

about the door. She heard some one speak to him. Some one came up to her and began to talk. Presently there was a call for Captain Lester. He had promised the children a song. Where was he? No one could tell.

Louise could never afterward clearly recall how she got home that night. She remembered a great babel of shouting and laughter, and Mr. Beaumont putting her into the carriage, and her being shut in there, in the dark, alone. After that all was blurred until she found herself by her bed-room fire, her maid gone, and an open sheet of paper in her hand. It was three years since she had looked at those written lines, which had then burnt themselves in on her memory; and yet even then she had hardly looked on them with such shuddering pain, such sick fear as now. She got up suddenly, and, going to a desk, took out a packet of her husband's letters. Seeking further, she came across a sheet of manuscript music, with words in pencil underneath, and "Lester" scrawled in the corner. She untied the packet, unfolded one of the letters and laid it on her knee, besides the little song and the note to Grace Dameril. Carefully she looked at one and all; then putting them aside, she covered her face with her hands.

She had no doubt—no real doubt when Harold Lester left her, and yet it was terrible to read the mute witness borne by those papers. Oh! how could any one have done it! She saw again Grace slipping that note into her hand and turning away, as though loth to watch her face. She felt again the girl's tightening grasp when she asked her, "And will you have him, Grace?" She heard again the vehement answer, "Oh! no, no." She had been brave then. She had hidden her wound well, but she had suffered. It had seemed to her that there was no man on earth worth loving since Harry Lester had proven false. And so she had married her cousin Allan, because Allan so passionately desired it, and because he was an old friend and play-fellow. Why not he as well as another?—so she had said to herself in the bitterness of heart—at least he was a good, true man.

And now—she folded up the letters and hid them away, and crept to bed.

It was very late next evening when her husband returned. She had been listening for him many hours, when the bell rang. Even then it seemed to her long before he came up stairs. At last there was a quick tread in the gallery and her door opened. She did not move or speak. She only looked at him; but that look was enough. Before his foot had crossed the threshold he knew that his great dread was fulfilled.

He came to her and mechanically bent his head to kiss her; but she put out her hand hastily.

"Not now, Allan; I have something to say to you," and then he saw that she had an open letter.

"Why did you write this?" she asked holding it up.

"You know—" his parched lips could utter no more.

"Yes, I know that you wrote it," she said, mistaking the meaning of his words.

"You know why. I was losing you, and you were the one thing in life I cared to have."

It never occurred to him to deny her charge. He seemed to have known all through those past days that the hour must be faced. Perhaps she had looked for a denial, or had thought to have to drag the truth from him bit by bit. At any rate they were both silent awhile. At last she raised her eyes to his pale face.

"You can gain nothing now, I think, by lying. You may as well tell me the truth. Did Grace know?"

"Yes, she knew, but she only did as I bade her. I told her if she did not help me I should go away—for life."

"Do you think the little you gained was worth buying at the price you paid for it?"

"You mean that I never gained your love. You need not tell me so; I know you too well."

"Shall I tell you how I comforted myself when I found that marriage did not bring me the joy it brings to some? I believe that in one way at least I was happy, since I could honour my husband entirely."

He shivered, but he was dumb. What could he say? His own hand had risen up against him; Grace, the sister who had worshipped him, had betrayed him. She had not promised to destroy that cursed letter.

"How did you know?" he asked; "did he tell you?"

"He told me last night that he had never written to Grace, and then I remembered one summer's day years ago—do you remember it? We were in the garden at Moorhill, and you imitated all our handwritings."

"I remember."

"And I came home and got out the letter—I had found it in Grace's desk after she died—and I saw—" she stopped and then went on slowly—"a forgery. I knew a poor clerk once who forged his name to keep his children from want—and he was transported."

"How did you come to meet Harold Lester last night?" Allan put the question quite gently. From beginning to end he showed no anger.

"They had a children's party at the rectory, and Constance Beaumont begged me to go. Captain Lester was there, and he spoke to me about Grace."

"You know that he has gone away?"

"He had better go if he guesses what I know."

He used to be hot-tempered. It is well the seas should part you."

