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A MISSION FULFILLED

CHAPTER XL
Disowned.

One secret trouble, known to no one save herself, had been laid upon the shoulders of Keith's wife during her husband's illness. It was a letter which had reached her at Naples, on one of the worst days of his fever; a letter addressed to him, but which, recognizing it to be in his father's handwriting, she did not scruple to open, hoping that it might contain words of reconciliation or of sympathy. Its contents were brief; but, as Margherita read them, she pressed her lips together, while a red spot flushed each pale cheek.

Somewhat or other, some rumor of his son's great error, some gossip of a deed, only half suspected by those who set the gossip going, had penetrated to the ears of the studious old man at the Grange; a rumor, a gossip calculated to make him mad with rage and indignation. Colonel Stockton was at all times, whether for good or evil, a man of his word; he had said that Keith's secret should not pass his lips, and he had doubtless kept his word during the short time he had remained in England. Had, then, during the two days that elapsed before the promise was made, any hint of the dis-

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her into her own room. There, after a while, she answered it, with trembling fingers, but a pen that, notwithstanding the foreign tongue, traveled quickly over her paper. She could not even read it, much less bear to answer it, in the room where her husband lay tossing feverishly from side to side, careless of anything save the present misery of existence, and wholly unconscious of this new trouble.

She did not pause to reflect if the severity of the writer were in any measure deserved; she was too absorbed by her womanly compassion for the sick man, her womanly indignation at the hard terms applied to him, to be able to weigh the justice of things. So soon as she had written her answer she tore the letter into twenty pieces. Keith should never—even when he recovered, as, please God, he would—read with his own eyes the cruel and humiliating words. She would tell him of them some day, but not with that biting harshness which her arms round him, her tender tone assuring him that she at least could feel respect for those who had fallen for a moment to rise again; that she at least, if no one else, knew of the remorse, the suffering that had followed dishonour, and that her heart yearned toward him the more for that knowledge.

This was her answer: "I have read your letter, for Keith is very ill of fever, too ill to see his letters. And I have torn it up, for I shall never see him again. His father has written him—It is enough that I have done so. But I will tell him, when he is better, what you have said; and I will write now what I know he would wish me to say. He would be too noble to deny his wrong-doing to his father, however harshly you are—too honest. For one moment he was tempted, and did wrong—only for one moment; and the God above knows that he has suffered more himself from the memory of that moment than he can by any punishment you may visit on him. But he is no dishonest man, and those who call him so, speak cruel falsehoods, and they know it. They know nothing for certain against him; but, if they did, they might know also, as I do, that it was the first time, and will be the last that he would ever do wrong in that way. The world is very hard, and you are hardest of all to your own son. Have those who judge him no sins of their own? Perhaps, to the great God above, they are less good than my Keith. Do not fear that we will beg from you; we will keep ourselves by work, and do not want your money. You were very good, very kind to me when I came a stranger to your house. For that I shall always pray God bless you. But if you cast your son off for this, if you do not forgive him, he will not bless you."

MARGHERITA.

The reply was posted the same afternoon; and it was only after several days when Keith was progressing toward recovery, and her own mind less preoccupied, that Margherita had time or inclination to reflect over her somewhat hasty action in the matter, and to ask herself if she had acted wisely.

She never knew the effect of her words; for no further communication came from any member of Keith's family for some time afterward. It was about three weeks later when at length a letter arrived for her from Florence, in answer to one her husband had begged her to write in his name to his favorite and friendly sister. Florence Ronaldson was greatly grieved to hear of her brother's illness, of which she had previously known nothing; and wrote most affectionately, begging the two to keep her regularly supplied with news. Her mother, she said, would not write for fear of displeasing Mr. Ronaldson, but sent her love to Keith, and wished to know if he was short of anything necessary to his comfort while still invalided. This was a good deal from Mrs. Ronaldson; particularly as the message was accompanied by the sum of ten pounds, which she had sent to acknowledge to her, but under cover to her daughter, who had evidently no character for dutiful obedience to maintain before her father.

