THE ACADIAN
AND KING'S CO. TIMES.

HONEST, INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS.--DEVOTED TO LOCAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

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THE ACADIAN.

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POETRY.

Friendship.

Some waiting stand in Fame's wide court,
And carve their names upon her walls;
I only ask the good report
Of one true heart in Friendship's halls.

Some barter life for wealth untold;
But better, purer wealth have I;
For friendship is the thrice-pure gold
Impressed by love's immortal die!

The Two Words.

One day a harsh word rashly said
Upon an evil journey sped,
And, like a sharp and cruel dart,
It turned a friend into a foe,
It pierced a fond and loving heart;
And everywhere brought pain and woe.

A kind word followed it one day,
Flew swiftly on its blessed way;
It healed the wound, it soothed the pain,
And friends of old were friends again;
It made the hate and anger cease,
And everywhere brought joy and peace.

But yet the harsh word left a trace
The kind word could not quite efface,
And though the heart its love regained,
It bore a scar that long remained;
Friends could forgive, but not forget,
Or lose the sense of keen neglect.

Oh! if we would but learn to know
How swift and sure one word can go,
How would we weigh with utmost care
Each thought before it sought the air,
And only speak the words that move
Like white winged messengers of love.

SELECT STORY.

A Life for a Love.

BY L. T. MEADE.

CHAPTER L.—*Continued*

That very same afternoon, as Mrs Wyndham was sitting in her bedroom, trying to amuse baby, who was in a slightly refractory humor, there came a sudden message for her. One of the maids came into the room with the information that Helps was downstairs and wanted to speak to her directly.

Mrs Wyndham had not left her room since Tuesday evening. There was nothing apparently the matter with her, and yet all through the week her pulse had beat too quickly, and a hectic color came and went on her cheeks. She ate very little, she slept badly, and the watchful expression in her eyes took from their beauty and gave them a strained appearance. She did not know herself why she was watchful, or what she was waiting for, but she was consciously nervous and ill at ease.

When the maid brought the information that Helps was downstairs, her mistress instantly started to her feet, almost pushing the astonished and indignant baby aside.

"Take care of Master Gerry," she said to the girl. "I will go and speak to Mr Helps; where is he?"

"I showed him into the study, ma'am."

Valentine ran downstairs; her eagerness and impatience and growing presentiment that something was at hand increased with each step she took. She entered the study, and said in a brusque voice, and with a bright color in her cheeks:—

"Well?"

"Mr Paget has sent me to you, Mrs Wyndham," said Helps in his uniformly weak tones. "Mr Paget is ill, and he wants to see you at once."

Valentine stepped back a pace.

"My father!" she said. "But he knows I do not care to go to the house."

"He knows that fact very well, Mrs Wyndham."

"Still he sent for me?"

"He did, madam."

"Is my father worse than usual?"

"In some ways he is worse—in some better," replied Helps in a dubious sort of voice. "If I were you I'd come, Miss Valentine—Mrs Wyndham, I mean."

"Yes, Helps, I'll come; I'll come instantly. Will you fetch a cab for me?"

"There's one waiting at the door, ma'am."

"Very well. I won't even go upstairs. Fetch me my cloak from the stand in the hall, will you? Now I am ready."

The two got into the cab and drove away. No one in the house even knew that they had gone.

When they arrived at Queen's Gate Helps still took the lead.

"Is my father in the library?" asked the daughter.

"No, Mrs Wyndham. Mr Paget has been in his room for the last day or two. I'll take you to him, if you please, at once."

"Thank you, Helps."

Valentine left her cloak in the hall, and followed the old servant upstairs.

"Here's Mrs Wyndham," said Helps, opening the door of the sick man's room, and then shutting it and going away himself.

"Here's Valentine," said Mrs Wyndham, coming forward. "I did not know you were so ill, father."

He was dressed, and sitting in a chair. She went up to him and laid her hand gravely on his arm.

"You have come, Valentine, you have come. Kneel down by me. Let me look at you. Valentine, you have come."

"I have come."

Never did hungrier eyes look into hers.

"Kiss me."

She bent forward at once, and pressed a light kiss on his cheek.

"Don't do it again," he said.

He put up his hand and rubbed the place that her lips had touched.

"There's no love in a kiss like that. Don't give me such another."

"You are ill, father; I did not know you were so very ill," replied his daughter in the quiet voice in which she would soothe a little child.

"I am ill in mind, Valentine, and sometimes my mind affects my body. It did for the last few days. This afternoon I'm better—I mean I am better in mind, and I sent for you that I might get the thing over."

"What thing, father?"

"Never mind for a moment or two. You used to be so fond of me, little Val."

"I used—truly I used!"

