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With a fierce exclamation he turned to his wife. Mary was breathing heavily; her face was deathly pale; two little crimson drops - she had bitten her underlip till the red blood trickled down her chin - were on her cheeks.

"Have you ever thought, when you had done this dreadful thing - the children are provided for - what was to become of me?" "You are a beautiful woman, Mary. I know plenty of men who admire you - you will marry again."

"She made no reply. It was as if she had treated the remark with contempt. She asked him something else."

"When all your debts are paid, all your affairs wound up, shall I have any money?" "Very little."

"She drew close to him. He heard the soft rustle of her gown; a faint, subtle perfume of violets wafted across his face."

"We lived on 'very little' once." He glanced at her sharply. When had he seen that look before on Mary's face, that look of tender happiness, of love? Ah, he remembered. On that summer evening, years and years ago, when he had asked her to be his wife.

"And we were happy, too." He had no need as yet to look at her, gazing at Mary's radiant face, her shining eyes.

"Far happier than we have ever been since we were rich." The silence in the room was intense. The ticking of the little clock on the mantelpiece, the only sound which broke the stillness, was like the beating of a heart.

"Suddenly he felt a soft arm round his neck. 'John, you never knew it - you were always so busy you never seemed to have time to talk to your poor little wife - but for years I - I have hated the money, too. It was young and had children - they were young and had never known anything else; but we were old folks, old fashioned' - she smiled - 'and whatever I might have appeared outwardly, I could never quite throw off the past. You thought the new prosperity made me drift apart from you. Well, I thought it made you drift apart from me. You were always so occupied with your business, your affairs, which I was too stupid to understand. But now the money is lost, and I am glad - yes, glad, for to me, too' - and there was a sob in the low, tender voice - 'it has been fetters around my neck, John! Oh, my husband, who I have always loved better than any one else in the whole world! Let us get back to the little cottage; let us begin life over again.'"

"She put the revolver back on the table - she knew there was no more need to hide it - and both the soft, clinging arms were round his neck now. And he was sobbing with his gray head on her breast, sobbing like a child."

"Yes, he would take up his life again - that life which he had so nearly thrown away - and once more he would be happy, with the happiness which only love can give. - The bystander."

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She looked up at him. He softened a little at the sweet wistfulness of her face. After all, they had loved each other once.

"I am busy. I have something else to do - just now."

He clutched feverishly at the weapon behind his back. What a mercy that she had not seen it!

"She sighed. It seemed to him - or was it fancy? - that the wistfulness on her face deepened a little. A shadow fell across it."

"That is what it has been for years, John. You have always been busy. Making money, I suppose."

He did not answer, and she moved to a sofa and sat down. He noticed how the softly shaded electric lamp drew out the rich tints in her hair.

"I - I have something to tell you," she said gently, about Kathleen. I thought, as the girl's father, that you would perhaps be interested."

He laughed. "Kathleen herself has never betrayed the slightest interest in or affection for me since she was ten years old. Why should I be interested in her?"

It was rather a cruel taunt to the girl's mother, but Mary ignored it. She sat very still, gazing straight before her, and he saw a tender maternal look steal over her face.

"Young Vandereldt has proposed to her to-night. She has just told me. I hope - I hope the dear child will be happy."

"There is small doubt of that. He has tons of money, hasn't he?" Again he laughed. The laughter sounded bitter and hard.

His wife looked at him. There was a half puzzled, half reproachful expression in the large gray eyes.

"Why do you look so white, so - so - so?" "His laughter had died down, but it had left a lingering smile - cruel, mocking - on his lips."

"You interrupted me," he said harshly. "Your entrance just now was - well, ill timed."

"What were you going to do?" The clear, steady eyes were still fixed on his face. There was something about Mary to-night - her stillness, her gentleness - which, somehow, irritated him.

It acted on his already over-strained nerves as a match applied to a torch. With a sort of brazen defiance he withdrew the revolver from behind his back and brandished it in front of her face.

"Blow my brains out," he cried. It was cheap melodrama, but he had expected Mary to be impressed by it. He had expected her to scream, possibly faint. Instead, however, she sat quite still.

