

The Earl's Mistake

"I see," she says, with a little wail of despair, "it was true! You have grown weary of me! You no longer love me!"

With a heart whose beating seems to stifle her, Carrie listens and waits for his response. But still he remains silent, his face, white and troubled, turned away from her.

"No longer!" goes on the sweet voice, reproachfully, despairfully. "Should I not rather say that you never loved me, that it was but a passing fancy on your part, an amusement to pass away the time? Ah, Cecil, Cecil and I had given all my heart and soul to you!"

He turns to her then with a gesture half desperate.

"For heaven's sake say no more!" he almost pleads. "It has been a cruel, cursed mistake! Say no more! I have wronged you deeply, past reparation!"

Carrie pants, and leans against the trunk of a palm with her hand pressed against her lips to keep back the cry of anguish that trembles toward them.

"So cruelly or more unintentionally, if I could bring back the past, I would do so with my life; but, great heaven! how can I tell you what must be told!"

His hand closed tightly on her arm. She puts both hands in his.

"Cecil, tell me! I can hear it—I am strong. What have I not borne your desertion, and is there anything worse to bear than that?" and her eyes grow moist.

He raises his head to answer, but at the moment the music ceases, and two or three persons saunter toward them.

He rises hastily, as if he feared to be seen with her.

"Come back when the next dance begins," he says, in a hoarse whisper. "I must see you again—I have much to tell you."

She inclines her head, and with hurried steps and pale, agitated face, he leaves her by a door opposite that leading to the ball-room.

Zenobia sits for a moment or two looking after him, with a strange smile on her face; it is a smile of deep satisfaction, and even triumph, but it gives place instantly to her usual serene one as Lord Ferndale enters and comes up to her.

"What, princess?" he says, "sitting here alone, and all unattended?"

"Questions to your whereabouts! Besides, you have promised me this dance, you know."

A fleet shade of annoyance and perplexity crossed Zenobia's face, then it cleared again.

"You shall have it, Lord Ferndale," she said, "on condition that you bring me back here at the close. I have promised to have a chat with a very old friend."

"Lady or gentleman, princess?" he asked.

"Can you ask?" she replied, with a brilliant smile; and Carrie watched her glide away, laughing softly, as if there were no such person as Lord Cecil.

Pale and trembling, Carrie emerged from her hiding-place.

The ferryer, who had leaned again, and utterly unable to face the ball-room, she sank into the seat from which Cecil and Zenobia had just risen, and sat with her hands clasped, her eyes fixed like one in mental agony.

What she thought she scarcely realized; she felt as if the heart within her had suddenly grown cold and dead—as if a dark cloud of bereavement had fallen upon and crushed her.

In a mingled confusion of the two voices, her lover's and this fair, hateful woman's, ran mockingly in her ears.

"Zenobia!" he had called her, and she had called him "Cecil!" And yes—great heaven!—she had spoken of love between them, as if she, the hateful woman, and not Carrie, were his lover and his promised wife.

"Am I going mad?" she asked herself, with a wild laugh, her lips white and twisted; "or am I asleep and reaming? Flippa—gazing helplessly round—Flippa, wake me! I have had a hideous nightmare!"

Then, even as she spoke, her eyes fell upon the scarlet domino which Zenobia had worn and left lying on the seat. With a start, as if she had seen some loathsome reptile, Carrie sprung to her feet, gazing down at it pantingly.

"No! no! It is no dream! It is all true, and he loves her! What shall I do?" and with a low cry of agony she sank on the seat again and covered her face with her hands, that she might torture herself by going over every word she had heard pass between them.

Suddenly the music commenced, and at the sound she remembered the appointment Lord Cecil had made, and she again sprung to her feet. She would wait for them; confront them both, and—then, as her eyes fell upon the crimson domino, another idea struck her. She had heard this woman tell Lord Ferndale to bring her back after this dance, whereas Lord Cecil would be back almost directly. With a shudder of loathing she picked up the scarlet domino with her finger tips, and threw it round her, then, with a trembling hand, she drew the hood over her head and slipped on the mask.

Both women were much of the same height, and, in the scarlet domino with the concealing hood and mask, pure-hearted Carrie looked Zenobia to the inch.

She had scarcely time to draw the cloak round her and cover her hands before Lord Cecil entered.

He was still pale, but the storm of indignation had passed, and he was calm.

He looked round to see if any one beside the clock figure in the seat was near the fernery, then he went up and stood beside the one hand resting on the back of her seat, his lips tightly set.

"Zenobia," he said, and Carrie knew by the tone of his voice how fiercely he was struggling for calm and composure. "I have come back to speak to you for the last time. You speak of no suffering; do you think there was no suffering for me? Zenobia, I loved you with a passion so deep, so true, that while I live I shall have the scars of it."

