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**Her Confession**

**And Yet There Was Nothing to Confess**

**By F. A. MITCHEL**

Two middle aged ladies sat over a cup of tea. One was forty-two, the other forty-one. They had been intimate friends some fifteen years before, had been separated, having gone to live in different places, and now had come together again and were summing up, so to speak, that portion of their lives which lay behind them.

"How different have been our experiences!" said the younger of the two. "You, Margaret, have known the joys of being a bride, the companionship of married life and the sorrows of widowhood, while I have looked upon the promised land of matrimony always from a distance. And now we are both alone, without husband or children. We have come at last to the same position, but not the same condition. You as a widow are a very different person from me, an old maid."

"In what do you consider this difference to consist, Helen?" asked the



THE MOMENT THE WORDS WERE SPOKEN HELEN REGRETTED THEM.

other, looking up at her friend with a pair of expressive, inquiring eyes. "It consists in so many things that it would be impossible to find a word under which to group them. If you ask me the principal difference it has produced between you and me I will say that it lies in this—you know what it is to be loved by a good man, I do not."

The widow leaned back in her chair and looked at vacancy. She seemed to be absorbed in thought—thought on what her friend had enunciated. At last she said:

"What we look at from without is usually very different from what we find it when we come to experience it. Love before marriage is not what it is after marriage. The first is an absorbing passion, the second is companionship. One is violent and may easily be turned to hate; the other is quiescent and, so long as it is not interrupted, may be strong and enduring."

"Interrupted by death you mean, I suppose."

"Not that alone; there are many other causes which may throw one who loves back into the passionate condition that exists before marriage—I mean a condition of suffering, not of pleasure."

"Do you believe in divorce, Margaret?"

"Not if there are children interested—that is, if the father and mother can live together on friendly terms."

"But you had no children." The moment the words were spoken Helen regretted them. "I was thinking of your feelings in a case that might be your own," she continued. "What would you have done, supposing your husband ceased to love you and loved another woman?"

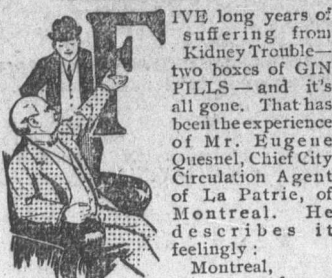
"In that case I should consider whether a marriage between them would be for the best. If I thought so I would consent to a divorce, that he might marry his new love."

Helen sipped her tea in silence. The subject seemed of more interest to her than to her friend. Indeed, she seemed to be moved by some deep feeling connected with it. One looking at her would have thought that she instead of Margaret had the experiences of a married woman. Presently Helen spoke again.

"I am glad, Margaret, that during

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I can assure you I can hardly believe it for if I had only known what I know now I would not have spent over One Hundred Dollars for nothing when two boxes of GIN PILLS cured me."

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your married life nothing occurred to break it. I can not conceive of any greater trouble to come to a woman than a separation from the man she has loved and married, and I thank heaven that there is one sin I have not upon my conscience. I have never done anything to turn a man from his wife to me, nor have I permitted any man to turn from his wife to me."

"No one who knows you, Helen, would doubt that. Indeed, it is quite likely that a married man who would yield to his inclination for you would be unworthy of you."

Helen started. It was evident from her words as well as her friend's rejoinder that she had some such experience as the one referred to on her mind. But it was also plain that she had not considered the man in the case unworthy of her. She entered upon a hypothetical defense of him.

"I can understand a man's momentarily yielding to a temptation, and yet love his wife truly," she said. Then, pausing, she seemed moved by a sudden recollection and continued in a tone that indicated deep feeling: "Margaret, I am going to make a confession to you. And yet it is not a confession, for that indicates an injury, a wrong, and there was no wrong on my part nor on the part of the one who was implicated with me in what I am about to relate."

"You remember that John and I were both of artistic temperament. We were fond of the fine arts, music, sculpture, painting, literature. He was the only real poet I ever knew personally. His appreciation for music was of the keenest. Do you remember that period when your mother was taken ill, and we were called away to attend her, and she finally died? You left John in my charge, and I recall your exact words when you did so. 'John and I have not been long married,' you said, 'but long enough to have come upon that period when a newly married pair begins to suffer from their incongruities. Leaving him at such a time is dangerous, for he is liable to seek solace with another woman. Help him to stand by his better instincts, so that when I return nothing shall have occurred to make a breach between him and me.'"

