

JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST.*

By COTTREL HOE.

Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.

NUMBER IX.—AN UNLOOKED-FOR ENCOUNTER.



At nine o'clock the long train came to a standstill, seventeen minutes late at Luga, and ample time was allowed for a leisurely breakfast in the buffet of the station. The restaurant was thronged with numerous passengers, most of whom seemed hardly yet awake, while many were unkempt and dishevelled, as if they had had little sleep during the night.

Jennie found a small table and sat down beside it, ordering her coffee and roll from the waiter who came to serve her. Looking round at the cosmopolitan company, and listening to the many languages, whose clash gave a Babel air to the restaurant, Jennie fell to musing on the strange experiences she had encountered since leaving London. It seemed to her she had been taking part in some ghastly nightmare, and she shuddered as she thought of the lawlessness, under cover of law, of this great and despotie empire, where even the ruler was under the surveillance of his subordinates, and could not get a letter out of his own dominion in safety, were he so minded. In her day-dream she became conscious, without noting its application to herself, that a man was standing before her table; then a voice which made her heart stop said—

"Ah, lost Princess!"

She placed her hand suddenly to her throat, for the catch in her breath seemed to be suffocating her, then looked up and saw Lord Donal Stirling, in the ordinary everyday dress of an English gentleman, as well groomed as if he had come, not from a train, but from his own house. There was a kindly smile on his lips and a sparkle in his eyes, but his face was of ghastly pallor.

"Oh, Lord Donal!" she cried, regarding him with eyes of wonder and fear, "what is wrong with you?"

"Nothing," the young man replied, with an attempt at a laugh; "nothing, now that I have found you, Princess. I have been making a night of it, that's all, and am suffering the consequences in the morning. May I sit down?"

He dropped into a chair on the other side of the table, and went on—

"Like all dissipated men, I am going to breakfast on stimulants. Waiter," he said, "bring me a large glass of your best brandy."

"And, waiter," interjected Jennie in French, "bring two breakfasts. I suppose it was not your breakfast that you ordered just now, Lord Donal?"

"I have ordered my breakfast," he said; "still, it pleads in my favour that I do not carry brandy with me, as I ought to do, and so must drink the vile stuff they call their best here."

"You should eat as well," she insisted, taking charge of him as if she had every right to do so.

"All shall be as you say, now that I have found you, but don't be surprised if I have but little appetite."

"What is the matter?" she asked breathlessly. "You certainly look very ill."

"I have been drugged and robbed," he replied, lowering his voice. "I imagine I came to close quarters with death itself. I have spent a night in Hades, and this morning am barely able to stagger; but the sight of you, Princess— Ah, well, I feel once more that I belong to the land of the living!"

"Please do not call me Princess," said the girl, looking down at the tablecloth.

"Then what am I to call you, Princess?"

"My name is Jennie Baxter," she said in a low voice.

"Miss Jennie Baxter?" he asked eagerly, with emphasis on the first word.

"Miss Jennie Baxter," she answered, still not looking up at him.

He leaned back in his chair and said—

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"Well, this is not such a bad world, after all. To think of meeting you here in Russia! Have you been in St. Petersburg, then?"

"Yes. I am a newspaper woman," explained Jennie hurriedly. "When you met me before, I was there surreptitiously, fraudulently, if you like; I was there to—write a report of it for my paper. I can never thank you enough, Lord Donal, for your kindness to me that evening."

"Your thanks are belated," said the young

"how came you to know about that? But of course the Princess von Steinheimer told you of it. She wrote to me charging me with all sorts of wickednesses for endeavouring to find you."

"No, Lord Donal, I did not learn it from her. In fact, if you had opened the door of the inner room at Mr. Cadbury Taylor's a little quicker, you would have come upon me, for I was the assistant who tried to persuade him that you really met the Princess von Steinheimer."

Lord Donal, for the first time, laughed heartily.

