'TWIXT LOVE AND AMBITION.

A SERIAL STORY BY ERIC LEACROFT.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

EDITH DUNKERY, a wealthy young woman, owner of Dunkery's Hat Factory, and mistress of Coltinghouse Park.

ALEC GARTH, an ambitious young workman in the factory.

LIONEL GRANT, a young Scotchman and a distant cousin of Edith Dunkery.

MINNIE FELLOWES, Alec's sweetheart, a beautiful but uneducated girl.

The MISSES PAMELA, VICTORIA and DOROTHY VERNEY, elderly aunts of Edith.

MRS. GARTH, Alec's mother.

SYNOPSIS.

Edith Dunkery is the only daughter of a wealthy hat manufacturer; her mother, who dies at her birth, is a member of an aristocratic but impoverished family. At the age of twenty-six Edith, at her father's death, is left in full control of the hat factory. She is a very capable young woman, and having a thorough grasp of the business, she decides to run the factory herself. Her three old aunts, in order to wean her thoughts from the business invite Lionel Grant to stay with them. Lionel wishes to marry his wealthy cousin, and Edith consents to make him manager of the factory. He proposes to her, but is rejected. When the story opens much dissatisfaction is felt by the inhabitants of Baldridge because Lionel Grant, thinking it will please his cousin, orders Coltinghouse Park to be closed. Alec Garth defies this order, and has an encounter with Edith in the Park. Later hearing of his ideas with regard to the factory, she consults him on a scheme of reorganisation, and finally installs him as manager, instead of Lionel.

Alec stays working late at the factory one Saturday afternoon forgetful that he has promised to take Minnie out. In the meantime Minnie is motored to Granton by Lionel Grant. Alec goes to Coltinghouse Park in the evening to fetch Minnie but encounters Miss Dunkery.

After a conversation with Miss Dunkery in the moonlight Alec loses his head and suddenly kisses her.

Edith enjoys Society, refuses several proposals including another from Lionel. She also decides she cannot face the scandal of a marriage beneath her.

Edith is difficult to keep on purely business relations.

Lionel's self esteem is hurt; he decides to cultivate Alec.

CHAPTER XVII.

Edith finds it difficult to keep on purely business relations.

Beldridge sweltered through a torrid August. On the neighbouring moors there was pure cool air to be tasted by those who had the time and energy to climb their steep sides. But the little industrial town, lying in its hollow by the canal, was jaded and airless. The daily climb to the factory in the hot, still mornings was in itself fatiguing, and in the factory itself the workers toiled listlessly and with frayed tempers. Much of their ill-humour was directed against the new manager. Alec had set to work to "tighten things up" with an energy born of his confidence in his own plans. Having tasted authority, he had begun to take pleasure in making his power felt. It was not that he was unjust or tyrannical, but he insisted upon the strictest observance of the new rules, some of which, at any rate in hot weather, were more than a little irksome after the more easy-going methods of the past. He began to be respected and disliked. He found himself falling away from the companionship of his old friends in the factory, the ring of young men who had shared his interest in social theories, and who regarded themselves as advanced thinkers. He no longer joined with them in their efforts to define the proper place of capital in the social system. Socialistic hobnobbing would hardly have befitted his new position. Even if he had been anxious to keep up his old associations, he would not have found it so. His company was received without active hostility, but with a coolness that emphasised the breach between him and his former mates. He could guess the kind of thing they said of him at those Friday evening gatherings at which he had used to take so prominent a part. He knew that they regarded him as a traiter to his class.

There had been times when the knowledge distressed him. He was naturally sociable, and it hurt him to find that he was no longer welcome among those whose good opinion he had used to cultivate. He wondered if, by cutting himself off from his old ideals he were not really falling between two stools. He no longer identified himself with the aims of the class to which he belonged. He had become an agent of "the bosses" as it was customary to call them on Friday evenings. On the other hand he was as far as ever from belonging himself to the "ruling caste" against which he used to direct his indignation. He was a kind of outcast. It was too late to go back, and there did not seem to be much prospect of going forward.

