

## For Her Sake; The Murder in Ferness Wood.

CHAPTER LXV.

The sick man wiped the beads of perspiration from his brow, and, after a few moments' pause, gave the following account of his crime to Lady Claronald, as she sat with her face buried in her hands, endeavouring to repress her sobs.

"I am quite sure that in acting as I did I was not wrong. Ah, Diana, you do not know, my dear, what thrilling voices urged me to do it—voices that never ceased! They called to me night and day. In the silence of night they seemed to break upon the air. I heard them in the daylight, when the sun was shining, and their message was always the same—'Kill him, and set Diana free!' I could not control them. Some unseen power must have sent them to me."

Diana's passionate sobs were stifled. She was listening intently, and was convinced that this was not the language of a sane man; and her heart beat with sensation of relief.

"I know you did not love him, Diana, and I also knew that you were not happy. I thought and thought of you, until I believe there were times when I went mad—quite mad—although I tried hard to hide the feeling that I should not like any one to know it. It took possession of me. It seemed to me that I awoke from my dreams at times, when I found I had been talking and laughing, fancying my room was filled with people, when in reality no one was there. Waking or dreaming, the voices were always calling to me. While you were mixing in the gayest of London society, I was forever haunted by those voices urging—'Kill him, and set Diana free!'"

"Suddenly, one morning, when they had driven me nearly mad, I answered them. I turned around like a man at bay. 'To kill is to murder, and murder is a crime,' I said.

"Then there was a chorus of laughter—oh, such laughter, Diana!—and above it sounded a voice, clear, grave, and sweet—'It is no crime to kill him. He has wrecked Diana's life; set her free!' And in the whirl and the chaos those were the only words which I remembered—'It is no crime to kill him. He has wrecked Diana's life.'"

"When I looked at you, I used to wonder whether you knew of those voices. Once on that fete day I was going to tell you about them. I knew that he was cruel to you—not merely wicked, but cruel; and I saw my chance that day. It never seemed to me that I was going to commit murder—indeed I did not look at it in that light. My mission was to set you free.



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and I cared very little whether I lost my own life or not; I wanted you to be happy.

"On that day I saw your husband intoxicated and quarrelsome. I forgot everything but two things. I saw you and Sir Lisle walking to the house together, and I knew he was in the chestnut walk alone. 'Now is the time!' shouted the voices; and the chorus was louder than ever—'Kill him, and set Diana free! Now is the time!' Why, Diana, do you know that every leaf on the tree, every blade of grass, every flower that bloomed, cried out too, 'Now is your time! Kill him and set Diana free! It is no crime to kill him; he spoils Diana's life.'"

"I went to look at him—the man it was my mission to kill. He had fallen asleep, his coarse red face hideous with drink. I thought of you. It is no sin to kill him!' sounded with a roar in my ears. 'Look at him! Set Diana free from such a man!'"

"I would have killed him in that moment, but there was nothing to slay him with. I went to the gun-room—you remember the old gun-room near the stables, Diana! Looking round, I saw a small revolver—one that I could easily carry in the pocket of my coat. From the fact that it was never missed, I should imagine that it was left by some visitor. It was loaded. Oh, Diana, what a hideous din there was in my ears when I took it up and put it into my pocket!"

"As I passed through the grounds I met many people whom I knew, and who spoke to me. They little dreamed what I had in my pocket, or what my mission was. No one saw me as I went down the chestnut-walk. The hand nearest to me was playing 'Partant pour la Syrie,' and the voices were crying to me on all sides—'There is no time to lose! Now is your chance! Kill him, and set Diana free!'"

"I went up to him, placed the mouth of the revolver over his heart, drew the trigger, and he was dead in a moment. He did not suffer, he did not cry out; he only raised one arm, which quickly fell again. The voices changed, and the air resounded with joyful cry—'Diana is free—Diana is free!'"

