

The Home Reading Circle

IMMORTAL FAME.

By HOWARD FIELDING.

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PART I. THE SECLUSION OF BERTRAM DYER.

I know Bertram Dyer when he was living on two boiled eggs in the morning, and an occasional invitation to dinner; but he was constitutionally incapable of becoming either poor in flesh or shabby in dress, and therefore few of his friends were aware how meager was the reward of his literary labors. It was a pleasure, in those days, to see him eat; and I enjoyed it as often as I could afford to do so. Now that his fame is so great, I can boast of having led him; and, moreover, I can advance the claim that it was one of my dinners which started him on the road to fortune.

On the occasion in question I had asked Bertram to meet me at a tobaccoist's on Forty-second street, near the hotel, where we were to dine. Urged by appetite, he came too early; and I found him sitting on the pedestal of a wooden Indian in front of the shop. Aroused from deep meditation by the sound of my voice, he arose and faced the image.

"Old fellow," he said, but which of us he was addressing I do not know, "there's money in a story about Indians."

And forthwith he wrote one which has been the talk of three continents. If I count Australia. Though Dyer was under thirty and had never seen a live Indian, he was thought, in England, to be a general of our western army and the peculiar terror of the red man. A newspaper portrait of him, which appeared bald, through a defect in the plate, led to the rumor that he had been scalped, and thousands of people were thus induced to buy his book. The singularly lurid coloring of the Forty-second street Indian shines out in Dyer's description of war paint, and when I held a portrait of the shop which had been marked by many, but fully appreciated, I believe, by no one except myself.

If there is one thing that is certainly worth money to a man in these days it is advertising, and Dyer had an abundance. Offers from publishers came thick and fast in the wake of it, and my friend was well to do. Greatly to my sorrow, he married, and I saw less and less of him; for, though he urged me to come to his home, I went very seldom, having taken a violent dislike to Mrs. Dyer. Then he moved away from the city for reasons that seemed excellent when he presented them to me, though I selfishly urged him to remain, for I had become very much attached to him. It appeared that he was overwhelmed with literary engagements which he thought it would be easier for him to fulfill if he could have the quiet of the country. Also, he was entertaining many of my wife's relations, and they had begun to be a burden upon him, notwithstanding the comfortable size of his income.

He bought an abandoned farm in the wilds of the Berkshire hills, and made a habitable dwelling of the rude old farmhouse. We maintained a desultory correspondence. The family, as nature will have such things like, and then I knew no more of him, except by paragraphs in the papers, and by his published writings which appeared in great and increasing profusion.

About two years after his withdrawal into seclusion I came to know his cousin, Miss Emily Dyer, a charming young woman who had been thrown upon her own resources by the death of her parents, and was struggling to maintain herself in New York. She had secured a position as a "retoucher" in a photographer's establishment, and her leisure was given to drawing and painting. Her work was hard; her wages very small, and, to cap the climax of misfortune, the photographer had fallen in love with her. I would have rescued her from all these hardships and perils by the simple process of matrimony; but, unhappily, she did not care for me. Her affections were fixed upon a tall, good-looking youth who was studying art, but had not yet learned to draw salary. Even by the light of their own rosy cheeks it seemed likely that they might have to wait a year or two before the young man should become rich and famous; and, in the meantime, I thought that it was a pity that the talent of Bertram Dyer, as the latest relative of the girl, ought to help her along.

I wrote to him upon the subject, and received a reply ten days later. It was a refusal, and he had dictated it to a stenographer. The thing read like a circular about foreign missions. I would have thought it a forgery, gotten up by his wife, but for the unmistakable Dyer signature. Such little, flimsy, coldly regular characters! Why had I not long ago read his true nature in his pompous and stilted biography. Yet I had thought him one of the most generous and tenderly sympathetic of men. Could success change a human creature so completely? I could not credit it, but I had to thank God that he had made me a failure.

After spending a day or two in an endeavor to digest Bertram's letter, I went to see Emily. We were just as good friends as if I had never given her the annoyance of refusing me. She was ill and could not receive me. Upon leaving the house where she was boarding, I perceived the flaxen-haired artist

patrolling the other side of the street. A mutual sorrow often unites the bitterest enemies. I accosted my successful rival and offered him a cigar which he received quite in the way of friendship.

"I don't believe it's anything serious," he said, in an anxious tone. "She is tired; that's all. If she could only go out into the country and rest for a while."

I quite agreed with his unspoken conclusion, but, though we walked together till after midnight and talked of nothing else, we did not succeed in reaching a solution of the difficulty. The next day I set out on a pilgrimage to the Berkshire hills.