Involuntarily Carrie uttered a low cry of anguish and held her hand to her throat.

He winced and bit his lips.

"Do not speak—do not say one word,

and make my task harder than it is, Zenobia. The time when we loved—and I—passed; it can never, it must never be recalled. Regrets are vain and useless, and can only torture us both to no avail. Zenobia, since we parted much has happened; I, who thought that I should never have again heart enough to feel one spark of love for woman, have met and loved a young and pure-hearted girl."

Carrie's head sank, and she drew a long breath.

"Yes, it is hard to tell," he said, biting his lip, "but it is best for both of us, Zenobia, that you should know the truth. This lady will be my wife!"

He sighed, and paused a moment. Summon all the pride which you possess, Zenobia, and obliterate the past from your mind—as I do. Let us be to each other as if we had never met."

He waited a moment, looking down at the mask, frowning and wondering faintly, in his trouble, at her silence, then he went on.

"You may ask why this should be, I answer, because in the memory of the past there is danger for me, though there may and will be, I trust, none for you. But as for me, I could never see your face, never hear your voice without a pang, with remembering that once you were the one woman the world held for me, the woman for whose love I would have died. So, Zenobia, let us part as friends if you will, but never again in case the Heavens know that in my heart and soul I am true to the girl who has given me her young heart, but—he hesitates—"but I should not answer for myself if from the shadow of the past there rose the Zenobia whom I so passionately loved and whom I pray Heaven I may forget."

His voice, hoarse with emotion, sank almost to a whisper, but Carrie caught every word, and like a knell it rang in her heart. It was all true, then; he had loved this beautiful princess—loved her so dearly that he dared not run the risk of meeting with her again in case the Heavens know that in my heart and soul I am true to the girl who has given me her young heart, but—he hesitates—"but I should not answer for myself if from the shadow of the past there rose the Zenobia whom I so passionately loved and whom I pray Heaven I may forget."

"Good-bye, Zenobia," he said in a low voice. "In time to come, some years hence perhaps, when you have found some man more worthy of you, we may meet on equal terms; but, till then, I pray Heaven that I may see your fair face no more."

As he spoke he held out his hand; but no hand stretched forth from the scarlet domino to meet it.

"So be it," he said, gravely. "It were better so. Farewell, Zenobia!" and, inspired by that madness which falls on the sins of men where women are concerned, he bent his head to touch her hand with his lips.

As he did so, with a cry of horror, the clock figure rose, a white hand threw back the hood and tore the mask away, and Carrie's fair young face confronted him, with blazing eyes and panting lips.

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"Carrie!" he cried, and instinctively he put out his hand, but with a gesture of scorn she shrank back.

"Don't touch me!"

"Don't touch me!" she said, and Lord Zenobia's arm falls to his side. For a moment they stand regarding each other, Carrie's hand pressed to her forehead, her face as white as death, her eyes fixed, not on him, but on vacancy.

Lord Cecil is the first to speak.

"Carrie," he says, but still her gaze goes beyond him as if she were conversing with her misery—"Carrie, why have you done this? and he points to Zenobia's scarlet domino. With a mechanical movement she lets the cloak fall from her white shoulders, and shudders as it slips rustling to the ground, but she does not answer him. "Why did you assume this disguise and play the spy?"

At this the blood flies to her pale face, but only for a moment.

"Could you not trust me?"

"I trusted you," she says, with a smile that is more scornful and full of despair than a torrent of words. "Have I not trusted you—Lord Cecil?" and she turns her eyes upon him with a mixture of indignation and anguish that smites to the heart. "Could any girl trust you more than I have done? I gave you my heart, my whole self, and you have requited me after the fashion of men!"

Her voice quivers, but she keeps the tears from her eyes with an effort that his gaze droops before hers, and he folds his arms with an air of sorrowful resignation.

"I trusted you with all a woman has to give, Lord Cecil—heart and soul, and in return you have given me what?"

Her voice breaks, and the tears well to her eyes, but she forces them back.

"Carrie," he says in a low voice, "will you listen to me? I can explain—"

"No doubt," she breathes in bitterly, with a scornful smile that brings the color away all that I have heard between this lady and yourself! You can explain away the fact that you were her lover before—I made you love me!"

"For heaven's sake!" he ejaculates; but she stops him with a gesture of cold impatience.

"Yes, it is true," she wails, more to herself than to him, "I knew it at the time. I felt it burn me with shame. Some prophetic instinct assured me that the time would come when I should rue it; and it has come. But, oh, heaven! why did you put one hand to her heart, why did you tell me that you loved me; why did you let me believe that you had never loved any one else, that there was another woman at the first sight of whom you would forget me? Why, why did you do it?"

