has blighted the life of their friend.

Mr. Muggleton still reigns lord paramount at The Towers.

His neighbors have almost forgotten that eccentric freak of his in passing himself off as a ruined man; and even they who profess to find something to blame in it are glad to take him heartily by the hand.

Few men in the county are more highly respected than honest Samuel Muggleton.

His daughters are all married—very greatly to the contentment of him and his good lady.

Upton Manor is a grand place in these days, and Sir Granville Grantly makes an excellent husband, having quite bidden good-bye to his earlier dissipations, and devotes himself almost entirely to his estate.

Pretty Vi is, of course, mistress of Rolleston Hall.

At first, there had been some question of building another house for the newly-wedded pair; but Vi had so wound herself round the heart of the old squire, that it was easy to see nothing would please him so well as to have her and his nephew underneath the old roof.

Accordingly, extensive alterations were made, the house was thoroughly restored, and, perhaps, there is not, in all Hampshire, at the present day, a more delightful home than Rolleston Hall, or a more popular hostess than pretty Mistress Vi.

Mr. Muggleton's eldest daughter, of course, has her home far away from The Towers; but her father goes to Castle Donovan very frequently, and, of all his sons-in-law, Sir Patrick is, secretly, his favorite.

A happy woman is Marie, Lady Donovan. Every day, almost, she discovers some new virtue in the big, honest heart of her Irish husband.

As for him, he worships the ground she treads upon; and, as his tenantry, in their turn, worship them both, it is easy to see that the kindly Fates are pouring down golden blessings in Ireland as well as in Hampshire.

Mr. Tiptaft is no longer the rector of Little Cleeve.

The parish had to bear the loss of that truly good and virtuous man.

After that meeting with Sir Patrick, in the lane, Hampshire became suddenly hateful to him.

He did not even appear in his beloved church on the ensuing Sunday, but remained at home, upon the plea of indisposition, while a curate from a neighboring parish took his duty for him.

He never officiated in the church of Little Cleeve again.

His indisposition so increased that, in the course of a day, or two, he repaired to the seaside for the sake of his health, and, a fortnight later, made arrangements for exchanging livings with a brother clergyman in the extreme North of England.

His marriage with Mrs. Darling took place before the end of the summer.

And, as the lady did, undoubtedly, possess the full eighty thousand pounds which had induced him to make her the niece of Lord Gowan, we ought, surely, to be able to say that this good man is now happy and content.

But, alas! it is not so.

The fascinating widow proved herself a Tartar when once she was fairly caught, and poor Mr. Tiptaft leads a miserable life at her hands.

She proves to him that she is quite equal to the management of her own fortune, and moreover, she finds fault with his sermons, ridicules his theology, and even dictates to him as to his manner of reading the prayers.

He is a very meek and humble Mr. Tiptaft in these days, has grown much thinner, and lost almost all the freshness of his pink-and-white complexion.

He is not even permitted to wear a waistcoat of High Church cut, Mrs. Tiptaft being of thoroughly Evangelical tendencies.

If Sir Patrick Donovan could see him as he is, that kindly Irish heart would assuredly feel a throbbing of pity for his once powerful rival.

Vivian Court is shut up.

Its master will never come to it again, and little Sylvia and Lady Ruth find their home with the latter's niece, Lady Hamlyn where they often speak with tender regret of the beautiful dead Lilian, whom they both loved and whose crimes they will never know.

Sir Gerald has embraced the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, and has entered one of the Italian monasteries—a monastery of an order famed for the rigid strictness of its discipline.

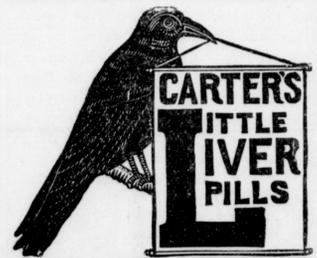
People think that grief for the loss of a beloved wife has driven him to this.

The truth—the whole truth—is known but to one person.

That person is John Morewood, and he will never breathe it to any living soul—no, not even to the wife of his bosom.

It Dr. Browne and Sir Patrick Donovan have suspicions as to the true manner

Continued on Fifteenth Page.



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