Bertram Dyer's retreat was situated in a peculiarly desolate region. The nearest railroad station was ten miles away, in the town of Rockwood. There he had a small cottage, and a few lodgings in a quaint little hotel kept by three old maids. That one of them who does the cooking should be earning twenty thousand dollars a year in New York, and wearing the "cordon bleu" is a somewhat unusual thing, but that is his habit and nobility in a man's nature. He who begins the day with them can hardly descend to the level of an ignoble act before sunset—when he can have some more.

This fortified for a task that promised many difficulties, I rode away from the hotel in Rockwood about nine o'clock in the morning, mounted upon a bicycle which I had brought from New York. I had received careful directions regarding the road, which, indeed, was easy enough to follow, since there was no other. It was in excellent condition, and, despite the hills, I might have made ten miles at good speed, but I stopped frequently to admire the scenery, which was always beautiful, and sometimes had the effect of grandeur. There were points in the road from which I could command a wide prospect, and once, at about six miles distance, I got a glimpse of Bertram's house. With the aid of strong field glasses I could see it quite distinctly, and it seemed a pleasant place in which to live and write.

I reached the border of my friend's estate before eleven o'clock. There was a gate giving entrance to a avenue that wound its way toward the house, which was invisible from that point. A grove, bright with autumn tints, growing beside the main road tempted me to take the circuit of the grounds, and I entered them eventually on the side toward Greenville, a town in which I should have left the railroad, but for the reputation of the Rockwood Inn since Greenville is nearer New York and only about a mile further from Dyer's home.

On approaching the house I perceived Mrs. Elizabeth Graves—mother of Mrs. Dyer—standing on the steps that led up to the veranda. I had met her in New York, and I liked her even less than her unamiable daughter. Her surprise at the sight of me made me aware that my letter announcing my intended visit had not arrived. Indeed, I had given it an insufficient start, considering the irregularity of the mails in that region.

Mrs. Graves was not more cold in her welcome than I had expected her to be. "You rode over from Greenville, I suppose," she said. "It's a pity you didn't come the other way, for if you had, you would have met Bertram at Rockwood this forenoon."

"Indeed," said I, "what time did he start?"

"Between nine and ten," she answered. "Of course I knew perfectly well that Bertram had been on the road to Rockwood at the time specified, but I am not one who would betray a man to his mother-in-law. If it suited my friend's convenience to leave a lie behind him at home, that was a matter with which his own conscience might deal. So I let it be understood that I had come from Greenville."

Mrs. Dyer came out of the house almost immediately. She was somewhat more cordial than her mother had been. The other woman would have sent me away hungry, but the younger one invited me to lunch, though with no great excess of hospitality. However, my mission was of a character to make one patient under any provocation. No one would have been so patient as I was, but she had really been led into a trap against him, her affection for him—the sincerity of which I had never doubted—would be stirred to such a degree that she would betray signs of remorse. To my great satisfaction, she began to cry; and thus I knew that, though Bertram's fate might be desperate, there was one, at least, of his persecutors who had not entered into the plot with her whole heart. My mouth was open to begin a rejoinder that she should trust me as a friend and tell me all, when Mrs. Graves suddenly appeared in the doorway. The glance which she leveled at me was like one of the tomahawks that flashed in Bertram's great story, and I fled for my life.

Of course, I had not abandoned the adventure. It was a retreat in the nature of a feint, designed to raise false hopes in the heart of the enemy. No sooner had I passed out of Dyer's farm, by the Greenville gate, when I wheeled to the westward, following a road that passed close to the base of a steep, wooded hill that I had noticed from the veranda. Its top was less than half a mile from the house, and I believed that it would afford me an excellent point of observation.

Concealing my bicycle among the trees, I climbed the hill, and speedily found a spot from which I could look out upon my friend's abode, without danger of being seen. As I turned my eyes upon it, the blinds outside the windows of the western chamber were opened, and, with the aid of my field glasses, I easily recognized Mrs. Dyer as the person who had opened them. She passed to the window in the southern wall, and immediately a flood of light streamed into the chamber. It was not a sick room, certainly. The bed was neatly made up. Beside it was a stand on which were several books and magazines, but no phials or other detestable appurtenances of disease.

There was no one else in the room but Mrs. Dyer, so far as I could see. Certainly no invalid would have been exposed to such a draft of crisp autumn air as must have been surging through the open window. This discovery strengthened a sus-

intercession with her cousin, and when that was over there might be something else that I could do for her. At least I could help her in any way which she had honored by her preference to make a profitable use of such talent as she had.

Suddenly I was startled by something falling beside me. It was my cigar, which had slipped from my fingers. I had been asleep. The moon had sunk almost to the hills upon the west. It was nearly 3 o'clock.

I re-entered the house and softly closed and locked the door. At that moment I heard a noise from the other end of the hall. Some one was coming.

I hastily stepped into the unlighted sitting room. A slender, dark young man with disheveled hair passed close to my hiding place, but did not see me. He was carrying a lamp and yawning painfully. When he had gone upstairs and entered a bed room I stole up after him. The remainder of the night I passed in slumber.

