THE DOROTHY CRYSTAL SYNDICATE.

BY E. F. BENSON.

Author of "The Heroic Georgie," "Mrs Ross Puts Her Foot Down," "The Candlestick," "The Barsham Letters," etc., etc. COPYRIGHT.]

IT was a fine moment when the Editor of that very largely-circulated magazine, osy Corner,' not only accepted the short Cosy Corner. story which Dick Cundall had sent him (with a stamped and directed envelope inside) but intimated that he would be glad to see any further work. This particular story was of the most degraded description and concerned a sweet young girl who lived with an aged and doddering father, and was like a sunbeam about their two squalid rooms. They were incredibly poor, but the sweet young girl's optimistic view of life and her touching belief in the beneficence of Providence, made them both as happy as the day was long. She sold flowers in Piccadilly Circus, and had a refined nature. Eventually her grandfather turned out to be an Earl, which showed how right Hermione was in pinning her faith to the beneficence of Providence.

The origin of this loathsome tale, though tself, was proved to be significance and strang momentous significance and strangely affected the lives of three people. Dick had been annoyed with his sister one evening trivial in itself, because instead of playing draughts with him as usual after dinner, she had sat mopping her eyes over the Old Curiosity Shop. When she had gone damp and red-Shop. When she had gone tamp and with eyed to bed, he had taken up the book, with rising nausea, read a chapter or two con-cerning Little Nell and her grandfather, and had sat up half the night in writing a similar assault on the emotions. The second half containing the glad tidings that her father was an Earl was added on the principle that though some readers like herself loved to wallow naked and unashamed in sheer sentimentality, others adored the aristocracy. To such insignificant beginnings, steeped in the spirit of mockery, the Dorothy Crystal Syndicate owed its origin.

Dick had always wanted to be an author, but a rebellious parent had put him at the age of eighteen into an office in the City, where now, seven years later, he earned his living. His father had died soon after his entry there, and the money which he had left to be divided equally between his two children and the control of the had left to be divided equally between his two children enabled them jointly with the addition of Dick's salary to live comfortably enough in a small flat off the Brompton Boad. Violet at this time was a very pretty girl of twenty, devoted to her brother, but with no use for any other member of his sex; and her sentimentality, which was of the deepest dye, she indulged solely over ememas, theatres, and books. She did not in the least desire that life should be like that, it was merely that she loved these emotions as exhibited in art, and when she came out of the picture-palace or shut her book, she was a young lady of an extraordinarily practical turn of mind. She ran the flat with the greatest ability, providing extreme comfort with notable economy, doing her marketing herself, and finding an exquisite pleasure in keeping down the house-books while still preserving the high standard of excellent meals and perennial hot water.

A wet Sunday enabled Dick to finish this awful little tale, and in the afternoon he read it to Violet.

"It's a parody, of course," he said, it's really not much more ridiculous than the stories you are so fond of. It's called 'Lady Hermione': there's richness for

That's a splendid name," said Violet thusiastically, "Wait a minute till I put enthusiastically, "Wait a minute till I put the kettle on to boil. Then I can enjoy it

thoroughly. Dick was soon deep in his reading and giggling at the more atrocious passages, when he heard a stiffled sob from his sister. "Dick, darling, don't laugh," she said

huskily. "It's too lovely! It isn't a parody at all. But if Hermione's going to die, I don't think I shall be able to bear it." Dick stored at her, "You're perfectly incredible," he said.

" It was meant to be funny, and there you are snivelling.

Never mind me," said Violet, "Just go on, and please don't laugh any more,' The story was not a long one, and pre-

sently he came to its happy conclusion. Violet dried her eyes.

"Perfect!" she said. "And an Earl.
That is nice. Of course, it would have been

lovely if she had died; I should have cried all evening. But it's much better as it is A hissing noise interrupted her, and she

flew to the fireplace.
"And the water's been boiling over," she cried with a stern relapse into practical affairs. "How careless of me."

The practical side of Violet's nature con-tinued in the secondant over their tea-Though the "Lady Hermione" had aroused all her deepest sentimentality, there was

all her deepest sentimentality, there was another side to that lady.
"Of course, you must have it published, Dick," she said. "Any editor of a popular magazine would jump at it. It's exactly

what the ordinary render wants nowadays, something to make him utterly miserable first, and then quite comfortable afterwards People are getting fired of dreary analytical accounts of what typists think about When they're going home on the top of an omniwant things to happen; great romantic things. Of course, there's no love interest in Lady Hermione at present--"

hat's all there's ever going to be of said Dick. "Why, I only wrote it to show you the kind of slosh you like,"

"You've shown me a great deal more then by accident," said she, "You've shown me you have got the trick-of course, I'm talking now from the commercial point of view -you've got the trick of writing what the average reader (that's me) adores. You must instantly send it to some popular magazine: 'Cosy Corner' would be as good

as any."
"I wouldn't let that rubbish appear under my name for a hundred pounds, 'said Dick.' Supposing somebody in the office came

"Oh, they won't give you a hundred ounds," said Violet, "More likely two pounds, said Violet. "More likely two guineas. And you needn't send your name at all. Dick Cundall isn't a good name for that sort of author. Just sign it D.C. with this address. As for pay, just take whatever they offer you. It's the appearance of that story that I want."

