

Continued from Tenth Page.  
locked the cellarette and took from it a decanter half full of brandy.  
Into this she slipped some of the small tablets she had taken from Lord Erceidonne, and which she carried about in a tin box in her pocket for safety.

She knew they contained a powerful narcotic, and one which acted quickly.

The two women, if they fell into her trap, would be safe for some hours to come.

When Mrs. Drax returned, Adela made a feint as if to measure the brandy into the glasses; then, suddenly appearing to change her mind, said—

'After all, you had better take the decanter and finish up what is in it; there is not much.'

The old hag nodded, with a guttural sound of delight, and disappeared.

An hour afterwards Adela listened at the door of her room, which was at the end of passage, out of which Lord Erceidonne's and the mysterious invalid's apartments opened.

The sound of snoring, loud and regular as the noise of a saw cutting wood, showed that her ruse had proved successful.

Nurse Jane she did not fear, for she was so obtuse, that it would be easy to satisfy her with some excuse, if she shook off the effects of the brandy, and appeared on the scene.

Adela's scheme was nothing less than to make an exhaustive search in Paul Barrington's rooms for some evidence which would convince Lord Erceidonne of the doctor's treachery.

It would be impossible to make him credit it otherwise.

Noble, loyal, and generous to a fault, he believed with implicit faith in all about him.

Even of his brother, Cosmo, he spoke kindly and gently, though it was evident there was little sympathy between them.

One thing seemed to hurt him: that his sister, Constance, of whom he talked often to Adela, never came to see him, for he loved her dearly.

She wrote constrained short letters, at long intervals, which he would throw aside with a sigh, saying they were unlike her true self.

But Adela knew well what Constance Villiers guessed—the truth—that all letters to and from the Manor were overlooked by Dr. Barrington, who kept the keys of the mail-bag.

The post-office was some way off, the coachman riding in and out with the locked leather wallet.

There was no way for her to communicate with Constance, and could she have done so, there was always the chance of Cosmo getting hold of the letter.

Adela longed to tell Lord Erceidonne why his sister did not visit him.

But the time had not yet come.

She went downstairs to the study when the coast was perfectly clear.

For some time nothing of importance rewarded her search.

The doctor was too astute to leave any private memoranda in accessible places.

Adela carefully examined his writing-table, but the files of papers upon it were all of an unimportant nature.

Surely he must keep a journal, or notes of his cases.

But where?

Suddenly her eyes fell on a small carved knob in the panelling of the wide mantel-shelf.

It looked almost like part of the pattern; but Adela had lived in old houses in her childhood, and her practised eye quickly detected anything peculiar to them.

She pressed the knob, disclosing a tiny recess, in which lay a leather-bound volume, with brass clasp, which was locked.

This was, obviously the book she sought. But how to undo the clasp was the puzzle.

Fortune favored her.

As her nervous fingers played with the fastening it gave way, for the key turned hurriedly, had not caught in the lock.

Paul Barrington would not return for some days; there would be time to read the journal—for such she saw it was—and replace it.

But what if Dr. Ives, cognisant of its existence, should want to refer to it?

The next moment she saw this was unlikely; for she was certain the doctor was too clever to put himself in his assistant's power by confiding in him.

Dr. Ives did not sleep in the house, but had a room at the gardener's lodge to the iron gates of the Manor grounds.

He was an inveterate smoker of strong tobacco, and this gave Paul Barrington, who could not tolerate any but the mildest

cigarettes, a good excuse for the arrangement.

Dr. Ives had fitted up a small outbuilding at his quarters as a photographic studio, photography being one of his hobbies.

He lent Adela a small camera, and taught her how to develop the picture she could soon take very cleverly; but after he had done once, under the friendly cover of the 'dark room,' attempted to press a kiss on her unwilling lips, she relinquished the fascinating pursuit.

She still had the camera, however, and photographic materials, and remembering this, an idea flashed through her brain.

Meanwhile, she hastened to secure the diary, putting another volume from the writing table, which somewhat resembled it, in its place.

If Paul Barrington came back suddenly, and looked into the small secret cupboard, he would think the substitution of the volume his own mistake, and she could thus gain time.

