

JOHN HEARS MYSTERIOUS PHRASES WHICH TROUBLE HIM WITH GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT LOUISE-AT TIMES HE WISHES HE WERE BACK IN THE HILLS.

Synopsis .- Louise Maurel, famous actress, making a motor tour of rural England, was obliged, when her car broke down, to spend the night at the ancestral home of Stephen and John Strangewey, bachelor woman-haters, in the Cumberland district. Before she left the next day she had captivated John. Three months later he went to London and looked her up. She introduced him to her friends, among them Graillot, a playwright, and Sophy Gerard, a light-hearted little actress. John, puritanical in his views, entered the gay bohemian life of the city with enthusiasm. It was soon seen that John and the prince of Seyre were rivals for the heart and hand of Louise. Sophy also loved John secretly. The prince tried to entice John into evil ways by sending fascinating women to charm and bedevil him.

CHAPTER XIV-Continued. -8-

"Sometimes with Miss Maurel, somees with her little friend, Sophy Gerard, and sometimes alone," John refled. "I have bought a Baedeker, aken a taxicab by the day, and done Il the sights. I've spent weeks in the ational gallery, picture gazing, and we done all those more modern shows p round Bond street. I have bought a ing car and learned to drive it. I ave been to dinner parties that have red me stiff. I have been introduced rowds of people whom I never wish see again, and made one or two ends," he added, smiling at his guest, r whom I hope I am properly grate-

The prince has been showing you nd a bit, hasn't he?" Graillot grunt-

The prince has been extraordinarily I to me," John admitted slowly, what reason I don't know. He ntroduced me to a great many ant and interesting people, and a t many whom I suppose a young



ae Maurel."

what about it all?" Graillot

ed. "You find yourself some-

"Ife pretty thoroughly."

"There is no secret about it, so far as I am concerned," John answered. "It is Louise Maurel. I thought you

must have guessed.' The two men looked at each other in silence for some moments. Out on orously. The roar of the Strand came faintly into the room. On the mantelpiece a very ornate French clock was ticking lightly. All these sounds seemed suddenly accentuated. They beat time to a silence almost tragical in its intensity.

Graillot took out his handkerchief and dabbed his forehead. He had wrltten many plays, and the dramatic instinct was strongly developed in him. "Louise!" he muttered under his breath.

"She is very different, I know," John went on, after a moment's hesitation. "She is very clever and a great artist, and she lives in an atmosphere of ing. I have come up here to try to understand, to try to get a little nearer to her."

There was another silence, this time almost an awkward one. Then Graillot rose suddenly to his feet.

"I will respect your confidence," he promised, holding out his hand. "Have no fear of that. I am due now at the theater. Your tea is excellent, in Bond street."

and such little cakes I never tasted be-

change, and her instinct warned her of the danger into which she was rushing.

"You surprise me very much," she said. "Louise Maurel is a very wonderful woman, but she seems to spend er's. Lately he has been bothering a the whole of her time with my cousin, little more than usual-in fact, I supthe prince."

"They are, without doubt, very friendly," John assented. "They have the prince is connected with the synprince wishes to marry her, or she im."

Lady Hilda began to laugh, softly, but as if genuinely amused. John sat "what makes you live in a hotel? Why and watched her in ominons slience. don't you take rooms of your own and furnish them? Surroundings like these lips. His visitor, however, www undisare destructive to one's individuality." turbed. She leaned over and patted "Well, you see," John explained, as his hand.

"Simple Simon !" she murmured, leaning a little toward him. "If you him. He tried to kiss me on the way go on looking like that, I shall pat your cheeks, too. You are really much him. That isn't like me, you know. I too nice looking to wear such thun-

der clouds!" "Perhaps if we chose some other subject of conversation-" John said stiffly.

Very well! You really are a most trying person, you know. I put up with great deal from you."

John was silent. Her face darkened a little, and an angry light flashed in her eyes.

"Well, I'll leave you alone if you like," she decided, tossing her cigarette into the grate. "If my friendship isn't often been offered in vain. There are more men in London than I could count who would go down on their knees for such a visit as I am paying you. And you-you," she added, with a little tremble of real anger in her tone, 'you're too hatefully polite and priggish! Come and ring the bell for the lift. I am going !"

