TALE OF A TONTINE) THE FATED FIVE (THE BY GERALD BISS (Copyright, 1911, by The North American Company.)

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALLMENTS

"The Fated Firs" refers to a party of English collegiates and unless who have kept up their student friends also by an annual dinner, which some have, from it into a concurrent pains to attended by the six school-send pounds, is puzzied what to do with it, and at the send pounds, is puzzied what to do with it, and at the favorably a proposal to found a Tastino, each of the favorably a proposal to found a Tastino, each of the inter-tion and twenty thousand pounds, is to go to the last

the hundred and twenty thousand pounds, is to go to the last increase. After a deal of discussion, the proposal is agreed upon, flowigh the cooler heads are not very favorably disposed brand the cooler heads are not very favorably disposed brand if the cooler heads are not very favorably disposed brand of none of them, knows as the "Tokal," a country belieman of none too brilliant finitions and already in dabt, as to morrigage his estate to the limit to raise his share. If these develops that Regimald Carnforth, a fashionable flower, who has married an eximavagent woman, is in dif-bilities, and develops that he must be the last of the first indevelops that for a married an eximavagent woman, is in dif-bilities, and develops that a freeward. Claude Liversedge, who araforth's wife has been chaperening as supper party, com-ced mainly of the children of Lord Windlesham. Colorel anistery and Gurdon, who are also in the Tontine. Next interface when he wine to land, that it has blown up. Then a Tokel," who has to land, that it has blown up. Then the fashiets that Carnforth sinks the boat, and a the tablets that Carnforth at the sout takes some soda-ing the that Carnforth gives him, and promptly dies.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST SUNDAY)

CHAPTER XXI (Continued)

ACQUELINE was as white as a ghost, with her lips ast tight, and she was helding Lady Guendolen's arm in a strange, mute agony of fear. It was elder woman who

"How-how is he?" she asked, scanning his lifeless white face with anglous eyes. "I kept it from Jack until I saw you oming."

"He is not dead," said Carnforth in a quick, sympathetic volce, laying large hand on Jack's arm. "There are some bones broken. I'm afraid he is suffering from severe concussion. We must see what the doctor has 10 say." "How did it happen?"

asked Jack in a strangled voice, as the men carried him gently into the library and laid him on the improvised

bed in the center of the room,

Carnforth shook his head. "I don't know," he said quickly. "I was away at

Upclyffe Farm, seeing Perham about some repairs. I left your father in the quarry plantation, and when 1 went to rejoin him, to my horror I found him hanging over a ledge halfway down. He must have gone too near the edge, and his foot must have slipped, or he must have suddenly turned disay. But it can only be conjecture."

To Jack standing by the bed with big distended eyes, which watched the motionless body with a strange, hungry fascination, instinctively it seemed queer, almost inexplicable, that he should have gone too near such a place, as there came back to her mind his rooted aversion to approaching any great height. She recalled the almost bitter way he used to speak of mountaineering, saying that it made him sick to think of fools running such risks, and that it ought to p to by law; and she re would never even go near a veranda, unless it had a high ralling in front. A thousand and one thoughts flashed through her mind, but she was interrupted by the sudden entrance of the doctor, hot with hurrying. Then followed a time of weary, anxious waiting, during which she sat with wide, staring eyes, silent and motioniese, with Lady Guendolen beside her, equally silent in a great unspoken sympathy. At length, after what seemed years of waiting, the verdict came.



"Then there was a pause, and Jack felt an icy chill round her heart and a sudden thrill of horror at the words.'

The nurse looked at her in surprise, obviously in the corner and turned up the word. Carrying it behind the screen which hid the light, she read the disapproving. "Probably not." she said coldly, "but you must article on "Tontine," and as she read her quick instinct grasped the situation. The Six must have decide for yourself whether it is right for you to formed a Tontine among themselves, a large one inleave your father or not." . volving sixty thousand pounds, or twice as much-she

Jack bit her lip as she turned away, but her mind could not judge the exact sum from the vagueness of was made up. "I shall go to town," she said abruptly, her father's disjointed words; and Uncle Reggie and

Seven o'clock the next morning found her in the hall in a fur motor coat and a toque to match, awaiting Carnforth and Lady Guendolen. Her father had passed a quiet night, only muttering once or twice and uttering nothing articulate or intelligible; and

"Poor little girl!" said Squirrel gently, slipping his arm round her unresisting figure and drawing her on to the couch near the fire. "Tell me all about it and let me have a chance of helping you, if I can. You know how I'd love it."