She did not wait to read the journal then though some words which raised her curiosity to the keenest point, had met her eye when she opened it.

There was other work to do. For one thing, Adela intended thoroughly to examine the cliff at the back of the house.

Paul's careless words as to the possibility of escape that way had thrilled her with keen hope. They showed also, that, so far, he was absolutely unsuspecting of her motives.

If he found out!

She was a bold woman, but a chill passed over her at the thought.

What had been Nurse Cecily's fate? This was another thing she meant to discover by judiciously questioning the attendant, Jane.

After hiding the doctor's diary in her room, Adela walked through the grounds to the back of the Manor.

The afternoon was still and sunny, only the distant sound of the blue waves lapping against the shore fell with faint rhythmic echo on her ear.

Close to the edge of the cliff there was a rustic shelter, under some wide spreading oaks, where the patients would occasionally work or read.

They sometimes, as in the case of Lord Erceidonne, even were allowed to walk on the beach below, for it was so wild and lonely that hardly anyone but the few fisher-folk frequented it. But this never, unless an attendant went also.

As Adela approached the shelter under the trees, she was surprised to hear voices.

Involuntarily she stopped short, for she recognized one of them.

It was that of Nurse Jane, whom she had supposed to be asleep indoors. The other voice was a man's.

The woman was speaking in anxious tones.

'I hate the place, and wishes to goodness I was safely out of it. Oh! yes, the pay is good enough, and there's plenty to eat, and all that sort of thing; but ghosts—I can't stand them; no flesh and blood could.'

The man's reply was inaudible, but evidently incredulous. The shrill, feminine voice was heard again.

'Say what you like, Joe Mills, there's things goes on in the house as isn't above-board—that's why they won't let us put a foot outside the grounds, or have a friend to see us in a harmless way now and again. It's like being buried alive. I don't know what would happen if they knew I had scraped acquaintance with you through your helping me get Miss Cordelia's umbrella when it blew into the sea that day. Every time I meet you, I go in tear and trembling.'

'Why don't you give notice? There's a home for you to come to,' growled the bass voice of her lover.

'I would, but somehow, I feel frightened to leave. It's being on the tip of my tongue heaps of times; but he has a way of looking at you with those gimlet eyes of his, that turns you sort of cold and queer. Then there was Cecily, her voice dropping. "But no; I'd rather not talk about that. Nurse Deane, she's a lady, and I like her. I felt mean, leading her to think I was not feeling well, but it was the only way. I must go back now, lest old Mother Drax should wake, though I gave her all my brandy, for it was nasty, bitter stuff, and I didn't like it. Remember, Saturday night. If I can get out, I will put a white stone on the top of the third rail of the fence.'

Adela had just time to conceal herself when she saw Joe Mills, a burly, honest-looking young fisherman in rough blue jersey, come out of the shelter.

Breathless, she watched him cautiously descend the cliff, fearing every moment he would fall and be dashed to pieces.

It seemed an eternity before he reached the bottom, but Adela saw that the feat, though very difficult, was not impossible.

A tiny boat rocked below on the tide, which had risen right up to the rocks.

Joe Mills dropped into this, and cautiously rowed away, keeping in the shadow of the cliffs.

Waiting until Jane had a good start of her, Adela returned to the Manor House. She had learnt much, and intended her knowledge to be of use later.

The most startling discovery, however, was still to come; the curious events of this most momentous day were not yet at an end.

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### THROUGH THE SECRET PASSAGE.

Nurse Deane ascertained that Lord Erceidonne was still sleeping calmly; his colour was more healthy, his breathing lighter.

No doubt his naturally fine constitution would rally from the effects of the insidious poison; but, at best, it was only a respite.

She understood now the doctor's devilish cunning in shielding himself by making hers the hand to administer the fatal doses.

Paul Barrington would be back in a few days, and then—

A knock at the door made her start.

It was Nurse Jane, whose smug, expressionless face told no tales of her little escapade.

