YOLANDE

BY WILLIAM BLACK

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

It was a beautiful, clear, mild night; and seated on the benches on the terrace there were several groups of people—among them two or three ladies. As Winterbourne passed them, he could not but think of Yolande's complaint that she had never even once been in the House of Commons. These were, no doubt, the daughters or wives or sisters of members; why should not Yolande also be sitting there? John Shortlands had sharp eyes; and he instantly guessed from his friend's manner that something had happened.

"More trouble?" said he, regarding him.

"Yes," said the other. "Well, I don't mind—I don't mind, as far as I am concerned. It is no new thing."

"I have told you all along, Winterbourne, that you brought it on yourself. You should ha' taken the bull by the horns——"

"It is too late to talk of it—never mind that now," he said, impatiently. "It is about Yolande I want to speak to you."

"Yes?"

"You won't guess what I am anxious for now," he said with a sort of uncertain laugh. "You won't guess it in a month, Shortlands. I am anxious to see Yolande married."

"Faith, that needn't trouble you," said the big ironmaster bluntly. "There'll be no difficulty about that. Yolande has grown into a thundering handsome girl. And they say," he added, jocosely, "that her father is pretty well off."

"She cannot remain longer at any school, and I don't like leaving her to herself at Oatlands Park or any similar place. Poor child! Do you know what her own plans are? She wants to be my private secretary."

"Nonsense, nonsense, man. Of course a girl like Yolande will get married. Your private secretary! How long would it last? Does she look like the sort of a girl who ought to be smothered up in correspondence or listening to debates? And if you're in such a mighty hurry to get rid of her—if you want to get her married at once, I'll tell you a safe and sure way—send her for a voyage on a steamer."

"I think I shall take Yolande away for another long trip somewhere, I don't care where; but the moment I find myself on the deck of a ship, and Yolande beside me, then I feel as if all care had dropped away from me. I feel safe; I can breathe freely. Oh, by the way, I meant to ask if you knew anything of a Col. Graham? You have been so often to Scotland shooting. I thought you might know. Inverstroy, I think, is the name of his place."

"Oh, that Graham. Yes, I should think so—a lucky beggar. Inverstroy fell plump into his hands some three or four years ago—quite unexpectedly—one of the finest estates in Invernesshire. I don't think India will see him again."

"His wife seems a nice sort of woman," said Mr. Winterbourne, with the slightest touch of interrogation.

"I don't know her. She is his second wife. She is a daughter of Lorn Lynn."

"They are down at Oatlands just now. Yolande has made their acquaintance, and they have been very kind to her. Well, this Col. Graham was saying the other evening that he felt as though he had been long enough in the old country, and would like to take a trip as far as Maluta or Suez or Aden, just to renew his acquaintance with the old route. In fact, they propose that Yolande and I should join them."

"The very thing!" said John Shortlands, facetiously. "What did I say? A voyage will marry off anybody who is willing to marry."

"I meant nothing of the kind," said the other, somewhat out of temper. "Yolande may not marry at all. If I went with these friends of hers, it would not be 'to get rid of her.'"

"I hope she'll find a young fellow who is worthy of her, for she is a thundering good girl, that's what I think, and whoever he is he'll get a prize—though I don't imagine you will be over-well disposed toward him, old chap."

"If Yolande is happy, that will be enough for me."

By this time the terrace was quite deserted; and after some little further chat they turned into the House, where they separated, Winterbourne taking his seat below the gangway on the government side, John Shortland depositing his magnificent bulk on one of the opposition benches.

There was a general hum of conversation. There was also some laborious discourse going forward.

What dreams visited the member for Slagpool, as he sat with his eyes distraught? His getting up some fateful evening to move a vote of want of confidence in the government? His appearance on the platform of the Slagpool Mechanics' Institute, with the great mass of people rising and cheering and waving their handkerchiefs? Or perhaps some day—for who could tell what changes the years might bring?—his taking his place on the Treasury bench there?

