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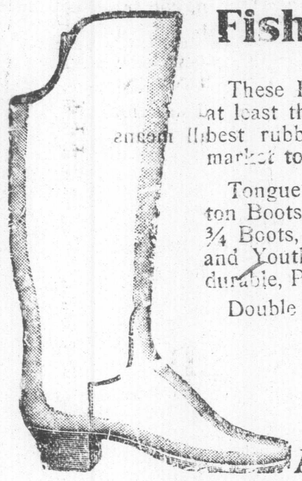

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The Mills of the Gods

Or A

Heart's Deception

CHAPTER IX.

The Picnic.

But the next instant her laugh dies away, for the heavens seem to open before them, a peal of thunder roars like the discharge of a park of artillery just above their heads, and the horses, startled and frightened, stop dead short, then rear up on end.

The carriage sways, and for a moment it seems as if it were going over, and Leslie is forced up close against Yorke.

He holds the terrified horses with one strong hand, and slips the other round the slim form fitted against him.

"All right," he says, in a low voice "Don't be afraid, Leslie!" His arm holds her, supports her, presses her to him, perhaps unconsciously. "You are quite safe, dearest, dearest."

Low as his voice is, Leslie hears him, or—she asks herself—is it only fancy?

For an moment, one brief moment, she covers, nestling to him, her face hidden against his shoulder; then with a start she draws away and with her face red and white by turns looks straight before her.

And through the roar of thunder and the hissing of the rain she hears those words re-echoing "Leslie, dearest—dearest!"

CHAPTER X.

Yorke in Love.

The great changes of our lives come suddenly. Swift as the lightning's flash, is the revelation to Yorke that he loves the girl who sits beside him.

Half-unconsciously he had uttered the words which are still ringing in her ears, but he knows that his heart has been saying "dearest" all day long.

He knows now what that strange, peaceful happiness meant which made him feel as if he would be content to pass the rest of his life by her side in the hermit's cel.

And he knows that this is no transient passion which wil have its day, and pass, leaving not a wreck behind, as so many passions alas! have passed with him. To every one of the sons of men, it is said, comes once in his life, the great all-absorbing love which wipes out all others, and which shall make of all his days an endless misery of a surpassing happiness; and this love has come to Yorke.

In an instant, as it were, it seems to have wrought a change in him. Gray, reckless, thoughtless, an hour ago, he is serious enough now.

His heart is beating quickly, furiously; his strong hands tremble as he holds the terrified horses, and urges them on with whip and voice; and yet, though apparently engrossed with them, thinking more of the silent girl beside him.

She is so silent! She scarcely seems to move, but sits with the rug concealing her face, her head bent down.

"What have I said?" he asks himself; in truth he scarcely knows. It is as if his heart had suddenly become eth master of his voice and actions, and had made a helpless slave of him.

If she would only speak! He ongs past all description to hear her voice, even though it should be in anger and indignation; but she does not speak. He lifts his face to the sweeping rain and almost welcomes it. The storm is in harmony with the tempest of awakened passion which rages in his breast. He does not dare to speak to her, scarcely venture to look her way, and he sits as silent as herself, while the horses dash along the streaming road and up the Portmaris street.

"We might have come by boat, there is water enough," says the duke," dryly. "Miss isle, I am afraid you are wet through. Pray get in at once, or you will catch cold."

She stands up on the box, and Yorke goes to unfasten the wrap, but she is too quick for him, and, taking out the hairpin, lets the rug fall, and stands before his eyes, her slim, graceful figure swayed a little away from him as if she did not want him to touch her.

He goes down, and offers her his hand, but she springs from the box lightly, stands a moment, then with a loud-voiced "Good-night—and thank you," follows her father into the house.

The duke looks after her.

"The poor child is wet through and chilled," he says, sympathetically. "It's a pity you didn't think of a mackintosh, Yorke. What are you going to do with the rig and horses?"

Yorke loks down at him as if he scarcely heard or understood, for a moment; then he says, absently, like a man only half recovered from a stunning blow:

"The horses—oh, I'll find a place for them."

"You might take them to the station, your grace; they can put them up there in the good stable," suggests Grey.

"Yes, yes; and look sharp," says the duke. "We'll have some dinner by the time you are back. Will you have a glass of whisky and water before you go?"

But Yorke shakes his head almost impatiently.

"I'm all right," he says, curtly, and drives off.

He sees the horses made comfortable in the stable at the station, and helps to rub them down and litter them; then he turns back.

But at the top of the hill he pauses. He cannot face the duke just yet. There is that in his face, in his voice, he knows, which will reveal his secret.

He turns off to the right, and makes his way along a little used road toward the sea.

He is wet thru, but he does not ontice it; he scarcely knows where he is going until he stands on the edge of the sea.

"I love her!" he murmurs. "Yes, I love her. There is no woman in all the world like her! So good, so gentle, so beautiful.

Te thinks of all the girls he has seen, talked with, danced with, and flirted with; but there is none like Leslie.

"I am a lost man if I do not get her!" he says to himself. "And how can I get her?" He groans and pushes his hat off his brow, that is hat and burning. "She cares nothing for me; why should she? If I was to ask her to be my wife—my wife! How can I?" And he shudders as if some black thought had swept down upon him, and crushed the houe out of him. "How Can I? Oh, what a mad, sensless fool I have eben! How we chuck our lives away to find out, when it is too late, what it is we've lost. If I had met her a year ago——" He breaks off, and sighs, as he tramps up and down in the rain. "If I could only wipe out that year! But I can't, though I'd give ten years of the life that's left in me to be able to do it! What would she think—say—if she knew, if I told her? With all her sweet, childlike ways, and all her innocence and purity, she is a woman, and the very goodness for which I love her woud fight against me! She looked and spoke like an angel when she was telling me that story about the hermit. An angel! I'm a nice kind of man to marry her! I might as well fall in love with one of those stars." And he looks up despairingly at the diamond lights that are peering through the rift in the clouds.

(To be continued)

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New Measure to Prohibit Discharging Oily Scum In Limits.

LONDON.—To stop the "oil-scum" nuisance on waters near British ports, the Board of Trade is introducing a Bill into Parliament.

It is designed to prevent the discharge of oil and bilge water from ships within a three-mile limit.

A press representative was informed at the Board of Trade that amongst the many facts concerning this oil scum which the authorities have had under consideration, is its effect upon seabird life.

Thousands of birds have been reported dead or dying on different parts of the coast, owing to the birds' wings having become clogged by oil.

Moreover, the question as to whether fish are affected by the oil has been discussed, particularly shell fish.

Replying to the Oyster Merchants and Planters' Association, Mr. H. G. Maurice (Minister of Fisheries) has stated that oil did not effect fish or even larvae or fry of fish, though it might affect the market value of oysters exposed at low water. The Government had more experiments which showed the oil did not adhere to fish.

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