

IN AN ANXIOUS MOMENT. MRS. HUNGERFORD THE DUCHESS. AUTHOR OF MOLLY BAWN.

Copyright 1896; by the Bachelor Syndicate. PART I. CHAPTER I.

"If you could only prove you were in the Upland wood at the time..."

"I can prove nothing," returns the young man addressed, somewhat doggedly; "I have only my word..."

"I know, I know, my dear boy. Don't for a moment think I do not respect it..."

"Why don't you ask rather why his own gun wasn't by his side?"

"Ah! It is the simplest explanation, and means only regret on the part of Verlington..."

"As I have told you," cries he fiercely, "I have no proofs..."

"There is one thing Lord Verlington—he pauses. 'I should like you to know that Dick and I were not such bad friends..."

"No, but he may!" "My life is in his dying hands," says the young man slowly...

"I know—it will go very hard with you. But not so hard, my dear fellow, as it is difficult to convict the innocent person..."

"Not a soul. At least," dejectedly, "I saw no one." "It was unfortunate—that quarrel yesterday..."

"And no one saw the reconciliation?" Lord Verlington's voice is sad. "Not one. Truly the stars in their courses fight against me..."

"Meredith," says the old peer, laying his hand on his arm, "is it true that last year, in town, there was a rivalry between you and about—the young lady you are going to marry?"

"Dick," reluctantly, "admitted her very much, I know. But I asked her if he had proposed—or if she had ever cared for him, and she said 'no.'"

"Ah," said the old lord again. "But this time Meredith appears to resent it. He is lost in a reverie, in which the young lady appears to him in a very undesirable light..."

shield him with her loving arms? Claudia had not come—Betty only had come, and with her soft eyes and voice had bid him take heart...

"At all events," goes on Meredith in a listless sort of way, "there was no friction afterwards—no slightest suspicion of malice..."

"After she had accepted me, I mean. He quite understood the situation..."

"It has been hinted to me." "If by my accusers, it should count for me, as in that case it is he who should have murdered me..."

"Perhaps not," says Lord Verlington, slowly. "I want to prepare you, Meredith, for what lies before you..."

"You, Betty? You are not a rat?" says he, getting up and holding out his hand to her. "Where is your uncle? Where is Lord Verlington?"

"Yes, she has got rid of me," says he. "I knew she would at the first chance. She has been growing very cold to me of late, and this was her chance..."

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"You have heard that girl tell you so." "A girl—very interested?" "In what?"

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"You see you have given him so much," Claudia's smile is not pleasant, "that he can scarcely smile mine. And—was it an accident?"

"That he is honorable to Quixotism in your opinion one quite knows," says Claudia, with a little swift glance at her mother. "But I suppose you are not so blind to know that he is in a bit of a tangle now..."

"The evening is well advanced, darkness has fallen, and still the great shadow lies upon the house, Dornham, although by no means mentally wounded, has still, to both the doctors' anxiety, remained unconscious..."

"Now you have heard," says Mrs. Jeffares turning to Claudia as the door closes behind Betty. "He is likely to recover, Claudia looks at her. Her elbow is leaning on the table near her, and her eyes are quietly mused on him in the palm of her hand..."

"I hope you are not going to be violent," she turns away from him making for the door in a little blind sort of way. "Why, Betty, what is it?" says he, following her. "Betty, you are crying. What is it, Betty?"

"I really don't see what I have done," says Claudia, who looks slightly amused. "Does it hurt you to see me?" "I have been true to myself, with quiet defiance, 'which perhaps,' with a glance at her, 'means the same thing.'"

"You forsake him now," cries Betty, suffocating with righteous wrath, "now when all men's hands are against him?" "I forsake him," says Betty, "I've given him his cocoa. But you, George—you?"

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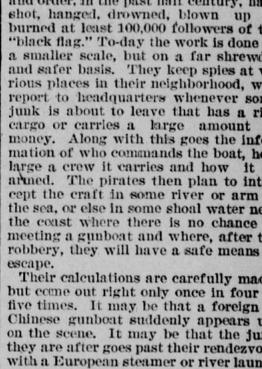
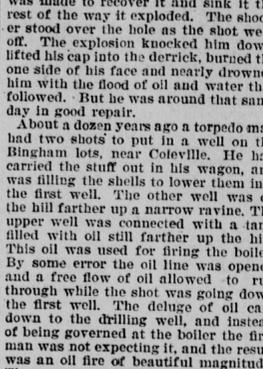
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PIRATES OF THE MALAY SEAS.

Their Crimes Conducted Much More Carefully Nowadays Than Formerly. In the Malay peninsula piracy has declined considerably since the expedition of twenty years ago, but Perak, Salangor and Romang still distinguish themselves now and again by a little unadvised business of this kind...

Their calculations are carefully made, but come out right only once in four or five times. It may be that a foreign or Chinese gumbot suddenly appears upon the scene. It may be that the junk they are after comes to their rendezvous with a European steamer...

A good deal of formality surrounded the gofny-ferch, and it was not to be omitted even when the parents were known to be willing to accept the bride or had many anxieties and among them the necessity of which will be seen by (and by) was the pace of his best horse and the pace and mettle of his friends' horses.

At last the wedding day dawned. The bride was dressed early and her finery she wore long cloak, buttoned all the way down to the throat, while a hood entirely covered her head and face. In the course of the morning the bridegroom sent some of his friends to seek out the bride. Arrived at her father's house, they found the door locked and before they could be admitted they had to recite some poetry. Sometimes the fair lady's whims and caprices made the delay in unlocking the door very long. When the door was opened the bride was still to be found.

She had taken refuge in some obscure corner of the house, where she was crouching out of sight, completely covered with her long cloak. This game of hide-and-seek was sometimes so prolonged that when the bride was found it was too late to be married that day, but this did not happen often. When the bride was really found there was a great mounting of horses; she in her modest cloak, was seated behind her father, and all the company set off as fast as their steeds could go—all except the bride's mother, who seldom, if ever, attended her daughter's wedding.

Up hill and down dale, over smooth and rough ground, the mountain ponies galloped and shrouded in the bridegroom if he and his friends did not reach the church before the bride. Service over, the bridegroom had still to keep guard over his wife, for in one country parish, if not in many, it was the custom of friends of the young man to wait outside the church until the service was over. When the happy couple appeared the bride was seized and placed behind one of the men, who galloped off with her.

Naturally, she was hotly pursued by the bridegroom, who, of course, after an exciting chase, eventually captured her. When at last the wife was secured she took her seat behind her husband and on his own horse and the company rode off again to the bride's old home. Arrived at the house all the party drank the health of the bride and bridegroom out of the same pewter.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Another view of the subject They had been telling fish stories, and the quiet, unobtrusive man looked queer. "The filer who spends his time in thinking up foolish questions broke the silence to inquire: 'I wonder what finally became of the whale that swallowed Jonah?'"

"I don't know," replied the quiet man, "but I have an idea as to some of his movements." "What is it?" "I don't doubt that he hunted up a party of other whales and bored them nearly to death telling them how the largest one he ever caught wriggled loose and got away."—Washington Star.

His BEST HOLD. "Brown—"Don't you think that the professional pugilists should be compelled to wear heavy gloves?" Jones—"Yes; especially when they are writing their letters."—Puck.

WHERE HE COULD ALWAYS SEE IT. Husband—"Do you know, my dear, I never get tired of looking at that photograph of you." Wife—"Why don't you have it framed and hung up in the club?"—Life.

A BALD STATEMENT. Visitor—"How much the baby resembles its father?" Nurse—"Yes, men; 'ceptin' it has more hair."—Puck.