

THE FAIR IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER XVIII.
A MODERN BONDAGE.
(Continued.)

ILLIAN sat with lowered lid, apparently listless almost to indifference; but her heart beat fast, and she felt the dark eyes, as they glanced at her now and again, as if she saw them.

'Ah!' cried Sir Talbot, suddenly. 'How well you have caught the bend of the head! Wonderful! And a few touches only!'

'Weak and impotent,' said Dawson Slade, quietly. 'It is kind of you to encourage me. My heart is heavy with doubt and dread.'

'Let me send for something to lighten it,' said Sir Talbot, and he walked away.

The moment his back was turned Dawson Slade drew a small square of prepared cardboard from under the larger canvas, and with quick, bold dashes began to make a little sketch.

Sir Talbot came back, followed by a servant with a tray of wine, and the sketch was slipped aside.

'Miss Woodleigh needs stimulant more than I,' he said, as Sir Talbot brought the wine forward; but she refused it with a smile and a shake of the head.

On the salver the servant had brought several letters. Sir Talbot took them, and with an apology, walked down to the other end to read them. Dawson Slade took out his sketch, finished it, and laid it down beside him out of sight; then he went on with the portrait.

The picture was finished, even to the rose and the frill round the white throat; but the face looked strangely incomplete, for it wanted eyes.

He waited a moment, pointing the crayon; then he said, quietly.

'Are you tired?'

She looked up, but there was no life in the eyes; the mask was upon her face. The crayon remained immovable.

'Not at all,' she replied.

'I must be careful not to weary you,' he said.

'It is in the bond that I am free when I please,' she said.

'At a moment,' he assented. 'Regard me as a slave to be dismissed at a word or a look—a mere slave!'

There was a subtle significance in his voice. She looked up fixedly, then her eyes dropped again; but they were outlined on the canvas.

'We have abolished slavery so long ago,' he went on, slowly, his words keeping time with the movement of his white hands, 'that we have almost forgotten the full meaning of the word. It is difficult to realize, is it not? A slave! One whose life has passed out of his own keeping into the hands of another—to be made happy or wretched by the word or look of one who perhaps regards him as a mere chattel—a machine—a block! Thus it is to be a slave! And yet they say that there are slaves who hug their chains and love their

bondage! Are grateful for a word or a look, cold though it may be, from their master or mistress; and have followed that master or mistress through trouble and sorrow, and even to death.'

His low, musical voice fell upon her ears soothingly—a faint touch of something that looked like self-pity sat upon his lips and shone in the dark eyes that dwelt dreamily on the canvas.

In silence she watched him, the strange fascination coming over her; a vague, uneasy sense of some hidden meaning in his words forcing itself upon her.

'Yes,' he said, 'we have abolished bodily slavery, but—and he turned to her with a strange smile in his eyes—'we are all slaves, nevertheless; in bondage to something or somebody—some to an idea.' Her hands tightened in their clasp, and a quick look covered her face. 'To an idea,' he repeated, looking at her dreamily, as if he were absorbed in his work. 'Some to a rash vow.'

With a sudden movement she turned her head from the light. He pushed as if she had thrown him out, and, as if by an effort, she resumed her former position.

'Thanks,' he murmured. 'I do not tire you? Some by a rash vow which, uttered in a hasty moment, may hold them fast in a lifelong chain; and some are slaves to a passion which, strive how they may, holds them in a stern grip, which never relaxes night nor day. Yes, of a slavery there be, that is the most complete and full. He is the bond servant of the sternest, hardest-tyrant on earth; his name—but this is too bad! I am trespassing on your good nature! You granted me permission to paint, and I have taken to moralizing. Forgive me!'

With a slight bend of the head she forced her lips into a smile.

'Pray go on,' dropped from her lips.

'I was going to say,' he continued, 'leaning back for a moment to survey his work and mix more color, his eyes glancing from the palette to her face musingly, 'that the name of this tyrant is Unrequited Love. He is the hardest of all taskmasters, and the

slave who has once felt his whip carries the mark to the grave. I once met with such a slave—but I weary you,' he broke off, with a deprecating wave of his white hand.

She raised her eyes, and looked at him as if awakened from a trance.

'No,' she said, in a low voice. 'You once met—'

'With just such a slave. He was a man who you would have thought had won his freedom if any man had; the least likely person in all the wide world to fall into such a bondage. He had laughed at chains, and scoffed at servitude—a very rove, reckless and free from a thought or care. One day—I am a bad story-teller, Miss Woodleigh; it will never be my fortune to hold a group of children spellbound with a fairy tale—but this isn't a fairy tale; this is all true, as those same children would say—one day this man met with what he pleased to call his fate. Poor artist as I am, I could paint the face he described to me better than portray it in words. Suffice it that it was a very beautiful one. Poor fellow! It was the most beautiful in all the world to him. I remember that she had dark lustrous eyes that would hide beneath long lashes one moment, and then shine out with a glorious light—pray,

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pray do not move, I implore you! Thanks!—and this goddess of his— for she was more goddess than mistress—had a great wealth of hair, soft and shimmering as silk, and with these eyes and this hair she caught his soul—all unwittingly—as some poor fly is caught in a silken web. Day by day, though it was never his fortune to exchange a single word or a look—for though he fed his love by looking at her, she never seemed to see him—he knelt at her shrine and drank of the mystic draught which, when once a man has tasted, robs him of his freedom forever, and makes him a slave, and this, my poor friend, became a slave! Realize it!—the glare of light from this window annoys you. Let me move you chair, he broke off with, and rising, he put his hand on the chair; but with a slight gesture she declined, and shaded her eyes with her hand.

'A slave, sold body and soul! sold for a price—for, remember, she was scarcely conscious of his existence, and was certainly quite unaware of the thing which had fallen into her hands. And so it went on. Day and night the chains grew thicker and more unbreakable. He worked at them himself, ah, and hugged them when he had made them; and, stranger than all, the slave was happier in his state of bondage than ever he had been when he had roved careless and free. So it went on until the longing to make know his slavery—to lay it, as it were, as an offering at his mistress's feet—grew too intolerable to be borne. He waited for an opportunity; none came. At last he made one.

To be continued.

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G. P. O., July 18, 1910. H. J. B. WOODS, P.M.G.

Said "She had no Blood."

Girls with an unhealthy pasty look are greatly to be pitied. The dark look underneath the eyes which accompanies this paleness, is a sure sign of an unhealthy body with anemic conditions of the system. The healthy girl has a fresh rosy complexion which is much admired. In