Only the sudden whitening of her face, the sudden little catch in her breath betrayed that she had even heard at all. Then suddenly she got up from her seat.

He was amazed, and perhaps a trifle disappointed at her coolness. Then a thought struck him. Mary thought that he was suddenly stricken with madness, and her attitude of calm collectedness was the one which she considered the wisest to adopt towards a lunatic. Well, he would show her that his desperate words and action had not been the idle ravings of a maniac, that he was in deadly earnest.

He laid the revolver down on the table, and caught hold of her hands. "Because I am ruined!" he said. The small hands which he trembled, but still Mary did not flinch, still the lovely, gentle eyes were fixed calmly on his face.

"Rained!" he repeated, and his voice was low and hoarse. "They think I am a millionaire, the people dancing and feasting tonight in my home. To-morrow the whole world will know that my money is lost! I am a beggar!"

"But how have you lost it?" He let go her hands suddenly and threw his out with a gesture of despair. He did not notice that, directly her hands were released, she snatched up the deadly weapon on the table and concealed it behind her back.

"Gambling! Oh, you didn't know that I was a gambler, did you? For the last ten years I have been fritting my hard-earned money away. I gambled on the stock exchange, on the turf, at Monte Carlo - those mean visits which I paid there, when I always would go alone, were simply to indulge my awful passion, and I always - always - lost!"

"But why in the name of heaven did you do that?" She did not treat him to tears, abuses or reproach. She simply stood there calmly, and looked him straight in the face.

Almost unconsciously he hung his head. Before he had not been in the least ashamed of himself. He had thought his conduct, taking into consideration the fact that he was unhappy in his home, perfectly justified. Now - well, some people might think that to ruin your wife and children by gambling, and then bring to their disgrace on the family by committing suicide, the action of a brute and a cad.

"Because - oh, because I was miserable, reckless, mad. I did not care what I did. A man must go somewhere to find amusement, happiness, and I - I found no happiness in my own home!" "Oh, John!"

At last she broke down. Her face worked, tears coursed down her cheeks. "Mary!" he lifted his bowed head. "You remember the old days when we were poor, how we longed to get rich? We did get rich, and I learned to care, yes, to care, the money which forged fetters of gold around my neck! What was money to me, do you think, when my children and my wife, and especially my wife, were daily drifting away from me? You despised me. You Mary were able to take your place in society - women adapt themselves to their surroundings far more easily than men do - and I - I was tired. So now I am best out of the way."

The low, desperate voice broke off in a kind of sob. He moved to the table for the revolver. Yes, he would do it now, in front of the woman who had ceased to love him - The weapon was not there.

had not cared. And why had the wealth, which he had spent the best years of his manhood in striving for, proved such dust and ashes to him when he lost it, he did not mind?

A look of intense bitterness crept into his eyes. Ah! he had loved her, the pretty village maiden he had made his wife. They had been happy in the poor little poverty-stricken home - happier far than he, at any rate had even been in Grosvenor Square. And then, when the money had begun to come in, and they had drifted apart, Mary had such a big house now to attend to; she had her visitors, her gayeties, her numerous rounds of what she called her "duty" calls. It takes three generations to make a gentleman, she said; it only takes about three years to make a lady. He had never been a gentleman - nor would he be one; he knew; and he remembered her and the feeling of amazement, of shock, when he had seen his wife on the occasion of her presentation at court. Mary at twenty had been shy, awkward, a typical country miss, nothing more; at thirty she had had the ease and gracefulness of a young queen. She had carried herself superbly; her little head, on which the diamond tiara had seemed to him to twinkle with mocking derisive eyes, was poised proudly on her slender throat. She wore her court train, her feathers, as if she had been accustomed to such gorgeous raiment all her life. Mary had very soon adapted herself to the life of a grande dame.

And then the children. In the cottage home they had been a never-ending source of delight. Well he remembered how, when he came back in the evenings tired from his work, they would meet him in the doorway, these four beings whom he loved - the baby crowing on Mary's shoulder, Harry the boy, Molly, the eldest girl, clinging to her skirts. Then after tea, they would gather round the fire, and with Mary sitting beside him, her soft arm round his neck, they two would talk eagerly of the business which he had just in an humble way begun to start, and make plans, half jokingly, of wonderful things which they were going to do "when they got rich."