She came to say that Mrs. Drax, having awakened with a bad headache, had found it necessary to retire again, after settling Miss Barrington for the night. If that lady's bell rang, no one was to go into the room, but to call Mrs. Drax up at once.

'As if anyone wanted to!' with an indignant sniff. 'It's my belief she's madder than anyone else in the house, that's the reason old Mother Drax is set to wait on her, so as she'll tell no tales. It's one thing to earn your living out of taking care of folks who are queer in the upper story, but another to have a sister with a bee in her bonnet.'

'Why should you think Miss Barrington is mad?' queried Adela. 'Have you ever seen her?'

'Never. No one who comes here ever sets eyes on her but Mrs. Drax. There's more in that than meets the eye, or my name isn't Jane Saunders,' mysteriously.

Adela did not think it politic to question Nurse Jane further at that moment, so she withdrew into her room, and, locking herself in, proceeded to read Paul Barrington's journal.

It was not a very easy task, for the handwriting was close and crabbed, and many passages were in German, a language which the doctor, who had passed some years in Germany, spoke as well as English.

Other portions were written in a strange cipher.

But her flesh crept with horror, as she slowly mastered the main gist of the volume, furnishing the strongest evidence of the plot against Lord Erceidonne.

The last entry had been made on the preceding day. It ran thus—

'The drug acts slowly but surely. The desired effect may probably be caused in a few weeks' time—it will depend on the strength of constitution in the subject.'

So much for the diabolical attempt to destroy the body; but the book disclosed more—a fiendish, deep-laid scheme to utterly wreck mentally, the man she loved.

This had nearly succeeded.

As most of the journal relating to this part of Paul's villainy was written in cipher Adela was unable to understand it in all its details, but she gleaned sufficient for her purpose.

She must lose no time in putting back the journal, as she might not have another chance of access to the secret receptacle.

But, before she did so, she photographed several of the leaves bearing the strongest evidence against the doctor.

She had another use, too, for the camera by which she hoped to convince Lord Erceidonne of Paul Barrington's treachery.

But for this she must wait her opportunity.

It came sooner than she thought.

She was about to put away her photographic paraphernalia, when she heard a light step in Lord Erceidonne's bed-chamber, then a voice.

Opening the door very cautiously, she peeped in, and saw a sight which chained her to the spot.

Ralph lay upon the couch, his eyes fixed with the rapt gaze of the visionary upon what truly seemed a spirit from the unseen world standing beside him.

It was the figure of a young girl, dressed in flowing robes of the softest white. Her long, graceful arms were bare, and raised in a beseeching gesture.

Thick tresses of gold-flaxen hair hung over her shoulders, and a wreath of pale red and emerald seaweed, twined with pearls, rested on her head.

She was speaking in soft, low tones, as one might do in sleep, or under mesmeric influence.

Adela could not catch all she said, but a few broken words reached her ear.

'You will not go away? Stay here, or the chain will be broken. It gets stronger daily, and one day you will become mine, and I shall be yours again. The sea can give up its dead. Is not love than stronger than death? My spirit beckons across the vast abyss to yours. Ralph! shall I call in vain.'

The speaker's back was towards Adela, and Lord Erceidonne, in a trance, saw nothing but his lost love.

Quickly Adela pressed the button of the camera—once—twice. It acted without noise, and she knew she had secured two impressions—though, perhaps, dim ones—of the supposed supernatural visitant.

Ralph Erceidonne half rose from the couch, his hands outstretched; but the girl waved him back, and, moving towards an open space in the wall, disappeared.

Another long pause.

Then at length Lord Erceidonne spoke, more calmly and coherently than he had done yet.

'It is true, I had forgotten. But I remember now; it all comes back to me. They found her cloak on the beach, and the boat, floating bottom upwards, was washed ashore; Drax told me about it. He thought she must have been drowned, trying to bathe. Paul was dreadfully upset, and since then he has never liked to walk on the shore. The boat is there now, though, tried to a post in one of the caves. Drax will not let me use it. I asked him to, for I wanted to row out to find Bella. Ah!—with a sharp cry of pain—"she will come no more—no more!"'

He bowed his head on his hands, and wept great choking sobs, that rent Adela's heart.