But for a minute Jacqueline could not speak. The tears would come, forcing their way from her aching, burning eyes down the pale cheeks of her wan little face: Cyril sat beside her in silence, stroking her hand sympathetically and letting her have her cry out-at a logs for words, as a man always is in the face of a woman's tears.

Gradually she recovered herself and smilled up at him a little piteously, meeting a reassuring smile in his eyes.

"How silly for me to cry," she said pathetically. "and I have been so brave, too, up till now! Now I'll tell you exactly what has happened."

Making a brave effort, she started at the beginning, telling about her father's accident, and omitting nothing.

he contented himself with taking her hand ellently in his and pressing it reassuringly from time to time. They had not long to wait at Scotland Yard bafore

they were shown up to Chief Inspector Frowde's room, and Jack found herself being introduced, in a dream, as it were, to a big, genial-looking man with a pointed brown heard and merry blue eyes as unlike the typi-cal criminal catcher as a man could well be. His heartiness of manner and big, kind voice gave her confidence; and before she realized it she was well into her story.

Frowds listened with rapt attention, taking a note here and there, but passed no comment. His face, however, grew grave, and his eyes keen, changing the whole expression of the man. When Jack had finished he still offered no comment.

whistling softly to himself the air of a pepular musichall song, unconscious of its inappropriateness. Then he jumped up hastly from his chair and left the room without a word of excuse; and Jack and Cyril sat still in silence awaiting his return.

He was not gone long, and when he came back his usual geniality seemed all to have returned. "Come along, please, Miss Vambery, and you, too, Mr. Gurdon, of course," he said, g"Twe just seen the chief, and he feels that it is such an important mat-ter that he would like to hear your story from your own lips. Follow me, please," They followed him down a labyrinth of passages and up a wide statucase to the other point internet.

and up a wide staircase to the chief commissioner's room. The head of Scotland Yard was busy at a big table covered with methodically arranged piles of papers; but he rose as they entered and placed a chair for Jacqueline near him.

"I want to hear your story for myself, please, Miss Vambery, from start to finish," he said inclaively. "It interests me particularly, as I know most of those concerned, except your father and the late Mr. Gur-don. Peters Chalmers was a very old friend of mine. and Mr. Carnforth I know well."

Jack seemed to have lost all trace of nervousness the excitement of the moment, and began at once to repeat her story in its proper sequences inying stress on the various points which had sunk into her mind, especially the question of the Tontine and the fact that Carnforth had been on the spot on the occasion of each death. She repeated her father's few delirious phrases, which had served as the key to the situation to her, and had burnt themselves into her "But," she concluded, "the only thing I cannot un-

derstand is why Uncle Reggie should want the money, when he is so rich. It seems incredible that he should murder his oldest friends one by one for the sake of money he does not want."

While she had been talking the chief commissioner had listened gravely to every word, obviously very in-terested, and both he and the inspector had made coplous notes, the latter taking her statement down almost word for word.

