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**The Romance OF A Marriage.**

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I didn't mean to offend you, my dear," she says, conciliatingly. "I am sorry—no, I am not sorry that it is broken off. I can't say that; but I am sorry that you have met him."

"Ah! so am I," retorts Paula, with a heavy sigh. "And—now I think I will go to bed. It is late, isn't it?" with a glance at the clock on the mantel-shelf.

"Won't you have something—a cup of tea?" says Alice, suggesting the feminine comforter.

But Paula laughs wearily.

"No, Alice; even a cup of tea would be useless. If—!"—throwing up her white arms with a despairing gesture—"if I could be only sure of sleeping, and—forgetting; but"—and she covers her eyes with her hands—"I know I shall not! I shall lie all night through thinking! Oh, Heaven! if it were not wicked to wish oneself dead!"

Alice stands and turns pale, awed into silence by the outburst of hopeless despair.

"You will—will get over it," she says, weakly.

"Shall I?" says Paula, dropping her hands and staring at her face in the glass. "Perhaps so. Oh, yes. One gets over so many things. Don't they say it is impossible to die of a broken heart? It doesn't matter; my heart is not broken, but"—and she puts her hand to her side with a strange gesture—"it feels as if it were bruised and beaten."

There is silence for a moment. Alice still looking at her with that mixture of pity and curiosity in the blue eyes which it is well Paula did not see or notice.

"Are you there still?" says Paula, raising her eyes. "Please go and leave me. I—shall be quite well by the morning," and Alice goes out quietly.

She pauses outside the door to listen, with a strange look on her face, a look almost of fear, and her face pale.

"She—she won't do anything rash," she murmurs. "No! Paula is not the

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girl to do that. But—but—it has told upon her awfully. I wonder how the major arranged it? How clever he must be! Poor Paula!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

"No, I am at home to no one. Tell them I'm out, ill, dead, what you like, only keep them from bothering me; and oh, do, pray do, take some of those flowers out of the room. They seem to stifle me; I believe they are swallowing all the air I want."

And Flossie pauses in her restless pacing of the room to throw up her arms wearily—white arms from which the lace falls as she lifts them, like drapery from a statue.

It is two days since Sir Herrick sent the little note into the greenhouse; two days since he left London, and she has heard nothing. Flossie, unaccustomed to suspense of any kind, the pampered favourite of the hour, for whom all things are made smooth and easy, has borne the first day's suspense very well. It is true she has scarcely eaten anything, and has been listless and restless by turns, snubbing even the faithful Weston; but as the evening of the second day approaches and no sign comes to tell her how her plot has worked, Flossie's spirit begins to wax impatient. Anything was better than this silence.

Has he explained everything to this country girl, and has she accepted him and made it up, or has he left her, and is he coming back to her—Flossie?

That is the question; and as she asks it of herself repeatedly the suspense grows intolerable.

Intolerable seems the dainty room, in which not one spot or article but is in perfect taste; intolerable is even the reflection of her own pretty face in the Venetian mirrors, and even the flowers, the flowers which Flossie loves best of all things—next to diamonds.

Weston signs to a footman, and hands him out the glittering epergnes and glass stands containing the de-throned favourites, and then stands and looks at her mistress with an anxious expression, tempered with admiration.

Never has the maid seen her mistress look more bewitchingly beautiful than she does this evening. In ordinary, Flossie is rather too pale; but this evening, there is a dazzling touch of carmine in the clear cheeks, and a brilliant light in her restless eyes.

She is dressed in one of the new tea-ropes, a loose garment that yet in some subtle way manages to indicate the supple form; its colour is of a dainty shell-like pink; there is soft lace at the throat and falling from the short sleeves; a model of airy, dainty, fawn-like beauty, fit for the case of an Ety. But Weston's admiration is tempered with anxiety.

"Do you feel hot, miss?" she asks. "Hot? Yes, and cold, too, by turns," says Flossie, with a sharp sigh. "At one moment the room seems stifling, then, when I think I'll ask you to open the window, it feels too cold. It feels cold now," and she sinks on to the couch and draws her arms across her bosom.

Weston comes nearer and looks at her, with her under-lip caught in her teeth apprehensively. "If you can't take care, miss, you'll have one of those awful colds—one like you had last autumn. Shall I send down to the manager and tell him you won't play to-night?"


Weston comes nearer and looks at her head. "I won't disappoint them. I am not ill, only upset, and I sha'n't put them in a hole for that; just in the middle of the run of the piece, too. No, I shall be all right directly. Get the Bradshaw, and see whether there is any train from Powis to-night."

Weston finds the Bradshaw and proceeds to make the hunt with the usual knitting of the brows; but Flossie snatches the book out of her hand.

"How slow you are! I hate to see anybody bumbling over a Bradshaw. I don't think anybody understands it but myself. There! I beg your pardon, but you don't spell Powis with a B, and that is where you are looking. Yes, there is a train at nine o'clock. Perhaps he will come by that. Put it away again and let me have some tea, and tell them to put some more green in it. Bad for me? Yes, of course it's bad for me; I don't know anything that isn't bad nowadays. But I'll have what I want, whether it's bad or good," and Weston goes out with a sigh to fulfil her mistress's commands.

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But when the tea comes the imperious mistress declares that she doesn't want it, and it is only by dint of much persuasion on Weston's part that she is prevailed upon to drink a cup and eat a thin wafer.

"I'm afraid you'll be ill, miss," says Weston, prophetically. "You've had no dinner to speak of; won't you lie down and rest; there's quite half-an-hour before you need dress for the theatre."