He had got hold of a blue book. It was the Report of a Royal Commission; but of course all the cover of the folio volume was not printed over—there were blank spaces. And the member for Slagpool began idly and yet thoughtfully to pencil certain letters up at one corner of the blue cover. He was a long time about it; perhaps he saw pictures as he slowly and contemplatively formed each letter; perhaps no one but himself could have made out what the uncertain pencilling meant. But it was not of politics he was thinking. The letters that he had faintly penciled there—that he was still wistfully regarding as though they could show him things far away—formed the word YOLANDE. It was like a lover.

CHAPTER III.

Next morning Mr. Winterbourne's nervous anxiety to get Yolande away at once out of London was almost pitiable to witness. Yolande was greatly disappointed. She had been secretly nursing the hope that at last she might be allowed to remain in London, in some capacity or another, as the constant companion of her father. Yet, when once they were really on their way from London her father's manner seemed to gain so much in cheerfulness that she could hardly be sorry they had left. She had not noticed that he had been more anxious and nervous that morning than usual; but she could not fail to remark how much brighter his look was now they were out in the clear air.

"Yolande," said he, "I had a talk with John Shortlands last night. I half threatened to throw up my place in Parliament, and then the arrangement would be that you and I, Yolande, should start away together and roam all over the world, amusing ourselves—going just where we liked—you and I all by ourselves."

"You would become tired of being amused. You could not always travel," she said. She put her hand on his hand. "Ah, I see what it is," she said, with a little laugh. "You are concealing. That is your kindness, papa. You think I am too much alone; it is not enough that you sacrifice to-day, to-morrow, next day, to me; but you wish to make a sacrifice altogether; and you pretend you are tired of politics. But you cannot make me blind to it. I see—oh, quite clearly I can see through your pretense!"

A new suggestion entered his mind. He glanced at the girl opposite him—timidly and anxiously.

"Yolande," said he, "I—I wonder now—I suppose at your age—well, have you ever thought of getting married?"

She looked up at him with her clear, frank eyes, and when she was startled like that her mouth had a slight pathetic droop, that made her face sensitive and charming.

"Why, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times!" she exclaimed, still with her soft clear eyes wondering. "Of course, when I say I have thought hundreds of times it is about not getting married that I mean. No. That is my resolution. Oh, many a time I have said that to myself. I shall not marry—never—no one."

"Oh, but, Yolande, that is absurd. Of course you will marry. Of course you must marry."

"When you put me away, papa. Yes," she continued quite simply. "That was what madam used to say. She used to say, 'If your papa marries again, that is what you must expect. It will be better for you to leave the house. But your papa is rich; you will have a good portion; then you will find some one to marry you, and give you also an establishment.' 'Very well,' I said, 'but that is going too far, madam; and until my papa tells me to go away I shall not go away, and there is not any necessity that I shall marry any one.'"

"I wish madam had minded her own affairs," Mr. Winterbourne said, angrily. "I am not likely to marry again. I shall not marry again. But as for you—well, don't you see, child—I—I can't live forever; and you have got no very near relatives; and besides, living with relatives isn't always the pleasantest of things; and I should like to see your future quite settled."

He found it was no use trying to talk to her seriously about this matter. She laughed it aside. She did not believe there was any fear about her future. She was all content with the world as it existed.

The Grahams were the very first people they saw when they reached Oatlands. Col. Graham—a tall, stout, grizzled, good-natured looking man—was lying back in a garden seat, while his wife was standing close by, calling to her baby, which plump small person was vainly trying to walk to her, under the guidance of an ayah, whose dusky skin and silver ornaments and flowing garments of Indian red looked picturesque enough on an English lawn. Mrs. Graham was a pretty woman, of middle height, and professed herself overjoyed when Mr. Winterbourne said there was a chance of his daughter and himself joining her and her husband on their suggested trip; but the lazy, good-humored looking soldier glanced up from his paper and said:

"Look here, Polly, it's too absurd. What would people say? It's all very well for you and me; we are old Indians and don't mind; but if Mr. Winterbourne is coming with us—and you, Miss Winterbourne—we must do something more reasonable and Christian-like than sail out to Suez or Aden and back, all for nothing."

"But nothing could suit us better," Yolande's father said—indeed, he did not mind where or why he went, so long as he got away from England, and Yolande with him.