"You have put everything most admirably, Miss Vambery," said the head of the Yard, when she had finished and he had asked her a few questions, "and I must congratulate you upon the lucidity of your statement. As to the one point which puzzles you, I believe that I hold the key there myself. I have every reason to believe that Mr. Carnforth is in the most desperate straits for money. In fact, I may tell you in confidence that a warrant has actually been applied for for his arrest, which we are only waiting to exccute pending an interview to be held this morning. which may or may not clear things up; but they look very fishy all round from my sources of information. But," he went on inclaively, "the other matter, morely guestion of misappropriation, sinks into absolute insignificance in the face of what you tell me. What this chance has revealed is the most terrible, coldblooded plot in the whole annals of criminology, and I feel we are dealing with one of the greatest criminals who has ever lived, if not the greatest of all. But we must go warily, very warily, as we have nothing at present to convict on, or even to justify an arrest. In the event of your father's death there would be no proof whatever. A few words in delirium overheard by one person would not stand against a man of Mr. Carnforth's position, and it would be useless to attempt to take any action on such filmsy grounds. So I must decide what is best to be done," The great man thought for a moment in silence. Then he spoke again in his usual decisive manner. "If the warrant for misappropriation is served today, all well and good, but I cannot be sure of that in the meantime. There again it is a question of responsibility and evidence. If not, we must focus ourselves for the present upon circumventing any further attempt on your father in his present helpless condition. Frowde here shall take charge of the case in person. He shall go down by the next train to the local doctor with a letter from me explaining everything, and he will be installed as male nurse before you get back. In this capacity he can fulfill the dual role of protecting your father and of collecting evidence in event of more delirium; and he will be on hand to take down any statement the moment your father recovers consciousness. He shall take with him a warrant for Mr. Carnforth's arrest and execute it at his own discretion. and I will arrange to have two or three experienced men from the Yard at hand; if he should need them. Now you, Miss Vambery, must return by the 4.10 this afternoon with Mr. Carnforth, If he is still at liberty, and you, Mr. Gurdon, must accompany them by hook or by crook, even at the expense of giving offense. But don't let him suspect anything. You will be able to help Frowde, and you will give Miss Vambery confidence. I will put everything in train at once; but we must not show our hand precipitately. We are dealing with too clever a man to risk a false step."

"No, he is not dead, but I don't think he can possibly pull through," the doctor said in a quick, low voice; "but we'll do our best. There is a compound fracture of the left leg and the left arm and three ribs are broken, and there is very severe concussion of the brain. We must vire for nurses and a specialist at once, Mr. Carnforth, nd-and-Miss Vambery." he added, kindly, "we will do our best, you may be sure."

The famous surgeon, who arrived late that night ok his head gravely, and almost forbade hope by his attitude; but Jack would not let herself yield to despair. spent hour after hour in the room, helping where could and holding the white, uninjured hand jeal-

the could and holding the white, uninjured hand jeal-ously between her little brown ones. Carnforth wandered about the house like a man pos-sessed, pale and restiess, his customary geniality thrown to the winds, and his face grim and set. Lady Guenddlen ascribed it to his deep affection for the sick man, won-dering secretly, at the same time, at his lack of selfdering secretly, at the same time, at his lack of solf-control and not divining the acute state of worry he was in, and, with his teeth clenched, he muttred to himself time after time that Vam should never leave the house alive, though for once he did not see his way clearly before him, and was groping for a solution. Meanwhile, no perceptible change took place in Colo-nel Vambery's condition until the second evening after the accident.

Becident

Jack as it happened, was alone with him in the dark-ened room at the time. Carnforth was at dinner with his wife, and the nurse had gone into the small adjoining sitting room for her supper, ready at hand if she should be wanted.

be wanted. Jack was sitting by the bed, watching her father's pale face with intent eyes full of love and anxiety, when sub suddenly became aware that he was trying to move, and a grean came through his teeth. The started up and bent over him before calling the nurse, and she became conscious that he was making an effort to speak. She remained motioniess, listening engerly as one or two inarticulate sounds forced their way through his pale lips. Then they grew more distinct, taking the form of words and making disjointed sentences.