Then had come the evening in the avenue at Coltinghouse. It had shown him that he had not really come to the last rung of the ladder. He knew well that the only kind of advancement to which he could look forward would be within the organisation of "Dunkery's," unless he could persuade one of Baldridge's American rivals of the desirability of enlisting his services. If he could have cut himself off from his former associates he could have pursued his career without compunction. But in Baldridge everybody knew he was only the son of old Jimmy Garth. He would be looked upon either too familiarly as one of themselves, or he would be despised as a renegade. If he was to cut himself off from his own class, he must seek to establish himself in the class above. After all, Jabez Dunkery himself had been a man of the people. But Jabez Dunkery had married above him. He had taken a wife from the undoubted aristocracy of the county. And with a gasp Alec had realised that evening that his vague dreams might now take a more definite shape, that he had a chance of realising them.

Miss Dunkery loved him. Of that there was not the least doubt to shake his complacency. He might possibly have exaggerated the reticence of great ladies of good family, but he knew at least that they did not casually submit to the embrace of young mechanics, however good-looking, unless they were powerfully moved. Alec was not surprised. He had not at any time of his life been greatly interested in the other sex, but he was quite aware that he possessed an unconscious fascination over women. He had always been vaguely conscious that there was not a girl in Baldridge to whom his advances would have been unwelcome. Miss Dunkery had the reputation of being a manhater. All the better; there was the less reason to believe that he had merely betrayed her into revealing a casual attraction.

None the less, he was not free from uneasiness during the three weeks of Edith's absence in London. He was painfully aware of the difference in their stations. If it had been necessary to the fulfilment of his ambitions to make love to a factory girl, he would have entered upon the task quite confidently, and have performed it to everybody's satisfaction. But he was not at all sure that he knew how to make love to a lady. He felt that it would probably require a special idiom of love-making which was beyond his experience. Still, he had made a good beginning . . .

She came into the office later than he had expected. Usually she set her workpeople an impeccable example of punctuality. Even when she had arrived, she did not send for him at once, as he had expected her to do. He walked restlessly about his little office, feeling that upon the conduct of their meeting depended the whole of his future success. He felt mentally cool, but physically nervous. It was not that he felt afraid of being betrayed by passion into pressing his suit too servently. He did not feel any passion. Any physical glamour that had clung about this woman had been due to her remoteness, her inaccessibility. Now that he had once held her in his arms, the glamour had disappeared. His only fear was that he would play his hand clumsily, and lose all the advantages that he had gained. Indeed, he was almost bound to play it clumsily, for he did not really know what cards he held.

When his summons to the white-washed sanctum came, he obeyed it with a feeling not very far from despair. All his confidence had evaporated, and he could hardly find words to greet her. It did not occur to him that the mistress of Baldridge might also be nervous.

If Miss Dunkery was nervous, she did not show it. She greeted him in the most matter of fact way imaginable, and invited him at once to give her a summary of anything important that had happened during her absence. It was only when, he had finished his recital that there fell an awkward silence between them. She hastened to break it by telling him of her experiences in London. She had not done very much. He was surprised to find that she had neglected some of the obvious opportunities which they had decided that the visit would give her.

"I'm afraid," she said apologetically, "that I went to too many parties to leave myself very much time for business."

"It's a pity," he said curtly. He had been anxiously awaiting the result of some of his promised investigations. She lifted her eyebrows.

"You're rather severe, aren't you?" she enquired coldly.

Then she regretted the question. She had made up her mind not to mingle personalities with business. Indeed, there were to be no more personalities between her and her manager. She hoped that he would recognise that without the need of verbal explanations. She had meant to convey by her manner that, as the novelists say, all was over between them, over as soon as it was begun. If her manager had sense enough to acquiesce in that unspoken decision, she would keep him on as a useful machine for securing the smooth conduct of the business. That had been the compromise at which she had arrived with herself. She knew that she ought really to send him away. She also knew that she could not. So she pinned her faith on resuming the old relations as if nothing had happened. It was not a brave compromise, but there are unaccountable gaps in a woman's vast capacity for self-sacrifice.