She slid gracefully to her feet, shook the cigarette ash from her clothes, and picked up her muff.

"You are really an egregious, thickheaded, obstinate countryman," she declared, as she moved toward the door. 'You haven't either manners or sensibility. I am a perfect idiot to waste my time upon you. I wouldn't have done it," she added, as he followed her dumbly down the corridor, "if I hadn't rather liked you !"

"I am very sorry," he declared. "I don't know quite what I have done. I do appreciate your friendship. You have been very kind to me indeed."

She besitated as his finger touched the bell of the lift, and glanced at have been shopping, and I hate tea. the watch on her wrist. She sighed, I don't know why I came to see you, and watched the top of the lift as it I suddenly thought of it when I was came up. Then she dropped her veil.

CHAPTER XV.

"Oh, it isn't interesting," she said. "It's just a young man in Bath. He is a lawyer and moderately well off.

He has wanted me to marry him for years. He was a friend of my brothpose I have received what might be

called an ultimatum. He came up yesterday, and I went out with him last good many interests in common, and night. He has gone back to Bath this morning, and I have promised to let dicate which finances the theater. I him know in a month. I think that is do not imagine, however, that the why I went out to Waterloo bridge in a mackintosh and got wet."

"Do you like him?" John asked prac-

tically. "I like him, I suppose," Sophy sighed. "That's the worst of it. If I didn't like Not the flicker of a smile warted his him, there might be some chance. I can't realize myself ever doing more than liking him in a mild sort of way; and if he expected more, as of course he would, then I should probably hate

to the station, and I nearly scratched rather like being kissed sometimes."

John buried himself in the wine-list. "Well," he admitted, "it doesn't sound very hopeful. I'm no sort of judge in these matters, but I have "Oh, dear me !" she interrupted, heard lots of people say that one gets on all right after marriage without caring very much before. You don't seem to have a very comfortable life now, do you?"

"Comfortable? No, but I am free," Sophy replied quickly. "I can come in and go out when I please, choose my own friends. It's rather fine to be here, you know-to be in the atmosworth having, let it go. It hasn't phere, even if the limelight misses one."

> John sighed, and regarded her thoughtfully. "You're a queer little girl, Sophy," he said. "I don't know how to advise you."

"Of course you don't," she answered. 'No one could. As for you, I suppose you will marry Louise. What will happen to you afier that, I don't know. Perhaps I sha'n't care so much about London then. You've made it very nice for me, you know."

"You've made it bearable even for me," he told her. "I often think how lonely I should have been without you to talk to. Louise sometimes is delightfully companionable, and kind enough to turn one's head. Other days we say to one another seems wrong. I come away and leave her simply because I feel that there is a wall between us that I can't get over."

"There isn't really," Sophy sighed. 'Louise is a dear. Considering everything, I think she is wonderful. But you are utterly different. She is very her own standards of life. You, on the other hand, are very simple, very faithful and honest, and you accept the standards which have been made for you-very, very rigidly, John. What are you looking at?"

He led her away, and they passe down the roota. John slowly resumed his seat.

"Sophy," he demanded hoarsely, "tell me the truth. Is there anything between the prince and Louise?"

Sophy nervously crumbled up the oast by her side.

"The prince admires Louise, and has done so for many years," she answered. 'No one knows anything else. Louise never speaks of him to me. I cannot tell you."

"But you must know," he persisted, with a little break in his voice. "Forgive me, Sophy, if I made an ass of myself. First Lady Hilda, and then Graillot, and then-well, I thought Louise might have rung up to see whether 1 was at home, if she came back sooner than she expected ; and the prince took the table last night !"

She leaned over and patted him on the hand.

"Don't worry," she begged. "If Louise has to choose some day between him and you, I don't think she'll hesi-



She Leaned Over and Patted Him on the Hand.

tate very long. Don't look so stern, scarcely understand her; everything please. You look very statuesque and perfect, but I don't want to dine with piece of sculpture. Remember that I am finding you too attractive for my peace of mind. There's your text !" He poured a glass of wine and drank it off.