sentences. "Reggie-" she heard with preternaturally acute ears "Oh God-Reggie-face of a devil-cruel-horrible-save me, save me-he pushed-pushed me over-no pity-" Then there was a pause, and Jack felt an icy chill round her heart and a sudden thrill of horror at the words. So Uncle Reggie, the popular, genial Uncle Reggie, had pushed her father over the edge of the quarry-with the pilless face of a devil? But somehow, ithough it shocked her, it did not altogether surprise her. All her life long from the time of toddling her instinct had revolted from this great, smiling man whom every one eise loved, when he took her on his knees and the her on sweets. It was not logic, she had always ry one else loved, when he took her on his knees and her on sweets. It was not logic, she had always but she had no control over her instinct. But why? should he wish to kill his dearest friend? Then, as she sought for a reason, the words began

ome again, falling weakly and disjointedly from the

ason. Curse the Tontine-brought nothing but ill-luck-first - Peter-old Yokel-then Winnie"-the words forced er-Peter-old Yokel-then Winnle"-the words forced ir way out with difficulty, almost inarticulate-"only and I left, Reggie-your life or mine-let's divide-y thousand each-for my little-Jack's sake-nothing to leave-she'll be pennliess-God knows-I don't if your death-or you mine-let's divide-all right-"s-settled-weight off my-" The words died away again, and Jack formed a sud-resolve.

Going to the door, she called the nurse. Nurse, my father has been trying to speak," she id quietly.

neriy, nurse entered the room quickly. Is sure to be a bit delirious," she said encour-to "but you musin't be alarmed. Did he say

k shook her head. o," she said, "he-only tried."

CHAPTER XXII Jack Acts on Information

ACK was vague in her own mind as to what a Tontine exactly was, although the word was familiar; but as soon as Colonel Vambery had

settled down again into a state of coma, she rossed the great darkened room softly and took out a ne of the Encyclopedia Britannica from its case

PAN DVOP Uncle Claude's? That was natural beyond doubt. Uncle Peter's? She paused and shook her head. In the light of what she now knew, probably it was not accidental. Probably it was nothing more nor less than a foul, treacherous murder, and she could not repress a shudder at the thought. Uncle John? Uncle Winnie? Their deaths had seemed natural enough, but were they or not? She could not help feeling suspicious, but there was nothing tangible. There was, however, the extraordinary coincidence that Carnforth was always near at hand at each of the deaths.

he were the last two left in. That was the key to the

situation, the reason of his attempt to murder her

lacking in proof, yet horribly real in its suggestion.

Had he been the vause of all or any of the other recent

Then another idea struck her, instinctive again and

father.

And then, with a strange insistence, the conviction was borne in on her that Carnforth would never let her father leave the house alive, if he began to mend; and it must be her duty to circumvent him, to save the life of her father who was so dear to her. She had been dependent upon him all her life long, and now in his turn he was dependent upon her, and she must repay all his love and care. But she must have heip; she felt, so isolated and lonely right in the enemy's camp. But to whom could she tell her weird, fantastic, almost incredible story? Not Lady Guendolen, certainly. She adored her husband and would never believe a word against him. And then the thought of Cyril came to her with a great rush of relief. Yes, she could lean on Squirrel. He was big and strong and true.

Jack shut up the encyclopedia decisively and re placed it in the case. She did not want Carnforth to see her with it somehow, in case he might wonder or suspect any knowledge on her part. She would wait till he had gone to bed, and then she would write Squirrel a long letter, telling him everything, and she would not leave the sickroom until her father was out of danger or-

She did not dare to put the thought into words, and it seemed to send an kcy chill of despair right through her heart. But she felt that she must be strong, and think hard to save him from the unsuspected dangers which lurked in the dark corners of the room. Day and night she must be at his side till help arrived.

A few minutes later Carnforth entered the room in his soft, quiet way, with Lady Guendolen on his arm; and, after asking the nurse how her patient was, he came straight over to Jack. She had prepared herself for the meeting, and did not flinch or change her man-

am unfortunately forced to go to town tomorrow I'm sorry to say, Jack dear," he said in a low voice; and, as he laid what was meant to be a sympathetic I'm sorry to say, suck dear, he said in a for the total and, as he laid what was meant to be a sympathetic hand on her arm, she could hardly repress a scream. "It is a piece of very urgent business, and Aunt Guen is coming up with me, as she has some things to fix up before sue can settle down here for a few weeks till your father is well again. We shall leave at 7 in the morning, and be back tomorrow night; so you won't be alone very long. You quite understand, don't you?" Jack nodded. She could not say what an intense relief it would be to be left alone; above all to have him out of the house. She would have time to think out her plan of campaign, and perhaps to act. A few minutes later they both left the room, kiss-ing her good-night, and Jack felt a strange feeling of sickness as Carnforth's lips touched her cheek, but she did not allow herself to flinch. Then she sat down to think. There would be no need to write to Squirrel now. She would wire to him in the morning instead to come to her. He was in London, she knew, staying at his club; and he would be with her early in the afternoon. The thought of his presence exaited and thrilled her, and her spirits rose instinctively at the prospect of an ally.

