

Sweet Miss Margery

She leaned back languidly in her chair and somehow she thought struck Margery that she had never seen the little room look so small and shabby before. The delicate gleam of Vane's white garments contrasted strongly with her own dingy, dust-stained black dress, the placid beauty of Miss Charteris' face brought back the thrill of pain to her heart. How different they were! Who was she, to compete with such a woman. She roused herself from her thoughts as she met Vane's cold clear eyes watching her.

"I beg your pardon," she said quickly, yet with unspeakable grace. "You have had a long drive; may I give you a cup of tea—or perhaps you would prefer some milk?"

She moved toward an inner room; but Vane stopped her.

"Neither, thank you," she replied coldly—she was growing more and more annoyed every moment. She was being treated with every courtesy, with all regard for etiquette, as though her hostess were a duchess instead of a common village girl; it was insupportable; she must hasten to break down that calm exterior which irritated her beyond measure. "Neither, thank you," she repeated. "I shall not stay long, it is, as you say, a tedious drive; but my cousin, Stuart Crosbie, wishes me to see you."

She bent her head to look at her founce, but not before she had seen the girl's slight frame wince and her cheeks grow paler.

"That shot went home!" she told herself.

Margery stood immovable, her hand still grasping the chair. A few moments before she had thought it impossible to suffer greater mental pain than she had endured; now she was experiencing pangs still greater, for her wound was being probed. Weak with grief, and wanting of food as she was, she determined to be brave, to stand firm before this woman—her rival.

"I scarcely know how to begin," continued Vane, with well-assumed kindness and concern. "It is a delicate matter, yet I could not let my cousin, Stuart Crosbie, hesitate for an instant, then held out her well-gloved hand. "Miss Daw," she said impulsively, "will you forgive me if anything I may say in the course of our conversation should vex you? I would not indeed willingly cause you any pain. Margery's eyes were fixed on the golden-tinged trees beyond the garden; she did not notice the outstretched hand. "Why should you cause me pain?" she asked, in reply. "There is nothing in common between you and me."

Vane let her hand drop to her side; then pain, and her whole frame shrank like this girl's control.

"I am glad you judge me rightly," she responded. "For I am and have been much distressed by my errand. Stuart has asked me, Miss Daw, to express to you his sincere sympathy in the loss you, Mrs. Morris, he begs me to tell you that he trusts you will apply at the castle now that you are left without a guardian. He has entrusted his mother's good-will on your behalf, and he sends you his small sum to assist toward anything you may require."

She held out a small packet as she finished, and had the satisfaction of seeing Margery's lips twitch with sudden pain, and her whole frame shake with passion beneath the insult.

"It was his intention to write to you as far back as last Thursday," went on Vane, "but he had the misfortune to break his right arm, and writing was impossible; therefore, as he thought you would require some explanation from him, he asked me to do so for him. I thank you for the insult, but I am not sure that Mrs. Crosbie has already written to some lady about a situation for you as maid."

Margery made no answer, and Miss Charteris waited a few moments, and then moved to the door, feeling strangely uncomfortable, and by no means victorious. She looked back as she stood at the door.

"You have no reply," she asked.

"Mr. Crosbie's explanation requires none," Margery answered, still in the same cold even tones.

"Then I will wish you good-afternoon."

"Stay!" cried Margery; and Vane turned toward her. "You have forgotten your packet," Margery added, pointing to the table.

Vane took it up without a word. Then, though she seemed to strike her, and she turned the money round and round in her hand, hurriedly.

"Perhaps you will write to Stuart or to his mother?"

Margery's eyes met Vane's in an unflinching gaze.

"Write!" she repeated, with unutterable scorn and pride in the word. "There is indeed little in common between us. Such a question deserves no answer."