"You mean that it's no business of mine?" asked Alec.

"Well, I suppose I did mean that. At any rate you have no right to criticise me."

"I'm not criticising you. I'm only thinking of the factory. You promised to get some information that would have been useful to me."

"To you?"

"Oh, I don't mind. It's your own business."

His nervousness was expressing itself in irritation. Also he was genuinely disappointed that she had failed him.

"Exactly," remarked Edith. "It is my own business; and really Mr. Garth, I'm surprised that you should think that it is your business to find fault with me."

"It's only for your own good," retorted Alec hotly. It's you who profit by it. I don't."

"Then please allow me to profit in my own way. I'm afraid you're rather presumptuous."

It had not presented itself to either of them that their first meeting after her return from London might result in a commonplace squabble. Her last word lingered in the air, and she suddenly realised the absurdity of the situation. This hot-blooded young man had taken her in his arms and she had replied by giving him her lips. Now he had dared to criticise her conduct of the business, and she had flared up and called him presumptuous. She sat back in her chair and laughed helplessly. Alec looked at her in consternation.

"What on earth are you laughing at?" he asked her.

"You," she replied weakly, "and myself."

He was bewildered. He was prepared to be puzzled by this lady of another class and tradition, but she was even more puzzling than he had expected. She laughed all the more at his bewilderment.

"I really don't see the joke," he said at length.

"I didn't expect you to."

"And I don't see that there's anything to laugh at in me," he added with naive displeasure.

She felt a pang. He looked very boyish in his bewilderment, and in the shamefacedness of being laughed at.

"I'm not really laughing at you," she hastened to explain, and she could not keep a note of tenderness from her voice. "At least I'm not laughing at you personally. Only at the situation. I'm laughing even more at myself."

But he was not to be so easily placated.

"I still don't see anything to laugh at," he declared, "either in myself or in you."

"I'm sorry if I have offended you. But don't you take yourself rather seriously?"

"Perhaps I do," said Alec. "Don't you?"

He had meant to ask her whether she took herself seriously, but some imp of mischief led her to misinterpret him and apply the question to himself, thus bringing the conversation round to the very question which she had resolved to avoid. She looked at him for a moment.

"I don't know," she said softly, whether to take you seriously or not." Then the same perverse imp prompted her to add:

"Do you want me, too?"

"Of course I do," he said fervently. And he meant it; if there was one thing he hated more than another, it was to be laughed at.

"Wouldn't it be rather dangerous?" she asked, brushing the imp aside.

He looked at her enquiringly.

"I mean for me to take you seriously," she went on. "I'm afraid that when I take anything seriously, I put rather a lot into it.

He considered this and again appealed mutely for an explanation.

"Oh, can't you see," she said wildly, "that I may not be able to afford to take you seriously? And if I don't take a thing seriously, I'd rather not take it at all."

Now he thought he understood what she meant.

"I suppose," he said slowly, "you mean to ask if I was serious in—in what happened the other night——"

She checked him.

"No. I didn't mean that at all. I was going to ask you never to say anything more about that."

"But I must," said the young man. "Whether you want to know it or not. I'm going to tell you. I was serious. I was never more serious in my life."

She looked at him and felt her helplessness. She, too, began to know, had been serious. But how was she to explain that the whole thing was impossible? Did she really want to explain to him? Wasn't it really her compromise that was impossible? She could claim his love and give her own, or she could send him away out of her sight for ever. The first was a possibility. The second? She looked at him almost hungrily at the mere thought of never seeing him again.

"I think you had better leave me now," she murmured.

"But I must have your answer," he insisted. "I tell you I was serious. I want to know if you were serious."

Now she really wished that he would go. She looked round her with an air of desperation. Then she raised her eyes to his.

"No," she said. "I was not."

He took a step towards her.

"I don't believe you," he said.

"Then go, go!" she cried. "I have answered your question. I can't say any more. Don't you see that the whole thing's impossible?"

"Nothing is impossible," said the young man. "But I'll go if you want me to."

He turned to the door. She called him back as he was opening it.

"Mr. Garth."

He turned back, his hand still on the knob of the door.

