The Secret Door & By Devek Vane

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

TORAH, the young and beautiful Lady Estcourt, misunderstanding her husband's effort to save her from the knowledge of his threatened blindness, becomes jealous of his interest in his old friend, Olea Lethbridge. Paul Delacour, of the French diplomatic service, fosters this misunderstanding and persuades North to clope with him to Paris while Lord Estcourt is away consulting an eye specialist in Wiesbaden.

Upon reaching Paris, Delacour is arrested on g charge of treason. North hurries home, hoping against hope to reclaim her farewell letter before her husband returns. She finds him already there, overloyed by the specialist's upinion that his sight can be saved. But she is dismayed to discover that the incriminating letter has fallen into the hands of Olga Lethbridge.

North confesses to Lord Estcourt's aunt, Lady Sarah Rochester, who promises her assistance. Delacour returns under a cloud and demands, as the price of his silence, that North shall help re-establish

him socially. Lady Estcourt's young sister, Felicity, comes to visit them. Upon meeting Delacour she reawakens his ambition and they become fast friends. Lord Estcourt heurs rumors of Delacour's impending disgrace and compals Lady Estcourt to break

off all social relations with him. Olga Lethbridge threatens Delacour with exposure unless he helps ber to disgrace Lady Estcourt, but Delacour rafuses indignantly. He is now gaining success in literary work and hopes to win Felicity Marchmont for his wife.

The Duchess of Exmoor, at Olga-Lethbridge's instigation, publicly snuhs Delacour during a brilliant reception at Claridge's. Delacour than turns to Lady Estcourt and renders her so conspictous that Lord Estcourt is garaged and makes Norsh promise not to speak to Delacour again.

Knowing Miss Lethbridge only awaits a favorable opportunity for showing Lady Estcourt's latter to her hosband, I saly Sarah scenis tha letter. Presently the dreaded blow fulls, but, when Olga produces her evidence to prove her statements to Lord Estcodet, it is out a blank sheet of paper.

Lord Estcourt fears to learn the truth, so he affects a cold silence toward his wife at home, though, outwardly they preserve an attitude of harmony. Felicity now acknowly edges her love for Delacour! but promises to conceal her feelings toward him from Lord Estcourt. Archie Rendel threatons to brand Delacour as a traitor unless he keeps away from Pelicity.

CHAPTER XXIII. "Love Can Hope Where Reason Would Despair.'

ADY ESTCOURT had returned to town with her sister, and Delacour wondered what he should do. Felicity would naturally expect to see or hear from him soon. Needless to say, he had no intention of giving her up at any moment, but at the same time his position was rendered much more difficult and dangerous by Archie Rendel's attitude.

He could not ask boldly for Fe-Helly now: he must persuade her to agree to a secret marriage.

"And that won't be easy." he reflected. "She does not like anything underhand. I shall have to think of a very plausible story to excuse it; I shall have to make it a matter of trusting me entirely or an elernal separation. I think she loves me too well to face such an alternative. She wouldn't tell anybody what passed between us at Little Haven; she would wait for me to speak to Estcourt. So, for tunately, it isn't likely to get to Rendel's ears, and once we ere married be will hold his tongue for her sake."

He was walking down Piccadilly, on his way home from the club, when he stopped suddenly and looked around. It was the first hour of the morning and the great city was sunk in a brief repose. The marciful night, "aurse of an ailing world," had covered it with a mantle of darkness and bidden

it sleep and forget. "I could have sworn I heard somebody belind me." he muttered, "and that not for the first time."

He looked all round suspiciously, peering across at the other side, where the trees in the Green Park cast a thick shadow near the railings. Could anybody be lurking there? But he could see nothing except a few poor waifs and strays of humanity who lay stretched asleep on the benches. All was still. He seemed to be the only person about.



you. I don't know about the dying, though. It's life I want, with you, dearest and bast-life at full tide."

Delacour had switched off the light in his room, but he stood a minute looking out into the quiet street. He was in no hurry to go to bed; he felt strangely excited to-night. He was turning away from the window when a figure on the opposite side arrested his attention. A man was walking slowly down the street, and he gianced up at the hotel as he went past. A lamp caught his face, and Delacour fell back with a little cry of

women, but never one so bonny as would eat out his neart in silence and loneliness, the monotonous tramp of the sentry round his prison walls forever la his ears? Would he sit there day after day brooding ever the old life until his misery overwhelmed him, and he would acream and pray for belo and pity, as men-stronger than he-had done before now?

soft on the tongue, as your Scotch persted every horror. Would be awan pretend to hope that La- growing tired. He would fain quit seldom is. I've met plenty of more banished to some desert Island, he lands's presence was not on his beautiful and brilliant and clever wondered, where day after day he count. The detective was watch-

> "Merciful heaven! Not thatnot that!" he cried, with a shud-

> Or would he be one of a chained gang, fastened to some loathsome mockery of a man against whom his whole nature revolted? Some

"He knelt at her feet, kissing her hand-her dress-anything that belonged to her-and for a moment she bowed her face to the beloved head, and he felt her lips touch his hair."

