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The Romance

Marriage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

And Sir Herrick? What was he do ing while Paula lay prostrate with grief, and suspicion, and doubt, with the dainty perfumed letter at her

box of the Frivolity, sitting carefully ence, behind the costly satin and lace curtains with which all the boxes at the Frivolity are furnished. He sits with his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed on the stage, gorgeous and glittering with the scene of Old King Cole's palace; but, gorgeous and glittering as it is, he sees it not-his eyes are fixed on a mental vision of a clear, running stream and a sweet, graceful figure and girlish face.

most effective numbers of the really pretty music with which the burlesque abounds, but he does not hear it; in his ears rings faintly the musical voice of Paula murmuring that low vow, "Nothing shall ever part us-

And as he stares absently the chorus halts, and Flossie Hamilton bounds on to the stage. She is exquisitely short, golden hair curled like a boy's; her slight form as flexible as steel. white-and-gold furniture, and pro-A roar of pleasure welcomes her, ceeded to get out of her page's costthere is an immense clapping of ume and into the plain but rich atsings her song-the song of the even-

Just before she sings it she glances towards the stage-box, and a smile of gratification and satisfaction lights up her face as she descries in the shadow of the curtain the tall figure in its well-fitting evening-dress.

But Sir Herrick doesn't smile in re turn, as he used to do; he scarcely seems conscious of her presence or the stage, but sits, his head bent on his breast, his eyes fixed and absent. Remorse sits triumphant in his Beart and tortures him.

"Fool! fool!" he murmurs-"weak fool!" And I am afraid that the reader who does not make allowance for him carried out my resolve at once, without dallying with it, I should be by my darling's side; and now-where am I? Here, in this confounded theatre, and still in chains."

No. Sir Herrick Powis did not en joy the successful burlesque; and

in the stalls, and invoked anything but a blessing upon them and

me. Flossie made her last bow, and ir Herrick rose and got into his dress

struck him. He would not go down night, but he would send a short note and I offered to bring it to you." excusing himself, and go home, change his cloths, and make straight for

there," he muttered. "I must write. I cannot tell her. The drend of a scene makes a coward of me. Yes, I will

this idea working in his brain that he drew out a card and scribbled on it, there and then, with feverish haste: "Am obliged to go into the country.

Will write to you," and going out of the box, called an attendant, "Take this to Miss Hamilton," he said, "and here—here is something

for your trouble." The box-keeper stared: the some

thing was a sovereign.

Then he went home to his solitary chambers and paced the floor for at least a couple of hours, during which,

if he repeated the objectionable epithet of "Fool!" once, he did so twenty times. A great longing to leave London, which he felt as if he hated, and to see Paula, took possession of him and mastered him; for joined to this longing was a strange, vague fear which he could not put into words-a dread lest something should "turn up" which should cause him to lose her.

And as this dread grew stronger, as he smoked cigar after cigar half through and flung it aside impatiently, Paula's beauty and sweet, youthful

been a weak-minded idiot; but I will not return to this beastly London until"-he drew a long breath-"until we are married, and she is mine beyond all accidents."

At last, pretty nearly worn out, he undressed and went to bed. Meanwhile, Flossie Hamilton, flush

ed with the success of the evening. descended to her dressing-room, snug little enertment deintly furnished, with its lace-draped mirror and hands, and she comes forward and tire of ordinary life, assisted by Wes-

"I'm sure you needn't ask, miss," replied Weston, with a smile, and pointing to the bouquets lying on a side-table. "One more encore than usual, miss. I have never heard you sing

"Do-do you think Sir Herrick was pleased? He hasn't seen it before, you know. Could you see him?"

"No. miss: but how could he otherwise? He sat close behind the

curtain; so did the major." "The major!" repeated Flossie, with a little start. "Was he in the house?

Did-did Sir Herrick see him?" "No miss I think not: they both kept behind the curtains out of sight."

Placele chuddered and fluched "I hope he did not," she murmured "He thinks the major is in the coun-

A knock came at the door, and the discreet Weston went into the ante-

"Who is it?" asked Flossie, as she sie Hamilton came on and smilingly re-entered, and there was a certain nour in the clear voice which rement, Sir Herrick rose and scowled vealed the fact that the actress's

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ite, and she jumped up and went in The major took off his hat as if he

naking obeisance to a duchess. "Did I disturb you?"