"You have asked me a question," said Edith. "Will you let me ask you one?"

"What is it?" asked Alec.

"Would you mind telling me your name—your Christian name, I mean?"

It is really very difficult not to mingle personalities with business.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lionel's self esteem is hurt; he decides to cultivate Alec.

When Lionel Grant received his final answer from Edith, his visit to Scotland was still a week ahead. He returned at once to Baldridge and the supervision of the Coltinghouse estate. His duties there were more or less of his own making, but he was capable at that kind of work, and he had brought the estate into a better condition than it had enjoyed for years.

Even Miss Dot had by now more or less reconciled herself to the failure of her plans to bring together her business manager and her nephew. To her great disappointment she was forced to admit that however suitable the match in the eyes of the world, it would lack the romantic glamour which she felt to be necessary to its success. She had reluctantly come to the conclusion that Edith, like the other surviving daughters of the house of Verney, was difficult to match.

"After all," she tried to console him, "it is better that you should recognise now that the match is unsuitable than that you should find it out after you are married, when it is too late to undo the mischief. I sometimes wonder whether fate has not been more kind to me than I am occasionally inclined to think. I am afraid that Harold will never be a Bishop, and the life of a country vicage is very exacting. But I am ever so sorry for you, my poor boy."

Lionel received the old lady's sympathy with an ill grace.

"I suppose I shall survive it," he said carelessly.

"It is very brave of you to take it like that. I am inclined to agree with Shakespeare when he puts the pangs of despised love among the things which make one doubt sometimes whether life is worth living."

To this Lionel had no comment to make, possibly because he had never experienced those pangs. It was not his custom to mingle sentiment with business. His failure to convince Edith had affected him precisely as he might have been affected by the failure of a promising investment. He regretted the dissipation of a dazzling vision, but he was ready to bear it philosophically, and he could tell his aunt quite truthfully that he was not greatly upset by Edith's refusal of his advances, though he was bound to say that he thought she had made a mistake. He was not sure, he implied, that the fisherman's maxim was quite applicable to her case. In fact, he hinted that, having lost this opportunity of getting a husband, she was not likely to have another for some time to come. At Coltinghouse she was entirely cut off from the polite world, and her return empty-handed from London had only confirmed the general view that she was unapproachable.

"In fact," said Lionel, "it only remains to buy her a Persian cat and a parrot and set her up as a typical old maid."

Miss Dot did not think that this observation was in the best of taste, but she allowed for the young man's disappointment, and said nothing.

But if the tender side of Lionel's nature had received no wound, he had been badly hurt in his self esteem. He had always prided himself on his success with women. He had never before experienced such a prolonged and successful resistance. He was angry with his cousin for being impervious to his attractions, and his anger was enhanced by the lurking suspicion that he had a rival. He had pondered deeply on her words in the Row, on that grey August morning. She had not denied that there might be someone else. She had merely said that there was no one whom she could possibly marry. He did not really believe that she was of the type that is inevitably doomed sooner or later to cherishing parrots and Persian cats. In fact he had two grudges against Edith, and both of them rankled in his mind. She had put a slight upon his business ability, and she had put a slight upon himself. It was not until he had returned to Baldridge after his visit to London that he began to suspect a possible connection between the two.

One evening, two days after his return, he had met Alec Garth in the Market Place, and, on a sudden impulse, had greeted him with frank cameraderie, as he would have greeted an equal, and had hauled him into the whiskey and soda he congratulated the young man on his success.

"The old girl was wise to make a change," he admitted. "I could never have got such a grip of the business as you have. After all, you were born to it, more or less, and I wasn't. Besides, between ourselves, I don't always get on very well with my cousin. She is a little bit too fond of having her own way, as I expect you've noticed."

Alec admitted that Miss Dunkery had a good deal of confidence in herself but supposed that she had a right to do what she liked with her own property.

"Oh yes, I don't grudge her the fun she gets out of the factory. Its her toy, you know. In fact, it's almost the only interest she has. All I mean is that I'm rather like that myself. I like to do things my own way. It's the Saracen's Head for a drink. Over irresistible force meeting the immovable barrier, and all that kind of thing. How do you get on with her? I should have thought that you would have something of a will of your own."