"This is all you said, but it was enough. I knew you meant that in case I should see your husband about to fall under a bad influence to have a

care of him and draw him away from temptation. I was sure that so great was your confidence in me that you would not ask anything of me on a matter between him and me."

"I kept John with me during nearly all his idle time in the period that you were absent. We visited what galleries there were, went where we could listen to music and read together from the works of our favorite poets. One evening he took me to the opera. 'Faust' was given and given beautifully. John sat entranced by the music and seemed also under the spell of that legend which contains in condensed form the story of humanity. After the opera we rode to my home and during the ride John did not speak a word to me. I invited him to come in and led him to the drawing room. Suddenly he began to talk strangely."

"I feel," he said, "that I am Faust and that a mephistopheles is dragging me to hell."

"And by the same passion he secured Faust's soul?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And who," I asked, "is Marguerite? I was trembling and spoke the words so low as only to be heard by one intent on hearing."

"His hand was near mine, and he took it in his. I arose and stood apart from him."

"John," I said, "stand firm. This is a passing madness occasioned by that weird drama acting upon an impressionable nature. Your wife will return soon, and by her presence banish what is but an evanescent emotion."

"He stood looking at me as one in a dream for a time, then said:

"Helen, from the bottom of my heart I thank you for having saved my self respect." And, turning, he left me. Your mother died that same evening and within another week you were at home."

"You know the rest so far as John is concerned—that he was saved from a momentary temptation, and that yours and his happiness were not marred by the incident. What I have to confess is this: From that moment I was a changed woman. The word of love that had been spoken entered into my being and I could not eradicate it. But no more than this, Margaret, did I wrong you. John never sought me, and that I might not meet him I left him and you for another place of residence. I never saw him again."

The woman who listened to this confession gave no other evidence of its effect upon her than to reach for the confessor's hand and press it. Helen continued:

"From that moment I took on a life-long suffering. But not from your displeasure, for I am sure even now since you know my secret that you are too strong, too just, too generous to blame me for what I could not help."

Margaret, who had retained the hand she held, bent forward and kissed her friend. Then she said:

"I do not blame you now, nor have I ever blamed you, for I have known of this from the moment of my return, when I heard it from John, though a different version. He told me that he loved you and would always love you."

Helen's head dropped on her friend's breast. There was a long silence, which was broken by Margaret.

"You would hear?" she said. "Why, knowing what I did, I remained John's wife, keeping you two apart. Perhaps my conduct to you seems that I grudged you what I could not myself possess."

"I have no such thought. I am sure you had a reason, and that reason was a noble one."

"Had I believed that you would have been happy with John," she said, "I would have given him to you. But you would not have been happy with him. He was too volatile, too intense in his feelings, too unsteady in every way. You would have been the blind leading the blind. You would have suffered under perpetual misunderstandings. He needed a different hand from yours to manage him. A time came when he recognized this himself."

"But you?" exclaimed Helen, looking up with a wonder akin to pain.

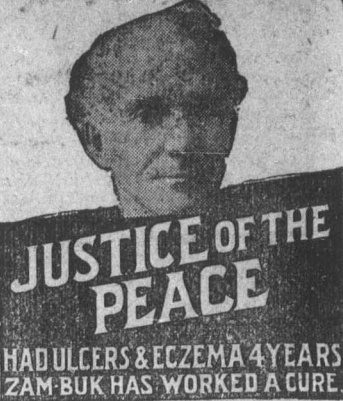
"I did my duty by him and you."

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A young Illinois swain, after receiving a very decided rejection from his sweetheart, sent her a statement of \$371.68 for flowers, candy and opera tickets. If he can't do any more cooing he seems determined to keep up the billing.



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"Four years ago I slipped in the station and fell on a freight truck, sustaining a bad cut on the front of my leg. I thought this would heal, but instead of doing so it developed into a bad ulcer, and later into a form of eczema which spread very rapidly and also started on the other leg. Both legs became so swollen and sore that I could only go about my work by having them bandaged. My doctor said I must stop work and lay up."

"After six months of this trouble I consulted another doctor, but with no better result. I tried all the salves, liniments and lotions I heard of, but instead of getting better I got worse."

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