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PURITY ECONOMY



REMORSE and REPENTANCE.

OR
For Daisie's Sake

CHAPTER XX.
HIS CONFESSION.

"Doctor, that is why I wished to speak with you, to ask for the plain truth, is Royall Sherwood going to live or die?"

"The issues of life and death are in God's hands alone," answered the doctor.

"But you are skilled in reading the signs, and you told Mrs. Fleming that he had one chance of life."

"Yes, I told her so; but it is so very slight, and life hangs on a thread. The operation to remove the bullet was very exhausting, but successful. He lies now in a comatose condition, from which he may rally to make a struggle for renewed existence, or he may sink soon into the sleep of death."

"Death! What an awfully solemn word it was! How it shook her nerves! She burst into hysterical sobs, and Doctor Burns hastily prepared a sedative, and forced her to swallow it. "You need it. It will give you sleep," he said gently.

After a painful struggle with her crowding emotions, she continued:

"You have promised to be my friend, so tell me what to do. You understand, I mean to be free of this marriage, whether Mr. Sherwood lives or dies? Then what must I do? Leave the house to-day?"

"Most certainly not! To do so would destroy his one chance of life," he exclaimed, with the anxiety of a physician.

"But, doctor, he need not know," she cried piteously.

"It would be impossible to keep him from it. It would be harsh and cruel to destroy his one chance to live by the shock of such a desertion." Doctor Burns replied, telling her the truth without disguise, in his anxiety over his patient.

He thought she was going to faint, she turned so white as she clasped her hands on her heart, where pity for Royall Sherwood struggled with passion for her absent lover.

His dark, tender eyes, his noble face, rose before her mind's eye, and she sobbed:

"Oh, that I might see Dallas! He would tell me what to do."



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"Shall I bring him here to see you?" he asked quickly.

"Oh, if you only would!"

"Then I will do so this morning, and if he is the noble man I take him for he will bid you stay and save his rival's life, even though you desert him afterwards—although, if my advice were asked, I should say make the best of a bargain, and keep the husband you have already won, since, after all, it's not a bad match. Sherwood has loads of money, and he's not at all a bad fellow."

"I know—I know; but Love goes where it is sent, and I could never care for him as he deserved. Oh, Doctor Burns, don't you turn against me, too, for all are in league to break my heart!" wildly.

"Poor girl—poor girl! Then I'll take your part by going at once to bring Mr. Bain to consult with you. Where shall I find him?"

"At the hotel, I suppose," she returned, adding: "May God bless you for your kindness to a poor, friendless girl!"

"Thank you, I have need of His blessing. And now go, like a good girl, and take a nap until I return with Dallas Bain."

She returned to her room to follow his advice, thinking that, indeed, she would like to look a little fresher when Dallas came.

But in a few minutes Mrs. Fleming entered, saying:

"Royall is awake and asking for you. Will you come?"

Annette, who was dozing on the bed, looked up wearily, and exclaimed:

"Be kind to him, Daisie, so that he may get well. I will help to nurse him; indeed, I will."

Daisie arose and followed Mrs. Fleming to the sick room.

The nurse who was watching by the patient quickly left the room at a gesture from the mistress of the house.

Royall, whose ghastly pallor made him look as if death had already claimed him for its own, smiled feebly on the visitors, and murmured:

"Little, you may go into the next room while I speak to Daisie."

They were alone—the beautiful, wretched girl and the husband who loved her so vainly and was slipping away from her so fast into the darkness of death.

He gazed at her with adoration in his dim blue eyes, and faltered:

"You did not leave me, Daisie. I am so glad, for I do not expect to live long, and I will die happy if you stay by me to the last."

Her heart was touched by his fervent love, and impulsively she smoothed his cold hand caressingly.

But he sighed, and continued:

"I do not deserve your kindness, and I would not dare to accept it—only that I believe I am—slipping away from life."

"Oh, no, no—there is a chance!" she said gently.

"Would you wish me to live, Daisie?"

"Yes—oh, yes!"

"For you, dear?" wistfully.

"Do not let us speak of that now. I am too nervous," she murmured.

"I understand, and I will not tease you by begging for your love—for I have a confession to make to you—my dying confession—and when you have heard it I cannot blame you if you hate me."

How she pitied him now—she who had hated him only last night. But death cancels all resentments.

She wiped the dew from his cold brow with her soft and gentle hand. She stroked his fair curls softly, thinking how handsome he was in his fair style—only no one could approach her splendid lover, Dallas.

"I shall pray God to let you live," she whispered; and a sudden hatred came to her for the fiend whose cowardly bullet had laid low this promising life.

"Wait till I tell you all," he sighed remorsefully. "Ah, Daisie, I have done you a cruel wrong, but I cannot go down to death without confessing it, and then you will hate my very memory."

"No, no—I will forgive you!" she murmured, out of her womanly sympathy.

