

**A WEEK OF PASSION, OR THE
DILEMMA OF MR. GEORGE
BARTON THE YOUNGER; A
NOVEL
IN THREE VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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A Week of Passion, or the Dilemma of Mr. George Barton the Younger; A Novel in Three Volumes, Vol. III by Edward Jenkins

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A WEEK OF PASSION

OR THE

DILEMMA OF MR GEORGE BARTON THE YOUNGER

A NOVEL

IN THREE VOLUMES

BY

EDWARD JENKINS

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VOL III

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CHAPTER I.

DRAWING THE STING.

ALTHOUGH Charles Pollard, in order to rouse his uncle from the apathy of despair, made that suggestion about the advisability of levanting at once in the yacht, which his foresight had provided, he was as yet by no means disposed to throw up the game.

The yacht, by the way, had fallen into his hands most opportunely for his purpose, through the failure of a Russian Prince to pay up the balance of her cost to the builders, who sold her for less than half the value to

Captain Yates. Her name was the *Vera*, of 200 tons. She was Clyde built, with beautiful lines, and her internal arrangements were luxurious and handsome. If it had been possible to run away from memory as well as from justice, no more enchanting prospect could have been offered to the partners than a dash across the Atlantic in this superb and comfortable craft. But unhappily neither of the intending passengers was in a humour to appreciate the æsthetic aspects of such a voyage.

Charles Pollard, in the course of that secret life of pleasure which he had led, had become used to finding himself in positions where exposure would have ruined his character as a sober and trustworthy man of business. Hence he was cooler than his uncle in this crisis of their affairs, since he believed the Earl to be at their mercy, notwithstanding what had occurred; and the only two people who knew anything of the connection of the Pollards with the crime were Yates and Schultz, the latter of whom was out of the country. So

that the nephew was for putting a bold face on things and running the risk of discovery. He hankered after London and its gay life, he shrank from admitting his guilt, as he would do by flight—from being hunted through the civilised world by Justice with her long telegraphic tentacles and her confounded arrangements for extradition of criminals. Besides, demoralised as he was, he still had an affection for his wife, the daughter of a brewer who was in Parliament, and his two children, whom he would be obliged to leave behind him, fresh victims of the crime which had poured out its streams of blood and sorrow in so many directions. After, therefore, he had stirred up his uncle by discussing the ways and means of making good their escape to South America, he turned again to the subject of their position, and endeavoured to convince his senior that whatever suspicions Mr. Sontag might entertain, it was quite impossible for him to lay hands on any evidence of their criminality.

But Joseph Pollard's intellect was now quickened by peril, and not a single point of danger escaped his keen and practised judgment. He said —

“ You forget, Charlie, that young Barton probably knows of the forgery of those transfers. I reminded you of that before. No doubt he knows as well of the deficiency in the rent account, so that it will be impossible for us to explain the restitution we made last week, and which, I fear, will turn out to have been a useless waste of resources. The evidence as to both these facts cannot be suppressed. With two such charges against us they may try to fix us with the capital crime, and how do you know that all the agents Yates has employed will be trustworthy? In any case I won't risk being tried for forgery and embezzlement. Then again the Earl can fix us for all that money.”

“ He will never do that. We have only to threaten to tell the Countess everything. He shrinks from that as he would from death.”

“Possibly—but he may even risk her knowing all, in order to get his money back or punish us. He has a masterly, overbearing spirit, and is a perfect devil when he’s crossed. I judge from this letter that Sontag has seen through your clever trick of reproducing the papers, and doesn’t believe they were lost. That sets him at guessing what object we had in the manœuvre, the advertisement, and all that. Every card we play seems to be trumped as soon as it is on the table. If he suspects us of one thing he will soon begin to suspect us of another, and remember this, we don’t know how much they know.”

“Nor how little!”

But Charles Pollard strove in vain to shake the elder partner’s mind on these points, in which he was so accurate and so unanswerable.

In the middle of their discussion a knock came at the door, and a clerk handed in a letter. Charles Pollard, after a glance at the superscription, tore open the envelope.

“Well,” he said, “if you are determined

to go, this is lucky. My friend, you know, the Captain —”

“D— him,” said Mr. Joseph, with a shudder.

“is now waiting for me. He says he has something important to communicate. I promised to give him the balance of that money to-night. I will go and tell him to order everything to be ready for a start. The rendezvous is the ‘Three Tuns,’ at Gravesend, close by the water, where I will have the captain of the yacht waiting to take us off. Yates was to have met me there this evening any way.”

He caught up his hat to go to Clement's Inn.

“Stay,” said the uncle, whose faculties were now all alive. “Where are you going to meet him?”

“At Clement's Inn.”

“Have you ever met him there before?”

“Never. But he says in his note it is a safe place, the rooms of a friend. You see it is a very unsuspecting address.” Had Mr.