"I put the revolver back into my pocket and went away. No one had seen me. I went to the tennis-court, and spoke to several gentlemen there. No one guessed; no one pointed his finger at me and said, 'This man has just taken the life of another;' while I heard nothing but exultant cries of 'Diana is free!'"

"I looked at your face, oh, love of my heart, when I had done the deed, wondering what you would say when you knew. That you would weep and lament I was sure; but I thought that after a time you would be happy—you would be free, and marry Sir Lisle. You see, there was no selfish thought in it; I never cherished the idea that you would be free to marry me.

"I do not remember much of the night that followed; the events seem confused. I was amongst those who searched the grounds for traces of the murderer, among those who sought to comfort Lady Cameron, among those who sent for the police; yet no one turned to me, saying, 'Thou art the man!' I do not remember how I reached home; but—strangest thing of all—when I found myself in my room again, the voices had ceased, and I never heard them afterward. I have had that secret continually weighing me down; but I did not mind. Men would say that I had committed murder; I know that I freed the earth from a cruel tyrant, and set Diana free. What have you to say to me?"

"Oh, Royal, what can I say," sobbed Lady Claronald, "save that I am grieved beyond expression?"

"Do you think that I did wrong?" he asked, innocently.  
"Yes, a cruel, terrible wrong," she answered, "one you must repent of with your whole heart, if you desire that eternal rest which is promised."  
"But, Dian, if I had seen a reptile coiling his deadly form around you, I should have crushed him!"  
"That is quite another thing," she answered. "No man has the right to take the life of another—and, oh, Royal, that you, of all men, should have stained your hands with blood!"  
He looked at her pitiously.  
"It was no wrong, Diana, to kill him. My dear, I am sure of it! I tested the justice of it in every way. The voices bade me do it; how could I disobey them? I have never heard those same voices since I did what they urged me to do; that alone is a proof that I did right. Oh, Diana, my dear, I am not afraid that my act will be condemned!"

(To be continued.)

## The Romance of a Marriage.

CHAPTER I.

There was no answer, and with a touch of impatience the girl called out again, "Bob! Bob! Where are you?"

This time there came a response. "Hello!" shouted a voice from the light mist; and the answering voice was, like the girl's, clear and ringing, but deeper, as a man's should be.

"What's the matter? Is that you, Paula?"

"Of course it's me!" retorted the girl, with a sneer of disdainful grammar. "Who else should it be? Why on earth don't you come in, instead of dawdling about outside there?"

"Well, I'm coming," is the rather reluctant reply.

"Yes, so is next Sunday! Do come on and get dressed. What are you doing there? Do you know what time it is?"

"No; what time is it?" says the voice, nearer now; and the next instant the owner steps on to the verandah.

He is a youth of some nineteen summers, as the novelists say—as if no one lived in the winter!—and a glance would prove him the brother of the girl beside him. There is the same tall, graceful figure, the same supple, self-reliant form, the same proud poise of the head and straightness of limb.

"What a row you do kick up," he says, knocking the clean country mud from his thick boots against the edge of the terrace. "Anybody would think the house was on fire. There's nothing the matter with your lungs, Paula!"

"My sweet child!"—she is a little more than a year younger than he—"this is nothing to the row there will be if you don't come in and get dressed. Alice has been at it for the last hour, and I've just put the last finishing touches to her war-paint. And here you stand, in those horrid farm-labourer's clothes, with your hands in your pockets, as if it didn't matter. But there will be a great row if you keep her waiting very long; she's not in the best of tempers now—something went wrong with the wreath, and it only wants the merest breeze to rouse a storm in the gentle Alice's breast. Come on!"

"Wait a minute," he says, with a youth's obstinacy. "I'm getting the

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mud off my boots; that's part of the way to dressing, you know. Why can't old Palmer give a hop without bothering us—or me, at any rate? Why can't Alice go alone?"

"There is nothing more ungrateful on the face of the earth than a boy!" exclaims Paula. "You ought to be very proud, sir—"

"I daresay!" sarcastically.