The tears filled her eyes.

"I thought you'd give me one of the old kisses."

"I can't. Don't ask it."

"Is your love dead, child, quite dead?"

"Don't ask."

"My God," said the sick man; "her love is dead before she knows—even before she knows. What a punishment is here?"

A queer light filled his eyes; Valentine remembered that whispers had reached her with regard to her father's sanity. She tried again to soothe him.

"Let us talk common-places; it does not do every moment to gauge one's feelings. Shall I tell you about baby?"

"No, no; don't drag the child's name into the conversation of this hour. Valentine, one of two things is about to happen to me. I am either going to die or to become quite hopelessly mad. Before either thing happens I have a confession to make."

"Confession? Father!"

Her face grew very white.

"Yes. I want to confess to you. It won't pain me so much as it would have done had any of your love for me survived. It is right you should know. I have not the least doubt when you do know you will see justice done. Of late you have not troubled yourself much about my affairs. Perhaps you do not know that I have practically retired from my business, and that I have taken steps to vest the whole concern absolutely in your hands. When you know all you will probably sell it; but that is your affair. I shall either be in my grave or a madhouse, so it won't concern me. If any fragment of money survives afterwards—I mean after you have done what you absolutely consider just—you must hold it in trust for your son. Now I am ready to begin. What is the matter, Valentine?"

"Only that you frighten me very much. I have not been quite—quite well lately. Do you mind my fetching a chair?"

"I did not know you were ill, child. Yes, take that chair. Oh, Valentine, for you my love was true."

"Father, don't let us go back to that subject. Now I am ready. I will listen. What have you got to say?"

"In the first place, I am perfectly sane at this moment."

"I am sure of that."

"Now listen. Look away from me, Valentine, while I speak. That is all I ask."

Valentine slightly turned her chair; her trembling and excitement had grown and grown.

"I am ready. Don't make the story longer than you can help," she said in a choked voice.

"Years and years ago, child, before you were born, I was a happy man. I was honorable then and good; I was the sort of man I pretended to be afterwards. I married your mother, who died at your birth. I had loved your mother very dearly. After her death you filled her place. Soon you did more than fill it; you were everything to me; you gave early promise of being a more spirited and brilliant woman than your mother. I lived for you; you were my whole and entire world.

"Before your birth, Valentine, a friend, a great friend of mine, left me a large sum of money. He was dying at the time he made his will; his wife was in New Zealand; he thought it possible that she might soon give birth to a child. If the child lived, the money was to be kept in trust for it until its majority. If it died it was to be mine absolutely. I may as well tell you that my friend's wife was a very worthless woman, and he was determined she should have nothing to say to the money. He died—I took possession—a son was born. I knew this fact, but I was hard pressed at the time, and I stole the money.

"My belief was that neither the child nor the mother could ever trace the money. Soon I was disappointed. I received a letter from the boy's mother which showed me that she knew all, and although not a farthing could be claimed until the lad came of age, then I must deliver to him the entire sum with interest

"From that moment my punishment began. The trust fund, with interest, would amount to eighty thousand pounds. Even if I made myself a beggar I could not restore the whole of this great sum. If I did not restore it at the coming of age of this young man, I should be doomed to a felon's cell, and penal servitude. I looked you worshipped me. I idolized you. I resolved that disgrace and ruin should not touch you.

"Helps and I between us concocted a diabolical plot. Helps was like wax in my hands; he had helped me to appropriate the money; he knew my secrets right through. We made the plot, and waited for results. I took you into society, I wanted you to marry. My object was that you should marry a man whom you did not love. Wyndham came on the scene; he seemed a weak sort of fellow—weak, pliable—passionately in love with you—cursedly poor. Did you speak, Valentine?"

"No; you must make this story brief, if you please."

"It can be told in a few more words. I thought I could make Wyndham my tool. I saw that his passion for you blinded him to almost everything. Otherwise, he was the most selfless person I ever met. I saw that his unselfishness would make him strong to endure. His overpowering love for you would induce him to sacrifice everything for present bliss. Such a combination of strength and weakness was what I had been looking for. I told Helps that I had found my man. Helps did not like it; he had taken an insane fancy for the fellow. What is the matter, Valentine? How you fidget."

"You had better be brief. My patience is nearly exhausted."

"I am very brief. I spoke to Wyndham. I made my bargain; he was to marry you. Before marriage with the plausible excuse that the insurance was to be effected by way of settlement, I paid premiums for insurances on the young man's life for eighty thousand pounds. I insured his life in four offices. You were married. He knew what he had undertaken, and everything went well, except for one cursed fact—you learned to love the fellow. I nearly went mad when I saw the love for him growing into your eyes. He was to sail on board the *Esperance*. He knew, and I knew that he was never coming back. He was to feign death. Our plans were made carefully. I was to receive a proper certificate, and with that in my hand I could claim the insurance money. Thus he was to save you and me from dishonor, which is worse than death.