"Well, if that doesn't beat all! And I suppose Cadbury Taylor hasn't the slightest suspicion that you are the person he was looking for?"

"No, not the slightest."

"I say! that is the best joke I have heard in ten years," said Lord Donal; and here, breakfast arriving, Jennie gave him his directions.

"You are to drink a small portion of that brandy," she said, "and then put the rest in your coffee. You must eat a good breakfast, and that will help you to forget your troubles—that is, if you have any real troubles."

"Oh, my troubles are real enough," said the young man. "When I met you before, Princess, I was reasonably successful. We even talked about ambassadorships, didn't we, in spite of the fact that ambassadors were making themselves unnecessarily obtrusive that night? Now you see before

you a ruined man. No, I am not joking; it is true. I was given a commission, or, rather, knowing the danger there was in it, I begged that the commission might be given me. It was merely to take a letter from St. Petersburg to London. I have failed, and when that is said, all is said."

"But, surely," said the girl, "you could not be expected to ward off such lawless robbery as you have been the victim of?"

"That is just what I expected, and what I supposed I could ward off. In my pro-



"Then looked up and saw Lord Donal Stirling."

man, with a visible attempt at gaiety. "You should have written and acknowledged the kindness you are good enough to say I rendered to you. You knew my address, and etiquette demanded that you should make your acknowledgments."

"I was reluctant to write," said Jennie, a smile hovering round her lips, "fearing my letter might act as a clue. I had no wish to interfere with the legitimate business of Mr. Cadbury Taylor."

"Great heavens!" cried the young man,

fession—which, after all, has a great similarity to yours, except that I think we have to do more lying in ours—there must be no such word as fail. The very best excuses are listened to with tolerance, perhaps, and a shrug of the shoulders; but failure, no matter from what cause, is fell doom. I have failed. I shall not make any excuses. I will go to London and say merely, ‘The Russian police have robbed me.’ Oh, I know perfectly well who did the trick, and how it was done. Then I shall send in my resignation. They will accept it with polite words of regret, and will say to each other, ‘Poor fellow, he had a brilliant career before him, but he got drunk, or something, and fell into the ditch.’ Ah, well, we won’t talk any more about it.”

“Then you don’t despise the newspaper profession, Lord Donal?”

“Despise it! Bless you, no; I look up to it, belonging myself to a profession very much lower down in the scale of morality, as I have said. But, Princess,” he added, leaning towards her, “will you resign from the newspaper if I resign from diplomacy?”

The girl slowly shook her head, her eyes on the tablecloth before her.

“I will telegraph my resignation,” he said impetuously, “if you will telegraph yours to your paper.”

“You are feeling ill and worried this morning, Lord Donal, and so you take a pessimistic view of life. You must not resign.”

“Oh, but I must. I have failed, and that is enough.”

“It isn’t enough. You must do nothing until you reach London.”

“I like your word *must*, Jennie,” said the young man audaciously. “It implies something, you know.”

“What does it imply, Lord Donal?” she asked, glancing up at him.

“It implies that you are going to leave the ‘Lord’ off my name.”

“That wouldn’t be very difficult,” replied Jennie.

“I am delighted to hear you say so,” exclaimed his lordship; “and now, that I may know how it sounds from your dear lips, call me Don.”

“No; if I ever consented to omit the title, I should call you Donal. I like the name in its entirety.”

He reached his hand across the table. “Are you willing, then, to accept a man at the very lowest ebb of his fortunes? I know that if I were of the mould that heroes are made of, I would hesitate to proffer you

a blighted life. But I loved you the moment I saw you; and, remembering my fruitless search for you, I cannot run the risk of losing you again; I have not the courage.”

She placed her hand in his and looked him for the first time squarely in the eyes.

“Are you sure, Donal,” she said, “that I am not a mere effigy on which you are hanging the worn-out garments of a past affection? You thought I was the Princess at first.”

“No, I didn’t,” he protested. “As soon as I heard you speak, I knew you were the one I was destined to meet.”