"It's queer," he mused, uneasily. as he went on, still half listening. "I've had a feeling that somebody was following me ever since I came out; I wonder if my nerves are getting shaky? Once or twice lately it has seemed to me that I was being watched or followed. What does it mean? Can there be anything

As he passed Exmoor House he glanced up and gave a short laugh. "Those stately portals are closed against me for ever," he thought. "If I sought admittance—which the saints forbid!-I should be turned away with only a little more courtesy than is shown to a troublesome beggar. And yet not so long ago I was an honored guest! The whirligig of time brings its revenges, as somebody says. Well, I have had some pleasant hours there. That was a memorable night at the ball, for instance. Fortune did not seem able to do enough for me then; that ought to have made me suspicious. I had position, popularity and a rich and beautiful woman was mine for the

"In less than forty-eight hours it was all crumbling to pieces; there was not one thing left whole in the wreck; nothing that was not damaged. It's queer. Fortune's a jade, no doubt. She kills you in your sleep like another Jael. Only a weman could have done a coldblooded thing like that. But I'll forgive her everything if she lets me bring off my last coup-if she gives me my Felicity."

asking.

His hard face softened wenderfully as he whispered the last word. Even the sound of her name was dear to him; he could not resist having it on his lips. Felicity-Felicity! How it lent Itself to music, how it conjured up a vision

of all things fresh and fair!
"Bear heart," he murmured, "how I love you! Your sweetness, your goodness and truth, even while they hurt me; your pretty determination, your shy tenderness -I love them all! I would not change you by a look or a thought."

The stars, those watchful eyes of heaven, looked down on him as they have looked down on so many lovers since the world began. They had seen it all over and over again -the hope and the fear and the longing. The night knows the best and the worst of a man as the day never can.

He turned into Duke street singing softly, almost unconsciously, "And for bonny Annie Laurie I'd

lay me down and die." "That is the word that suits you best, sweetheart-bonny, and it's he gasped. "It is—it must be would resent his superiority and Lalande." He collapsed into a torture him at every opportunity? chair, trembling from head to foot, the blood pounding in his ears.

a fiask of brandy from his dressingbag and, pouring some into the silver cup, drank it off neat, his teeth clinking against the brim. His perces answered to the potent spirit, which gripped them like steel. In a few minutes Delacour drew a long breath and staggered across to the window. With a

trembling hand he pulled the blind a little on one side and looked out. No one was there. No footstep sounded in the quiet street; no watchful, menacing gaze met his. All was wrapped in silence and re-

"Can I by any rossibility have dreamed. made a mistake?" he asked himself, eager to hope. "I only saw the face for a moment, and I haven't seen Lalande since that time in Paris, nearly a year ago now. With that idea of being watched and followed in my head, I might give a sinister interpretation to what may be nothing more than a harmless incident; I might imagine

a likeness that was not there." But he could not reassure himself; he could not set his mind at rest, and the night passed on unbeeded while he sat thinking and fearing. One idea after another sprang up, only to be cast aside; he could not decide on any plan of

"If I were wise," he said at last, slowly, "I should gr-go now. this minute, while there may be yet time. I should not take any risk, But I can't; it would mean losing Felicity. I could never come back to claim her, even if she would have me when she knew all. She holds me, I can't give her up; it is like tearing my heart out. I cannot go away alone; she must share my flight.

"I'll watch my opportunity tomorrow and see her somehow. The sooner I'm off the better, if that was really Lalande, there can be no doubt. His presence means mischief. He wouldn't have crossed for nothing, and it looks as if it were on my account by hisbeing outside just now. The Rendels wouldn't betray me. I think; it wouldn't do in their posimight. He has nothing to lose and he knows enough to ruin me. Curse him!"

His vivid imagination painted

"Mon Dleu! I know that face." coarse, degraded creature who Delacour caught his breath, and shivered at the bare idea. He, As soon as he could move he got with his almost womanish refinement-his fastidious tastes-he to make one of such a gang, locked together like dangerous brutes-

as they were! He got up and walked about the room to try and escape from the horror of his thoughts. The chill light of dawn found him still pacing up and down, and showed a ghastly, haggard face with staring eyes. He had aged and changed as time alone could not have changed him. He looked a hunted, desperate man; there was scarcely a trace of the handsome, gallant Jover of whom Felicity even now

At last, from sheer physical fatigue, he threw himself down on the bed and slept heavily until late into the day.