He does not answer. He knows that no words he can say will avail with her in her present mood.

"I—I," she says, with a little pant, "was only a simple girl, a farmer's daughter, content and happy before you came. Was it worth while to deceive so insignificant a person as myself, Lord Cecil? There were other women fairer than I am in your own rank of life with whom you could have amused yourself, and who would, perhaps, have cared little or nothing for the fact that while I live I shall have the scars of it."

Involuntarily Carrie uttered a low cry of anguish and held her hand to her throat.

He winced and bit his lips.

"Do not speak—do not say one word,

pleads, but she shakes her head defiantly.

"Not nothing you could say would wipe away what I have seen and heard. Perhaps you do not know that I have been hidden here for the last quarter of an hour, that I have heard every word that has passed between you; that I have seen your face which has spoken more eloquently than your words! No, Lord Cecil, even though you may try and persuade yourself that it is me whom you love, you could not convince me!"

"Carrie!" he says, almost in despair.

"Not I am ignorant of the world in which you move, Lord Cecil. I am a farmer's daughter, a mere country girl, but I am woman enough to know that I have stepped between you and the woman you love, and—end—I withdraw!"

No pen can write down the bitterness, the anguish underlying the calmly spoken words, "I withdraw!"

Like a dead weight they fall upon Lord Cecil's heart, and seem to crush him.

Two or three persons enter and saunter by them, just glancing at them as they stand apparently in cozy conversation, and little dreaming that they are looking at a girl whose heart is slowly breaking, and a man wrestling with the demons of remorse and despair.

He waits until they have gone, then he looks at her.

(To be Continued.)

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No. 5937.—The little suit here illustrated is one of the most smartest among the new designs for boys. Deep tucks in front and back are a feature of the mode. They are stretched as far down as the belt and pressed to the lower edge of dress. The front laps in double-breasted style and fastens with large pearl buttons. A broad sailor collar adds considerably to the smart effect. A removable shield finished by a standing band is included in the pattern. The little trousers made of the same material accompany the frock. They are fitted with an elastic collar and finished by a standing band. Broadcloth, serge, flannel, gingham and pique are all suitable for reproduction. The 4 year size will require 2½ yards of fabric, the material for the making. Sizes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 years.

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MINER KILLED.

Was Blasting on Elgin Cobalt Property in Loraine.

Cobalt, April 1.—An inquest opened at Haileybury this afternoon on Jos. N. Bailey, aged 72, from St. Thomas, who leaves two sons and one daughter, the eldest son residing in Fort William. Deceased lived in a shack at Haileybury and was engaged in development work on the property of the Elgin Cobalt Development Company in Loraine. He was in the habit of taking lunch at McCann & McKelvie's lumber camp but, failing to show up on Tuesday night either there or at the shack in Haileybury, search was made, disclosing the dead body on a log with an arm and leg broken and the body badly crushed. Evidently the old man had loaded a round of holes in the shaft he was sinking and was caught by the blast before he had time to get away to safety. He had many friends gained by reason of his genial character. He was known generally as the marvel of the camp owing to his advanced age and activity, mental and physical.

ASPHYXIATED.

One Girl of Ten Years May Not Recover.

London, Ont., April 1.—At 6 o'clock this evening, when neighbors broke into the house of James McLean, on Chesley avenue, it was to find McLean, his wife and three children in an unconscious condition from gas asphyxiation. For eighteen hours they had been that way. All will probably recover except a ten-year-old girl, who is in a serious condition. The family retired about midnight last night. An hour later the mother was awakened by the moaning of a child. She staggered into the next room, to find the child vomiting, and then herself fell in a semi-conscious condition. The woman says that she never completely lost consciousness, but was physically unable to arise or even make a sound. When neighbors finally awoke her she thought it was but morning. Her husband, when aroused, murmured that he had overslept.

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Our Gigantic Pre-Easter Sale Starts To-morrow

Tremendous reductions in all departments, offerings such as the following seldom occur to you just at the height of the Easter season.

Sharp at 8.30 to-morrow morning we open our doors to positively one of the best sales in every way ever attempted in Hamilton. Our Pre-Easter Sale will be carried on in a greater scale than ever attempted before, offering to you women's wearing apparel of correct style and quality for Spring and Summer wear, in many cases at less than half regular prices. Every woman should visit this store to-morrow where you will secure some of the most notable bargains of the whole year, selected from one of the largest and best stocks ever brought into Hamilton. Shop at 8.30 in the morning if you would share in many of the best bargains.

