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REMORSE and REPENTANCE.

OR

For Daisie's Sake

CHAPTER XX.
STRANGE EMOTION.

Then, utterly disregarding her friend's question, she uttered wildly: "Royall Sherwood must not die! He must not die, for then the man that shot him would be a cruel murderer! And I am sure he would not wish it. He did not mean it. He made a terrible mistake, and—but what am I saying?" fearfully, "I don't know anything about this, except that I'm so sorry—and Mr. Sherwood's life must be saved, no matter by what sacrifice! Listen to me, Daisie Bell! You must not refuse anything he asks you to do, for if you leave him he will surely die, and you will be his murderer, not that other one. No, not that other one, for I'm sure he made an awful mistake, and—and— Oh, stay here to nurse Mr. Sherwood; do, dear Daisie, and I will stay and help you all I can."

They scarcely knew what to make of her incoherent words, and both women united in trying to calm her, Daisie stroking her little dark head tenderly, while Mrs. Fleming said kindly:

"Be more quiet, dear, lest you excite Royall too much. See how wild he looks."

"No, no—let her say what she will. I see that she is on my side," he faltered, with half-closed eyes and a quivering smile.

Annette turned again quickly to Daisie, saying wildly:

"Yes, yes; I am on his side! I want him to get well! So, will you promise what he wishes, Daisie?"

"Annette, come away with me a while, dear, and let us talk this over."

Daisie answered, taking the girl's burning hand in her own and leading her away to Mrs. Fleming's bootleer.

"Now, calm yourself, and let us understand each other. Do you know who shot Mr. Sherwood?" she asked suspiciously.



Wash Day and Backache

WASH DAY is the least welcome day of the week in most homes, though sweeping day is not much better. Both days are most trying on the back.

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"No, no—of course not, Daisie! What a very foolish question!" panted Annette, in visible alarm.

"Well, then, tell me how you found out so quickly that this had happened, and how came you here at this gloomy midnight hour—you, who have been too ill to leave your bed?"

"— Oh, Daisie, wait till I think a bit! My head seems dazed with it all. Yes, yes; this is the way: Our servant girl brought the news. She had been up here looking on at the play, and stayed very late. So it happened—that ghastly thing—before she came away. I was awake and restless when she came back, so I called to her for some ice water. She came in and told me all, and that Mrs. Fleming had sent for you. I wanted to come and help you, so I made Lucy come with me, and then sent her to break it to mamma, who will be terribly angry at me, I know. But I don't care—I don't care for anything, so that Royall Sherwood gets well."

"Are you in love with him, Annette?"

"Of course not, you silly girl! Don't you know that I have a splendid lover in the West?" laughing hysterically.

"Oh, yes; I had forgotten. But you told me he was coming to see you. Annette—has he come yet?"

A strange light gleamed in the dark, uplifted eyes, and Annette's hand was pressed convulsively on her heart while she answered:

"No, he could not come— Oh, what am I saying? He came, but his visit was very short, for he was called away by a telegram. I was so sorry, for I wished to bring him to call on you. He was so tall, and dark, and handsome, like your noble Dallas. Oh!" and suddenly Annette broke down and wept in wildest grief.

Daisie let the storm abate; then said anxiously:

"Dear, did your servant tell you about—my marriage?"

"Yes—oh, yes—everything. And so Dallas came back to you, after all? I wish my lover could come back to me," sighing. "But, Daisie, you cannot help yourself now, since Royall is your husband; and if you desert him now it will seem so heartless, as if you wished him to die! That would be too dreadful. Let him get well by your help, and then leave him, if you wish, Daisie."

Daisie sighed to herself that every one was in league against her. She had not a friend in the world but Dallas. Oh, if only he were by her side now!

Sighing wearily, she answered:

"Do not tease me any more to-night, dear, for I cannot make up my mind until I see Dallas to-morrow. He must advise me what to do, for I am all at sea. Of course, I wish to be kind to the dying, but I cannot, must not, do anything that will hinder me from getting a divorce from him should he live. So you see how hard my position is, dear, and must not urge me to anything that will wreck my life's happiness."