Harry, the boy, should be sent to a good school - he had always sorely felt the lack of education in his own life, and determined that if wealth ever did come to him his son should not suffer in the same way. Molly and baby - the darlings, they were so pretty - they should have the loveliest frocks! That money could buy! They had to be, unlike most day dreams, they had actually been realized.

Harry had had a good education, and in his first term at Harrow he had realized bitterly that his son despised him. He was "common" and Harry was a gentleman - made so by his gold.

And now that the Harrow days were over and a crack regiment had been entered by the idle, good-for-nothing young man, who would never have had the brains or the energy to make the fortune which his father had, he knew that he was despit of still more.

Molly and baby - Kathleen she was called now - had "the loveliest frocks that money could buy." They had inherited their mother's beauty, while "poor papa's bourgeoisie," as they called it, had been fortunately left out. Mary was married to the eldest son of a peer; Kathleen, the younger girl, was expected to make an equally brilliant match. There had been a rich young American at her feet all the season. In the few hurried conversations which, in her whirl of social distractions, Mary found time to have with him she was marked to "be" - "to bring the things to a satisfactory climax" that this ball was being given to-night.

Well, they were well provided for, those who he was leaving behind. If they were going to be left helpless he would not have done it, would not have recklessly gambled away his fortune, would not have thrown away his life; but they were left with settled prospects. Harry's money had been settled on him when he was aged; and Molly could touch the girls would have wealthy husbands, and Mary -

A shadow fell across the stern, grave face. Mary was a beautiful woman; she was fairly young, under fifty still; she would marry again.

Doubtless, after the first shock was over, she would be glad to be released from the "common" husband of whom he had guessed long ago, she was ashamed.

The clock on the mantelpiece chimed out twelve. Without a moment's hesitation he stood up. With his right hand he raised the revolver to his temple.

The door opened and his wife came into the room. Quick as lightning he hid the deadly weapon behind his back. Anxiously he searched her face. No, she had not seen the revolver, had not surmised what he was going to do.

"John, I have come to fetch you. Is it not rather rude for you to hide yourself in here, away from all your guests?" She came slowly toward him. Yes, Mary was certainly a most beautiful woman, a young looking woman, too. In her white brocade dress, diamonds shimmering on her neck and in her hair, she looked almost like one of her own daughters.

And yet he had loved her best in the sunbonnet and print frock. He looked at her angrily. Why had she interrupted him? And then he almost laughed. Good heavens! He must loathe this, "too, too solid flesh" of his, indeed, to be in such a hurry to make an end of his life! He was only delayed a few minutes; he could kill himself directly she had gone again.

"I hate my guests," he answered. He spoke roughly. "What do they come for? To feast in my house, drink my champagne and laugh at me behind my back directly they have left!"

"John! I wish you would not talk like that. You won't come to the ball-room, then?" "No."

"Why not?"

"Sir," said Maria, addressing herself to the officer in command, "please to inform me why you think enter my brother's house tonight?"

"Certainly, noble lady. It is by order of the governor-general. The Lady Matilda de Esthume must accompany us without delay. You need be under no apprehension, however, as to the treatment she will receive; for I pledge you my honor that not a word shall be addressed to her otherwise than as becomes her rank."

"O, sir," replied Maria, "I wonder to see you employed on such an errand; for I have always heard you spoken of as an honorable knight."

"I can assure you, lady, that the employment is not to my taste; but, as a soldier, I have no choice but, punctually to obey the orders of my general. Be pleased, therefore, to bring down to the Lady Matilda; we can delay no longer, and you must yourself see that escape is hopeless."