But, in truth, the pinch of poverty had not yet reached the Keiths. The ten-pound note was not unacceptable, looked at in the light of future requirements; but for the present they found themselves in possession of a good sum of ready money, from the proceeds of the sale of the London house and furniture. As to the invalid, those were not likely to be wanting under Mrs. Spencer's hospitable roof. As regarded any settled income, the matter was a different one; and its amount might not figure 0. This side of the prospect certainly was dark; but it had not as yet been fairly faced in its grim outlines by either Keith or his wife.

Keith had been too languid to think on such things; and when at length during one of their long mornings on the dusky-scented cliffs, above the malachite and purple sea, she told him of his father's letter and of her reply, and together they discussed their certain future, Keith treated the matter with a serenity that was more amiable than practical. It seemed, in truth, impossible to realize the bitter facts of want and social ostracism lying here among the flowering shrubs and aromatic herbs, with all the soft loveliness of an Italian summer round him—the cloudless blue above, the gentle plashing of the sleepy waves below—a novel in his hand, a shawl spread beneath him, and hospitable friends awaiting his return to lunch.

He listened in silence, although not the silence of indifference, to Margherita's account of the correspondence that had passed in Naples between his father and herself; but he gently checked her in her strictures upon the conduct of the former.

"No, Margherita," he said, quietly, "harsh, perhaps, but not unjust."

He declined on his part to entertain any immediate anxiety on the score of their future. They had enough to keep things going for some time, with

economy; and before another year was over, matters would be sure to right themselves somehow. Either his father would relent, or one of his friends would find him some post or other, or "something would turn up somehow."

"If it comes to the worst, Margherita," he said, putting his arm around her waist, "we can live here for almost nothing; and must work together for our living. I must make my fortune by painting pictures of you for the Academy, and we must keep house for ourselves. I will chop the wood, and you shall cook the dinners."

A few days after this Keith and Margherita moved into their new home—the prettily situated but somewhat dilapidated house which Spencer had found for them. It was but a few minutes' walk from his own abode, and was a cozy-looking little place, the rent of which was almost nominal, owing chiefly to the bad condition of wall-papers and plastering, which the owner was too poor to renovate, and which rendered it unlettable to the majority of tenants. It was called a furnished house, but the furniture, like the rent, was almost nominal, and had to be considerably augmented by articles which Spencer and his mother generously insisted upon transferring as a loan, for any length of time, to the young couple.

The night of September saw them established in their new domicile in fair comfort, and with much satisfaction. Economy was to be the rule of the household, and Keith had fitted himself up a studio wherein to set. They were not, as he had proposed, absolutely without servants; for a bright, strong girl from Anacapri did the household work, and did it effectively, to his equal astonishment and satisfaction.

A fortnight later, Margherita's baby was born, and Keith found himself in the position of a father. Then Lucia came, and for ten days took up her permanent abode in the house. And now once more the barrier between the peasant mother and the educated daughter was broken down, and they found themselves at ease again with each other, as the natural order of things, for the time being, was restored, and once more the mother took the upper place, and the daughter was dependent, in her hours of weakness, on the mother. But toward her English son-in-law the Capriote never abated one jot of her natural reserve, nor ever treated him as aught else but a superior and a signor, with whom she was on friendly, but respectful terms. She was a singularly quiet and retiring woman, full of a reticence which seemed to be more or less shared by the other members of her family, who rarely took advantage of her presence to be found at Keith's door.

To be Continued.

A tri-weekly "train de luxe" is to be placed in service over the new Simplon route for passengers between England and Italy, via Calais, Paris, Lausanne and Milan.

BLINDFOLDED By a Book



MARIE CAHILL.

"Marrying Mary" Likes
"Blindfolded."

"I've read 'Blindfolded' twice, says Marie Cahill, the star in 'Marrying Mary,' at Daly's. 'The first time I rushed through it to see how it would end. A woman usually looks at the ending of a story first and reads backward. But I had been warned not to do it, and so used all my will power to keep from peeping at the last pages while I was in the early chapters. I used to close the book and try to guess how it was going to turn out. I always gave it up though. It's the most absorbing thing.'"