Yet she made an effort to check them, for she knew that the hopelessly insane rarely weep real tears, and the hot, heavy drops were clearing the fevered brain.

'That is true, dear friend,' she said, quietly; 'but there are others who love you, who long to take you away to some haven of safety. You must leave this place—no matter how; I will arrange that. But the sooner the better.'

'How can I?' he asked, with pale and trembling lips. 'Do you know what they say? It is not true of course but they think I am mad. Paul would never let me go, never; I can tell that by the others. They all want to go home sometimes; one or two of them tried to escape, but they have always been caught, and brought back.'

'And you have never wished to go? Have

A panel, which had been pushed out of place, closed after her, apparently becoming part of the solid wall again.

By this time Adela saw that what she had often suspected was true—that the extraordinary thickness of the walls of the old house concealed a series of secret passages, just wide enough to allow of one person passing from room to room.

She composed herself with a powerful effort and went into Lord Erceidonne's room.

'You saw her! She has just been here. My Bella—my darling loved one! She spoke to me at last! Ah! if you could only have heard you would have believed indeed.'

His voice was tremulous with excitement, his eyes wild and eager.

'Lord Erceidonne, control yourself and play the man, I entreat—I implore you,' said Adela, in concentrated tones. 'What you have seen was no spirit. I will prove it to you.' Then, as she saw the gathering cloud of distrust in his eyes: 'You know I am your friend. I would do nothing to hurt or pain you. Oh, believe I mean well by you, and hear me!'

She knelt by him, clasping her hands upon his weak, cold ones.

The magnetic warmth of her touch seemed to reassure him; the frightened, dazed look died out of his face.

'I do believe you,' he answered, looking into her frank, beautiful eyes with a dawning expression she had never seen in his own before. 'You are good and true. Tell me what you wish, I will listen.'

'I begin by asking you a question, Lord Erceidonne. Dr. Barrington's sister—what is she like? Did you ever see her?'

'Never,' replied Lord Erceidonne, passing his hand wearily over his brow. 'I ought not perhaps to say—Paul would not like it—'

'Do not fear, I will betray nothing to Doctor Barrington. Tell me what you know, I implore you,' said Adela, earnestly.

'Well, I will then; but wait. I seem to have a cloud here,' pressing his hand to his forehead. 'I cannot recollect or put things together as I used. My Bella had a twin sister—yes; but she was not quite the same as other people—her mind did not grow with her body. Paul told me. When she was a child of three, one of the people her father had here—he was a doctor, like Paul, you know,—frightened her by letting her fall from a height; but it only hurt her brain. She lived to grow up, and is here now; but nobody sees her except Paul and Mrs. Drax. Yes, Hilda is mad—in a whisper—quite mad. That was what made my father angry when I married Bella. But she is not like that—oh, no. She is beautiful as an angel, and good as one. But what has poor Hilda to do with her?'

'Everything. Lord Erceidonne. I firmly believe that your mad sister-in-law is being made, by Paul Barrington, to personate the spirit of the one you have loved and lost. As you know, he has strong mesmeric influence, and he has used this to dominate the mind of Hilda Barrington. He is not here now; but the girl has acted involuntarily the part so often rehearsed.'

'There are many persons, mentally unsound, who are yet capable of playing a part and repeating a given form of words. The flowing white dress and other adornments would appeal to the childish vanity of an insane woman, and hypnotic power would do the rest. You think me cruel, brutal, to dispel your illusion; but believe me, after all, we do not lose those we love, and we shall see them again one day—if not on this side the Dark River, then on the other.'

The tears streamed down her face, as she spoke with impassioned fervour.

Lord Erceidonne was silent, as if stunned by a bolt from the heavens.

He gazed wildly at Adela, and held out his hand, which she clasped.

'It seems as if something has broken—here,' he muttered, putting the other hand to his brow. 'Let me think, let me try to collect my thoughts. What happened before—just like this? Who said it was not Bella? Ah, Cecily, poor Cecily, she thought the same. She watched at night, and said she saw—what was it? What was it?' piteously. 'Help me to remember.'