"I'll do my best," he agreed. "If it sounds like rubbish, you can still becomplex, very emotional, and she has lieve that I appreciate everything you've told me. You are pretty, and I am lucky to have you here. Now I'll try to make you believe that I think

> She leaned over so that her head alost touched his. "Go on, please !" she murmured. 'Even if it hurts afterward, it will be heavenly to listen to!" The next night Sophy acted as showman at the first production of the play, so long delayed because of Graillot's insistence on a scene that promised to be startling to English playgoers. Her part was over at the end of the first act, and a few minutes later she slipped into a seat by John's side behind the curtain. "What do you think of it so far?" she asked a little anxiously. "It seems quite good," John replied cheerfully. "Some very clever lines, and all that sort of thing; but I can't quite see what it's all leading to." Sophy peered around the house from behind the curtain. "There isn't standing room anywhere," she declared. "I don't suppose there ever was a play in London that was more talked about; and then putting it off for more than three months-why, there have been all sorts of rumors about. Do you want to know who the people in the audience

he drew an easy chair up to the fire for his guest, "my stay in London is only a temporary one, and it hasn't seemed worth while to settle anywhere." She stretched out her graceful body in front of the fire and raised her vell. She was very smartly dressed, as usual. Her white silk stockings, which she

seemed to have no objection to displaying, were of the latest vogue. The chinchilla around her neck and in her little toque was most becoming. She seemed to bring with her an atmosphere indefinable, in its way, but distinctly attractive. Brisk in her speech, a little commanding in her marner, she

was still essentially feminine. John, at her direct invitation, had called upon her once or twice since their meeting at the opera, and he had found her, from the first, more attractive than any other society woman the river a little tug was hooting vig- of his acquaintance. None the less, he was a little taken aback at her pres-

> ent visit. "Exactly why are you here, anyhow?" she demanded. "I feel sure that Eugene told me the reason which had brought you from your wilds, but I

have forgotten it." "For one thing," John replied, "I have come because I don't want to appear prejudiced, and the fact that I never spent a month in London, or even a week, seemed a little narrow-minded."

"What's the real attraction?" Lady Hilda asked. "It is a woman, isn't it?" "I am very fond of a woman who is in London," John admitted. "Perwhich, a few months ago, I knew noth- haps it is true that I am here on her account."

Lady Hilda withdrew from her muff gold cigarette case and a little box of matches.

"Order some mixed vermouth with emon for me, please," she begged. "I

"It was very kind of you," John said, "If I had known that you cared about

"You will wish me good luck?" "No !"

"Why not?" John demanded, a little startled.

"Because," Graillot pronounced. 'from what I have seen and know of you both, there are no two people in this world less suitable for each other." "Look here," John expostulated, "I don't want you to go away thinking so. You don't understand what this means to me.'

"Perhaps not, my friend," Graillot least my trade to understand men and women. I have known Louise Maurel since she was a child."

"Then it is I whom you don't understand." "That may be so," Graillot confessed.

'One makes mistakes. Let us leave cret About It. It is it at that. You are a young man of undeveloped temperament. You may be capable of much which at present tion should be glad to I do not find in you." is shown me one side of

"Tell me the one quality in which you consider me most lacking," John begged. "I want you on my side, Grailore of a citizen of the world, lot."

"And I," Graillot replied, as he shook his friend's hand and hurried off, bit," John answered simply. "want only to be on the side that will bre I see of the life up here, mean happiness for you both." er it seems to me. I mean, of

to no back to the hills, wreathed

The telephone bell rang. He plac

"Who is it?" he asked.

chanically.

the receiver to his ear almost me-

"Lady Hilda Mulloch is asking for

you, sir," the hall porter announced.

room through her lorgnette, and did

not hesitate to express her dissatisfac-

He left the room a little abruptly. ie ordinary life of pleasure. be lived by a young man John walked back to the window, opwho hasn't any profession pressed with a sense of something almost ominous in the Frenchman's which he can concen-

you stay?' vain. Side by side with it, there mmediate reply. Insurged into his memory the disquieto the window of his stood looking across tude which his present relations with a discontented frown Louise had developed. She was always

he last few months. On the other hand, he was profoundly rallot continued, "that, isely and truthfully, you at arm's length for the present. bored man in London. hing behind all this efs, my friend, to fit your- forts to see her alone, and when they ad human being, into the met he made no special claim upon

Speak the truth, now ! as a father confessor." ohn swung round upon his heel. In

the clear light it was obvious that he he found his task both hateful and difwas a little thinner in the face and ficult. that some of the tan had gone from his complexion.