"Ah, you don't know it yet," Royall Sherwood cried, half accusingly, and added: "I told you last night that I did not know what Little had done, but it was false. I was in the plot to deceive you. I went to her with my troubles, and my fear of losing you, since you were going away, and she suggested the plan to get you to help us last night, and make the wedding a real one. I agreed to it, and won you for my bride by a friend, a hideous lie."

Started beyond the power of speech, she gazed at him in dumb horror.

"Ah, I knew you would hate me! But I could not die without making my peace with God," he moaned faintly.

"I told the preacher about it last night, and he prayed for me, and said I must tell you all, so as to win God's forgiveness and yours. You can forgive me, can't you, since I was so soon cut down in my wickedness, and forced to repent? And, Daisie, I have sent for my lawyer. I shall leave you my whole fortune in atonement, so that you may one day be happy with Dallas Bain."

"I will not accept it—I do not want it!" she cried hastily, adding: "Take my forgiveness freely. You sinned against me through your great love, so I cannot hate you."

A glad smile irradiated his features, and he was about to thank her for her goodness when Doctor Burns entered softly, having returned from his mission into the town.

He expressed his pleasure at seeing Royall "getting on so nicely," as he expressed it. Then he called in the nurse, and beckoned Daisie from the room.

Her heart gave a wild throb of joy, and she followed him eagerly, expecting to behold Dallas the very next moment.

CHAPTER XXI.
SHE LONGED FOR DEATH.

Daisie Bell followed the kindly old physician back to the little room where they had spoken together a while ago, her heart throbbing wildly, her eyes gleaming brightly, her color coming and going with the delightful anticipation of soon meeting her darling.

Doctor Burns held open the door, and she stepped eagerly across the threshold, flushing her eyes brightly around in search of Dallas Bain.

But the room was unattended by the splendid form she had expected to see, and the old doctor said gently: "I did not find Mr. Bain. He had gone away."

"Gone away?" And her face paled with astonishment.

"Yes; he left the hotel a little before daylight this morning, telling the clerk he was returning to New York. But sit down, my dear young lady, and call up all your fortitude, for I fear I have most unpleasant news for you," exclaimed Doctor Burns solicitously, and as she sank nervously into the nearest seat he continued: "I almost fear that this Dallas Bain is unworthy of your regard. Has there not always been something mysterious about the young man?"

"Oh, Doctor Burns, do not you also join the ranks of his traducers!" Daisie faltered, clasping her little hands together, tears welling into her beautiful eyes.

Then she looked up into his benevolent old face, and was startled at the fatherly pity that beamed from his kind gray eyes.

Drawing his chair close to hers, he regarded her kindly, saying:

"I have something very strange to tell you, but perhaps you will be able to explain the mystery of it, since you know Mr. Bain so well."

His voice was so grave that he felt an icy chill run over her frame, and her lips refused to utter a word, so he continued:

"About two hours after midnight a young woman dressed in black, and so heavily veiled as to be unrecognizable, called at the hotel, and insisted on having Dallas Bain called up, as she had very important news for him."

"The clerk sent the porter upstairs for Mr. Bain, and he was found up and dressed, not having retired yet. He came down quickly, and the young woman insisted on having a private interview with him. He yielded, and they were alone some moments in the clerk's private office. They came out, and the woman hurried away, and the man, looking as though he had seen a ghost, went quickly upstairs to his room again. In half an hour he came down, paid his bill, and said he was returning to New York by the first train. He had no baggage, having only arrived the evening before, and said he would walk to the train."

"Well, the curious part of the story is, the hotel porter, prompted by curiosity, followed the veiled lady in black. She went directly to the station, and the porter, remaining to watch her, saw her finally board the train for New York. Directly Dallas Bain came hurrying up, and leaped on the train as it was pulling out of the station. (To be Continued.)"

ASK FOR
ALVINA

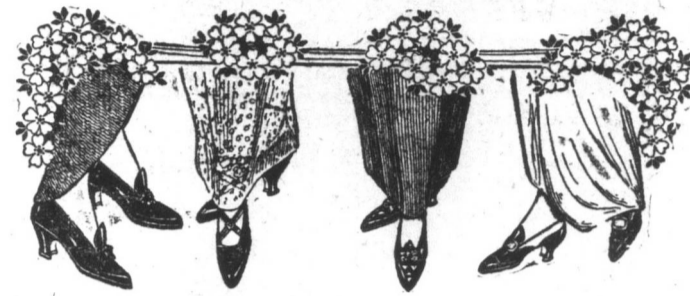
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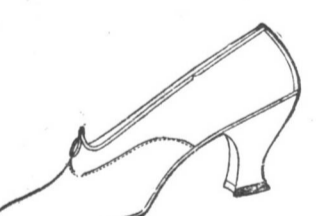
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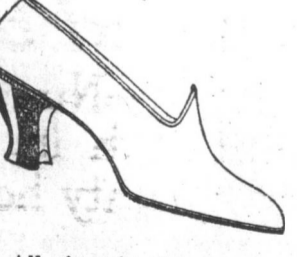
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