“Ah, Donal, Donal, at lover’s perjuries they say Jove laughs. I don’t think you were quite so certain as all that. But I, too, am a coward, and I dare not refuse you.”

Lord Donal glanced quickly about him; the room was still crowded. Even the Berlin Express gave them a long time for breakfast, and was in no hurry to move westward. His hurried gaze returned to her and he sighed.

“What an unholy spot for a proposal!” he whispered; “and yet they call Russia the Great Lone Land. Oh, that we had a portion of it entirely to ourselves!”

The girl sat there, a smile on her pretty lips that Lord Donal thought most tantalising. A railway official announced in a loud voice that the train was about to resume its journey. There was a general shuffling of feet as the passengers rose to take their places.

“Brothers and sisters kiss each other, you know, on the eve of a railway journey,” said Lord Donal, taking advantage of the confusion.

Jennie Baxter made no protest.

“There is plenty of time,” he whispered. “I know the leisurely nature of Russian trains. Now I am going to the telegraph office to send in my resignation, and I want you to come with me and send in yours.”

“No, Lord Donal,” said the girl.

“Aren’t you going to resign?” he asked, in surprise.

“Yes, all in good time; but *you* are not.”

“Oh, I say,” he cried, “it is really imperative. I’ll tell you all about it when we get on the train.”

“It is really imperative that you should not send in your resignation. Indeed, Donal, you need not look at me with that surprised air. You may as well get accustomed to dictation at once. You did it

yourself, you know. You can't say that I encouraged you. I eluded the vigilant Cadbury Taylor as long as I could. But, if there is time, go to the telegraph office and send a message to the real Princess, Palace Steinheimer, Vienna. Say you are engaged to be married to Jennie Baxter, and ask her to telegraph you at Berlin."

"I'll do it," replied the young man.

When Lord Donal came out of the telegraph office, Jennie said to him, "Wait a moment while I go into the sleeping car and get my rugs and handbag."

"I'll go for them," he cried impetuously.

"Oh, no," she said. "I'll tell you why, later. The conductor is a villain and was in collusion with the police."

"Oh, I know that," said Lord Donal. "Poor devil, he can't help himself; he must do what the police order him to do, while he is in Russia."

"I'll get my things and go into an ordinary first class carriage. When I pass this door, you must get your belongings and come and find me. There is still time, and I don't want the conductor to see us together."

"Very well," said the young man with exemplary obedience.

When the train started, they were seated together in a far forward carriage.

"One of my failings," said the girl, "is that I act first, and think afterwards. I am sorry now that I asked you to send that telegram to the Princess."

"Why?"

"Because I have a great deal to tell you, and perhaps you will wish to withdraw from the rash engagement you have undertaken."

"A likely thing!" cried the ardent lover. "Indeed, Miss Princess, if you think you can get rid of me as easily as all that, you are mistaken."

"Well, I want to tell you why I did not allow you to resign."

Slowly she undid the large buttons of her jacket, then, taking it by the lapel and holding it so that no one else could see, she drew partly forth from the inside pocket the large envelope, until the stamp of the Embassy was plainly visible. Lord Donal's eyes opened to their widest capacity, and his breath seemed to stop.

"Great heavens!" he gasped at last, "do you mean to say you have it?"

"Yes," she said, buttoning up her jacket again. "I robbed the robbers. Listen, and I will tell you all that happened. But, first, are you armed?"

"Yes," he replied, "I have a trumpery revolver in my pocket; little good it did me last night."

"Very well, we shall be across the frontier by noon to-day. If the Russian authorities find before that time how they have been checkmated, and if they have any suspicion that I am the cause of it, is it not likely that they will have me stopped and searched on some pretence or other?"

Lord Donal pondered for a moment. "They are quite capable of it," he said; "but, Jennie, I will fight for you against the whole Russian Empire, and somebody will get hurt if you are meddled with. The police will hesitate, however, before interfering with a messenger from the Embassy, or anyone in his charge in broad daylight on a crowded train. We will not go back into that car, but stay here, where some of our fellow countrymen are."