For a narrative of adventure fit to make one sit stark, staring awake till cockcrow, for a tale of tantalizing and labyrinthine mystery, read "Blindfolded," by Earle Ashley Walcott. The puzzle is presented at the jump, and as it unravels it appears to grow constantly more complex. For mastery of mystery it would be hard to surpass this unusual story.

It is a strange mix-up of dual identity. A young man finds himself taken for a cousin, whom he strongly resembles, and whom he has seen murdered without apparent reason. He is compelled by a force of circumstances to impersonate the murdered man and take up his hazardous and subterranean mission without having the slightest idea what that mission is. He essays a triple task—to find out what he is trying to do, to do it, and to escape as neatly as possible. All three prove to be extremely difficult. It is, in reality, a detective story of the very highest order without any detective in it. Seldom has there been written a more generously exciting and more genuinely interesting tale of adventure.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.



SAM BERNARD.

Sam Bernard Wants
Another Walcott Book.

"Yes, I caught the 'Blindfolded' fever from Georgia Caine," said Sam Bernard, the famous comedian. "She telephoned me one day to read it. She has such excellent judgment that I obeyed without delay. What is it all about? Why, there's a mysterious child, an old man, money and mystery—especially mystery. From the first lines to the beginning of the last chapter you are led literally 'blindfolded' from place to place. People tell you startling things; you see people killed; you don't know what it's all about; but you're curious to know, and so hurry on to the end. I wish Walcott would hurry up and write some more."

It is not merely the hero, but the reader who is "Blindfolded" in Mr. Earle Ashley Walcott's tale. No sooner is the young man landed in San Francisco than he is tumbled from one murderous assault into another, without knowing what it is all about, and he fills up the intervals with speculations on the stock market which are equally blind to him. The reader naturally is kept in equal ignorance. The author's art consists in striking a breathless pace that leaves no room for reflections.—N. Y. Sun.



BLANCHE BATES.

"Suspense Until the Last Page—A Book of Absorbing Interest," Says Blanche Bates.

"I have enjoyed reading 'Blindfolded.' It is a book of absorbing interest, strong, moving, dramatic. The intricate and ingenious plot is so cleverly developed that the reader is held in suspense until the last page."

What is the mystery in "Blindfolded"? It would not be fair to author or reader to reveal it here. The book is the best source. One thing is certain, the stories are few, indeed, which exhibit so much resource, skill and bewildering inventiveness in concealing the climax as one finds in "Blindfolded." And yet it is so artfully managed, it becomes so much a part of the tale itself and the result of the condition it develops that the reader never senses the rare cleverness displayed until with one sweep of the arm, as it were, the curtain is lifted and end, whole mystery, from beginning to end, is revealed. In a word, "Blindfolded" is a story of a very unusual quality.—Brooklyn Eagle.



DAVID WARFIELD.

"Cost Me a Night's Sleep, But Gained a Delightful Experience," Says David Warfield.

"I always did enjoy a good detective story. And now, to a list of favorite authors, which includes Anna Katharine Green and A. Conan Doyle, we must add that of the clever young author of 'Blindfolded.'"

"It is a story that enchains the interest from the first page to the last, and is as intense and dramatic as a well-written play. The book cost me a night's sleep, but I gained a delightful experience in story telling."

"Blindfolded!" For once the title hits the nail of the story on the head. "Blindfolded" the reader will find himself on the very first pages of Earle Ashley Walcott's story, and the bandage is not removed until the last. It is an exciting game of "Blind Man's Buff" from start to finish. You may think you have your man a dozen times, but a dozen times he will elude you—in short, there is a shiver for every page, a shock and surprise for every chapter ending.

The setting is weird, the seamy side of San Francisco. There are some good characters—old Mother Borton of the lodging house, who befriends the hero, and who might have come out of Dickens, and the mysterious Doddridge Knapp, "king of the street," with the face of a wolf, in whose employ the hero finds himself with a checkbook good for millions, to buy or sell at the king's command. The excitement never flags. It is rough house all the time. The story is not advised as a soporific.—N. Y. Globe.

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