"I think I have," said Alec, feeling a little flattered. "But I generally find that I manage to agree with her on most points. "You see, he added modestly, "she more or less adopted my scheme for running the place, and naturally she looks to me to see that it works properly."

"She's wise," decided Lionel. "Now I could never have worked out a scheme like that, if I'd been at it until my dying day. I'm inclined to think that a man has either got the genius for organisation or he hasn't. Now I don't mind admitting that I haven't got it. I'm all right at your humdrum work. But I'm quite aware that I haven't got imagination enough to do things on a big scale.

Alec decided that this young man was not so unpleasant as he had supposed. At any rate, he had the grace to recognise his limitations, and incidentally to admit his successor's superiority. The successor became complimentary in his turn.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I wish you had stayed on. I think we could have worked together, and got things done."

"I'm sure we could," said Lionel with conviction. "We should be like Jack Sprat and his wife. You've got the imagination, and I think I'm pretty good at seeing that ideas are properly carried out. Another whiskey? But I'm afraid that Edith and I are what they call incompatibles. Mind you, I don't quarrel with her. It never pays to quarrel with a woman. But we don't altogether hit it off. So I leave her to you. See that you keep her out of mischief."

With which magnanimous abdication, the Scotchmen gulped his whiskey and looked at Alec over the glass.

"In fact," he threw out, "I think she's taken rather a fancy to you."

Alec looked at him quickly. The remark had taken him unawares.

"How do you mean?" he asked with a trace of confusion.

"She thinks she has got the right man in the right place. And I agree with her. Here's luck, Mr. Garth."

Alec raised his glass. For the moment he had felt uneasy. But the Scotchman's tone had been perfectly frank and friendly. And, after all, there could be no possible ground for suspicion.

(To be Continued).

HOLIDAYS IN BELGIUM.

It is announced by the Great Eastern Railway Company that it has been decided to run again this year the short sea service between Harwich and Zeebrugge which provides a very convenient route for intending travelling to the Belgian Coast Resorts, Blankenberghs, Heyst and Knocke, also Bruges, Ghent, and other parts of Belgium.

The service will commence on the 1st June and will be run six times in each direction instead of three times as last year.

Restaurant and Pullman non-stop Express in connection with the steamers will leave London (Liverpool Street) at 8-40 p.m., and in the reverse direction will bring passengers into Liverpool Street at 8-0 a.m.

These facilities will provide an excellent opportunity of spending a very inexpensive holiday in Belgium combined with every comfort to travel.

ASYLUM MAINTENANCE REDUCED.

Mr. R. Preston presided at the Lancaster Board of Guardians on Saturday, when a communication was to hand from the Lancaster Asylums Board, intimating a reduction in the charge of maintenance, which Mr. Ball said would save the Union £2,000 a year. He added: "I expected more."

THE KING'S "BULLY."

King George, as "George Rex," has sued President Harding for 1,079 dollars damages, for the alleged non-delivery of 64 cases of corned beef. It should be explained that the citing of the King and the President is a mere legal technicality, and that the missing "bully" was part of a war order for Tommy Atkins's rations. The affair has nothing to do with the royal wedding breakfast.

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Remarkable testimony is to hand from Mr. W. P. Lyons, of 23, Graham-road, Lower Edmonton, London, N. This gentleman was burned on the arm by molten sealing wax. When the wax removed the skin was torn, and subsequently after the burn had healed, the arm became almost raw with eczema which spread rapidly. Then the other arm was attacked, and Mr. Lyons says the torment of the pain and itching which he endured was truly awful. Advice and treatment did no good until Germolene was used, and that, to use Mr. Lyons' own words, "cured in an amazingly short time." Now there is not a blemish on either arm.

Germolene is efficacious in the cure of all skin ailments such as eczema, itching rashes, pimples, psoriasis, piles, bad legs, ulcers, ringworm, and impetigo. It is manufactured by the Veno Drug Co., Ltd., Manchester, in their modern and splendidly equipped laboratory (without a doubt the finest of its kind in the Empire), the home of Dr. Cassell's Tablets. Awarded gold medals at four great international exhibitions. Sold at 3s. per tin (1s. 3d. the small size) by all chemists.