When I came down the next morning I met Mrs. Graves in the hall. "Bertram came back last night," she said. "Perhaps you heard him drive up to the front door, a little after twelve?"

No; I hadn't heard him, nor had I seen him, though at the hour named I had been sitting almost directly before the door. However, I did not tell her that.

"Later in the night," she continued, "he was taken very sick. You won't be able to see him. We have sent to Greenville for a doctor."

I expressed my deepest sympathies. About nine o'clock the doctor from Greenville arrived. I recognized him as the young man with the tangled hair who had passed so near me on the preceding night.

PART II.
A FRIENDLY BURGLARY.

I considered it highly important to ascertain whether the young man who personated the Greenville doctor really had any knowledge of medicine. If he had, it would seem probable that he was a resident physician attending upon Bertram in an illness that was by no means the sudden and unexpected one which I had described to Mrs. Graves. Accepting that view, two theories would naturally suggest themselves to account for the duplicity and concealment that were being practiced by the household. Bertram's illness might be of such a nature that it would be best kept secret; he might be periodically insane. Second, he might be the point of death, and his wife and her relations might fear that I would influence him against them in the disposition of the money he had earned and the valuable copyrights he held.

On the other hand, if the young man were not a doctor, there must be some sort of plot against my friend, whereby he was held prisoner and prevented from communicating with the outer world. Perhaps his presence was being kept secret by the Graves contingent. I prepared to suspect Mrs. Graves of anything. As for Mrs. Dyer, I could not regard her as an active element in so serious an affair. My dislike for her had been based upon her mental vacuity, upon her absurd inferiority to her husband. She had seemed to me incapable of good or evil except as others might influence her. Grandfather Graves was a shrewd old rat, with an eye like a hawk and the inside of another's pocket. With the other members of the household I was almost unacquainted, but I did not detect any leading sign among them.

On the whole I regarded Mrs. Dyer as the veranda most tightly than the Graves family. My ancient pillars while Mrs. Graves strove to keep off with the cold edge of inhumanity.

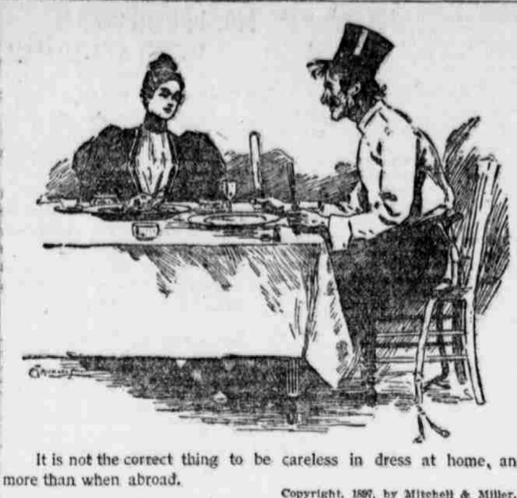
Mrs. Dyer and "the doctor" seemed surprised that I had shown so much tenacity, when they had expected me to drop in a few weeks; whereupon Mrs. Graves nodded her head at me as much as to say "I'll get rid of you long before that, my boy."

Apparent acquiescence seemed to be my best course, and I began to adieu with so great a semblance of cordiality that the hatchet-faced old woman was deceived. She took "the doctor" into the house again, ostensibly to offer him some refreshment, and thus I was left alone with Dyer, which was what I had wished for. Immediately I began to speak of my husband as if I had no hope of ever seeing him alive again. I dilated upon his many amiable qualities and upon the brilliant success of his career, and then I began to speak of his death, and she had really been led into a trap against him, her affection for him—the sincerity of which I had never doubted—would be stirred to such a degree that she would betray signs of remorse. To my great satisfaction, she began to cry; and thus I knew that, though Bertram's fate might be desperate, there was one, at least, of his persecutors who had not entered into the plot with her whole heart. My mouth was open to begin a rejoinder that she should trust me as a friend and tell me all, when Mrs. Graves suddenly appeared in the doorway. The glance which she leveled at me was like one of the tomahawks that flashed in Bertram's great story, and I fled for my life.

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It is not the correct thing to be careless in dress at home, any more than when abroad.

The letter had "come hard." It had plainly been written at dictation and under compulsion. No wonder Dyer had sworn when he had finished it. Evidently the poor fellow was not at all his own master in that house. I resolved anew to see him and to rescue him. Where could he be? Where, but in that other room on the north end of the house, the room that I had seen no one enter or leave on the preceding night?

There was a door between the rooms. I turned the knob. It was locked on the other side. I ventured to call softly: "Bertram!" A confused murmur—half smothered sound—was audible within. I called again, as loudly as I dared. Still the same murmuring noise, a little louder than before. Had they tied the poor fellow like a dog and gagged him? I put my strength upon the door, softly, steadily. The lock yielded. I entered.

