

DOOR DOCUMENT

UNDER A SHADOW.

Continued.

"I thought that I heard something strange," said Edgar.
"How quickly and well!" cried Nugent.
A few rapid strokes brought them quite close to the opposite bank; there, from the bushes still whirling, they knew something had gone down.

"Shall we dive after it?" asked Edgar, and Nugent said:
"I will know just the spot where it disappeared."
The next moment they both saw the face of a woman floating on one half minute on the surface of the river, then it disappeared.

"The next moment Nugent had plunged into the river after it. How silent the moon and stars were while he fought that pallid struggle! how silent the trees and the wind! All nature seemed listening and waiting. In a few moments Nugent rose to the surface.

"Edgar?" he cried. Another rapid stroke of the oars and Edgar was close to him. "It is a woman!" he exclaimed; "help me lift her in the boat."
She was raised over the side, the water dripping from her garments and from her long hair. They laid her down while Nugent climbed into the boat after her.

"How to the shore," he said; "we must raise the boat before we can do anything for her."
A few seconds—the boat seemed to fly over the water—a few seconds, and they were close to the green bank. Edgar leaped out, drew the rope belonging to the boat, and fastened it to the trunk of a tree then they knelt to look at the woman whose life they had saved.

"She is not dead," said Nugent; and then the moon showed them a beautiful face—more beautiful than words could tell, even as they saw it there, cold, white and still.
"She is not dead," repeated Edgar. Carrying her up the bank, he laid her on a bed of moss, and she lay there, cold, white and still.

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"Where is my baby?" she cried.
"Poor little baby! we are going to find it a little grave in the sunshine, where the flowers can grow near it," said the doctor.

"Poor little baby! Now you must talk no more."
She caught his hand in her own.
"Who saved me?" she asked. "I went to the river—my best friend is dead. Who saved me?"

"I saved you," replied Nugent.
The dark dreamy eyes looked sadly at him.
"You did not know," she said. "You thought you were doing a good deed when you took the dead child and the living mother from the river. Ah! my heaven! we were better there; there was only my body left to die—my heart and my soul died days ago."

"Poor child!" said Nugent, and he turned away to hide the tears that filled his eyes. Alison caught the doctor's hand again. "It was very good of him," she moaned; "but he did not know—he could not have known. You will be kind to me, and let me lie in peace."
"Have you no one thing to live for?" asked Nugent.

"No," she cried, with a sudden passion of pain; "not one single thing—before Heaven, not one."
"Poor child!" he said again.
Then the doctor, with the two friends, withdrew, leaving Bebo to take off the wet clothes and administer the sleeping draught.

"Will she live?" asked Nugent eagerly.
"I should say not," replied the doctor; "the child of the river would be long dead if she were not dead already."
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"It is true, said the doctor, 'she has thrown herself in, with the dead child in her arms. There is no more to be said there can be no doubt,' he continued, 'but that the hapless lady was quite insane.'"

He wrote to England, to Messrs. Walton, who at once sent one of their confidential clerks to Florence. He found that there was nothing else to be done. Alison Trente had undoubtedly, in her delirium, taken the dead child in her arms, and plunged into the river with it. The clerk made quite sure, as he believed, of the intelligence before he returned to England. Messrs. Walton waited some time before they told the news to their client.

I reached him one evening when Alison Trente had just given place to winter, and he was alone at Hargrave Park, preparing for his coming marriage in the spring. There he received the solicitor's letter telling him that Alison Trente had drowned herself. She had taken her dead child in her arms, and plunged into the Arno; her body had not been seen, and, in all probability, never would be recovered.

He was for a few minutes terribly shocked. The words 'her dead child' horrified him first, then the notion of Alison Trente had drowned herself, with her loving heart and genius, died!

"Of course it was right, he argued, that before his marriage he should give up all these things and live in peace with Alison Trente. He remembered what he had said to her on that dreary, fragrant night, when the boat had glided down the deep, silent river.

"If ever you leave me, I shall come back to this very spot and die myself!" he had said, and he had seen her there with a mocking smile on her lips. He felt annoyed with her then for saying that, but how true they were!

"She had been right," he thought, "she had loved him that losing him should drive her to death!"
Then his fancy wandered to the masked ball and the tall figure in the dark domino.

"You have the line of murder on your hand," the fortune-teller had said to him, and he was true. He had driven this helpless girl to her death as surely as though he had plunged her into the water with his own hands.

So the little Alison slept the deep sleep that comes from drugs, the little one who had had her own daughter, and had never recovered from the loss of her, cut off from the dead child's head some of the soft, silken, golden down. She meant to give it to the poor mother who recovered.

"They buried the little one in the green cemetery at Florence. There was no name to put on the little gravestone—no name, no age; but Nugent would have a small white marble cross with a cluster of white lilies at the foot."

Then they had nothing to think about but Alison. Would she recover? If health or strength returned to her, would she regain her senses? She was terribly ill. One strange delusion never left her when Nugent came into the room to see what progress she was making, she always called him Arthur. He was not unkind to Alison in appearance. A mother's love came into her eyes, and she would look at him with a child's love, and she would look at him with a child's love, and she would look at him with a child's love.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
A GRANDMOTHER-IN-LAW.
A month had passed, and Alison was able to sit up. Once again she began to realize the terrible shock of her lover's desertion and her child's death. It had been a long marriage; she had not wanted to live, she had not cared to live. She had turned her face full often to the wall with a dreary moon, hoping she would die. She had refused the doctor's medicine, she had refused food; but then as he had said, she was young—youth has a strength and vitality of its own hard to defeat.