'Do not trouble; it will all come back,' said Adela, gently. 'You told me the other day you did not know what had become of Nurse Cecily; was that so, or had you forgotten?'

Another long pause.

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'And you have never wished to go? Have

never attempted to get away?'—wonderingly.

'Never!'—in hopeless tones. 'I did not care what became of me when Bella died. I got ill and Cosmo did not like the idea of looking after me, I think. He suggested that I should stay altogether with Paul; and I did not mind much, for one place was as good as another to me then, so long as I had my books and music. Here, too, I seemed nearer Bella, and I could talk of her to Paul. Once or twice I fancied I should like to see Connie—my sister, you know—but Paul would not let me. He thinks I am mad; but I am not, though I often feel ill and weak, and then my head is not clear'—sighing.

'Who told you you were mad? It is a wicked falsehood,' said Adela angrily. 'You are as sane as any man on this earth, Lord Erceidonne; and because I think so, I will warn you that you must give way no longer to these morbid fancies, or you may end by losing in reality. Doctor Barrington and your brother have tried to effect this object; so as to keep you imprisoned here, for vile ends of their own. I do not ask you to believe me, but I can prove every word I say; and there has been even worse wickedness on their part—as an exclamation of startled incredulity passed his lips.

'But you must be patient for a short time,' she continued, rapidly, 'and trust me. Remember, no whisper to anyone, or all will be lost. For my sake again I pray you, be careful. Doctor Barrington's vengeance on those who offend him is terrible and far reaching. Under the velvet glove is the iron hand of a relentless tyrant.'

'I promise faithfully all you ask,' said Lord Erceidonne. 'It seems as though I was awakening from some long, troubled dream; as yet, I understand little or nothing. But this I know—you would serve me and I am grateful.'

With a courtly gesture, he pressed her hand to his lips.

With a throb of gladness at her heart, Adela noted the quietness of his tone, the calm light in his wan face.

The reason which had tottered on its throne was regaining its balance, and her haunting fears that she had come too late to the Manor to fulfil Constance Villiers' behest, were needless.

The sound of wheels grinding on gravel in the distance told her the picnic-party had returned Adela hurried downstairs to meet them, though, after all that had transpired, it was hard to discuss traveltips with Dr. Ives, and listened to the rhapsodies, vapourings, or grumbings of the patients.

This was why she did not notice that Mrs. Ababin, generally the most voluble of them all, regarded her in silence, with a peculiarly malevolent expression.

To be Concluded

## A SIMPLE SOLUTION.

### Why Dodd's Kidney Pills Always Cure Kidney Diseases.

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One of our cleverest and most successful physicians was asked to-day, how he accounted for the enormous number of Kidney Disease cases that have been cured by Dodd's Kidney Pills.

'It can be accounted for in only one way,' he answered, 'Dodd's Kidney Pills possess the power of curing disordered Kidneys. No other preparation known to man possesses this power.'

'Bright's Disease, Diabetes, Dropsy, Gout, Stone in the Bladder, Gravel, Lumbago, Rheumatism, Heart Failure, Paralysis, Nephritis, Diseases of Women, etc., all spring from disordered Kidneys. These diseases are all marked by retention in the blood of certain dead matter, that healthy Kidneys' extract from the blood, and throw out of the body.'

'Now Dodd's Kidney Pills restore the Kidneys to health. Then the blood is properly purified, all poison being drained out of it, and thrown out of the system. There can then be none of the diseases named. It's very simple you see.'

'Dodd's Kidney Pills are undoubtedly the only medicine that can cure these diseases. They never fail to cure them—they cannot fail.'

Dodd's Kidney Pills are sold by all druggists, at fifty cents a box, six boxes \$2.50, or sent, on receipt of price, by The Dodd's Medicine Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

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'Well, what is its particular merit?'

'Oh, you just touch a button, and it sinks through the floor to the smoking-room below.'

'For whom is it intended?'

'The fellow who leaves his seat in the middle of a row at the end of each act.'

A child who was asked to name the four seasons, replied seriously, 'Pepper, salt, mustard and vinegar.'

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