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ALL DRUGGISTS

WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE.

CHAPTER IX.
(Continued.)

Then I told him, as quickly and as connectedly as I could, of the resolution I had come to, of the arrangement I had made with my old friends, and of my unalterable determination to enter the novitiate on the first of May.

He received my communication, after the first sharp interjection, entirely in silence. When I had ceased speaking he leaned his elbow upon the mantel-piece, with his face away from me, and remained for fully five minutes gazing into the fire. A slight movement on my part made him turn round.

'Then you have come to say good-bye to me now—your final good-bye, Miss Bernard?'

'Yes.'

'Do you know that you have communicated this bit of news in a rather startling and very unprofessional fashion? Do you know that the law entitles me to a quarter's notice of a movement of the kind, Miss Bernard?'

'I know—I know; but I cannot help that. Why must you?'

'Oh, you must—must you? And you expect me to part with you on the best and friendliest of terms? I am to send you back to your patrons with an indorved testimonial of all the cardinal virtues you brought from them—eh?'

'You will say nothing unjust or harsh of me, I know. You and yours have been too true and kind to me from the first day I entered your house, Sir Richard. I answered, in a rather tremulous voice.

'I will say nothing harsh, certainly. I think I can even vouchsafe you a character for the ordinary

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qualifications of servitude, Miss Bernard—for honesty, sobriety, good-temper, patience, and devotion to your duty. I can say you have been a good little girl on the whole, age and experience considered; but—but the only thing I have to say just at present—is good-bye— isn't it? And as the hour is advanced and my cigar—'

'Good-bye—good-bye,' I muttered, huskily, too heartsore even to place my hand in his. 'I—I will not keep you longer. Good-bye.'

My hand reached his somehow then, and the room seemed to whirl round. I felt his arm clasp me quickly, and the next moment my hot face was buried on his shoulder, and the tears I could no longer restrain fell heavily from my eyes.

'Not a novice yet, Miss Marie,' he whispered, kissing the tears from my face; 'not quite detached from the perishable creature yet. I must put this break-down in my report to the Lady Abbess.'

'If you like,' I answered, struggling to regain my self-possession. 'I will tell her myself—tell her that it cost me just a little to leave forever the people who had—had been so kind to me; the little children I had learned to love, the house that I had learned to love, the house that I, a friendless stranger, had been told to call my home, almost from the first day I entered it.'

'Your home?' he interrupted. 'You call my house your home? Then why do you want to leave it and my children, whom you love? Why? why?'

'For—for many reasons. Because I am called to a higher life; because I cannot stay. I mean I—I want to go,' I stammered, turning away from his eager look. 'Good-bye, Sir Richard; good-bye! I am sorry to leave you. I thank you for all your goodness to me, and I will never forget you and her—never!'

'Wish me well—wish me happiness before you leave my arms,' he said, laying his cheek upon mine. 'I could believe in the fulfillment of a good wish from such true lips as yours, my little friend.'

'May you prosper,' I said, 'in all your earthly aims and hopes! May you be happy—happy as you deserve to be—in your home, your love, your children! I can wish you no more.'

'Why are you leaving me?' he asked, sharply, after a moment's silence. 'I will not say good-bye until you answer that. Look me in the face, Miss Bernard, and tell me what this sudden resolution means.'

'I have already told you. It means—means—'

I stopped as my eyes met his, for that glance told me evasion and subterfuge were of no more avail. It told me my pitiful secret was no longer my own, that he knew why I was leaving him.

How the knowledge had come to him, when I had betrayed myself—that moment, or long before; I could not guess; but I could read no surprise, no compassion, no rose, or

chivalrous compunction in the flushed, smiling face bent over mine—only a look of intolerable triumph, of base satisfaction, that half-maddened me.

'Marie,' he whispered, 'the revered mother won't take you. You will have to come back to the children and me. Make the most of—'

He stopped, with a sudden impression upon his lips, and at the same moment a strain of unearthly music filled the room. Jessie's voice, wild, shrill, despairing, echoed for a moment in our horrified ears.

He rushed to the opened window, looked out into the thick darkness for a moment, then came back and seized my hands.

'What is the matter with you? Why are you shaking like that? He cried, in a rough whisper.—'Surely you are not silly enough to be frightened by such—such—'

'It was her voice—her voice in pain! Oh, have pity on her—you who loved her once! She is appealing to you.'

'Appealing to me! to me! What wrong have I done her?' he said, fiercely.

'Appealing to you not to make that that woman the—guardian of her children. In life she a ked me to save them from her; she did, she did, Sir Richard! And now, in death, her tortured spirit has found voice. Oh, you cannot discard it—you dare not discard it!'

'Hush—hush! What is that? It was Mrs. Johnson's whining voice. She was evidently advancing across the hall toward us.

'Jessie, Jessie! Where are you! Come to your poor old mother, my darling, and tell her your trouble. She—she is not afraid of you. Come my daughter!'

'I—she—we must not be found together at this hour, Marie,' said Sir Richard, confusedly. 'I must escape at once. I will go part of the way to-morrow with you and the children, but now—'

'Go,' I said, pointing to the open window, 'you can escape that way without being seen.'

'To-morrow morning I am going with you to Worthing,' he said, hastily dropping out of the window.

I turned and found Mrs. Massey confronting me. One glance at her flushed face told me that she had been listening for some time, that she knew my pitiful secret—had heard my mad appeal which he had so angrily repulsed.

I sunk back into my chair, covering my face with my hands.

'To-morrow morning!' she echoed, with a fierce laugh. 'Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Johnson! Come in here a moment, please. I have a bit of news that will startle you a little, I fancy. Do you see this person covering before me—your grandchildren's invaluable governess, your daughter's devoted companion—'

'Yes, yes! What is the matter? She has seen—heard—'



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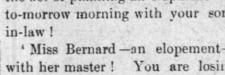
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'I have just interrupted her in the act of planning an elopement for to-morrow morning with your son-in-law!'

'Miss Bernard—an elopement—with her master! You are losing your senses, Mrs. Massey.'

'Time will show. I came down here to look for a book I had mislaid, and found her crying in Sir Richard's arms, protesting her love for him and his children, urging him to accede to her wishes, with a shameless impudency I have never heard equalled. Your voice in the hall startled them, however, and he dropped out of the window, at r promising to fly with her in the morning.'

'Miss Bernard,' cried Jessie's mother, recoiling from me—why—why don't you speak? Tell me she is raving. You—you were not here with my son-in-law?'

I made no answer.

'Look at the leaves of the flower I gave—I mean, he wore in his button-hole—on the shoulder of her dress! Look at the color of her cheeks—the guilt in her eyes! She cannot deny it!'

'Marie Bernard,' said Mrs. Johnson, coming close to me and gripping my shoulder, 'Look me in the face and tell me, were you alone with Sir Richard at this hour of the night? Has he promised to leave with you in the morning?'

'Yes,' I answered, slowly; 'I was here with him, and he has promised to go to Worthing with me in the morning.'

(To be continued.)

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