Maria did, in fact, see too plainly that the blow was neither to be evaded nor resisted, and with heavy heart entered the chamber of her young friend. For a moment she stood in silence before the bed and contemplated the unhappy Matilda as she slept, - slept indeed profoundly, yet not peacefully. Her breath came heavily and hurriedly; ever and anon, with a convulsive motion of her hand, she seemed striving to repel some threatening vision; and amid many inarticulate sounds might be distinguished the oft-repeated name of Adolf, which she uttered in the tone of one who calls for help in danger.

Tears flowed from Maria's eyes; for the spectacle moved her inmost heart, which was still more deeply touched by the thought of the sad-making example soon to follow. But, painful as it was to be the bearer of evil tidings, there was no time to be lost; a few moments' delay might all the chamber with rude soldiers. To spare her friend a worse shock, she must hasten to startle her from her slumbers; taking therefore, Matilda's hand, she roused her with the words -

"Awake! awake dear friend; I have that to say to you which will not brook delay."

TO BE CONTINUED.

"FETTERS OF GOLD."

He sat alone in the big, luxuriously furnished library. The room was oppressively still, but from without, through the closed double doors, came the faint strains of a languorous waltz. A grim smile curled slowly round the corners of his mouth. It really was rather comic to make one's exit from the world in the same way as a "Marche Funebre," but of dance music!

He touched almost affectionately the revolver lying on the table in front of him. It was expensive, the best of its kind, like everything else in this expensive house; it would not blunder; it would do its work well.

Just one pull at the trigger, and then - ah! - respite from misery, freedom from care - eternal sleep. He leaned back in his chair and his eyes strayed, half mechanically, to the little Sevres clock on the mantelpiece. Half past eleven. In another thirty minutes - at midnight - he had made up his mind to die.

Leaning back, with half closed eyes, he thought over his past life. It is said that the dying - and he, surely, was practically that - sometimes see their whole lives pass before them in full review, and now he was seeing his. He saw it all from the very beginning. The childhood in his grandmother's log cabin on the bank of the river, the flight, as a lad of sixteen, to England, because, in his miserable home, he had been treated worse than a dog; the poverty, the hardship, the marriage, when he was barely twenty, to a girl of seventeen, and then, just as if the young wife had acted as a magnet - as laughing, in those days he had often told her that she had - the gradual turning of his luck. He had "struck it" as the vulgar saying expressed it, and the man who had been little better than a beggar at twenty, had, at forty, become a millionaire.

A millionaire! He opened his eyes and glanced - the grim smile still on his face - round the splendid room. Who would have thought that the poor heaten, half starved little urchin of the log cabin was going to blossom out some day into a business genius? And who would have thought, too - and the smile grew grimmer - that the man who had proved himself to have such a splendid talent for organization, such a wonderful "grip" of his trade would be a fool at gambling, and fritter his vast fortune away?

His fingers strayed again to the weapon which was to bring him his freedom. To-night nobody knew anything; to-morrow it would be in all the papers that John Doran, the millionaire, was ruined.

His ruin had been creeping upon him stealthily for years. He had gambled - foolishly, heartlessly, recklessly. He had seen everything, all the money that he had striven for, in sweat and blood, slipping from his grasp, and he

"Not I," replied the Breton, as the dice rolled from his hand upon the table, "the game is not lost yet. See there, twelfth!"

And now it was Jehan's turn; he threw only six - so with an air of joy and triumph the Breton tucked the necklace under his arm, and Jean stood aside from the table, with bitterness and vengeance in his heart, but still a master of himself to put a good face on the matter, and even, with feigned good humor, to wish the winner luck with his prize. But for all this he was not at all disposed to let his adversary off so easily.

While the Breton was in conversation with another of his comrades, Jehan whispered something in the ear of those who stood next to him, and then called across the table.

"Now, comrade, as you have cleaned me out, you must give me another chance. I will set my share of this night's earnings against an equal sum; what say you?"

"Done; I'm always ready." Jehan took the dice, and in two casts threw eighteen. The other now took them up, and seemed, talking all the while, to hold them carelessly in his hand; the soldier who stood beside Jehan narrowly watched him; and now they distinctly noticed how the Breton again brought the dice to his lips, and by this device threw first ten, and then twelve.