Great Pre-Easter Sale of Women's Handkerchiefs, Worth Reg. 8c. 2 for 5c

On sale to-morrow morning at 8.30, one of the best offerings in women's Handkerchiefs of the whole season, 500 dozen in the lot, just the kind for children's school use, etc., out they go to-morrow morning at 2 for 5c.

Pretty New Dutch Collars, Our Regular Selling 19c ea. Price 25c, Pre-Easter Sale Price

Fill your Easter neck wear here to-morrow, just passed into stock 6 dozen pretty new Dutch Collars, trimmed with insertion and lace, also in the white lawn Jabots to match, sale price, each .10c

A Great Easter Belt Sensation, Former Prices 49c each 75c and \$1, Saturday Sale Price 49c

10 dozen new Elastic Belts, by a great special purchase for the Easter selling we make the above special offering for to-morrow only. Pretty Elastic Belts in plain and steel effects, finished with the newest steel buckles, out they go Saturday, all one price 49c

Decided Bargains in Easter Wants at the Notion Counter

- Back Combs with steel mounting, regular price 15c, Saturday sale price 10c
- Elastic Hose Supporters, worth regularly 25c and 35c pair, Saturday sale price 15c
- Wire Pads, hair covered, worth regularly 35c, Saturday sale price 98c
- Real Hair Pads, sold everywhere at \$1.50, for Saturday 10c doz.
- Bone Hair Pins, very special Saturday 1c card
- Washing Spring Hooks and Eyes, Saturday special 1c card

Pre-Easter Sale of New Dress Goods

All roads will lead to this grand section of the McKay store to-morrow, placing on sale some of the most notable buying chances of the whole season in new and wanted materials. Visit this section to-morrow and view the grand display sale.

Swell Directorate Satin Suiting, Worth Regularly 89c Yd. \$1.25, Saturday Sale Price

Just passed into stock, another new line of this new and popular suiting material, and for those who intend buying in the near future, should take advantage of this very special sale in colors of navy, brown, myrtle, reseda, new blue, and black, 52 inches wide, and on sale in the correct weight for stylish spring suits, at, per yard 89c

New Plain and Shadow Stripe Broadcloth Suitings, 75c Yd. Our Regular \$1.00 Qualities for Saturday

Another important offer from our Dress Goods Section. Lovely new quality wanted Suitings at a popular price; on sale in elephant, taupe, brown, navy, Copenhagen, red, fawn and black, at per yard 75c

Charming Easter Millinery on Sale To-morrow

Visit our grand Millinery Sale to-morrow and view the lovely Easter Hats on sale at a remarkable price. By all odds Hamilton's best display sale. Lovers of women's pretty head-gear should take advantage of these grand specials. Priced \$6.50 and \$8.50.

Five Extra Specials from Our Ready-to-Wear Department

The Most Astonishing Sale, in Point of Low Prices, That We Have Ever Announced or You Have Ever Heard Of.

Women's New Spring Suits on Sale at \$16.50

Made of Clifton, Panama and French Venetians, in plain and fancy stripes, semi-fitting models, single breasted Coats, satin lined, \$22.50, special price for Saturday \$16.50

Women's Tailored Suits \$10.98 Misses' Spring Suits \$12.50

A splendid assortment of colors. Made of high-grade Clifton Panama and dark shades, beautifully tailored, with new semi-fitting Coats. A light and dark shades, many nicely trimmed, good assortment of colors. Coats are Others strictly tailored. Skirts gored nicely tailored and trimmed, skirts and pleated. These Suits are worth new prices, value \$15.50, specially from \$15 to \$17.50, sale price \$10.98 priced for Saturday \$12.50

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In Colored and Black Clifton Broad-Navy, brown, green and black, also cloth and covert cloth. Box and semi-fancy materials. A good assortment of sizes and styles. Regular \$5 and fitting \$6.50, sale price \$3.00. On sale Saturday morning \$2.98

\$1, \$1.25 Dress Silks To-morrow 59c

Over one thousand yards of lovely Dress and Waistings Silks, in splendid designs for street wear. These silks are all guaranteed qualities, and proper effects for pretty summer wear; worth regularly \$1.00 and \$1.25 per yard; on sale to-morrow for 59c

1,000 Yards Black Taffeta Silk 39c

1,000 yards of this Silk for to-morrow only, a silk that will wear and worth regularly 60c yard; sale price 39c

Exceptional Values in Easter Linens for Saturday

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- Nearlinen 20c
- Bleached Sheetings 29c
- Nainsook 12½c
- Towelings
- Galatea 25c

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From Montreal for Liverpool, CANADA May 29, June 3, July 7, August 11, September 15, October 20, November 25, December 30, 1897.

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