"That is what I was going to propose," said Jennie. "And now listen to the story I have to tell you, and then you will know exactly why I came to Russia."

"Don't tell me anything you would rather not," said the young man hurriedly.

"I would rather not, but it must be told," answered the girl.

The story lasted a long time, and when it was ended the young man cried enthusiastically in answer to her question—

"Blame you? Why, of course I don't blame you in the slightest. It wasn't Hardwick who sent you here at all, but Providence. Providence brought us together, Jennie, and my belief in it hereafter will be unshaken."

Jennie laughed a contented little laugh, and said she was flattered at being considered an envoy of Providence.

"It is only another way of saying you are an angel, Jennie," remarked the bold young man.

They crossed the frontier without interference, and, once in Germany, Jennie took the object of so much contention and placed it in the hands of her lover.

"There," she whispered, with a tiny sigh, for she was giving up the fruits of her greatest achievement, "put that in your despatch box, and see that it doesn't leave there until you reach London. I hope the Russians will like the copy of the *Daily Bugle* they find in their envelope."

The two chatted together throughout the long ride to Berlin, and when 11 p.m. and the Schleischer station came at last they still seemed to have only begun their conversation, so much more remained to be told.

The telegram from the Princess was handed to Lord Donal at Berlin.

"I congratulate you most sincerely," she wired; "and tell Jennie the next time you see her"—Lord Donal laughed as he read this aloud—"that the Austrian Government has awarded her thirty thousand pounds for her share in enabling them to recover their gold, and little enough I think it is, considering what she has done."

"Now, I call that downright handsome of the Austrian Government," said Lord Donal. "I thought they were going to fight us when I read the speech of their Prime Minister, but, instead of that, they are making wedding presents to our nice girls."

"Ah, that comes through the good-heartedness of the Princess, and the kindness of the Prince," said Jennie. "He has managed it."

"But what in the world did you do for the Austrian Government, Jennie?"

"That is a long story, Donal, and I think a most interesting one."

"Well, let us thank Heaven that we have a long journey for you to tell it and me to listen."

And saying this, the unabashed, forward young man took the liberty of kissing his fair companion good-night, right there amidst all the turmoil and bustle of the Schleischer Bahnhof in Berlin.

It was early in the morning when the two met again in the restaurant car. The train had passed Cologne and was now rushing up that picturesque valley through which runs the brawling little river V�sdræ. Lord Donal and Jennie had the car to themselves, and they chose a table near the centre of it and there ordered their breakfast. The situation was a charming one. The broad, clear plate glass windows on each side displayed, in rapid succession, a series of pictures well worth viewing; the densely wooded hills, the cheerful country houses, the swift roaring stream lashing itself into fleecy foam; now and then a glimpse of an old ruined castle on the heights, and, in the deep valley, here and there a water mill.

It was quite evident that Jennie had slept

well, and, youth being on her side, her rest had compensated for the nightmare of the Russian journey. She was simply but very effectively dressed and looked as fresh and pretty and cool and sweet as a snowdrop. The enchanted young man found it impossible to lure his eyes away from her, and when, with a little laugh, Jennie protested that he was missing all the fine scenery, he answered that he had something much more beautiful to look upon; whereat Jennie blushed most enticingly, smiled at him, but made no further protest. Whether it was his joy in meeting Jennie, or the result of his night's sleep, or his relief at finding that his career



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was not wrecked, as he had imagined, or all three together, Lord Donal seemed his old self again, and was as bright, witty, and cheerful as a boy home for the holidays. They enjoyed their breakfast with the relish that youth and a healthy appetite gives to a dainty meal well served. The rolls were brown and toothsome, the butter, in thick corrugated spirals, was of a delicious golden colour, cool and crisp. The coffee was all that coffee should be, and the waiter was silent and attentive. Russia, like an evil vision, was far behind, and the train sped through splendid scenery swiftly towards England and home.