"You have lost again, friend J. Han," he exclaimed. A tremendous blow of Jehan's fist was the answer. Blood gushed from the Breton's nose and mouth, and for a moment he stood stunned and motionless, so violent was the shock.

"You're a cheat, a thief!" shouted Jehan, now diving full vent to his fury; "I have not seen how you wotted the dice, and so now my money of me by false play? You shall give back all I have lost to-night, or by heaven -"

But the Breton, now recovered from his stupor, gave him no time to finish his speech, but rushed upon him, sword in hand, with a volley of oaths and curses. Jehan, too, was ready for the fight, and swore vehemently that he would have the Breton's blood. All ready the blades flashed in the lamp light and a bloody issue seemed inevitable, when suddenly an additional alarm, also in military equipment, appeared upon the scene.

The look of mingled command and reproach which the new-comer cast upon the combatants sufficiently indicated him to be one of their officers; and no sooner were they aware of his presence than with abashed looks they slunk aside, the curses died away upon their lips, and the swords were hastily returned to the scabbards. Jehan and the Breton eyed one another in a manner which showed that they did but postpone the termination of their contest to a more convenient season; meanwhile they followed the example of the rest, and drew near their commander, who now spoke:

"Are you ready, men?" he asked. "Ready, Messire de Cressines," was the answer.

"Remember, not a word spoken," proceeded the officer. "And remember, too, that the house to which this citizen will conduct you is under the especial protection of the governor; the first that lays a finger upon anything therein will bitterly repent it. Now, follow me."

The citizen alluded to, and who was about to serve as conductor to the French soldiers, was no other than Master Brakels, the same whose patriotic behavior had caused him to be expelled from the guild of the Cloth-workers. The whole party once in the street, Brakels took the lead, and silently led them through the darkness to the Spanish street, and the mansion of the Nieuwlands. Here the soldiers ranged themselves close to the walls, on either side of the door, drawing their very breath cautiously, so fearful were they of giving the alarm. Master Brakels tapped very gently, as though on an errand which required caution. In a few moments a woman's voice from within inquired who it was that knocked at so late an hour.

"Quick, open!" replied Brakels. "I come from Master Deconinck with an urgent message from the Lady Matilda. Be quick, for there is danger in every moment's delay."

At this reply, the servant suspecting no treason, immediately undrew the bolts, and opened the door with all the speed she could command; but what was her alarm when, at the heels of the Fleming, she saw that eight French soldiers had forced their way into the hall.

With a scream, which resounded through the house, she endeavored to make her escape; but in this she was prevented by Messire de Cressines, who seizing her by the arm, awed her into silence by his threatening gestures.

"Where is your mistress, the Lady Matilda?" he asked, in a tone of perfect coolness. "My lady retired to her chamber two hours ago, and is now asleep," stammered out the waiting maid in a frightened tone.

"Go to her," pursued de Cressines, "and bid her rise and dress herself; for that she must go with us on the instant. She will do well to attempt no resistance, for we are prepared to use force if necessary."

The girl hurried up stairs to the chamber of Maria, whom she forthwith awoke. "Lady," she exclaimed, "make haste and rise, the house is full of soldiers."

"What say you?" cried Maria, terrified, "soldiers in our house! What is it they want?" "They come to carry off the Lady Matilda; at this very instant. Make haste, I pray, for she is asleep, and I fear every moment lest they should enter her chamber."

In too much haste and astonishment to answer, Maria threw a loose dress on over her shoulders, and descended the stairs, where she found de Cressines still in the entrance hall. Two male servants, who had been awakened by the girl's scream, had been arrested and detained by the soldiers.

"Come, why don't you throw your arms around me, I suppose!"

As for Matilda, she could only look from one to the other in speechless wonder, hardly able to believe her eyes, so like her father did Adolf stand before her.

"Sir Adolf, now proceeded Diederick, "if you would secure success to your enterprise, we shall do well to start without delay, lest perchance, should an enemy or an unfaithful serf see you in your present guise, you not only risk your life but risk it fruitlessly."

The reasonableness of this caution was obvious, and the young knight immediately assented. "Farewell, noble lady!" he exclaimed, "farewell! Think sometimes of your servant Adolf."