"Oh, but we must do something," Col. Graham said. "Look here. When we were at Peshawur a young fellow came up there—you remember young Ismat, Polly?—well, I was of some little assistance to him, and he said any time we wanted to see something of the Nile I could have his father's dahabeah—or rather one of them, for his father is Governor of Merhadj, and a bit of a swell, I fancy. There you are, now. That would be something to do. People wouldn't think we were idiots. We could have our sail all the same to Suez, and see the old faces at Gib. and Malta; then we could have a skim up the Nile a bit—and, by the way, we shall have it all to ourselves just now."

"The very thing," exclaimed Mr. Winterbourne, eagerly, for his imagination seemed easily captured by the suggestion of anything remote. "Nothing could be more admirable. Yolande, what do you say?"

Indeed, she seemed greatly pleased; and when they went in to lunch, they had a table to themselves, so as to secure a full and free discussion of plant. Mrs. Graham talked in the most motherly way to Yolande, and petted her. But she was a shrewd-headed little woman. Very soon after lunch she found an opportunity of talking with her husband alone.

"I think Yolande Winterbourne prettier and prettier the longer I see her," she said, carelessly.

"She is a good-looking girl. You'll have to look out, Polly. You won't have the whole ship waiting on you this time."

"And very rich—quite an heiress, they say."

"I suppose Winterbourne is pretty well off. Making engines is quite respectable. Nobody could complain of that."

"Oh," she said blithely, "I haven't heard from Archie for a long time. I wonder what he is about—watching the nestling of the grouse, I suppose. Jim, I wish you'd let me ask him to go with us. It's rather dull for him up there; my father isn't easy to live with. May I ask him?"

"He'll have to pay his own fare to Suez and back, then," her husband answered rather roughly.

"Oh, yes; why not?" she said, with great innocence; "I am sure poor Archie is always willing to pay when he can; and I do wish my father would be a little more liberal."

Then Mrs. Graham, smoothing her pretty short curls, and with much pleasure visible in her pretty dark-gray eyes, went to her own room and sat down, and wrote as follows:

"Dear Archie—Jom's good nature is beyond anything. We are going to have a look at Malta, just for auld lang syne; and then Jim talks of taking us up the Nile a bit; and he says you ought to go with us, and you will only have to pay your passage to Suez and back—which you could easily save out of your hats and boots if you would only be a little less extravagant. Mr. Winterbourne, the member for Slagpool, is going with us; and he and Jim will have the expenses of the Nile voyage. Mr. Winterbourne's daughter makes up the party. She is rather nice, I think; but only a child. Let me know at once. Your loving sister, POLLY."

She folded up the letter, put it in an envelope; and addressed it so:

The Hon. the Master of Lynn,
Lynn Towers.

CHAPTER IV.

The usual small crowd of passengers was assembled in Liverpool street station—hurrying, talking, laughing and scanning possible ship companions with an eager curiosity; and in the midst of them, Yolande found herself for the moment alone. A woman came into this wide, hollow-resounding station, and timidly and yet anxiously scanned the faces of the various people who were on the platform adjoining the special train. She carried a small basket. After an anxious scrutiny she went up to Yolande.

"I beg your pardon, miss——" And with that her trembling hands opened the basket, which was filled with flowers.

"No, thank you; I don't want any," said Yolande, civilly. But there was something in the woman's imploring eyes that said something to her. She was startled; and stood still.

"Are—are you going further than Gibraltar, miss?"

"Yes. Yes, I think so," said Yolande, wondering.

There were tears running down the woman's face. For a second or two she tried to speak, ineffectually, then she said:

"Two days out from—from Gibraltar—would you be so kind, miss, as to put—these flowers—on the water? My little girl was buried at sea—two days out."

"Oh, I understand you," said Yolande, quickly—with a big lump in her throat. "Oh, yes, I will! I am so sorry for you."

She took the basket. The woman burst out crying; and hid her face in her hands; and then turned to go away. She was so distracted with her grief that she had forgotten even to say "Thank you." At the same moment Mr. Winterbourne came up—hastily and angrily.

"What is this?"

"Hush, papa! The poor woman had a little girl buried at sea—these are some flowers."