When he awake, after the first moment of bewilderment at finding himself lying outside the bed balf dressed, it all rushed back upon him in a flood. And for a moment he cowered down and wished that he might never have waked to such a memory. Then his natural pluck and daring slowly reasserted themselves and he was ready to defy his enemies once more.

"I may yet make good my escape with all the spoils of war," he reflected, stimulated and refreshed by his long sleep. "But there is no time to be lost; I must act at once." He wrote a few lines very carefully, rang for his trusted valet and handed him the note with minute instructions what to do.

"It is most important," he said, gravely, "that this should be given to Miss Marchmont privately and with as little delay as possible. I need hardly tell you to exercise the greatest care."

As soon as the man had gone Delacour made haste to dress. He was almost ready, and had glanced impatiently out of the window to see whether his messenger was in sight, when he saw a familiar figure-but not the one he was looking for-standing at the corner of the street. This time there could be no room for doubt. It was La-

"He's waiting for me," was the tion. But that devil De Saba thought that flashed through his mind with unmistakable conviction as he staggered back out of sight, He knew that his instinct had not deceived him; that he had guessed the future in lurid colors and exag- the truth. He could no longer

ing the hotel for him. And this quiet hurbor where Felleity mitted - me. Paul T On you cannot! Have time. If he were taken, there would - a welcome. But could be cross the be no escape. They would not arrest him a second time unless they had irrefragable proofs of his guilt,

Delacour was breathing a little quickly, like a man who has been running hard, and there was a cold moisture on his white face, but he showed no panic feer. He was keeping blinself well in hand. He knew that everything now depended on his courage and skill. He could not afford to give way for a micment.

He put a large sum of money. which he had kept ready for any emergency, in his pocketbook, and was tearing up some letters and papers when the door was opened gently. His first impulse was to fling himself against it; then, with a gasp of relief, he recognized the latruder. His valet had returned and had brought an answer to his detter.

Delacour tere open the envelope. There were only a few words in--mhfm:

"I am here slong and will see you for a few minutes.-Felicity." As quickly as posable he told his man as much of the truth us. was necessary, ordered him to pack in up and await his further instructions at an obscure little hotel in man Soho. He would communicate with him as soon as he was settled anywhere. Meanwhile, he must manage for himself with very little luggage. He could not risk any bindrance.

The man listened as though be were receiving the most ordinary orders. Ht was probably not great ly surprised; but Delacour was a kind and liberal master, and all present he had no intention of throwing him over. His varied experience had taught him that more "pickings" are to be had with the vicious than with the virtuous, and p that they were more inclined to appreciate his psculiar gifts.

Delacour thought his position could not be quite desperate or Lalande would have entered the hotel and arrested him before thin He must be walting for some final instructions and had incantionaly let himself be seen. Delugant hoped that the delay might be his salvation, and salzed on the chance. He and Felicity might be out of England before his enemies realfred that he had been warned and made his escupe.

He sent his valet to reconnoitre before he ventured out. There was no sign of Lalande anywhere then, and, halling a hansom, he was driven rapidly to Belgrave Square. Felicity did not keep him walting more than a moment, but he stood eagerly watching the door

until she came in-"What is it-what han happened?" she asked anxiously. "You said you wished to see me alone on a matter of the greatest importance. You are in trouble—there is something wrong?"

She forgot her shyness, her uncomfortable feeling at the mystery and secrecy; she was concerned only for him. His changed appearance roused all her fenderness; she was eager to give the help and comfort of which he seemed to stand so much in need.

"Yes," he said; gravely, as be took her hands and held them. "there is something very wrong. I have got into trouble and must leave the country; it is dangerous

for me to be here now." "But why-what is it?" she asked, a little piteously. Her heppiness was so fresh and she had hardly any time to realize it, Was it going to be spollt so soon? "What have you done? Don't keep

me in suspense Paul." . The name dropped abyly and softly from her lips and his heart thrilled as he heard it. It had never meant so much to him before; on no other woman's lips had t raised such tender emotions. For the first time it seemed to mean home and love and peace.

In his gay, insolent youth he had not thought of such things, but life had changed of late and he was



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the stormy sea on which he had

CHAPTER XXIV. "Good Wight a d Good-By."

SAT HAVE time to explain to little," Delacour said. "I have run a great risk in coming here at all. But I couldn't lonve you in silence—I couldn't go away without a word."

"Go away?" Falleity repeated. wildly, her eyes wide with pain and roused and struggled and enter the four. "You are not going to leave you formotton? And it was only the other day! Oh, what done it "Tones Ila

. She clong to blue to though take would hold him amont all the world. She only heard the threat of separation. She only knew that he was the man she loved and that some evil had befallen him. "My little awastheart," he mur-

mured, tanderly, as he alcoped and

(Continued on Nort Page)

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