Allan smiled faintly. "If that were all—his anger—I could face it; I have faced worse things. Why did he come in between us, and snatch you from me—me who had loved you always—ever since you were born!"

"Loved me?" she broke in, bitterly. "Well, there are different ways of loving, I suppose; but you had better have hated me."

He stood for a moment looking down at her, his dark face working.

"Yes," he said at last, "but I didn't know then—perhaps if I had known—Louise, I can't talk any more now—I am quite worn out. I have not slept—how long is it, I wonder, since I did sleep?"

She did not answer him, or try to detain him. Her strength, too, was well-nigh spent.

III.

A week went by. They ate and drank, walked and rode, sometimes together, more often apart. They talked to one another civilly before Millie and the servants, yet sometimes Louise almost wondered wildly how long it would be before she grew used to the terrible truth that now sounded in her ears whenever she heard her husband's step or saw his face. Some day, no doubt, the sharpness of the pain and shame would die away as other pains and shames that she had known had died, and she would no longer shrink from him as a liar and a thief.

He saw that she shrank from him. He had always been very quick to see any mood of hers; and at the end of that long week he broke silence. They were in the library, and he had found her some book for which she had been searching. As their hands touched, he said in a low voice: "You would sooner have hunted for it yourself, wouldn't you? You would sooner have no help from me, little or great. Well, it isn't strange, after all. You have cause enough to shun me."

"I don't want to shun you," she answered, standing before him with downcast eyes. "You are my husband—Millie's father. I don't forget that. But it is hard just now—I think if we were apart for awhile it might be easier. Let me go to my mother's with Millie for a month or two."

"You shall go, dear, when and where you like."

And then he went away to the little oriel room where he did his farming and justice business. He did not generally write his letters there, but he meant to write one now which had been on his mind for days. Yet he did not begin it at once. The short winter afternoon closed in while he still sat shading his face with his hand. At last he lighted a candle, and drew a sheet of paper toward him. This was what he wrote:

Four years ago, Lester, I saw that you cared for Louise Sydney. I cared for her, too. I thought I had reason to fear you. I wanted to make sure of her while you were away, and I did a dastardly deed. I forgot that letter of which she told you, and in that way I won her. I could have won her in no other way. You have guessed the truth already; but you ought to know it.

ALLAN DAMERIL.

He had stopped after each sentence, as if doubting whether to say more or less, and when he had signed his name he read the whole twice over. Then folding and sealing it, he enclosed it to Mrs. Vivian, begging her to complete the address. And now, with his letter in his pocket, he went softly up-stairs to bid his little daughter good-night. When he came down again to the drawing-room, his wife was there working.

"Have you made any plan?" he asked.

"Would the day after to-morrow be too soon? My mother needs no notice. I could write to-night."

"Yes, write to-night. You had better go soon."

There was silence till he spoke again.

"Louise, after to-night we will never speak of those things that are past. But now will you listen to me?"

She murmured, "Yes."

"Will you try and believe me that if I have sinned I have suffered for my sins? I don't think I have ever known a peaceful moment since the idea of writing that letter came to me. I was miserable enough before, but I should have done better to endure my misery. I didn't think so then. I was selfish—cruelly selfish. I thought of my own desolation if Lester won you, and I sacrificed you. I used to fancy that when you were married, and I had made you to love me, I would tell you what I had done. But that time never came. I cannot undo the past, but, dear, try and forgive me. If I thought of myself then, I think only of you now. There is nothing I will not do to make amends, to make you happy."

She was moved, but she hardened her heart.

"You have always wished me to be happy in your own way," she said. "You can do no more than you have done."

"I will try, at least. And now I am going out. Louise, before I go, can you say, 'I forgive you'?"

There was a struggle within her. Then she stood up, pale and trembling, and held out her hands.

"I may have judged you hardly. I do forgive you."

For an instant, as she looked at him, he seemed to see, not the face of his cold, reserved wife, but of the girl-friend and comrade who had been lost to him four years ago. His hand closed on hers. His eyes asked with piteous entreaty

for some sign of relenting. But it did not come, and with a sigh he turned away.