"All our plans were laid. I waited for news. Valentine, you make me strangely nervous. What is the matter with you, child? Are you going to faint?"

"No—no—no! Go on—go on! Don't speak to me—don't address me again by that name. Just go on, or I—— Oh, God, I am a desperate woman! Go on, I must hear the end."

As Valentine grew excited her father became cool and quiet; he waited until she had done speaking, then dropping his head he continued his narrative in a dreary monotone.

"I waited for news—it was long in coming. At last it arrived on the day my grandson was born. Wyndham had outwitted me. He could not bear the load of a living death. Shame on him. He could take his bliss, but not his punishment. He leaped overboard the *Esperance*—he committed suicide."

"What? No, never. Don't dare to say such words."

"I must say them, although they are cruel. He committed suicide, and then he came to haunt me; he knew that his blood would rest on my soul; he knew how best to torture me for what I had done to him."

"One question. Was the insurance money paid?"

"Was it? Yes. I believe so. That part seemed all of minor importance afterwards. But I believe it was paid. I think Helps saw to it."

"You believe that my husband committed suicide, and yet you allowed the insurance offices to pay."

"What of that? No one else knew my thoughts."

"As you say, what of that? Is your story finished?"

"Nearly. I lost your love, and for the last three years I have been haunted by Wyndham. I see his shadow everywhere. Once I met him in the street. A few nights ago he came into the library and confronted me; he spoke to me and tried to touch me; he——"

"What night was that?"

Valentine's voice had changed; there was a new ring in it. Her father roused himself from his lethargic attitude to look into her face. "What night did my husband come to you?"

"I forget—no, I remember. It was Tuesday night."

"Did he carry a violin? Speak—did he?"

"He carried something. It may have been a violin. Do they use such instruments in the other world? He was a spirit, you know, child. How queer, how very queer you look!"

"I feel queer."

"He wanted me to touch him, child, but I wouldn't. I was too knowing for that. If you touch a spirit you must go with him. No, no, I knew a thing worth two of that. He went on telling me he was alive. But I knew better, he couldn't take me in. Valentine, everything seems so far away. Valentine, I am faint, faint. Ah, there he is again by the door. Look! No, he must not touch me—he must not!"

Valentine glanced round. There was no one present. Then she rang the bell. It was answered by the old housekeeper.

"Mrs Marsh, my father is ill. Will you give him some restorative at once? And send for the doctor if necessary. I must go, but I'll come back if possible to-night."

She left the room without glancing at the sick man, who followed her to the door with his dim eyes. She went downstairs, put on her cloak and left the house.

She had to walk a little distance before she met a hansom, and one or two people stared at the tall, slim figure, which was still young and girlish, but which bore on its proud face such a hard expression, such a burning defiant light in the eyes. Valentine soon reached home. Everything was in a whirl in her brain. Esther Helps was standing on the steps. She flew to Esther, clasped her hands in a grasp of iron, and said in a husky choked voice:—

"Esther, my husband is alive!"

"He is, dear madam, he is, and I have come to take you to him!"

"Oh, Esther, thank God!"

"Come indoors, madam, you have not a moment to lose. We will keep that cab, if you please. I have only just come back. I was going to seek you. Stay one moment, Mrs Wyndham. You are in black; will you put on your white dress—the one you wore on Tuesday night."

"Oh, what does it matter? Let me go to him."

Dr. H. F. Merrill.

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"Little things sometimes matter a great deal; he saw you last in your white dress."

"He was really there on Tuesday night?"

"He was there. Come, I will fly for you."

She did so. Valentine put her cloak over it, and she two drove away in the hansom. Valentine had no cars for the direction given to the cabman.

"I am in heaven," she said once, under her breath. "He lives. Now I can forgive my father!"

"Madam, your husband is very ill."

Valentine turned her great shining eyes towards Esther.

"All the better. I can nurse him," she said, with a smile, and then she pulled the hood of her cloak over her head and did not speak another word.

The cab drew up at one of the entrances to St. Thomas' Hospital.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Mrs Billus—Don't you believe it's true John, that a person partakes to a considerable extent of the nature of the creature he eats?

Mr Billus—No. I've been eating fish all my life, and I can't swim a stroke.

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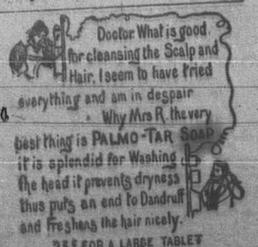

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