After a time she began to watch the sunshine, to listen to the birds, to talk about the flowers, and to feel that there was some little beauty left in the world after all. From that time she never mentioned her lover's name. She made no inquiries about him; she took it for granted that he had ceased to feel any interest in her. She hoped he would believe her dead.

There had been a terrible commotion at the villa when it was found out that she had disappeared. On that night the old nurse had slept soundly, never waking until the morning sunbeams touched her face. The excuse she gave afterward was that she had been awake for two nights, and was worn out. When the warm, bright sunbeams did wake her, she turned to her patient, and saw that she was no longer there.

At first she felt no alarm, believing that she had gone into the next room to see the child. She went there, but, to her alarm, the child as well as the nurse was gone. Then she cried out for help; the servants came running to her. The doctor was sent for, he severely reprimanded the nurse, who went with violent protestations of having done her best.

"She has drowned herself, sir! I know she would," she said to the doctor. "She was always muttering in her sleep about a woman's face in the river. She has gone to the river!"
The doctor knew that it was probable "she has gone," and she has the child with her," he said slowly.
They went—for it was morning light now—they went to the river-side. There were traces of hurried steps, and to the nurse's eyes the most convincing proof of all, the white lace she had wrapped around the baby's head, and the flowers that she had scattered over it, were traced from the room where the child lay down to the river's bank.

"Heaven help you, my good friend, you will have a sorry life of it, I fear, a mother-in-law is had sometimes; but a grand-mother-in-law!"

Lord Carlyne, who had pleased himself by picturing the delight of traveling with his young wife, found himself hampered with an invalid lady, who required close carriage and warm rooms. Besides which, Madame D'Isio watched him with Argus eyes. It was all very well, he thought, as he seemed to be sincerely attached to Camilla, but he was to be trusted? There had been something in Florence—her son had not exactly told her what, but a kind of entanglement and what had happened one night he had again.

For Camilla's sake she considered herself bound to keep a watchful eye on him. She made a point of inquiring rigorously into the hours of his absence—where had he been? whom had he seen? She had another habit, too, which annoyed him greatly—he watched him, furiously with half-closed eyes. The earl did not find his life remarkably pleasant the constant presence of Madame D'Isio was a terrible torment to him. In any way she displeased his young wife, she, all tears, flew to Madame Trente, then Madame would lecture him, and then she would lecture him, and then she would lecture him.

Then his wife weeping, full of reproaches and complaints, would weary him into asking forgiveness.

"It was always the earl of England, if in return, he presumed to say one word to Madame, that stately lady with imperious grace went on her knees to the wistful, then his wife weeping, full of reproaches and complaints, would weary him into asking forgiveness.

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but she had read of a young girl, an artist whose name was Assita Ferrari, a girl who would have been one of the finest geniuses in the world had she lived. She had been born an artist. She had painted a few pictures of rare merit, then the doom of woman was upon her. She fell in love; as her love grew her genius was marred; when her love reached its height her hand lost its cunning, and she died disappointed both in heart and love.

"I will call myself Assita Ferrari," thought Alison; the very name and memory of Alison Trente shall die from the face of the earth—lost, guilty, wretched Alison! Assita Ferrari shall atone for Alison's sin. I have lived for art and it has lost me. I will now live for art.

She reached Rome, and was more successful than she had ever hoped to be. The sale of the locket and the ring procured her three hundred pounds. She smiled a faint and smile as she saw the little heap of gold.

"I shall eat only bread and fruit; I shall drink nothing but coffee and water," she said, so that her living will not cost me much. This will last me all the year; I am studying.

She took a pretty little room and entered herself as a student in the best art school in Rome. How she worked. No man ever toiled harder. She denied herself almost everything; she studied far into the night; she rose and resumed her studies in the early morning. When she had painted till she could no longer hold a brush she would read. She read all the great authorities on the art of painting; she read the lives of all eminent painters; she spent whole days in the picture-galleries drinking in deep draughts from the very fountains of art.

She was diligent and humble as a child; she began at the beginning. On the first day, when she with some pride showed her master her greatest efforts, pictures and sketches which she thought very excellent, but he said to her: "You are almost self-taught."

"Yes," replied Alison; "I had lessons some years ago. I have taught myself since."
"The first thing that you have to do is to forget all you know, to unlearn all that you have learned, that you may get on."

He was struck with the docile, intelligent manner in which she obeyed him. "You are obedient," said Signor Claudio; "that is the first step towards success."
Yes, she was obedient enough; she resolutely put away from her all dreams of color, all her conceptions of great pictures, and worked at the first lessons of a beginner.

"I shall never succeed!" she asked one day of Signor Claudio.
"Yes," he replied; "you are a true artist; you live in your art; you will succeed."
"Have I not genius," she said to him again, "or only talent?"

"You have genius," he replied; "and what is more, you have industry. My experience teaches me that one without the other is useless."
To be continued.

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