"I am staying up here, and going on, with it," he announced doggedly, "because of a woman."

Graillot stopped eating, placed the mist though they might be; to strug remains of his cake in the saucer of his on his way through the blinding f tencup, and laid it down. Then he to drink down long gulps of his opened his lips to speak and abruptly purer, less civilized atmosphere. closed them. His face suddenly under went an extraordinary change. A few seconds ago his attitude had been that of a professor examining some favorite object of study; now a more personal note had humanized hi expression. hatever thought or reflection it was at had come into his mind, it had anly startled him.

"Who is the woman?" he asked tion. athlessly.

seeing me, I would have come to you with pleasure."

"What does it matter?" she answered. "You are thinking, perhaps, that I risk my reputation in coming to a young man's rooms? Those things do not count for me. Ever since I was a child I have done exactly as I liked, and people have shrugged their shoulders and said, 'Ah, well, it is only Lady Hilda !' I am quite convinced that if I chose to take you off to Monte Carlo with me next week replied, "but remember that it is at and spend a month with you there, I should get my pass to the royal inclosure at Ascot when I returned, and my invitation to the next court ball, even

in this era of starch. You see, they would say. 'It is only Lady Hilda !'" The waiter brought the vermouth, which his visitor sipped contentedly.

"So there is a woman, is there?" she went on, looking across the room at her companion. "Have you committed yourself already, then? Don't you remember what I told you the first night we met after the opera-that it is

well to wait?" "Yes, I remember," John admitted. "I meant it."

He laughed good-humoredly, yet not without some trace of self-consciousness.

"The mischief was done then," he said. "Couldn't it be undone?" she asked

lazily. "Or are you one of those tedious people who are faithful forever? manner, something which he could not Fidelity," she continued, knocking the fathom, against which he struggled in ash from her cigarette, "Is really, to my mind, the most bourgeois of vices. It comes from a want of elasticity in the emotional fibers. Nothing in life ween him and the charming when she had any time to has bored me so much as the faith-pus friendship had spare—sometimes almost affectionate. has bored me so much as the faith-

"You ought to put all this into one of your books," John suggested. conscious of her desire to keep him

"I probably shall, when I write my He had accepted her decision withreminiscences," she replied. "Tell me about this woman. And don't stand out a murmur. He made but few efabout in that restless way at the other end of the room. Bring a chair close her notice. He was serving his apprento me-there, close to my side!" John obeyed, and his visitor contem-

ticeship doggedly and falthfully. Yet there were times like the present when plated him thoughtfully through a little cloud of tobacco smoke. "Yes," she decided, "there is no use

He walked aimlessly backward and denying it. You are hatefully goodforward, chafing against the restraint looking, and somehow or other I think of the narrow walls and the low cell- your clothes have improved you. You a little more air than when you ing. A sudden desire had seized have

came to town. Are you quite sure you haven't made up your mind this woman in a hurry?" uite sure," John laughed, "I sup-

I am rather an idiot, but I am dicted to the vice of which you were speaking."

She nodded.

"I should imagine," she said, "that you were not an adept in the art of flirtation. Is it true that the woman Lady Hilda peered around John's is Louise Maurel?"

"Quite true," John replied.

"But don't you know-" She broke off abruptly. She saw the

"My dear man," she exclaimed, face of the man by her side suddenly alliance, then, shall I call it?"

"This is very nearly my idea of perfect happiness," Sophy murmured, as

she leaned across the table and listened idly while John ordered the dinner. "Give me very little to eat, John, and talk a great deal to me. I am depressed about myself and worried about everything !"

"And I," he declared, "am just beginning to breathe again. I don't think I understand women, Sophy."

"Wasn't your week-end party a success?" she asked.

"Not altogether," he confessed; "but don't let's talk about it. Tell me what is depressing you."