"No, I will not. But, ah, I cannot bear for Mr. Sherwood to die! He must live—he must live!" cried Annette, relapsing into wildness again.

Daisie begged her to be quiet, promising to do what she could to help on Royall's recovery.

"I shall stay anyhow until to-morrow, if you will stay with me, Annette," she said; and this the young girl readily promised to do.

When Mrs. Fleming came to them presently, they told her this; and as she saw that all her threats could not force Daisie into acquiescence she had to be content with what the girl offered.

She said sullenly:

"Perhaps you will both wish to retire now, as Royall cannot bear any further excitement to-night. In fact, another physician has been telegraphed for from Baltimore, as an operation will have to be performed to find and remove the bullet."

A sob from each girl showed how deeply the words moved them. Then Annette said pleadingly:

"Daisie, you must let me share your room, for I'm so nervous I shan't be able to sleep a wink, and I'll feel better if I have company."

"So shall I," returned Daisie sadly; and they were shown to a beautiful room, whose soft white couch invited sound repose.

But, alas! In Daisie's heart there was grief that murdered sleep, so that

she spent the hours till dawn in a dreary vigil, wondering what the morrow would bring to her, not daring to hope for Royall Sherwood's death, since that would be a sin, yet conscious that such a catastrophe would mean freedom and happiness for her and Dallas. As for Mrs. Fleming's terrible accusation, she believed it was only a ruse to force her into terms; and determined not to let it influence her decision.

Annette, too, must have had some hidden sorrow aching at her heart, for she did not even lie down, but remained for hours sitting at an open window, staring out into the darkness with big solemn eyes that saw nothing but despair in the unknown future.

CHAPTER XX.
HIS CONFESSION.

"May I speak to you alone a few minutes, Doctor Burns?" murmured Daisie, following the physician out from breakfast the next morning.

"Certainly, Mrs. Sherwood," he returned deferentially; but she turned back from the threshold of the little morning room they were entering, with a passionate gesture and heart-wrung cry:

"Not that—oh, not that—Miss Bell is my name!"

"I beg your pardon."

He bowed, and followed her across the threshold, closed the door, and placed a chair for her, sitting down opposite, and surveying her critically through his gold-bowed glasses, thinking, perhaps, that her wonderful beauty was all the more striking for the deadly pallor it wore.

"I think you married Mr. Sherwood last night?" he remarked.

The violet eyes flashed and darkened, and Daisie's golden head creaked itself with sudden anger.

"Perhaps you are aware of the circumstances of that marriage?" she asked, with icy hauteur.

"Yes; an ill-timed joke on the part of our hostess; but, unfortunately, binding until the law is invoked to release you. So you are really Mrs. Sherwood."

"Do not remind me of that fact unless you wish to drive me mad!" she exclaimed entreatingly; and he gazed at her in simple wonder, replying:

"Perhaps, then, I am mistaken in believing that you were engaged to Mr. Sherwood, and only angry because the marriage was a premature one?"

"Yes, yes," she said; then studied his face to see if she could trust him. It was the face of a man of sixty years, genial and open, with a sympathy that encouraged her to exclaim:

"Doctor Burns, I am in sore trouble, and I need a friend's advice. Will you be that friend?"

"Most gladly, my dear young lady," he replied, so kindly that she was emboldened to sketch for him, in few but moving words, her brief love story.

"Now you see where I stand, Doctor Burns—married to one man and in love with another. Could anything be more distressing?" she cried appealingly; and he agreed with her that it was most unpleasant, while he thought within himself that the world had far too many such distressing cases.

She continued eagerly:

"Mr. Bain promised to secure a lawyer to-day to take my case, so of course I should not even be here under the same roof with Mr. Sherwood; but—" She paused, and he added pityingly:

"The circumstances of the case made it impossible for you to decline returning here last night. Common humanity would have been outraged by a refusal. But why trouble yourself over the ethics of the case, my dear young lady? Divorce proceedings are not likely to be needed, since you may soon be a widow."

She shuddered at the bluntness of the words; then rallied her courage, and said frankly:

(To be Continued.)

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