Violet was perfectly right about its acceptation by the Editor of "Cosy Corner," and she laughed with pleasure at the request that he should be permitted to see more of D.C.'s work. She had been equally correct in her estimate of what the Editor proposes

to pay for it.

We won't let him off another time with that starvation wage," she said, "But never mind the money; that's a mere detail at present. Write to him and say you accept it, but that you only sell him first serial rights, and that the story remains your proposity. Or you'd better let me do your property. Or you'd better let me do that for you; I'm much more business-like,

Rather, as long as you give me the two ineas," said Dick. "Now, let's play guineas," said Dick.

Violet saw that he was looking about for a cigarette, and flew to put the box by his elbow. That sort of attention, she had elbow. That sort of attention, said observed, always paid. "There you are," she said. "Now, Dick,

do be kind, and let me talk to you for ten minutes. I'm bursting with ideas : you've no notion how I've been thinking.

This story will appear, and I bet you a box of cigarettes that within a fortnight, Mr John Dacres will write to D.C. repeat ing his request to see more of his work. possible, more about Lady Hermione. Now let's be business-like. that bet?"
"Yes," said Dick, yawning.

"Well, then, I want you to let me reply that, saying that you have written another story; about Hermione, but that you are afraid-that is, D.C. is afraid-that a reward of two guineas is not a great temptation to you.

"I thought you said money was only a detail," said Dick,
"Yes, but details have to be attended to,"

said she. Then another detail is that I haven't written a further story about Hermione," said he.

"Oh, but Dick, you will have by the time I tell him so, said Violet, "You must! I promise you that you won't get less than ten pounds for it. It won't take you long; you wrote the other in a few hours. And ten pounds is ten pounds."

"But supposing it isn't?" asked Dick, I mean, supposing Mr Dacres doesn't give

me ten pounds for it?" Violet did not hesitate.

"Then I will," she said. "I shan't have to, because he will. And you won't have to nvent a story ; I've got it all ready for you. All you'll have to do is to tell it in just the superb way you told the first one."

Dick threw away the end of his eigarette. "What are you up to, Vi?" he asked. "I can't tell you all that I'm up to," she said, " because in the first place you would laugh at me, and call me mad; and in the second, I never make cut-and-dried plans for

long ahead. I see the next step quite clearly, and that is that when Mr Dacres asks you, as he will, for another Hermione story, and when you tell him that you won't take less than ten pounds for it, you must have one ready to send him."

"And what's the story?" asked Dick.
"You said you had it ready."

Violet's eyes grew sentimental for a moment.

"Oh, it's lovely!" she said. Hermione's father has become an earl—the Earl of Tintagel, I think—and they now live in Park Lane. She goes to a ball, or per-haps she gives one, and meets a very interesting-looking young man with coal-black hair, who is lame—" Dick shouted with laughter.

"Not the strong, silent Englishman again?" he asked.

You may call him so if you like. He is strong and silent, and Hermione feels there s something very wonderful about him, As

he goes away he holds both her hands for a

moment, and gazes into her eyes and says, "Pshaw!" to himself, "What a suspense,"
"It seems to me that you are embarking
me on a serial," said Dick,
"I don't say that I'm not," she said,
"But that depends on all sorts of other
things. All I want you to do at present is

things. All I want you to do at present is to write the second story on the lines I've given you. And whatever happens you'll get ten pounds. It may be more—but it will certainly be that, beginning, Dick." And that's only the

Dick had the firmest belief in his sister's bractical ability, and he had never seen her more in earnest.

Go on." he said. "Tell me some more of your plans.

"My dear, I can't tell you much," she said, "But one thing I have quite made up my mind about. You only signed yourself D.C . didn't you?

That's all. "Well, D.C. mustn't be Dick Cundall. That would never do as the name of the author of 'Lady Hermione.' Eve been pondering very carefully, for the answer to 'What's in a name? is 'A very great deal.' And I don't think—of course, I should be delighted to consider any suggestion—I don't think you could better 'Dorothy Crystal.' In fact, when I write to Mr Ducres telling him that there is another Hermione story, I shall sign it Dorothy Crystal.

"Lor"! What a name!" said Dick,
"I'm glad you like it. She's just right for the author of Lady Hermione.