be with her early in the afternoon. The thought of his presence exaited and thrilled her, and her spirits rose instinctively at the prospect of an ally. Then an even better thought struck her. No, she would go to town with her host and hostess in the morning, consult with Squirrel, and perhaps be able to take some action without delay. If Carnforth were out of the house her father, she knew, would be safe. "Nurse," she asked in a low voice, "how is my father? Is there any immediate danger?" Nurse shook her head. "No; so far as can be judged, he is doing as well as could be expected. He has not recovered conscious-ness yat; but he will probably be delirious first, per-haps for days. Then it all depends upon his strength and the healing of the wounds. As a matter of fact, he is bearing up remarkably well; and'I hope that there may be quite a chance of recovery now." The words in themselves, non-committal as they were, seemed to lighten the weight on Jack's mind and to give her a certain relief by increasing her right to hope; but for the moment she was more engrossed with the ulterior problem which she had to solve single handed. "Them of the heagen with a natural hesitancy, feature that she would for the time being be mis-

single banded. "Then-then." she began with a natural hesitancy, feeling that she would for the time being be mis-understood. "there would be no harm, no danger in my going up to town tomorrow for the day with Mr. Carnforth? We should be back in the evening, and I have something to do which will not wait."

delirious to alarm Carnforth. Lady Guendoleh was the first down of the two "Jack!" she exclaimed in frank surprise, "whatever are you doing here, dressed up for a journey?"

she felt relieved that he had not been sufficiently

"I am going up to town with you, if you will have me, Aunt Guen," answered the little girl quistly. "Nurse says that there is no immediate danger; in fact, that daddy is going on very well, and, like you, I have one or two important things to see to, both for daddy and myself. I don't want to leave him for a minute after he recovers consciousness."

She spoke in a matter-of-fact tone to conceal her emotion. All the long night through she had knelt by the bed, kissing the dearly loved white hand and praying passionately for his recovery, planning and plotting the whole time to save him against the unknown dangers she would have to ward off from his unconscious head. Every nerve in her body was taut and tingling, and she had braced her weary little body for the fight. Her usually mobile, merry little face was set and pais, and there were great, pathetic circles round her dark eyes. From a woman's point of view she looked ugly, but the consciousness of it in her glass as she dressed did not worry her.

"I should hardly have thought it wise or necessary," said Lady Guendolen, a little reproachfully. "But I suppose you know best. Is it nothing which Uncle Reggie or I can do for you?"

Jack shook her head, wondering what she would think if she knew.

"No, I'm afraid not, aunty dear; but thank you very much for thinking of if," the little girl said gratefully. "Let me come, there's a dear. I-I really must; that's all about it."

Carnforth at first raised objections. Then suddenly chauged front, the thought occurring to him that perhaps Jack would be as well out of the sickroom. while he was away in case of any delirium. In'a few hours there would be no fear of anything, he thought grimly to himself.

"Yes, come by all means, then, my dear, if you think it best," he said kindly, and he asked no further questions as to the pressing business during the journey, tucking a big rug round her and advising her to sleep.