The young man leaned back in his chair,

interlaced his fingers behind his head, and gazed across at Jennie, drawing a sigh of deep satisfaction.

"Well, this *is* jolly," he said.

"Yes," murmured Jennie, "it's very nice. I always did enjoy foreign travel, especially when it can be done in luxury; but, alas! luxury costs money, doesn't it?"

"Oh, you don't need to mind, you are rich."

"That is true; I had forgotten all about it."

"I hope, Jennie, that the fact of my

insist on returning the money to the *Bugle* now that I have failed in my mission."

"Dear me, how much more honest the newspaper business is than diplomacy! The idea of returning any money never even occurred to me. The mere suggestion freezes my young blood and makes each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Our motto in the service is, Get all you can, and keep all you get."

"But, then, you see, your case is different to mine; you did your best to succeed, and I failed through my own choice; and thus I sit here a traitor to my paper."

"Well, Jennie," said the young man, picking up the despatch-box, which he never allowed to leave his sight, and placing it on the table, "you've only to say the word, and this contentious letter is in your possession again. Do you regret your generosity?"

"Oh, no, no, no, no, I would not have it back on any account. Even looking at the matter in the most materialistic way, success means far more to you than it does to me. As you say, I am rich, therefore I am going to give up my newspaper career. I suppose that is why women very

rarely make great successes of their lives. A woman's career so often is merely of incidental interest to her; a man's career is his whole life."

"What a pity it is," mused the young man, "that one person's success generally means another person's failure. If I were the generous, whole-souled person I sometimes imagine myself to be, I should refuse to accept success as the price of your failure. You have actually succeeded, while I have actually failed. With a generosity that makes me feel small and mean, you hand over your



"'Well, this *is* jolly,' he said."

travelling on a *train de luxe* has not deluded you regarding my wealth. I should have told you that I usually travel third class when I am transporting myself in my private capacity. I am wringing this pampered elegance from the reluctant pockets of the British taxpayer. When I travel for the British Government I say, as *Pooh Bah* said to *Koko* in the 'Mikado,' 'Do it well, my boy,' or words to that effect."

"Indeed," laughed Jennie, "I am in a somewhat similar situation; the newspaper is paying all the expense of this trip, but I shall

success to me, and I selfishly accept it. But I compound with my conscience in this way. You and I are to be married; then we will be one. That one shall be heir to all the successes of each of us, and shall disclaim all the failures of each. Isn't that a good idea?"

"Excellent," replied Jennie; "nevertheless, I cannot help feeling just a little sorry for poor Mr. Hardwick."

"Who is he—the editor?"

"Yes. He *did* have such faith in me that it seems almost a pity to disappoint him."

"You mustn't trouble your mind about Hardwick. Don't think of him at all; think of me instead."

"I am afraid I do, and have done for some time past; nevertheless, I shall get off at Liège and telegraph to him that I am not bringing the document to London."

"I will send the telegram for you when we reach there; but, if I remember rightly what you told me of his purpose, he can't be very deeply disappointed. I understood you to say that he did not intend to publish the document, even if he got it."

"That is quite true. He wished to act as the final messenger himself, and was to meet me at Charing Cross Station, secure the envelope, and take it at once to its destination."

"I must confess," said the young man, with a bewildered expression, "that I don't see the object of that. Are you sure he told you the truth?"

"Oh, yes. The object was this. It seems that there is in the Foreign Office some crusty old curmudgeon who delights in baffling Mr. Hardwick. This official—I forget his name; in fact, I don't think Mr. Hardwick told me who he was—seems to forget the *Daily Bugle* when important items of news are to be given out, and Mr. Hardwick says that he favours one of the rival papers, and the *Bugle* has been unable, so far, to receive anything like fair treatment from him; so Mr. Hardwick wanted to take the document to him, and thus convince him there was danger in making an enemy of the *Daily Bugle*. As I understood his scheme, which didn't commend itself very much to me, Hardwick had no intention of making a bargain, but simply proposed to hand over the document, and ask the Foreign Office man to give the *Bugle* its fair share in what was going."