"About myself, or things generally?" "Yourself first."

"Well, the most respectable young man you ever knew in your life, who lives in Bath, wants me to marry him. I don't think I could. I don't think I could live in Bath, and I don't think I could marry anyone. And I've just thirteen shillings and fourpence left. I haven't paid my rent, and my dressmaker is calling for something on account on Monday morning."

"There's only one thing to answer to that," John insisted cheerfully. "I

John's whole expression had suddenly changed. His eyes were fixed upon the door, his face was stern as a granite block. Sophy turned quickly around. The maitre d'hotel, with another satellite in his rear, was welcoming with much ceremony two lately adrived guests. Sophy clutched at the tablecloth. The newcomers were Louise and the prince of Sevre.

"I don't understand this!" John muttered, his lips twitching.

Sophy Gerard said nothing. Her cheeks were pink with excitement. Suddenly Louise saw John and Sophy. She stood quite still for a moment; then she came toward them,

slowly and a little languidly. The prince was still studying through his eveglass the various tables which the head waiter was offering for his consideration.

"What an astonishing meeting!" Louise remarked, as she laid her hand for a moment on Sophy's shoulder. "What is going on behind my back?" John rose very slowly to his feet. He

seemed taller than ever, and Louise's smile remained unanswered.

"The rain broke up my week-end party," he explained, "and I met Sophy | are?" in the Strand. In any case, I intended returning tonight. I understood that you would not be here until tomorrow

"Those were my plans," Louise replied; "But, as you see, other things have intervened. Our little house party, too, was broken up by this abominable weather, and we all motored up to town. The Faradays have gone home. The prince heard from Miles that I was at home, and telephoned me to dine. Me voici !"

John was struggling with a crowd of hateful thoughts. Louise was wearing by the prince or by the management?" a wonderful gown; her hair was beautifully arranged; she had the air of a woman whose toilet was complete and perfect down to the slightest detail. The prince's slow drawl reached them distinctly.

"It was my servant's fault, I suppose," he said. "I told him to ring up last night and order the table for two in that corner. However, we will take the vacant one near your desk."

He looked around and, as if for the first time, missed Louise. He came toward them at once.

"The prince seems to have ordered his table last night," John remarked, his tone, even to himself, sounding queer and strained.

Louise made no reply. The prince was already shaking hands with Sophy. "I thought you were spending the week-end with my cousin, Strange-

wey," he remarked, turning to John. "We did spend part of it together," John replied. "The weather drove us back this afternoon."

"I congratulate you both on your good taste," said the prince. "There is nothing more abominable than a riverside retreat out of season. We are tak-

ing the table on the left, Louise."

"Not particularly," John answered. 'I shouldn't know them, if you told me. There are just a few familiar faces. see the prince in the box opposite." "Did you telephone to Louise today?" Sophy asked.

John shook his head.

"No. I thought it better to leave her lone until after tonight."

"You are going to the supper, of course?"

"I have been asked," John replied, little doubtfully. "I don't quite know whether I want to. Is it being given "The management," Sophy assured him. "Do you come and take me! It's going to be rather fun."

The curtain went up upon the second act. John, from the shadows of the box, listened attentively. The subject was not a particularly new one, but the writing was brilliant. There was the old "Marquis de Guy," a roue, a degenerate, but still overbearing and full of personality, from whose llps came some of Graillot's most brilliant sayings; Loulse, his wife; and Faraday, a friend of the old marquis, and obviously the intended lover of his wife.

"I don't see anything so terrible in this," John remarked, as the crutain went down once more and thunders of applause greeted some wonderful lines of Graillot's.

The mystery about the life of Louise further troubles John and he sets forth to get the exact truth, no matter how tragic for him it may be.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Headed, Obstinate Country Man."

am going to lend you fifty pounds while you make your mind up about the young man."

She made a face at him. "I couldn't borrow money from a strange gentleman." she protested.

"Rubbish!" he exclaimed. "If you begin calling me a stranger-but there, never mind ! We'll see about that dinner. Tell me more about your love af-

fair, Sophy." "It isn't a love affair at all !" she exclaimed, almost indignantly. "Why, I am sorry. Your prospective

about eleven o'clock.