"You've got a note for me," sh abridgment of ceremony. "Yes," he said, with a smile. "I me

She almost snatched the note from his hand, read it, and turned pale. "He has gone!" she said, bitting he

The maor nodded. "By he-you mean Rick?" he said

coolly. "Is that an adieu?" "Yes-read it." she said, holding out to him. "Short, and not very sweet

The major cast his eye over th couple of lines, and shrugged his shoulders eloquently. "Never mind," he said; "it is what

expected. Yes, he has gone. Did you send that letter I dictated?" She inclined her head moodily

"Yes." "Then he will soon be back," said the major, with his most pleasan

"Do-do you think so?" she demand ed. "Are you really sure?"

"Quite sure!" he responded. "Unhuman nature-shall I say feminine t pretty closely, my dear Miss Flos-"Yes, he must come back to me,

she said, with a feverish eagerness, as if trying to convince and reassure herself-"he must. If not, I shall-"

The major puts up his white hand "Don't say die, it's such an ugh

word: besides, you wouldn't, you know, you really wouldn't. My dear Miss Flossie, never say die!" Bless my soul! that sounds like one of those tle start of horror and apology. "Tut, tut! what I mean is, don't be fearful and low-spirited. If our really most ingenious epistle has reached its desperhaps by the next train. There, go home and get some rest after your great and most wonderful exertions, my dear Miss Flossie. Bless you!

And the major, with a fine and

CHAPTER XXVII.

ing off for London at a moment's no-

says Paula, leaning against the man- not of her beloved Rick! tel-shelf, the candle in her hand throwing a fitful glare on her face, rose"-too pale indeed, with its dim, hollow rims round the dark eyes.

"To-morrow, yes," admits Alice, news? Have you heard bad news?" And she looks up with searching

Paula remains silent for a moment, he dark, gentle eyes looking down at cold smile. the fair, cold face wistfully. One spark of sympathy between them and she could tell Alice all, and trust her; but there isno sympathy in the hard face only keen, cold curiosity, and some thing more like selfish interest.

No! she cannot tell her.

"I don't think it is bad news," she says in a low, sad voice. Then she breaks off abruptly, and bursts into rather mirthless laugh, and her eye glitter with forced sarcasm.

"Bad news? No! Do I look like it! Oh, no, it is not bad news; it is only only a joke, a capital joke, but some how I seem to have missed it, that is all," and she laughs again with a de

"Oh, well, if it's a secret, pray d not let me intrude-"

"As Paula Pry says," murmur

"I suppose I shall learn in time," roes on Alice. "But pray rem this: that if anything should be the natter, that I warned you most dis inctly-I mean, if it has any refer nce to Sir Herrick Powis.'

"Thanks. I won't forget," says

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Paula, with a weary smile. "I will be sure and remember your direful proenosication, and give you an oppor tunity of saying, 'I told you so.' " Then she laughs again, and goes to her

ver the world saw! Paula, lying with lids, listens to the hours as they Court, watches the darkness grow into grey dawn, and grey dawn into coseate morning. She cannot sleep can scarcely think: love, overmastering love, sits triumphant on his throne and dominates her.

"If he would come back and tell me that it is all false!" iis her one shudder of fear runs through her dreadful letter: but Bob has promised

So the day comes, as it will come to the sick and the hale, the glad and which men call eternity.

But notwithstanding her sleeples night, Paula does not come down lookbenevolent smile, takes his departure. ing broken-hearted or forlorn; the sweet face is a little pale, and the dark eyes the darker and more im-"If there is any mystery, I beg that pressive for the ring of shadow round may be permitted to share it," says them-for with the bright morning sunlight hope has sprung up in he warm indignation. "Here is Bob start- heart. The letter is an imposture, a libel: it might be true of another man, but not of Sir Herrick Powis-not o her knight of the noble countenance

So she meets Alice's keen eyes with a confident smile, and makes an ad-"pale as the lily and sweeter than the mirable pretence at eating a hearty breakfast, goes out to the pigeons. converses with the pups, gives the colt the handful of corn which he re-"but he has gone to-night. And what lishes far more than he does the liberis the matter with you? What has hap- al feed from the manger, and thenpened, that you come in looking as sh, then, what shall she do with the if you had seen a ghost or heard bad day? The postman comes up the hill; but though her heart beats with a wild hope, she will not run down to meet him, but waits at the gate, for Alice is at the window, watching her with s

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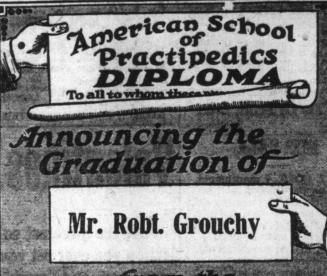
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