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For Her Sake;

The Murder in Ferness Wood.

CHAPTER LII.
Diana was unnerved. She had been touched to the heart by her meeting with Sir Royal, and she had been startled by her husband's violence; she had been afraid also of a scene between the two. The result was that she lost her presence of mind for a few minutes.

He placed her on one of the garden-chairs, and stood for some time in silence by her side. Diana unnerved was very different from Diana proud and independent; the old imperiousness had for the moment given way to suffering submission. The beautiful face drooped until it was hidden in her hands, and Sir Royal trembled like a leaf when he heard the deep-drawn, bitter sobs she could not restrain.

"Is it always like this, Diana?" he said, as he bent over her. "Do not fear to tell me. Does this often happen? Does he treat you in this manner frequently? Tell me, Diana."

But she only sobbed out:

"Oh, Royal, my heart will break!"

And the Worst is Yet to Come—



He knelt down by her side, and in—"Let me sit down, Royal," she said, "how could he comfort her? The girl whom he had loved as the 'child Diana,' this fairest, noblest type of womanhood, this most beautiful woman, how could he offer her consolation? He drew her hands gently from her face, and saw the tears falling from her eyes.

"Trust me, Diana. Tell me," he said—"are you very unhappy? I can see he is horrible; and he is cruel to you. You must be wretched. Tell me all, Diana."

She raised her despairing face to his.

"Oh, Royal," she cried, "I wish I were dead! I am so unhappy, I do not care to live. I wish I could die!"

His head dropped upon his breast with a groan as these words fell from her lips. It was maddening for him to know that his Diana—the fairest and best of women—should be so crushed by trouble that she prayed for death to deliver her from it.

The eyes he raised to hers were full of pain.

"You should have told me before," he said. "I heard you were not happy; but you never wrote, and I dared not call upon you, lest I should lay violent hands upon him. Ah, Diana, no one living shall touch one hair of your head! Why did you not tell me? You promised me that, if ever you were in trouble, you would send to me, you would let me know."

"Oh, Royal, my heart will break!"

while:
"Oh, Royal, I wish I were dead!"
"He ought to die, not you!" was the almost savage response.
Lord Clanronald came up to them, looking somewhat embarrassed.
"I am afraid I was in a towering rage about that key, Diana; but it is so vexing, just when you want a thing, to know that it is lost!" Then, turning with an air of awkward apology to Sir Royal, he added: "You have not yet found out how tiresome and aggravating wives can be."
"No," rejoined Sir Royal; "if I had a wife I should treat her as a lady."
"Do you mean to insinuate that I do not treat my wife as one?" cried the other, fiercely.
"I am quite sure that you do not," replied Sir Royal, undauntedly; "but in my presence you shall."
Lord Clanronald laughed, but the laugh was unnatural and uneasy.
"If your wife were my sister, or if I had the right to avenge her wrongs, I would lash you like a cur every time you shouted or swore at her," continued Sir Royal.
"You would!" laughed Lord Clanronald, again.
"I would!" replied Sir Royal; and he looked a formidable foe as his dark eyes flashed fire.
Diana slowly led the way to the dining-room. She was right; no one there noticed the trace of tears. Her father was engrossed in his dinner, Lady Cameron with her guests, Lord Clanronald in keeping his glass well filled. Five years before, if she had shed a tear, the whole household would have been alarmed; now her grief passed unnoticed.
From that night a great change took place in Sir Royal's demeanor. He grew more silent, more reserved, though exhibiting a warmer devotion than ever to Diana. Every day saw him at Ferness, until Lord Clanronald cried out in a rage that the man haunted the house like a shadow. But he had taken the baronet's lesson to heart; he neither swore nor shouted at his wife in Sir Royal's presence again.
One day he was more intolerable than usual. Everything had gone wrong. One of his favorite horses had fallen lame; his valet had again mislaid something that he wanted; the butler had looked what he called impertinent when asked for a third supply of "brandy and soda." The Times was lost, and he had not read it; one of his favorite dishes had been on the table at luncheon, and he had not been asked to partake of it; several other contretemps, all of the same slight importance, had happened, and he had worked himself into a furious temper. He stroiled on to the terrace with a faint idea of seeing what the fresh air would do for him; and there, sitting among the shrubs that surrounded the statue of Flora, he saw his wife.
She was buried in thought; her attitude was one of utter despondency and weariness; her head was thrown back, and her hands lay idly folded on her knees. There was something in the pathos of her face that might have touched the hardest heart; but it did not touch his. The only idea that occurred to him was that he could now give vent to his irritation.
"Diana," he cried, "why are you sitting in that absurd fashion, looking as melancholy as Niobe? You want every one to know that you are unhappy."
She at once perceived his mood. Lord, bitter experience had taught her that in such circumstances silence was best; therefore she made no answer.
(to be continued.)

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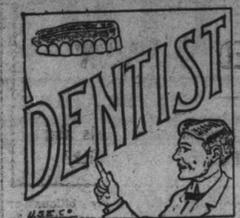
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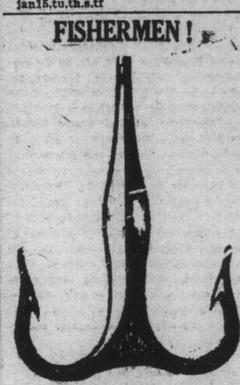
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