"Do you mean to say that the official in question is the man to whom I am to hand this letter?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle! Why, that is Sir James Cardiff, the elder brother of my mother; he is a dear old chap, but I can well understand an outsider thinking him gruff and uncivil. If the editor really means what he says, then there will be no difficulty and no disappointment. If all that is needed is the winning over of old Jimmy to be civil to Hardwick, I can guarantee that. I am the especial *protégé* of my uncle. Everything I know I have learned from him. He cannot understand why the British Government does not appoint me immediately Ambassador to France; Jimmy would do it to-morrow if he had the power. It was



"Ah, Donal, Donal, you always had a keen eye for the beautiful."

through him that I heard of this letter, and I believe his influence had a good deal to do with my getting the commission of special messenger. It was the chagrin that my uncle Jimmy would have felt, had I failed, that put the drop of bitterness in my cup of sorrow when I came to my senses after my encounter with the Russian police. That would have been a stunning blow to Sir James Cardiff. We shall reach Charing Cross Station about 7.30 to-night, and Sir James will be there with his brougham to take charge of me when I arrive. Now, what do you say to our settling all this under the canopy of Charing Cross? If you

telegraph Mr. Hardwick to meet us there, I will introduce him to Sir James, and he will never have any more trouble in that quarter."

"I think," said the girl, looking down at the tablecloth, "that I'd rather not have Mr. Hardwick meet us."

"Of course not," answered the young man quickly. "What was I thinking about? It will be a family meeting, and we don't want any outsiders about, do we?"

Jennie laughed, but made no reply.

They had a smooth and speedy passage across from Calais to Dover, and the train drew in at Charing Cross Station exactly to time. Lord Donal recognised his uncle's brougham waiting for him, and on handing the young lady out of the railway carriage he espied the old man himself closely scrutinising the passengers. Sir James on catching sight of him came eagerly forward and clasped both his nephew's hands.

"Donal," he cried, "I am very glad indeed to see you. Is everything right?"

"As right as can be, uncle."

"Then I am glad of that, too, for we have had some very disquieting hints from the East."

"They were quite justified, as I shall tell you later on; but meanwhile, uncle, allow me to introduce to you Miss Baxter, who has done me the honour of promising to be my wife."

Jennie blushed in the searching rays of the electric light as the old man turned quickly towards her. Sir James held her hand in his for some moments before he spoke, gazing intently at her. Then he said slowly, "Ah, Donal, Donal, you always had a keen eye for the beautiful."

"Oh, I say," cried the young man, abashed at his uncle's frankness, "I don't call that a diplomatic remark at all, you know."

"Indeed, Sir James," said the girl, laughing merrily, "it is better than diplomatic, it is complimentary, and I assure you I appreciate it. The first time he met me he took me for quite another person."

"Then, whoever that person is, my dear," replied the old man, "I'll guarantee that she was a lovely woman. And you mustn't mind what I say; nobody else does, otherwise my boy Donal here would be much higher in the service than he is; but I am pleased to tell you that the journey he has now finished will prove greatly to his advantage."

"Indeed, uncle, that is true," said the

young man, looking at his betrothed, "for on this journey I met again Miss Baxter, whom, to my great grief, I had lost track of for some time. And now, uncle, I want you to do me a great favour. Do you know Mr. Hardwick, editor of the *Daily Bugle*?"

"Yes, I know him; but I don't like him, nor his paper either."