And she, left alone, wept silently and long. It was over, the terrible strain of suppressed anger and contempt. She could pity, and she did forgive him. Pity and forgive! How things had changed with her since the childish days when Allan's holidays were the event of her year! How merry they had been then, and how good Allan had always been to her! And then her mind travelled on to a later time, when Harold Lester had come back from his four years' voyage, no longer a mad-cap boy, terrifying her by his wild freaks, but a man who had done gallant things and who, for all his fun and frolic, could be very much in earnest sometimes.

And in all that long stay of his at Hantleigh he had often been in earnest. He had never told her that he loved her. What had he, the penniless lieutenant, to offer? But she had needed no telling, for she thought she knew, until—well, she had known. He was cleared. He was beyond reproach. But, ah, that other! Could shattered faith, could dead love ever live again?

And, while she wept, Allan was abroad in the darkness. It was a strange, weird night. Now and again rent and ragged clouds swept across the moon. There was a storm coming up. The wind blew chill against his face—but wind and storm mattered nothing to him now. He went first to the little general shop in the village, and there posted his letter. Then he turned in again at his own gate, but not up the steep winding road to the house. He crossed the open pastures to a stream which, swollen by the winter rains, dashed noisily along. Following its course, he came in time on to the wild grounds bordering on the moor. There the water had eaten for itself a deep channel, and the banks rose high and steep, clothed down to the water's edge with fern and mountain ash. He halted, and looked around. Beyond the dark shoulder of the moor he saw some glimmering lights—the windows of Ardely court. A thought came into his head. An old school-friend—his only intimate friend—lived there. He had not seen him lately. What more natural than that he should go over to him, as he had often gone before? Who would wonder—who would guess? And then a great longing seized him that she should guess. But he fought with that longing, and conquered it. He would only care for her and for her peace. She should have no suspicion that might trouble her. He thought again. Then he retraced his steps as far as a woodman's cottage in the dell below. The woodman's little grandson opened the door at his knock. Hastily scribbling on a piece of paper, "I am going over to Ardely. I may stay the night if St. John is at home," he twisted it up, gave it and sixpence to the lad, and bade him make the best of his way to the house. Then he went out again into the silent night. Breasting the hill, he hurried onward, as though urged now by some fixed, eager purpose. On and on, plunging through dry bracken, climbing over great rocks, groping his way through the pine wood, he found himself at last by a narrow wooden bridge spanning the stream that roared and foamed far below—a seldom-used bridge, slippery with green lichen and guarded only by one slender rail.

This was his goal. Hereabouts in the days of his boyhood he had shot many a rabbit, robbed many a bird's nest, and here had now come to die! Yes, to die! That was the only way in which he could make her happy. Had he not told her that he was ready to do anything? And this was no light thing to do. He was young, and life was strong in him. He clung with passionate yearning to all that he was leaving—his wife, his child, his home—he shrank from the death he had come to seek. He looked down into the white seething cauldron. He remembered once saying to his wife that he would have that rickety old bridge taken away and a safer one built. He wondered if she would remember it when they found him. Ah, well! neither she nor any one would doubt that in crossing those green planks in the uncertain moonlight his foot had slipped, and—

One step on to the bridge—one whisper of his wife's name—one more gaze into the gulf beneath, and then he fell, and lay bruised, and crushed, and senseless, washed by the hurrying water.

"Allan, do you know me?"

The dark head upon the pillow did not move; there was no strength for that, but the white lips parted and whispered, "Is it you, Louise? has it always been you?"

"Oh, Allan, yes! who else should it be?"

Her tears were dropping fast upon his breast; her lips were pressed to the powerless hand she held.

"Where am I? I thought the stream was sucking me in—I thought I was out of your way."

"Darling, you are at home. You have been very ill, but you are better now, thank God."

"Do you say that? Are you glad?"

"Glad?"—her eyes, her voice, answered for her.

He lay for a few minutes musing.

"Did they find me there—under the Cow Bridge?" he asked at last.

"Yes; old Trower found you, in the early morning, as he went to his work."

"How long ago?"

"More than a month."

"And so it did not kill me—that fall?"

"You fell between the rocks. But you were terribly hurt—at first they said you could not live."

