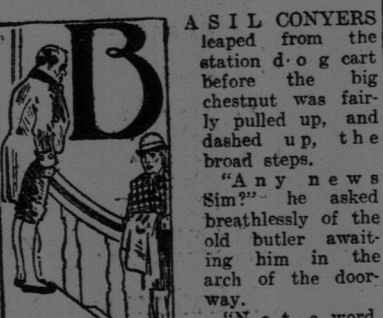


THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 1907.

By Helen Wallace
Author of 'The Greatest of These' 'Their Hearts' Desire' Etc.

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CHAPTER I
IN THE TAPESTRY ROOM.



AS LADY CONYERS leaped from the station d-o-g cart before the big chestnut was fairly pulled up, she dashed up, the broad steps.

ley in its autumn bravery of ripening fields, of yellowing leaves, sloping gradually upward till field and meadow were merged in rolling moorlands, beyond which misty peaks and distant summits loomed dim. But her fixed eyes were doubtless seeing little enough of the mellow harvest cheer, or the bright reaches of the river, gleaming here and there amid tufted woods, for when at last Conyers stepped softly to her side, and she slowly turned her head, there was for a moment no recognition in her gaze. If till now all had seemed bewilderingly unchangeable enough here in the blank, bitter hopelessness, the tragic woe looking out on him from the smitten eyes, in the cruel furrows plowed deep in the handsome, high-featured face.

nor night. I may as well tell you, it is never out of my thoughts. I go over and over every detail, wondering if there is nothing that we have overlooked, nothing that would afford some clue, till my mind is like a mill ever grinding out misery." The hands, lying passive in her lap, clasped themselves tightly. "He will be a wretch tomorrow," she began again in an altered voice.

striven again and again to repel the same suggestion. No, if she were to keep her reason, that thought must gain no harborage in her mind. Had she not known from her own school days that some day she was to marry her cousin, David, and had ever union been happier save for the one ever-present anxiety—the frail health of their only child? That there could be any other cause for anxiety was never admitted. And had she not thought that she in her turn was doing her best for her dreamy delicate darling in planning this marriage for her with her distant cousin, Basil Conyers, a Stormont by descent on the mother's side, whose hearty, honest unemotional nature was just the corrective which Isabel had needed? Her child would be so safe in Basil's keeping, and her great inheritance, too, and once happily married, that cloud which at times darkened her young life would, of a surety, pass away.



"You-you have no news?" he blurted out, hardly knowing what he said, but feeling that the silence was unbearable and must be broken.



"A cry almost broke from him."

Dear Lady Stormont can you bear to speak to me? She started at the touch, and looked up like one wearing a dream. "Oh, my poor boy, it is you at last. If you could have come sooner, I think you might have brought hope with you, but now—" Her voice broke. "I would have given my right hand to have been here," said Basil, passionately, "but by some cursed chance your wire missed me, and has been following me about the Loffodens, and then there was the crossing; but if you can bear to do it, for God's sake tell me about it. Remember, I've only had your wire. I know nothing more. I couldn't bear to question Rogers as I came from the station, nor even Sim—tell me what you can. I can't take it in yet, it seems so impossible, but there must surely be something that I could do."

CHAPTER II
WHERE?
IF HOPE so hard to kill, had struggled up again, one glance at the man's face would have been enough to quench the feeble flame. His wife had used to put a question to him, she turned away to the window as Sir David, seated in the room, looked at him with a cold, unkindly gaze. "You are here at last! Perhaps you can help us with some suggestion now that we are here?"

He was a tall man, rather spare and thin for his height, from which a slight stoop detracted a little. In spite of his thinness, his appearance did not suggest the country gentleman or the man of outdoor pursuits. Rather he had something of the bookish, student air. The grey which had creased his white into a deep, downward curve, and the heavy eyebrows, of the same reddish tawny hue as his hair, the grey eyes, red-rimmed, fierce and desperate, shifty-like those of some baited creature. Ever seeking, and ever seeking in vain, he looked at the man with a questioning, hungry gaze, and the same consuming, feverish unrest possessed the man's whole frame. He could not sit, he could not stand still. He would not sit, as if he would fain carry him in some new direction. Now Conyers understood why she saved for that one outbreak, she held her grief masked it with that set, still face. For himself a sense of nightmare oppression was growing on him. Was it Isabel Stormont? Was it Isabel, the gentle, his little play-fellow, the gentle girl, his wife, who had stepped into her man's room and her little slippers on, and no hat, Justice says, "the poor mother's voice faltering over these details which had gained such poignant novelty." "Do you know what is always in my mind," her voice sinking—the Alder Pool in the river, where the water is so deep and dark?"

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The original tints had gently faded to a tender, all-pervading pinkish-gold, making a harmonious background to one or two remarkable portraits, and to the simple lines of the fine old cabinets and tables.

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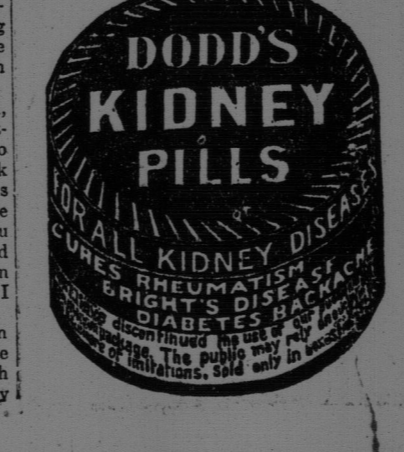
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