At Dorchester station, when they left the car, she gave one of the porters half a crown and a telegram asking Cyril to meet her. Then in the train nature asserted herself, and she fell asleep in a corner, glad not to have to talk, and slept nearly all the way to

At Vauxhall she woke with a start and a pleasant consciousness of feeling rested. She opened her eyes and looked round, and it took her a full minute to

and looked round, and it took her a full minute to recall everything. Carnforth, who was giving up the tickets, smiled across at her reassuringly in his most genial fashion, and in the light of all she knew the charm of it sent a shiver through her. This smile, which made every one love him, was, after all, only a mask worn to cover the pittless face of the devil. Her overwrought imagina-tion smoothed the creases and lines out of the face, and she could see the hearilessness, the callousness, the cruel sensuality of it. But for the present it was her part to act.

and she could set the fit But for the present it was the cruel sensuality of it. But for the present it was her part to act. She yawned lasily and threw off the rug. "You've had a file sleep, dear," said Carnforth, unwrapping her in his fatherly way, "and it has done you a lot of good. You were a poor, tired, pinched, white-faced little mortal when we started. Now, can Aunt Guen or I drop you anywhere?" Jack shook her head. "It's very kind of you," she said, trying not to appear formal, "but I am going home first, and that will be out of both your ways. I know." She thought it politic to suppress the fact of Cyril altogether at the moment. "All right," said Carnforth carelessly, unsuspicious of danger, as the train ran slowly into the platform at Waterloo. "Meet us here at the 4.10 train or come round to Portman square any time before 3.30. I am anxious to get back as soon as possible, and I am sure you are." you are.

CHAPTER XXIII At Headquarters

Y YRIL was waiting anxiously at Eaton place, and Jack could hardly keep from throwing her arms round his neck in the relief and joy of seeing him as he came to the door and opened it in

person. "What's up, dear?" he asked eagerly. "I got your wire and came along at once. Why didn't you let me meet the train?" "Because I did not want the Carnforths to know that I had come up to see you, that's why." she an-

Cyril listened without comment, his face growing hard and stern.

"I have been wondering about things for some time," she concluded, quite herself again; "and my instinct has been straining after something. Now I understand. Poor old dad in his delirium made the situation clear all in a fissh; and now I see it all-the Tontine. Uncle Reggie's determination to win it and his deliberate attempt to kill father. And I believe now that he killed Uncle Peter, too, and perhaps Uncle Winnie and your father as well; but that's only instinct, and we can't prove it. I've always hated him, you know, Squirrel, though I never could give a reason for it; and I especially hated that smile of his. Ugh, it makes me shiver."

"I have always been awfully fond of Uncle Reggie myself," said Cyril slowly-"awfully fond of him; and-I can hardly bring myself to believe it of him."

Jack's face fell. It seemed for a moment as though she were losing her only ally, as though the ground were slipping from under her feet and she were being left to fight the battle alone against frightful odds.

She gave a sharp little cry of bewildered protest. In an instant Cyril's strong fingers closed round her little brown hand reassuringly.

"I don't mean that I don't believe it," he went on quickly; "I only mean that it's all so horrible that I can hardly credit such appailing villainy. There is other circumstantial evidence, too, which you don't know. Why, the Tontine accounts for the last mortgage on Witham only a few months ago-twenty thousand pounds and nothing to show for it! I was going to ask Undle Reggie if he could explain it to me. Besides, your father in his delirium couldn't have made up such a story, and you couldn't have imagined it. Good God, it makes me feel sick!"

A feeling of renewed security crept over Jack as he spoke, and for a moment both were silent, thinking deeply.

"He'll never let dad leave the house allve, if he can help it." said Jack in a low voice. "That's why I was going to wire for you today. But, when he said he was coming to town, I grasped the opportunity to come, too, although I hated leaving dad. But I felt that nothing could happen to dad while he was away, so I came up with him and mean to return with him. Meanwhile, we can plan what is best to be done; and, of course, when I get back, I'll never, never leave dad's room or sleep or let any one get near him till he's well again. And I'm sure he'll get quite well now," she concluded, pathetically.

Cyril nodded gravely.

'Yes, we'll have to watch over him very carefully and, of course, I shall be there somehow or another to help you. But we shall have to think out the best way to arrange things. I could go to the station with you. of course, and ask pointblank if I may go down, too, as I am so anxious; and Uncle Reggie could hardly retuse. But I wonder if we can't manage something better, as But I wonder if we can't manage something better, as that would create a rather awkward position; and I am sure that he doesn't mean to stick at anything now. He doesn't intend the colonel to leave Hinton Magna alive, that's certain; and what's more, he doesn't want him ever to recover consciousness. So he is sure to act promptly, whatever he does, as soon as it is certain that your father is likely to recover. It was awfully clever of you not to mention the delirium to a soul." Jack flushed with pleasure at his pratse, as he got up from the couch and began waiking up and down the room.