"Lie down and rest!" echoes Flossie, impatiently. "You speak as if I had broken my leg, or was just recovering from a long illness. I hate lying down and resting. Another hour, is it? I wish it was time now. After all, there is nothing like work. What is it the man says in that book Sir Herrick"—her face flushes at his name—"let me? Something about labour being the best way to forget one's troubles. Well, I think he's right. Anyway, I never feel so happy as when I'm at work. I'll come and try over those new songs," she says, jumping up, and narrowly escaping overturning the fragile tea service.

She goes to the piano, and her bird-like voice etoain etoain etoain she soon warbles of it.

"It is no use, I can't sing. It is to be hoped I shall sing better than that to-night, or there'll be no encores and plenty of hissing."

Weston laughs reassuringly.

"If you were to stand before them and go through your part in dumb show, they'd encore it, Miss," she says, confidently.

"I think they would—the fools!" says Flossie, scornfully. "No, no, I won't call them that; they have been good friends to me. I wish—and her voice falters—"I wish I'd stuck to them altogether, and made no other—friends. Isn't it time now? At any rate, I'll go up and dress," and she goes out of the room with a listless sigh, her tea-robe draping round her like the pink threads of an orchid.

"Tell them," she says to Weston, as she steps into her carriage, "tell them to keep Sir Herrick, if he comes, and I happen to be late. They are to take in some cigars and brandy-and-soda, or champagne, and to tell him that I want to see him particularly. But he won't come to-night," she adds, inaudibly; "I feel that he won't."

She is very silent and very talkative by turns on the way to the theatre; but when they arrive there, and she sees the crowd waiting outside the door, her face brightens.

"After all, the man is right," she murmurs, with a hard, dry laugh; "there is nothing like work, nothing."

And as if to prove it, to herself at rate, she plays to-night as, they say,

she has never played before. Her voice is as clear as a bell—her smile as bright as a patch of sunlight in a green meadow; never has she danced with greater abandon and clearer poetic meaning, and when her song—the great, much-advertised song—comes on, she executes it as freshly as if she were singing it for the first time.

There are five encores to-night, and so many bouquets that the acting manager has to come on to help carry them.

From the beginning to the end of the burlesque it is the same story of triumph and success; and when she goes down to the dressing-room, after appearing before the curtain twice in answer to the frantic calls of the delighted audience, she finds the manager, opera-hat in hand, his face beaming, his eyes glistening.

"Couldn't let you go without thanking you my dear!" he says. The manager "my dears" all the actresses at the Frivolity. "Splendid—really splendid! You outdid yourself, you did, indeed! We shall run the piece a year—twelve months, mark my words! And—ahem!"—with a little, significant cough—"I shall do myself the honour of calling on you to-morrow. We must be just, my dear. It shall never be said that the manager of the Frivolity was a niggard!" Which meant that Flossie was to be offered another ten guineas a week.

She nodded and smiled, and put her tiny, warm hand into his round, red one, and passed into her dressing-room, and sank into a chair, all the colour fading from under the paint and rouge in an instant.

"Be quick," she gasped. "Take off these things; the place is stiff. . . and Weston hurriedly undressed her. "Now I am as cold as ice," she said, shivering, and Weston as quickly wrapped her in her furs.

"You have overdone it, miss," she said, reproachfully. "I thought you would when I watched you from the wings. But it was beautiful."

Flossie sighed.

"And it is all over," she said. "I wish, if I were strong enough, that it could last twice as long. I forget everything when I am on the stage; it is only when I am off that I—I—Tell them to be quick with the brougham."

"It is here, miss," said Weston. "We are rather later than usual. That last dance and encore took up the time."

"Be quick, then," she said. "He may have come and gone before we get back," and she left the dressing-room and made her way to the stage-door, followed by the admiring and envious glances of the crowd congregated in the passages. Many a girl sighed and wished that she possessed the beauty and the talent of the great actress. There was not one of them, perhaps, who carried so anxious and fearful a heart within her bosom as that of the popular Flossie Hamilton.

"Has Sir Herrick called?" was her first words as she entered the drawing-room, now lit up by the wax candles in their pink shades.

"No, miss," was the answer. "Lord Fossie and—"

"I am at home to no one," she said, curtly, "excepting Sir Herrick," as she sank on to the couch with a sigh.

Then she sprang up suddenly and threw her fur cloak from her shoulders, and almost tore her bonnet from her head.

"Take them away," she said, "and tell them to bring some champagne, and," calling after the astonished Weston, "tell them I am at home to nobody," and with a laugh, a reckless laugh of desperation, she went to the piano and began rattling off a wild mazurka.

Weston brought the wine and poured out a glassful, and Flossie drank it thirstily, recklessly.

(To be Continued.)

**Fashion Plates.**

SMART COAT DRESS.



Pattern 3120 is here portrayed. It is cut in 7 sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. Size 38 will require 4 1/2 yards of 44 inch material.

Gabardine in a new shade of brown was selected in this instance. The vest, belt and collar is of sand colored satin with worsted embroidery for decorations. Taffeta, velvet, serge, duvetyne or broad cloth, are also suitable for this model. Width of dress at lower edge is about 1 1/2 yard.

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A SIMPLE APRON MODEL.



Pattern 3122 was selected for this style. It is cut in 4 sizes: Small, 32-34; Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42; and Extra Large, 44-46 inches bust measure. Size Medium will require 4 1/2 yards of 36 inch material. One could develop this in white drill, linen or lawn, with tape binding in white or colors. It is good also for gingham, lawn, percale, chambray, sateen and alpaca.

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