

**GREAT PORTER SQUARE:
A MYSTERY; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Great Porter square: a mystery; In Three Volumes, Vol. II by B. L. Farjeon

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B. L. FARJEON

**GREAT PORTER SQUARE:
A MYSTERY; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

GREAT PORTER SQUARE:
A MYSTERY.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

*Author of "Grif," "London's Heart," "The House of White
Shadows," etc.*

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VOLUME II.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
XX.—The "Evening Moon" concludes its narrative, and affords a further insight into the child-like and volatile character of Lydia Holdfast	1
XXI.—Richard Manx makes love to "sweet Becky"	31
XXII.—In which Becky gives way to her feelings, and renews an old acquaintance	42
XXIII.—"Justice" sends a letter to the Editor of the "Evening Moon"	62
XXIV.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement	88
XXV.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement (continued)	96
XXVI.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement (continued)	125
XXVII.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement (continued)	158

555762

CHAP.	PAGE
XXVIII.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement (continued)	189
XXIX.—Frederick Holdfast's Statement (concluded)	219
XXX.—Becky's reply to her Lover's Statement	245

GREAT PORTER SQUARE: A MYSTERY.

CHAPTER XX.

THE "EVENING MOON" CONCLUDES ITS NARRATIVE,
AND AFFORDS A FURTHER INSIGHT INTO THE
CHILD-LIKE AND VOLATILE CHARACTER OF LYDIA
HOLDFAST.

IN the hope of her husband's return, and looking forward with sweet mysterious delight to the moment when she would hold her baby to her breast, Mrs. Holdfast was a perfectly happy woman—a being to be envied. She had some cause for anxiety in the circumstance that she did not hear from her husband, but she consoled herself with the reflection that his last letter to her afforded a sufficient explanation of his silence. She mentally

followed his movements as the days passed by. Some little time would be occupied in settling his son's affairs; the young man most likely died in debt. Mr. Holdfast would not rest satisfied until he had ascertained the exact extent of his unhappy son's liabilities, and had discharged them. With Frederick's death must be cleared away the dishonour of his life.

"Now that he was dead," said the widow, "I was ready to pity and forgive him."

Her baby was born, and her husband had not returned. Day after day she looked for news of him, until she worked herself into a fever of anxiety. The result was that she became ill, and was ordered into the country for fresher air. But she could not rest. Her husband's return appeared to be delayed beyond reasonable limits. Could anything have happened to him in the wild part of the world in which Frederick had met his death? She did not dream that in the tragedy which had occurred in the very heart of London, the murder in Great Porter Square, with which

all the country was ringing, lay the answer to her fears. In her delicate state of health she avoided the excitement of the newspapers, and for weeks did not look at one. Thus, when her health was to some extent established, and she had returned to her house in London, she had no knowledge of the murder, and was in ignorance of the few particulars relating to it which the police had been enabled to bring to light. She knew nothing of the arrest of Antony Cowlrick, of the frequent adjournments at the police-court, and of the subsequent release of this man whose movements have been enveloped in so much mystery.

It happened during her illness that a friend, who witnessed the anxiety of her mind and sympathised with her, wrote to America for information concerning Mr. Holdfast, anticipating that the reply to his letter would enable him to communicate good news to her; and it also happened, most singularly, after a lapse of time, that it was to this very friend Mrs. Holdfast appealed for advice as to how she should act.

"I felt as if I was going mad," are the widow's words. "I could endure the terrible suspense no longer."

She called upon her friend, not being aware that he had written to America on her behalf. On the table was a letter with the American post-mark on the envelope, and as her friend, in a hurried manner, rose to receive her, she observed that he placed his hand upon this letter, as though wishing to conceal it from her sight. But her quick eyes had already detected it.

"I did not know," she said, after she had explained the motive of her visit, "that you had correspondence with America."

He glanced at his hand, which still covered the letter, and his face became troubled.

"This," he said, "is in answer to a special letter I sent to the States concerning Mr. Holdfast."

"Ah," she cried, "then I am interested in it!"

"Yes," he replied, "you are interested in it."