Jack fushed with pleasure at his praise, as he got up from the couch and began walking up and down the room. He lit a cigarette and rang the bell. "You'd better have a glass of wine and something to eat, Jack dear," he said in a masterly tone, which she did not resent in the least, as he gave the neces-sary order to the butler. "You need it after your jour-ney, and we have no time to waste. While you eat, I'l think."

Jack took the glass of wine and ate a biscuit out of obedience, but without appetite, watching Cyril the

whole time. "I'm afraid I'm not much of a chap at plans, dear." he said at last, with a little smile; "so we'll put some one else on to it for us. I know one of the boss men at Scotland Yard; and we'll just drive round at once and lay the facts before him. He'll be able to advise us."

and lay the facts before him. He'll be able to advise us." Jack's face brightened. "That's spiendid," she said eagerly. "You are a brick, Squirrel. If we can get some one who has experience of hese things to take charge of every thing, or even to advise us, it will be such a weight off my minu. I'm afraid Uncle Reggie is too clever for either of us." In the cab she nestled very close to Cyril with a big, happy feeling of dependence and relief, yielding herself and giving her reliance with the readiness of a woman in love. Cyril looked down at her tenderly as she sat by his side; but he feit that any word about themselves, any hope of future hanpiness which he might suggest, would be out of keeping with the anxiety of the occasion, and strike a jarring note. So

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A State of the second

CHAPTER XXIV Back to the Wall

'ARNFORTH put his wife into a cab as soon as they had dispatched Jacqueline to Eaton place. "I'll be round at Portman square by 3 o'clock

to take you to the station, if all goes well," he said with his most brilliant smile, as he raised his hat and turned away. "There should be nothing to prevent me."

He seemed altogether in a lighter mood than he had been since the failure of his attempt to kill Colonel Vambery.

He was accustomed to facing difficulties; and they always acted as a fillip to his character. It was at times of inactivity that he was apt to brood and grow irritable, worrying because he was doing nothing. However, the moment he got started again, he would face the difficulties with redoubled energy and revel in brushing them out of his path.

in brushing them out of his path. And on the crisp December morning he was opti-mistic in contrast to the pessimism of the past two days. Everything which appeared so dimcuit in the country as to be practically insurinountable seemed to smooth itself out and become wonderfully simplified as he drew nearer town; and be felt that he was very close to his goal, burying in this thought the annoy-ance he had at first felt at his failure to finish things off completely and finally three days before. So far as Vam was concerned, that would not be a very difficult matter now, although it was partly the cause of his visit to town. All that would be required

So far as Vam was concerned, that would not be a very difficult matter now, although it was partly the cause of his visit to town. All that would be required was a hypodermic syringe, together with a little poison, which he had all ready, jocked up in his writing table in the library at Poriman square. In Vam s present condition no suspicion would be aroused if he were to pass away quietly without recovering con-sciousness; and he had only to make an opportunity. He could easily send Jacquellae out with his wife and get the nurse out of the room for a moment on some pretext or other; and the thing would be done in a gecond. Once or twice that morning be had wondered whether Jack had any suspicion of the truth, when he had caught her eyeing him with a queer, intent book, and her manner had appeared a little strained. But he dismissed the idea as quickly as it came, with a shrug of the shoulders, as ridiculous, asceribing it to the overwrought state of his nerves during the last infree days. As they began to recover tons under the influence of action, he was more and more inclined to make light of it; and, besides, he asked himseit, where was there a single shred of evidence against infuence of action, he was more and more inclined to make light of it; and, besides, he asked himseit, where was there a single shred of evidence against imself? But the fact remained that the sconer Vam was permanently silenced the batter.

(CONCLUDED NEXT SUNDAY)