Violet's forecast was fulfilled with an accuracy that would have done credit to a major prophet. Within a week after the appearance of Dick's first story, Mr Dacres wrote again to ask if D.C. could not send him, on the same terms, another little tale about Lady Hermione. Violet thereupon replied with a most able letter, stating frankly that Dorothy Crystal for so she signed herself) had another story just completed but that she was probably sending it elsewhere, as two guineas was scarcely a price that she cared to accept. Mr Dacres instantly wrote asking whether he might see the story, and having read it, decide whether he wished to purchase it at a higher rate than was at all usual. Would Miss Crystal ring him up before II a.m. next morning and give her reply?" Violet, as she read this, became aware

that she had come to cross-roads, and instead of ringing him up as requested, or going out to her marketing, perused his letter again, trying to conjecture exactly how he had felt when he wrote it. If how he had felt when he wrote it. If Dorothy Crystal declined to send the sumptions typewritten manuscript sump tuous it was: Dick had produced a marvellous, strong, silent Englishman it was possible that Mr Dacres might meanly acquiesce in her decision and ring off. In that case she would have to pay Dick ten pounds and what was more exeruciating, the columns of "Cosy Corner," easily the best for the purpose, would be closed against him. On the other hand her acute sense detected a certain auxiety in Mr Dacres' note; he clearly wanted to see the story, and she was most desirous of knowing how great his interest in it was, for it would be a splendid endorsement to her own estimate of the very marketable quality of Dick's work, if so practical a judge as the Editor of "Cosy Corner" bought it at the price she proposed to ask without seeing it. That would add immensely to her confidence for the future

Violet spread all these problems before her mind and regarded them like a panor ama. She glanced also at the clock which

was verging on 11 a.m.

"I'll chance it," she said to berself, "And I won't even ring him up. I believe he'll ring me up. That would be much better," It was almost with a sob of relief that she heard the telephone bell tinkle, and a crisp voice asked if Miss Crystal was incontrolled her trembling lips and said she was Miss Crystal and who was it please . . . And it was he,

lease . . . And it was he,
Mr Dacres was a little abrupt at first. He had expected to be rung up by Miss Crystal. To which Miss Crystal, without a tremor, said how stupid it was of her, but she had quite forgotten. And that was a lie, because quite forgotten. And that was a lie, because she had been thinking of nothing whatever

else.

"About that story," said Mr Dacres.

Violet gulped and then spoke.

"Yes, so kind of you, Mr Dacres, to take an interest in it," she said. "But I don't think I'll send it to you on approval. In fact I've almost—olt, well never mind that,"

Mr Dacres's voice became a little anxious and very cordial

and very cordial. "I should very much like to see it," said he. "It is, I believe, about your charming heroine, Lady Hermione," "Oh, how nice of you," said Victet, "Yes, it's about Hermione."

And what are you asking for it?" said Mr Dacres.

Ten Guineas," said Violet, Guineas sounded more professional than pounds "I'll take it," said Mr Dacres, "Will "Will you

kindly send it round?"
"Certainly," said Violet. "And would you kindly confirm your purchase by letter. At ten guineas for magazine appearance in

Cosy Corner.'

Violet instantly sent it off, with a small piece of pretty riband holding the sheets

together.

The development of Dorothy Crystal grew swiftly. Mr Dacres (by telephone) was charmed with "Lady Hermione's ball," but, with all deference, was not the gap between the first chapter and that rather large? Her readers, he felt sure, would want to know what happened between the elevation of her father to the peerage and her full-blown father to the peerage and her full-blown appearance in Park Lane. There might be much interesting — indeed, absorbing romance in the debut of Hermione into London society. (Mr Daeres hinted at highly-coloured episodes which made Violet's mouth water.) Could not Miss Crystal interpolate some such chapter, since two chapters of the material to be dealt two chapters of the material to be dealt with could not be worthily treated in one, between the first chapter already published. and that of the delightful, the inimitable ball? And then, again, readers would be wild to know the unfolding of the love-interest so thrillingly adumbrated at the close of the chapter about the ball. In fact, Mr Dacres had a proposition to make to Miss Crystal, which he hoped would meet with her approval, and would, he felt sure, be advantageous to them both. The matter could be discussed more easily in an interview than over the telephone-wire, and if she would be so good as to appoint him a time, he would be most pleased to wait upon her. Violet did not besitate for a moment. She instantly said that she would I

expect Mr Dacres in half-an-holy rang off, and sat down to conside she had done, and what she intended

she had done was define assume the personality of Dorothy assume me personnel, and the authorship of Dick's stories she intended to do was to consent to not only these three chapters, amount more. She felt certain Dacres wanted her (Dick) to write plete serial story, and, now assured anxiety to obtain that, she meant to him up to the highest possible figt undertake to supply it. Dick about it first he would almost say that he couldn't and wouldn't say that he commit and wouldn't thing of the kind, and though st ultimately persuade him, it would great deal of time and energy. It better then to confront him accompli of a contract in which pective sums of money would themselves. As for the identification self with Dorothy Crystal, she qualms about the wisdom of the rightly felt that it was a great as scheme that a young and very prowould have been rank injustice not to acknowledge that) should author of the romantic history of H. rather than a stockbroker's Dacres might easily propose giv view in "Cosy Corner young authoress, illustrated by graph of herself, and a corner of With where she worked. It would all if ful advertisement. Besides, Dock that not for a hundred pounds w be known that he was the ambi-

