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## For Love of a Woman;

### New Romeo and Juliet.

#### CHAPTER XXVII. NOT LOVE, BUT PITY.

What should she say to him? The thought of having to tell him that there was no hope for him smote her with a keen sense of pain! She dreaded seeing his face as she dealt the blow. She herself had loved, you see, and could sympathize with him. Heaven! how hard it was that she should have to rob the friendless, solitary man of his one chance of happiness! She faltered and hesitated; and a light of hope—wild, almost maddening hope—burnt in his eyes.

"Doris!" he breathed. "Doris!" "Hush! hush!" she said. "Ah! why have you told me this? Why didn't you go without telling me?" "Forgive me!" he answered. "I was going. If you had not come back in the moment of my struggle, you would not have seen me again! And now I have told you! You hesitate!"

"I hesitate because—" she paused, and looked down at him with sweet, trouble, gravity and tenderness, the tenderness of a woman who is about to deal a man who loves her the deadliest blow he can receive at her hands. "Because I cannot love you, I—her voice broke, but she struggled with it and went on—"I care nothing for rank or wealth; they are nothing to me. I should say what I have said if you were a prince. I shall never marry anyone, Mr. Levant!" She turned her head aside; but he saw the tears fill her eyes. "I am sorry, sorry!" she murmured. "There is no one I like better. I do not know, I never guessed that you wished—that you wished me to be your wife; but I knew that you

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### Mrs. Westmoreland Tells in the Following Letter.

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were my friend, and I was proud that it should be so." "Your friend!" he breathed. "Only friend! Ah, Doris many and many a night I have wandered here, watching the light in your window, and wondering whether by some miracle I should win you! Your friend! Well, I played my part well—I hid my heart's secret while it was possible."

"Yes," she said, gently. "I never guessed it. And now we must part—I must lose my friend! But I am grateful—ah, so grateful! You speak as if I were so far above you! You forget that I also am alone, and lowlier than yourself, for I am a woman, while you are a man, with all the world before you."

"No," he said; "all the world lies behind me. Losing you, I say goodbye to any hope of happiness, goodbye to ambition! Percy Levant and the world have done with each other from to-night."

"Oh, no!" she murmured, pleadingly. "You do not know! If I told you that I am not worthy of your love; that I am not only poor and friendless, but—her face went pale and her lips quivered—"but nameless! That my life has been wrecked—"

"Wait! wait!" he said, with a strange expression on his face, his voice suddenly hoarse. "Tell me nothing! I know—I know as surely as that these stars are above us that not an ignoble thought, not one unworthy deed has ever stained your life. What sorrows have come to you have been undeserved. Nothing could shake my faith in you, my queen—for you are my heart's queen. Ah! Doris, give yourself to me from to-night! Let me make a fresh life for you; let me teach you to forget the past; let me make the future for you! Say yes, for my sake—or your own! Yes, for your own! See how confident I am that I can make you forget—make you happy! It is my love gives me confidence. I ask for so little—I don't ask you to love me! I ask you to confide yourself and your future to me. I know that I shall win your love—I am not afraid!" His face lit up as if transfigured by the hope that had sprung up within his breast. "With you by my side I can face the world, and vanquish it! Doris! Doris!"

She put her hand to her eyes, and her lips quivered. "And you will be content?" she murmured, almost inaudibly. "Content to accept so little for all you offer me—for so much love?"

"Content? Yes!" he responded, fervently, with a world of meaning in his voice. "Yes, I shall be content! I can guess, though you shall tell me nothing now, dearest, that there has been someone else, some other man, who proved unworthy the great treasure of your love, that you have not forgotten him, and the sorrow he caused you! I ask nothing! I am content to wait and win back your heart for myself, and I shall win it! Now, my queen, give me my sentence," and he held his hand out to her.

Half-dazed by his passionate pleading, touched by the generosity of his faith and belief in her, thinking of him and not of herself, Doris slowly let her hand fall into his.

He did not take her in his arms, but his hand closed on hers and held it in a close grasp, then, as he pressed his lips to it, he murmured: "My queen! my queen!" with a passionate reverence that would have moved a harder heart than Doris's.

She drew her hand from his clasp gently, and he did not offer to retain it, as if he meant to show her that his promise to be content to wait until he had won her love was something more than an empty phrase.

"Good-night," he murmured. "Good-night, Doris! Some day you will know how happy you have made me! Some day when I have taught you to know what happiness means! Good-night, my love, my queen!"

She looked at him for a moment through a mist of tears—tears that fell upon the grave of her old love—and then gazed from his side.

He stood, where she had left him, watching her till the glimmer of her white dress faded from his sight; then he threw himself on the ground and covered his eyes with his hands.

"Great Heaven!" he murmured, "am I mad or dreaming? Is she mine, mine, mine? Oh, my darling! my beautiful! I will keep my word! You shall be happy! I swear it! I swear!"

He raised his hand to the silent, star-gemmed sky, then stopped and stared with a sudden horror, for there in front of him stood Mr. Spenser Churchill. He stood with his pale, smooth face smiling unctuously down

upon him, a half-mocking smile curving the sleek lips. "Ah, my dear Percy!" he murmured, smoothly. "How do you do? How do you do? Surprised to see me? Yes. You look rather startled. Almost as if you had forgotten me!"