The room was dark, but a light suddenly flashed up. I saw a tumbled bed, a flaring lamp on a table; and, beyond, Grandfather Graves in his scanty night clothing, just in the act of falling down an enormous old-fashioned musket from the wall.

Bertram Dyer was not there, and a half second later neither was I. My form might have been seen flitting across the lawn, while behind me, and, indeed, all around me, echoed the resounding bang of the old musket. (To Be Continued.)

One Way to Help the Coal Trade.

From the Colliery Engineer.

The conditions surrounding the marketing of anthracite coal have materially changed in recent years. But a few years ago no size smaller than chestnut was sent to market and in fact thousands of tons of the latter were thrown on the culm pile at the mines on account of lack of market. In course of time this waste of chestnut coal ceased and the demand for that size became almost as strong as that for stove coal. The broken and lump coal sizes were used exclusively for steam purposes at manufacturing establishments in the Eastern and Middle states. Later the cheaper bituminous coal wrested the trade of manufacturers from the anthracite operators and anthracite became gradually known as a domestic coal for which it is peculiarly fitted. This resulted in less demand for lump and broken coal, and made necessary the production of larger proportions of egg, stove and chestnut. The breaking of these large sizes down to the sizes in demand naturally increased the proportion of pea, buckwheat and rice coal. In most recent years improved appliances have made it possible to secure most excellent results in steam-raising by the use of the smaller sizes of anthracite, or those below chestnut in size. Owing to the absence of smoke and the great heating power of anthracite, manufacturers in many instances prefer it to bituminous, and the anthracite trade has, therefore, resolved itself into two distinct classes: First, the trade in domestic coal, which takes the sizes larger than pea coal. Second, the trade in steaming coals, which takes the small sizes. About

twenty-eight per cent. of the coal shipped to market from the collieries of the Girard estate in Schuylkill county in 1896 consisted of sizes below chestnut. The percentage would have been materially increased had all the small sizes possible been shipped. This proportion is about an average one for the anthracite region.

As will be seen from the foregoing, the domestic sizes of anthracite do not enter into competition with bituminous coal, and the trade in those sizes is limited to the domestic consumption in localities comparatively near the anthracite regions and to domestic consumption in the homes of wealthy men in the west and northwest who prefer to pay the increased price for anthracite over bituminous on account of its greater cleanliness. The trade in the small sizes enters into direct competition with the bituminous coal trade. To meet this competition, lower freight rates on sizes below chestnut coal are necessary. The operator in the anthracite region can afford to put these small sizes on the market at a price that will compete with the price received by the bituminous operator for his coal at the mine; but, when a freight rate of two or three times as much is charged on small sizes of anthracite as on the bituminous, the markets with bituminous coal, and the result is manufacturers, no matter how much they may desire anthracite, are driven to the use of bituminous. The anthracite-carrying roads contend that they are carrying coal to market as cheaply as they can afford to. This statement may be true as far as the large sizes are concerned because the demand is not constant enough to keep their cars continually in service and thus give them a regular tonnage.

There is nothing to be gained by the statement that the anthracite production is not restricted. It is restricted, and rightfully so. Without restriction the market for domestic sizes would be flooded, prices would break, bankruptcy would be the fate of the operator and starvation that of the miner; but, the restriction that wisely controls the production of domestic sizes should not be so closely applied to the small sizes. These small sizes should not be counted in the apportionment. They have very little, if any, bearing on the state of the market for the domestic sizes, and they should have the same advantages of regular supply to consumers, as bituminous coal. Further, the freight rates on these small sizes should be reduced to a figure more in consonance with the freight rates given bituminous coal. If this is done many manufacturers now using bituminous coal, because they can get regular supplies of it, would speedily turn to the small sizes of anthracite. Operators of anthracite mines would be benefited and the railroad companies would certainly gain, as it is better for them to employ their cars in the transportation of small sizes of anthracite than to have them lying idle during a considerable portion of each year. If bituminous coal can be hauled to market at three or four mills per ton per mile, so can the small sizes of anthracite.

If such a policy is inaugurated the great carrying roads will profit in two ways. First, by the increased income from their coal properties. Second, by the increased tonnage on which the profits, though smaller than on the tonnage on domestic sizes, will result in some gain where now there is none. While restriction in anthracite production must be adhered to, it must also be borne in mind that no steam user can afford to arrange his steam plant for the use of small sizes of anthracite unless he has some assurance that his supply will be regular and in accordance with his wants. This supply cannot be regular if the same restrictions apply to small sizes that apply to domestic sizes; therefore he cannot have such an assurance as long as the small sizes are included in the restriction. Neither can he afford to turn to the use of these small sizes of anthracite unless he can get them at such a figure as will enable him to make steam as cheaply as does his competitor who uses bituminous coal.

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