But what words can describe the maiden's emotion as she heard those few and simple words? Hitherto she had looked only at the bright side of Adolf's chivalrous undertaking; she was once again to behold her beloved father! But now at once the thought flashed upon her, that the happiness was to be purchased at the price of her life - the loss of her good brother - for so she called the knight. A pang shot through her heart; but she was sufficiently mistress of herself to suppress her tears; and loosening the green veil, which formed a portion of her head dress.

"Take this," she said, "from the hands of your grateful sister; let it remind you of her who will never forget your noble deed; it is my own favorite color."

The knight received the pledge on bended knee, and with a look which spoke his thanks, he pressed it to his lips.

"Lady," he said, "so great a reward exceeds my power to bestow; but the day may come when it shall be given me to point my blood for the House of Flandres, and to show myself not unworthy of your gracious favor."

"Come, a truce to compliments," cried Diederick; "it is time we were gone."

With pain the youth and maiden heard the summons. Each spoke but one word more:

"Farewell, Matilda!" "Farewell, Adolf!"

The two knights hurried away; and passing out into the court-yard, mounted with all despatch. A few moments later and the streets of Bruges resounded with the heavy tramp of two horses, the last salutes which was heard under the gate towards Ghent.

CHAPTER XI.

In the year 1280 a terrible conflagration had caused the ruin of the old town-hall in the market place of Bruges, the wooden tower with which it was surrounded had perished in the flames; and all the charters and monuments of the city together with it. But in the lower part of the building some massive walls had resisted the general destruction, and some few chambers were still left standing, which were now used as a garret-house. At present these half ruined apartments were the chosen rendezvous of the French garrison; and there they whiled away their time in play and revelry.

A few days after Adolf of Nieuwlands' departure, eight of these foreign mercenaries found themselves together in one of the inmost recesses of the ruin. A large lamp of coarse earthenware was shed its yellow rays upon their swarthy faces, while a thick smoke curled upwards from its flame, and hung sullenly in the groinings of the vault. The walls still retained traces of decorative painting; an image of Our Lady, with the hands broken off, and the features defaced by time or violence, stood one end of the chamber. At a heavy oaken table sat four soldiers, intent upon the dice which they were playing; others stood by, looking on and following with interest the chances of the game. It was evident, however, that some other game was afoot than that in which these men were so much engaged; for, with helmets upon their heads and swords at their belts, they had all the appearance of being prepared for action.

Soon one of the players rose from the table, at the same time angrily dashing down the dice upon it. "That old Breton's hands are not clean!" he exclaimed; "else how should I lose fifty times running? A plague on the dice! I'll have done with them!"

"He is afraid to go on," cried the winner, with a provoking air of triumph. "What the fiend, Jehan! surely you are never cleaned out yet, man! I that the fashion in which you face the enemy?"

"Try once more, Jehan," said an other; "the luck can't go one way forever!"

The soldier addressed as Jehan stood for some moments in doubt, whether to try his luck again or not. At last, passing his hand within his shirt of mail, he drew from under it his last reserve, a necklace of fine pearls with richly wrought clasps of gold.

"There," he exclaimed, holding it out so that all might see, "I will stake these pearls against what you have won from me to-night. It is as fair a necklace as ever shone upon the neck of a Flemish lady! If I lose this, I have not a stiver left of the whole booty."

The Breton took the jewel into his hand, and scanned it curiously. "Well then, goes," he cried; "how many throws?"

"Two," replied Jehan; "you throw first."

The necklace lay upon the table, and over against it a heap of gold pieces. All eyes were fixed on the dice as they rolled, while the hearts of the players beat high with excitement. At the first throw, the Rukle dame Fortune seemed to be taking Jehan into favor again, for he threw ten, and his adversary but five. But while preparing to throw again, and full of hope that he might this time retrieve his losses, he suddenly observed that the Breton secretly put the dice to his mouth, and now intently convinced that it was not ill luck, but foul play, that had hitherto made him the loser. He took no notice, however, merely calling to his adversary.

"Come, why don't you throw your arms around me, I suppose!"

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