Percy Levant rose to his feet, his eyes still fixed on the smiling face. "By Heaven!" he breathed, almost with a groan. "I had forgotten you!"

"Really? Now, wasn't that a little ungrateful, eh? To forget your best friend—one who has always had your best and truest interests at heart! Tut, tut, my dear Percy!"

"When—when did you come?" demanded the other, in a low voice. "Almost this moment. I have just looked in at the villa and greeted our fair hostess. Hearing that my dear young friend, Miss Marlowe, was in the garden, I asked permission to come in search of her, and—er—found her so deeply engaged that I did not venture to intrude myself."

Percy Levant looked from one side to the other. "You—you have been listening?" he said. Mr. Spenser Churchill looked very much shocked.

"My dear Percy, what a dreadful charge! Listening? Certainly not! Seeing you—er—immersed in each other's conversation, I took a little stroll, and waited until the interview had come to a close."

Percy Levant leaped against the tree with his arms folded, his head bent upon his breast, but his eyes still fixed upon the other man's. His face was pale, and there were great drops of sweat upon his brow.

"And how goes our little arrangement, my dear Percy? Am I to congratulate you? Though I didn't listen, as you so cruelly suggested, I gathered that your suit was meeting with a favourable reception. Did my judgment play me false, or has Miss Marlowe accepted you?"

The younger man remained silent for a moment; then he said, almost inaudibly: "She—accepted me."

Spenser Churchill nodded with a smile of satisfaction. "Capital! I congratulate you, my dear Percy. I congratulate you!"

The smooth, oily voice broke off suddenly, for Percy Levant had seized the speaker by the shoulder, and held him in a grip of steel. "Silence!" he growled out between his teeth. "What devil prompted you to come here to-night? Heaven—to-night!"

"My dear Percy, I came to see how you were progressing; not that I was anxious. Oh, dear, no! I knew that that handsome face and lovely voice of yours would prove irresistible; but I wanted to see for myself how our little scheme was going on—"

"And I had forgotten you!" dropped from Percy Levant's lips. "Yes, I swear it! I remembered nothing but that I loved her—"

Mr. Spenser Churchill's lips wreathed in a rather painful smile, for the grasp of the strong hand made him shudder. "You—you find, you cannot believe it, cannot understand! How should such as you believe that I had forgotten our devilish contract, that I should love her for herself alone—"

He broke off, and his head dropped. "Come, come, my dear Percy, the delicate sentiment you have expressed

upon him, a half-mocking smile curving the sleek lips. "Ah, my dear Percy!" he murmured, smoothly. "How do you do? How do you do? Surprised to see me? Yes. You look rather startled. Almost as if you had forgotten me!"

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does you credit. Of course you love Miss Marlowe for herself; and the fact that you happen to know that she is not so poor as she thinks herself—in fact, that in marrying her you make a rich man of yourself—goes for nothing. Of course, of course! Very nice and—er—proper. But—would you mind taking your hand from my shoulder; you have remarkably strong fingers, my dear Percy! But I trust you will not forget that I have a curious document in my possession—"

Percy Levant withdrew his hand with a sudden and violent thrust that caused the philanthropist to spin round like a teetotum.

"Remember? Yes, I remember!" he said, hoarsely. "It would be as well for you if I had continued to forget it! Keep out of my sight while you are here, or I will not answer for myself!"

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### "THE GLASS OF FASHION."

Doris went back to the house scarcely knowing whether she was awake or dreaming. Could it be possible that she had promised to be Percy Levant's wife? She stood for a moment outside the door of Lady Despard's boudoir, trying to realise all that had passed, and the step she had taken so strangely, so suddenly, and when Lady Despard called out "Is that you, Doris?" she started like one awakening from sleep.

"Yes, it is I," she said. "There is your bracelet."

"Oh, thank you, dear. I am afraid you have had a hard search! Why—what is the matter?" she broke off to exclaim as Doris turned her face to the light. "Why, dear, you are as white as a ghost, and your hands"—taking them anxiously—"are burning. Doris, you have taken a chill! You foolish child, to stay out so long, and on account of this stupid bracelet. Why, it isn't of the slightest consequence! Go to bed at once, dear. Stay, I'll come up with you. You look dreadfully ill!"

"I am not ill," said Doris, and she sank down on the leopard-skin at Lady Despard's feet. "I have something to tell you, Lady Despard. It was not your bracelet that kept me so long; I—I have been talking to Mr. Levant."

"To Percy Levant! He was there still? What could he have to say? Ah! You don't mean to tell me, Doris, that he has proposed to you?" exclaimed her ladyship, in a tone of suppressed excitement.

"Yes," said Doris, in a low voice; "he has asked me to be his wife."

"And—and you said 'No,' of course?" "I said 'Yes,'" replied Doris. Her ladyship sank back, and stared at the pale, lovely face.

"You—said—yes! But, good heavens, my dear Doris, have you thought? Percy Levant! Why, child, there are half a dozen of the best of the men are madly in love with you. I know—I know—that the Prince Romanis is only waiting an opportunity to propose to you! He hinted as much to me yesterday! And Percy Levant! Of course, I'm not surprised that he should ask you; I've seen that he was over head in love with you. Of course, we've all seen it, but never thought he would venture to tell you, least of all that he should ask you to be his wife. Why—why, he hasn't a penny; he is as poor as a church mouse."

"Then he is as rich as I," said Doris, in a low voice. (to be continued.)

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