"Proud! Isn't this the Palmer's swell ball that they've been talking about for the last three months? Isn't half the county going to be there, and—wouldn't I give my ears to be in your place? And there you stand grumbling as if you were going to a missionary meeting! Besides, Alice go alone! As if she could! Someone must take her, and who has she got to take her but you, you ungrateful, sulky—"

Then she burst out laughing. "What will you do Bob? You can't dance, you don't care for ladies, you—well, Bob, you must make up with the supper! Don't drink too much of the Palmer champagne, Bob; and don't forget to be polite to the unfortunate wretch you have to take down to supper! Come in! You've knocked all the mud off those boots, I'm sure. Come in! There!—there's Alice's voice," and she runs in shouting as she does so: "All right! Bob's just going to dress! He won't be long!"

He follows her into the parlour—it is not a dining-room—and drops into a chair with a yawn that displays a set of excellent teeth, regular and white as ivory, and threatens, also, to swallow the girl as she stands impatiently before him.

"Now, then!" she says, looking down at him with a smile, half of impatience, half of amusement. "Take off those boots. I've got your things, and—she whisks a dress-suit and clean shirt from a chair—"here they are, and very pretty you'll look."

"Very," he says, eyeing the black evening-suit ruefully. "Ah! very like a waiter, or an undertaker anxious for a job. Why on earth can't a fellow go out to spend the evening without making such an idiot of himself? Give them to me, confound them!"

"No, I'll take them up for you," she says, snatching them back. "You'll drop half of them on the stairs. There—there are your shoes," and she touches a pair of dancing-pumps with the point of her small foot.

He takes them up and stares at them with an air of disgust and contempt.

"I shall never get into these," he says; "they're a mile too small."

"No, they're not. You didn't expect them to look like these—these—canoes, did you?" and she kicks the thick boots. "They are your size; I bought them. They are all right. Now, then, what are you going to do now?" for he had got up and was feeling absent about the mental-shelf.

"I was just going to have half a pipe," he says, rather shamefacedly. "There's sure not to be a chance all the evening—"

She snatched the pipe out of his hands and threw it, with a laugh of impatience, to the end of the room.

"Don't I tell you that there isn't time? Alice is nearly dressed already! You are half-an-hour late as it is! But you are enough to drive a saint wild—"

"Do you call yourself a saint?" he queries.

"Never mind what I call myself," she retorts, with a stamp of the foot. "Alice will call us both something if you don't be quick. Now, Bob, please me! You know how wretched she'll make it—"

(To be continued.)

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## Fashion Plates.

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### Allies Clin

Make Modification German Industry Multitudes Return U.S. Coal Strike

MODIFYING THE PROTOCOL.

PARIS, Dec. 8. The clauses providing for indemnities for the destruction of the German fleet at Scapa Flow has been modified as to refer to the Hague questions whether the delivery of the tonnage demanded will cripple Germany, is understood. The understanding is that other features of the Protocol most objectionable to Germany have been eliminated and the expectation here is that German plenipotentiaries will sign the Protocol with much further delay.

EASING THINGS DOWN.

PARIS, Dec. 8. The Allies have consented to modify some of the terms of the protocol putting the peace treaty into effect to which Germany has made no objections.

PREMIER'S NOTES TO GERMANY.

PARIS, Dec. 8. The Supreme Council's notes dealing with the Peace Treaty were delivered to Baron Von Lersner, head of the German delegation, this evening. The first note denies that German demands for modification of the Treaty of Versailles are a surrender of German claims against international law and the return of the prisoners. It agrees to consider the economic effects of the sinking of the warships in Scapa Flow (in a spirit of equity after a ruling by the Reparations Commission). The note warns Germany "for the last" that denunciation of the Armistice would give the Allied armies all the means for necessary military measures, and adds, "In this spirit we await your signature of the protocol and the exchange of ratification." Regarding the coercion clause of the protocol, the Supreme Council considers that the signature to the protocol and ratification will make it effective, and that the protocol execution will be guaranteed by the general terms of the treaty.

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