Vane's brows contracted. She "smiled" and walked quickly to the carriage, and entering it, drove swiftly away. Her mummings were not altogether pleasant during the first mile or so of her return journey. She had succeeded and succeeded so well that she need never fear Margery Daw again; yet her spirit was vexed even at her victory, for, though she had forever separated Stuart and this girl, she had not lowered her rival to the dust, as she had intended.

she judged the girl to be so honest, to say much, if indeed her pride would allow her to notice him at all, there would be sufficient to fire Stuart's anger and determination to learn the truth; and then—

Vane's face flushed at the thought of the humiliation she would undergo in such a case; and she registered a vow that she would never permit it to happen, Margery must go and at once.

Margery remained standing at the door as Vane walked down the path. She did not move, as, in a dim way, she saw Miss Charteris settle herself in the dainty carriage, nor did she stir as the ponies started briskly from the gate. But as the sound of their hoofs died away in the distance, she woke with a shuddering sigh to the grossness of the insults that had been offered her. Suddenly her strength failed, and with a groan, she sunk back on her chair, burying her face in her hands. The thought of her loneliness had been bitter, but her lover's false words had rankled in her breast; but the weight of Vane's humiliating words crushed her. It was almost greater than she could bear.

She tried to banish all tender recollection of Stuart from her, to think of him only as the one man who had darkened the glory of life for her, as the man who had plucked the sweet blossom of her love only to trample it under foot; but she could not succeed. Her mind would go back to those happy walks, those brief moments of gladness when they met, till it wandered to that day in World Wood, when with her hand clasped in his, she had sworn to love him always, no matter what came between them. Yes, she loved him—would love him to the end; though he had deceived and injured her, though he had treated her with such scant courtesy, and degraded her shamefully, her love was still the same.

She shook back her wealth of red-gold curls and rose to her feet; she was growing calmer. She reflected that she had yet to plan her future. She pushed the chair to the doorway and sunk into it. The sun was sinking behind the woods; the air was soft and balmy—the touch seemed like a kiss upon her cheek. The musical note of a bird twittering its "good-night" amid the leaves, the babble of the distant brook, soothed her. She leaned her weary head against the door, and began to think.

One idea stood out clearly—she must leave Hurstley. She dared not even picture to herself a future in the village where her eyes would rest on Stuart smiling at that cold, cruel woman—where she must sit down beneath a repetition of insult that had already roused her spirit almost to madness. No, there was no other course open to her—she must go, and soon. Ah, if she could, but rush away at once, and let the veil of darkness cover her humiliation! But whither and to whom could she go? Reuben could not take her with him. Mrs. Bright would welcome her for awhile; but she would not meet Robert—poor Robert!

Like a flash of light in darkness came the remembrance of Miss Lawson, and the letter from her sister.

Would it be too late? It was not a week ago, this must be her chance. She rose hurriedly, her limbs numb, and tied on her bonnet. She would go to Miss Lawson at once; the place might still be vacant; she might start perhaps in the morning! The thought lent her strength. She forced herself to eat some food, though every nerve in her body was quivering from excitement.

The simple viands, the glass of milk, seemed to put new life into her; she left a message for Reuben at the next cottage, and started in for her sister's place, her heart beating with the thought of the rush of eager desire and hope that burned within her.

Miss Lawson was seated at her window, writing, when her eyes fell on Margery's figure coming rapidly up the path. The governess started at the pale cheeks, her countenance look of pain, and her heart thrilled with sympathy.

"Well, child," she said, as the girl came in.

"Miss Lawson," began Margery, and then her rapid walk told her, and she had recoiled to a chair.

The governess rose, untied her bonnet, and held a glass of water to her lips. She saw at a glance that something was wrong; but she asked no questions.

"You have walked too quickly, as usual, Margery," was all she observed as she turned away with the glass.

"I wanted to see you," murmured Margery, then, after a brief pause, she added slowly, "You remember what you said, Miss Lawson, that evening we parted, you would help me? I have come to claim that promise. I want—"

"Tell me what you want."

"I want what I refused that night—to leave Hurstley—go away altogether. It is too late—oh, Miss Lawson, is it too late to go to that young lady?"

Miss Lawson looked at her keenly.

"No," she replied; "it is not too late. Strangely enough, I have heard from my sister again, urging me to persuade you. I can't see it up."

Margery felt the first thrill of pleasure she had experienced during during the long dreary day.