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MOTOR TRAFFIC ON LOCAL ROADS.

Mr. F. J. Dickens, of Woodlands, Silverdale, forwarded, on behalf of the 50 residents in that village a petition to the Lancaster Rural Council on Saturday asking the Council to take steps to get certain roads leading into the village closed to heavy motor traffic. On many of these roads it was impossible for two vehicles to pass, and on some of them the lives of foot passengers were endangered.

Mr. Escolme said the road to Yealand was one of the most picturesque in the North, and he should be very sorry to see it closed.

Mr. Armitage asked if there was any means whereby they could divert the traffic from the roads suggested without damaging the advantages of the travelling public. They must be allowed to get to the beauty spots — particularly Yealand — but if the roads could be closed without causing undue hardship it should be done. Motor coach traffic should be diverted from the very narrow roads.

Mr. Escolme: I do not see how we can stop them. They come in one way and go out the other, making it a circular tour. There is no interference with the ordinary traffic at all.

Mr. Unsworth: There is access to Silverdale by a wider road.

Mr. Escolme: But they generally take the circular road.

The Clerk pointed out that not so long ago they were invited to join with the South Westmorland Rural authority in a scheme for closing the roads adjacent to that part of the district, but they declined. An inquiry had been held, but the result had still to be received. That Council could not close any road without first making appeal to the Ministry of Transport, who would have to hold an inquiry.

Mr. Escolme moved that the matter be left over to the new Council.

Mr. Jackson seconded, and the resolution was carried.

"LONDON OPINION."

The current issue of this witty journal has many features of interest. Apropos of the Royal wedding, Harrison Owen contributes a racy article on "Naming the Baby," in which he satirises the prevailing custom of naming new babies after notable personages and events, and there is yet another of the racy Pusher Long Stories by Derwent Miall, under the title of the "One Thing Wanting," a description of the way in which snobbery was made to aid the success of a hydro. The cartoons are topical, and deal in comical fashion with the political crisis. On the cover Bernard Leete presents the Coalition leopard, with the names "Bodmin, Camberwell, Clayton," and the query "Who said the Axe wouldn't cut?" whilst Bert Thomas provides an entertaining picture in which Liberal and Labour workers are preparing the Coalition coffin. "If we hammer in a nail, turn and turn about," says the Liberal, "we shall soon get it finished.

"PUSHED" A BATH CHAIR.

While Capt Edmund Ashworth, of Undercroft, Ellel, was motoring along North-road, Lancaster, on Saturday afternoon, past the Ship Hotel, he applied the brakes to avoid a bath-chair, but the car skidded and pushed the chair over. It contained J. Ewin, of 60, Edith-street, Skerton, an invalid, who was thrown on to the slippery wood setts. He was carried into Croft and Evans' show, and Dr. Gray was telephoned for. He found Ewin suffering from shock, and Capt. Ashworth took him home in his motor-car. The accident was attributed to the slippery state of the street in the rain.

THE CHANGE IN Savings CERTIFICATES

March 31st 1922 156		April 1st 16/-
March 31st 1927 £1		April 1st £1
March 31st 1932 £160		April 1st £160

ON and after April 1st (when the purchase price will be increased from 15/6 to 16/-) there will be two kinds of Savings Certificates in existence :—

(1) 16/- Certificates then on sale.

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The maximum holding for each individual will still be 500 Certificates, whether they are 15/6 or 16/- Certificates, or a *combination of both.*

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At end of 1st year	15 6	16 0
" 2nd "	16 9	17 6
" 3rd "	17 9	18 9
" 4th "	18 9	19 9
" 5th "	£1 0 6	£1 0 6
" 6th "	£1 1 6	£1 1 6
" 7th "	£1 2 6	£1 2 6
" 8th "	£1 3 6	£1 3 6
" 9th "	£1 4 6	£1 4 6
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