"Louise, I did not slip. I meant—"

"My husband—I know! Oh, Allan, when I believed you would die, and that I should never be able to tell you—"

"Tell me what?" he asked, his sunken eyes fixed on her face.

"That I do love you—more than all the world beside. When I thought you would never know it my heart was ready to break."

"My wife!" he said no more, but into his face there came a tremulous joy.

"Listen, dear," she went on softly. "I had better say it all now, and then you will be at rest. It has come back, Allan—the love of the old days, only more a thousand-fold. It has come back, and all the rest seems blotted out."

Then she leaned over him, and kissed him with a long, lingering kiss.

"And now, my Allan, we are going to be quite, quite happy. But we must not talk any more. Let me sit here beside you, and sing you to sleep."

He was content, for he was strangely, blissfully weary. And so, sitting with his hand locked in hers, she sang till, lulled by her voice, he fell into a slumber.

ARTISTIC.

A SCHOOL of art, costing \$125,000, is to be erected at Manchester, England.

It is stated that Mr. Ruskin's condition still continues such as to cause considerable anxiety.

ABOUT 150 water-colour drawings have been sent by English artists to the French Universal Exhibition.

A LARGE statue, to represent North America, has been placed upon the Chateau d'Eau of the Cascade on the Trocadéro.

AMONG the contributors to the next exhibition of the Royal Academy will be Mr. Robert Barrett Browning, the son of the famous poet and poetess.

MR. G. PAUL CHAMBERS, R.S.A., who was so mysteriously murdered some time ago in Edinburgh, left several paintings, which have just been sold and realized £5,000.

M. WALTERDIN, a French gentleman who possesses a fine collection of the works of Fragonard, has announced his intention of throwing open his gallery to the public every Friday during the Paris Exhibition.

A FINE painting by Courbet, called "La Vague," and exhibited in the Salon of 1874, has just been bought for the Luxembourg for the sum of 200,000 francs. It is said to be one of the most powerful works of this powerful painter. The cross of the Legion d'Honneur was offered to him immediately after its exhibition, but he, with his customary bluntness, refused the honour.

RUSSIAN art, it is stated, will be well represented at the French Exhibition. An exhibition has been lately held at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg of the paintings destined to be sent to France. Some of these have been seen before, but most are new, and among them there are reported to be several remarkable works. A large picture by Gerson of Copernicus, expounding his system before an assembly of notable persons in Rome, in 1543, holds the place of honour.

FASHION NOTES.

SILK finished violets in all shades can be bought for three cents a dozen.

BLACK shirts with white dots in them are now sold in London; they will hardly supersede the white articles.

MANY of the coloured fringes are mixed with chenille, which adds both to the richness and lightness of texture.

A MARKED feature about new bonnets is the absence of all hanging draperies; they are made to look as compact as possible.

HONITON lace returns with new favour to dress trimmings, and is exhibited in elaborate designs and profuse quantities on rich robes.

BONNETS this season are largely of the capote form, and set close to the head; they have greater breadth than formerly, but narrow brims.

IT is the fashion now to have very elaborate costumes trimmed with tureen lace, macramé fringes and white or coloured embroideries.

THE daisies or marguerites—the flower of the Queen of Italy—are formed into chains and arranged round the brims of some of the newest bonnets.

PLAID black lace, headed with rainbow jet passementeries, has appeared on black silk and black camel's-hair mantlets, dolmans and sacques.

A BEAUTIFUL toilet of cachemire and English crepe is made in princess shape, and these materials and this style make the most desirable deep mourning dress that can be had.

A NEW way of making sets of lingerie consists of a turned down collar, with cuffs to match, covered with small lace ruffles. The plain princess dress exacts this kind of lingerie.

Is children's underclothing there is very little that is new. Sometimes the combination form of garment is adopted by them, and their little petticoats are gored; but they should always be made with bodices attached, drawers and flannel petticoats buttoning on to the corset stays.

COPY OF TESTIMONIAL JUST RECEIVED.

93 ST. FRANCIS XAVIER STREET.

MONTREAL, 5th April 1878.

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(Signed.)

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