"And soon—I may go soon?" she asked.

"The sooner the better—in fact, tomorrow, if you can be ready," Margery answered, with a weary smile, pushing aside her curls.

"Then I will telegraph to my sister in the morning, when you start. I will go with you to Chesterham and see you into the train, and I think you had better get yourself one or two things when there; you can repay me out of your first quarter's salary."

Margery bent her lips to Miss Lawson's hand.

"I can never thank you sufficiently," she whispered; "you are too good to me."

Miss Lawson pulled away her hand with a jerk; but her face bore no trace of anger.



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I have been treated by doctors for twenty-five years for a bad case of eczema on my leg. I tried the best, but failed to cure it. My own doctor had advised me to have my leg cut off, but I said I would try the Cuticura Remedies first. He said, "Try them if you like but I do not think they will do any good." At this time my leg was peeling from the knee down, my foot was like a piece of raw flesh and I had to walk on crutches. I bought a cake of Cuticura Soap, a box of Cuticura Ointment and a bottle of Cuticura Resolvent. After the first two treatments the swelling went down and in two months' use of the Cuticura Remedies my leg was cured and the new skin grown on. The doctor could not believe his own eyes when he saw that Cuticura had cured me and said that he would use Cuticura for his own patients. But for the Cuticura Remedies I might have lost my life. I am truly grateful for the wonderful cure that Cuticura wrought. I have many grandchildren and they are frequent users of Cuticura and I always recommend it most highly as a safe and economical cure for skin troubles.

(Signed) Mrs. J. B. RENAUD,
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afford the speediest and most economical treatment for eruptions of the skin and scalp. A safe habit of Cuticura Soap and Ointment use is often sufficient to clear the system, soothe the skin, and bring the Cuticura Book on treatment of skin diseases.

incidentally mentioned that she had met Mrs. Bright, who was in great distress about her son.

"What has happened to him, Aunt Constance?" asked Vane, with assumed indifference.

"I thought I said that he was in love with this girl—wished to marry her, in fact—and is so troubled at her refusal that he has determined to leave England."

"Ah!" ejaculated Vane, looking up suddenly, her cold blue eyes shining like stars. "Reuben Morris has gone to Australia, you say?"

"He starts at the end of the week; he left Hurstley for London this morning."

"And this girl is with him?" next queried Miss Charteris.

"She must be," Crosbie's cottage is shut up, the key has been sent to the Weald, and the neighbors tell me they saw both the man and the girl leave early this morning."

"Could Mrs. Bright give you no clue as to where her son has gone or intends to go?"

"None. She gave me his note to read, in which he merely says he shall leave England for a while. This girl has bewitched him. A marriage with him would have been the best she could expect—indeed, much too good for her," murmured Mrs. Bright, sadly. "What do you propose to do now, Vane?" she added, rising.

"Nothing. I have finished. Aunt Constance, the game is ours. Do you not see that this young man has gone to Australia with them?"

"Mrs. Crosbie removed her driving gloves slowly."

"I scarcely think that, Vane," she replied, "for Margery Daw has refused to become his wife. His mother is highly incensed and greatly troubled, poor creature, about it. No, I cannot think that, Vane."

"It will prove to be the truth, nevertheless," Miss Charteris said, quietly; adding, "and, as such, it is welcome as a full and complete solution to a difficult and disagreeable question. Poor Stuart—I am sorry for him!"

Mrs. Crosbie glanced at her niece, leaning against the open window, almost frail-looking in her delicate white gown, and could scarcely reconcile the strong, cold, relentless spirit with so lovely an exterior. For an instant a feeling of disgust at this girl's calm trickery and deceit, and at her own shame, leaning against the open window, almost frail-looking in her delicate white gown, and could scarcely reconcile the strong, cold, relentless spirit with so lovely an exterior. For an instant a feeling of disgust at this girl's calm trickery and deceit, and at her own shame, leaning against the open window, almost frail-looking in her delicate white gown, and could scarcely reconcile the strong, cold, relentless spirit with so lovely an exterior. 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