Violet dismissed all qualms, and into a whirlwind of activity. Sie servant that a visitor would presque and ask for Miss Crystal, and wishown in. She put on an extremely ing blouse, and prettily disordered She pictured to herself the chatastes, she was to assume, and in a with these put a copy of "The R the music rest of the piano, hid ettes, took the daffodils our ef where she had just placed them, that she might be discovered; them, and laid a copy of Shakes by them.

Mr Dacres took away with Jilly later, a whirl of charming impressigned contract, a sheaf of short-lim and a photograph. Of them all ing impression, or perhaps the ph which he several times furtively under the lid of his despatchease him personally the most, and enthusiastic and an impressionalit gentleman, he longed to be at we shorthand notes, in order to do b justice to the delicious subject From a popular point of view teemed with romance; never had such a telling tale as that which I Crystal had so ingeniously unfolded What a name, too! How expression sweet, almost old-fashioned sit orphaned childhood, living will old aunt in the country, amid and beehives and cowslip-wine, love of scribbling, which dated time when Aunt Doreas used to Wide Wide World "to her, sill armehair of winter evenings hearth, her determination to writer of pure and elevating should show her readers the life and the heights to which could rise, all these, whill Dacres feel rather sick, were highest value for the article y planning, and which should most widespread interest in D Then how deeply touching w Aunt Doreas, the sale of the wallflowers, and her move is that dearly-loved brother, and until he got a situation in brother was evidently a good of her, but not in the least her, or her marvellous gift; how sweetly she said it) Hermione's early struggles, and title came, and pool-) that any editor would conshumblest of his columns a delicious picture she the table, and that mellifluo Rosary," on the piano. fountain-pen itched to be

promising a subject.

Besides the softer emotion stimulated by Dorothy Cryst Mr Dacres's business instinct satisfied with the contract by From an artistic point of vicing but the supremest of instalments he had seen of b o put it tersely, it was the drivel he had ever read, but eyes saw a fortune in it. Ho bought the serial rights of D novel, "The Lady Hermion to appear weekly in the "Cowhat pleased him more, by the book-rights of the same. be published on the complet appearance It was true chapters of the work were y but he was perfectly satisfied who had written the acc Hermione's ball, and her lirs Roger Falconhurst (such was ing name of the strong, sile) produce a story which would pre-eminent among "best selle an extraordinary flair in gaugii taste, and he was convinced Crystal (properly advertised covered a coming popular id-just started a small publishing own and his autumn list would by Lady Hermione, already known readers through "Cosy Corner business point of view be felt he ha done a better morning's work.

Continued on page 7.)

Wednesday, J. THE DOROTHY

Continu His immediate popular of the inte politicae interest means of the in esent of love, present of love, of Not only was sh photograph did attractive story, bu behind those chil bobbed wealth of most interesting with all he who, with all he well able to take another long loo began his panegy bick was infor evening to the fla hard been places. had been pledged gave him the moing to spring the

the was thorough tridge following suspicions.
"Why this opu this inxury? If thing to tell me v "We are opule least we shall be "Something al-tite Dick. astate Dick.
"My dear, how "Well,

came to see me Dick behaved was furious at fi would not write since Violet had she might take of made for him. amazement us th Violet acquainted aspects of the cas "You'll on Shall I begin? I begon?

The appearance

in the autumn

lisher's expectati leaped to her thre was called for spent half the albums and answ and writing critic manuscripts whi authoresses sent this was, the ent made her shiver chilled the flatter that bick was pe situation; she ha him, with his e successor to winds which he would in advance; on those feuits of her, quite sufficie the beem, so he due to Violet, it v him with all the rareer, with the marquis who p backelog and trie misun lerstanding and his lotal dis car and a and "ronger and with his gaining his arrival, wour where, nursa and finall der's, Eator Dick

thed ther Violet. limini Victor east v than that. She a with each nowled rour cillier the must r from invented hives down to the built on reared on a four She was who had r was ou to the Ita

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txpostice, possibly So deep she wa that she did not and she did not appeared to be it was unkind of his a lust brought came to the office operate in the papers! I say that you was taken in the papers! I say that you was taken.

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happers! I sa I. alors: I sa I. alors: You with a pang of hored that she happered that she happered had she an interviewer so accustomed no alors are alors and the sanswered with Something in the sanswered with answered with answered with a something in the sanswered with the sa