Yolande went quickly after her, and touched her on the shoulder.

"Tell me," she said, "what was your daughter's name?"

The woman raised her tear-stained face.

"Jane. We called her Janie; she was only three years old; she would have been ten by now. You won't forget, miss—it was—it was two days beyond Gibraltar that—that we buried her."

"Oh, no; do you think I could forget?" Yolande said, and she offered her hand. The woman took her hand, and pressed it; and said, "God bless you, miss—I thought I could trust your face;" then she hurried away.

(To be continued.)

A Doubtful State.

"Your wife is doing some baking today," said Mrs. Nabor. "What is it, bread or cake?"

"She doesn't know," replied Newlywed. "She hasn't finished yet."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

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Exact Definitions.

Young Hopeful—Father, what is a "traitor in politics?" This paper says Congressman Jawweary is one.

Veteran Politician—A traitor is a man who leaves our party and goes over to the other one.

Young Hopeful—Well, then, what is a man who leaves the other party and comes over to ours?

Veteran Politician—A convert, my son.—Boston Transcript.

Quite Proficient.

Jack—Your friend Miss Gusherly is always using slang phrases, isn't she?

Edyth—Yes, indeed. She is quite familiar with the English slanguage.

At "About 30"

When one knows the age of a woman one knows the woman. The very fact that she permits you to know her age exposes her character. She no longer masquerades. She has lost a certain uncertainty, an evanescent delicacy, that was an irresistible charm. Women, like philosophy, are divided into two classes, the knowable and the unknowable. Also, like philosophy, it is the unknowable woman who is the speculable. Therefore to get her at her highest capacity she must be unmarried and about 30.

The married woman presents certain inescapable telltale data. She has children, and those children have apparent ages, two facts which go far in determining her annals. If she is unmarried and is not "about 30" she is under 30, again a definite fact. Being "about 30" is indefinite. She may be more or less. No one hazards a guess. There is a delightful vagueness in being "about 30." It has nothing to do with dates, and many of us who from our youth up have felt no attachment for dates can forgive the unattached their confessed indifference.

Natural Sequence.

Mrs. Jolliboy (to sick husband)—The doctor has arrived.

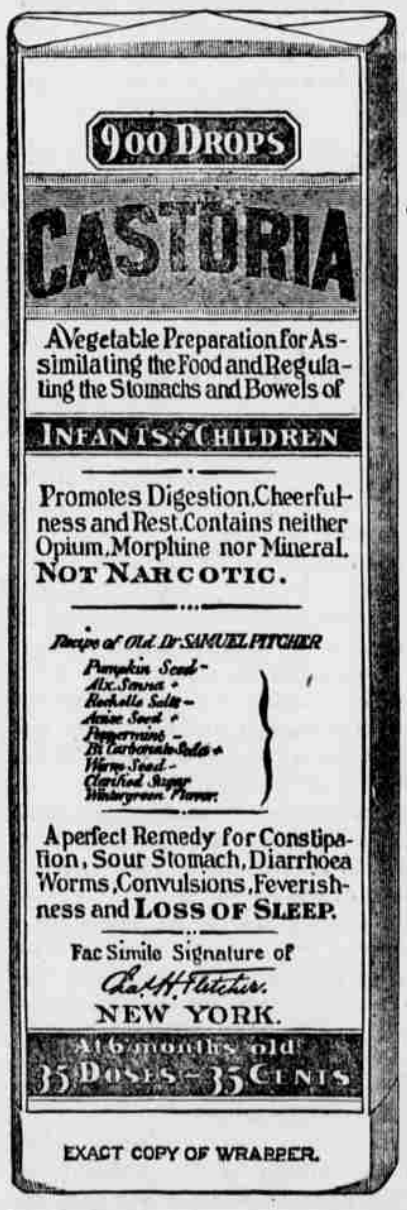
Jolliboy—Then you had better telephone for the undertaker, my dear.

Mrs. Jolliboy—Why, Tom, what do you mean?

Jolliboy—Well, coming events cast their shadows before them, you know.

A sunny temper gilds the edges of life's blackest cloud.—Guthrie.

The first step to knowledge is to know that we are ignorant.—Cecil.



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