"Well, neither do the Russians, for that matter, by this time, and I merely wish to tell you that if it hadn't been for his action, and for the promptness of a member of his staff, I should have failed in this mission. I was drugged by the Russian police and robbed. Miss Baxter, who was on the train, saw something of what was going forward, and succeeded, most deftly, in despoiling the robbers. I was lying insensible at the time and helpless. She secured the document, and handed it back to me when we had crossed the frontier, leaving in the hands of the Russians a similar envelope containing a copy of the *Daily Bugle*; therefore, uncle, if in future you can do anything to oblige Mr. Hardwick, you will help in a measure to cancel the obligation which our family owes to him."

"My dear boy, I shall be delighted to do so. I am afraid I have been rather uncivil to him. If you wish it, I will go at once and apologise to him."

"Oh, no," cried Jennie, "you must not do that; but if you can help him without jeopardising the service, I, for one, would be very glad."

"So should I," said Donal.

The old man took out his card-case, and on the back of his card scribbled a most cordial invitation to Hardwick, asking him to call on him. He handed this to Jennie, and said—

"Tell Mr. Hardwick that I shall be pleased to see him at any time."

"And now," said Lord Donal, "you must let us both escort you home in the carriage."

"No, no. I shall take a hansom, and will go directly to the office of the *Bugle*, for Mr. Hardwick will be there by this time."

"But we can drive you there."

"No, please."

She held out her hand to Sir James and said, with the least bit of hesitation before uttering the last word, "Good night—uncle."

"Good night, my dear," said the old man, "and God bless you," he added with a tenderness which his appearance, so solemn and stately, left one unprepared for.

Lord Donal saw his betrothed into a hansom, protesting all the while at thus having to allow her to go off unprotected.

"What an old darling he is," murmured Jennie, ignoring his protests. "I think if Mr. Hardwick had allowed me to look after the interests of the paper at the Foreign Office, Sir James would not have snubbed me."

"If the Foreign Office dared to do such a thing, it would hear of something not to its advantage from the Diplomatic Service; and so, good night, my dear." And, with additions, the nephew repeated the benediction of the uncle.

Jennie drove directly to the office of the *Daily Bugle*, and, mounting the stairs, entered the editorial rooms. She found Mr. Hardwick at his desk, and he sprang up quickly on seeing who his visitor was.

"Ah, you have returned," he cried. "You didn't telegraph to me, so I suppose that means failure."

"I don't know, Mr. Hardwick. It all depends on whether or not your object was exactly what you told me it was."

"And what was that? I think I told you that my desire was to get possession of the document which was being transmitted from St. Petersburg to London."

"No; you said the object was the mollifying of old Sir James Cardiff, of the Foreign Office."

"Exactly; that was the ultimate object, of course."

"Very well. Read this card. Sir James gave it to me at Charing Cross Station less than half an hour ago."

The editor took the card, turned it over in his hands once or twice, and read the cordial message which the old man had scribbled on the back of it.

"Then you have succeeded," cried Hardwick. "You got the document; but why did you give it to Sir James himself, instead of letting me hand it to him?"

"That is a long story. To put it briefly, it was because the messenger carrying the document was Lord Donal Stirling, who is—who is—an old friend of mine. Sir James is his uncle, and Lord Donal promised that he would persuade the old man to let other newspapers have no advantages which he refused to the *Daily Bugle*. I did not give the document to Sir James, I gave it back to Lord Donal."

"Lord Donal Stirling—Lord Donal Stirling," mused the editor. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"He is a member of the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, so you may have seen his name in the despatches."

"No. He is not so celebrated as all that comes to. Ah, I remember now. I met the detective the other night and asked him if anything had come of that romance in high life, to solve which he had asked your assistance. He said the search for the missing lady had been abandoned, and mentioned the name of Lord Donal Stirling as the foolish young man who had been engaged in the pursuit of the unknown."

Jennie coloured at this and drew herself up indignantly.

"Before you say anything further against Lord Donal," she cried hotly, "I beg to inform you that he and I are to be married."



"He and I are to be married."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the editor icily. "Then, having failed to find the other girl, he has speedily consoled himself by——"

"There was no other girl. I was the person of whom Mr. Cadbury Taylor was in search. I willingly gave him valuable assistance in the task of failing to find myself. Having only a stupid man to deal with, I had little difficulty in accomplishing my purpose. Neither Mr. Taylor nor Mr. Hardwick ever suspected that the missing person was in their own employ."

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Hardwick. "So you baffled Cadbury Taylor in searching for yourself, as you baffled me in getting hold of the Russian letter. It seems to me,



"Lord Donal was very popular and the bride was very beautiful."

Miss Baxter, that where your own inclinations do not coincide with the wishes of your employers, the interests of those who pay you fall to the ground."

"Mr. Cadbury Taylor didn't pay me anything for my services as amateur detective, and he has, therefore, no right to grumble. As for the St. Petersburg trip, I shall send you a cheque for all expenses incurred as soon as I reach home."

"Oh, you mistake me," asserted Mr. Hardwick earnestly. "I had no thought of even hinting that you have not earned over and over again all the money the *Daily Bugle* has paid you; besides, I was longing for your return, for I want your assistance in solving a mystery that has rather puzzled us all. Paris is in a turmoil just now over the——"

Jennie's clear laugh rang out.

"I am going over to Paris in a day or two, Mr. Hardwick, to solve the mystery of dressmaking, and I think, from what I know of it already, it will require my whole attention. I must insist on returning to you the cost of the St. Petersburg journey, for, after all, it proved to be a rather personal excursion, and I couldn't think of allowing the paper to pay for it. I merely came in to-night to hand you this card from Sir James Cardiff, and I also desired to tender to you personally my resignation. And so I must bid you good-bye, Mr. Hardwick," said the girl, holding out her hand; "and I thank you very much indeed for having given me a chance to work on your paper."

Before the editor could reply, she was gone, and that good man sat down in his chair bewildered by the suddenness of it all, the room looking empty and dismal, lacking her presence.

"Confound Lord Donal!" he muttered under his breath, and then, as an editor should, he went on impassively with his night's work.

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It was intended that the wedding should be rather a quiet affair, but circumstances proved too strong for the young people. Lord Donal was very popular and the bride was very beautiful. Sir James thought it necessary to invite a great many people, and

he intimated to Lord Donal that a highly placed personage desired to honour the function with his presence. And thus the event created quite a little flutter in society. The society papers affirmed that this elevated personage had been particularly pleased by some diplomatic service which Lord Donal had recently rendered him; but then, of course, one can never believe what one reads in the society press. However, the man of elevated rank was there, and so people said that perhaps there might be something in the rumour. Naturally there was a great turn-out of ambassadors and ministers, and their presence gave colour and dignity to the crush at St. George's, Hanover Square. The Princess von Steinheimer made a special journey from Vienna to attend, and on this occasion she brought the Prince with her. The general opinion was that the bridegroom was a very noble-looking fellow, and that the bride, in her sumptuous wedding apparel, was quite too lovely for anything.

The Princess was exceedingly bright and gay, and she chatted with her old friends the Ambassadors from Austria and America.

"I'm so sorry," she said to the Ambassador from America, "that I did not have time to speak with you at the Duchess of Chiselhurst's ball, but I was compelled to leave early. You should have come to me sooner. The Count here was much more gallant. We had a most delightful conversation, didn't we, Count? I was with Lord Donal, you remember."

"Oh, yes," replied the aged Austrian, bowing low; "I shall not soon forget the charming conversation I had with your Highness, and I hope you, on your part, have not forgotten the cordial invitation you gave me to visit again your castle at Meran."

"Indeed, Count, you know very well how glad I am to see you at any time, either in Vienna or at Meran."

The American Ambassador remained silent, and glanced alternately from the bride to the Princess with a puzzled expression on his face.

The mystery of the Duchess of Chiselhurst's Ball proved too much for him, as the search for the missing lady had proved too much for Mr. Cadbury Taylor.