

LAUREL VALE'S LOVER.

There were only a few people at the Dolphin house—it was late in the season. The maple woods made a low line of deep red against the autumn sky; the ladies, too, muffled scarlet shawls over their white dresses as they sat on the piazza of the hotel overlooking the surf, listening to the hand which still played joyfully in the sunny afternoons.

The heiress, Miss Vale, who had come late, remained here. She liked the cold breath which crisped the surf, turned the maple red and made her horse-drawn carriage on the smooth floor of yellow sand which stretched for miles along the bay.

Her fastidious beautiful face, and the more woman-loving one of her aunt, daily met the view of the loungers as her sleek hairs changed their silver bits down the shore road.

She was more often seen abroad in her carriage, but being an old traveler, she was a good walking stick, and often came into tea with a dash of red in her smooth cheek, her brown hair, damp with spray, curling closely about her temple. She had been on foot to Grape point or the Shoals—favorite retreats—accompanied only by her great white dog, Peri. Miss Vale was a little peculiar, people said.

Certainly she did as she pleased, with an unobtrusive independence which hardly need to have troubled any one. She had gone out that day after the storm to see the sea dash and roll in its strength. The sun shone brilliantly on its dancing white caps as they settled gradually into calm.

She had sat long while on the rocks, her great dog at her feet, and was a long way from her hotel; but when she turned down the beach with her carriage, and her aunt sat among the cushions and read.

There was no one but Peri to see how beautiful Laura Vale was as she sat against the ragged black rocks, her dress of steel gray kindled from her light feet, her graceful shoulders and arms bunched in a soft crimson shawl.

The sunshine struck her perfect profile under a black soft-plumed hat, and she checked, and bringing into relief the firm dimpled chin; and those who had called her cold would not have accused her then, for she smiled at the smile of her red lips, so warm the light of her brown eyes.

She loved the sea—thrilled upon its breath—delighted to be alone with it. So she did not mind how the hours ran, though Aunt Pardon turned her hundredth page and yawned among the purple cushions.

"Come here, Sibind!" A mellow masculine voice came from among the rocks—too pleasant and manly a voice to whiten Miss Vale's cheek with fear, certainly; but with one swift silent motion, she rose to her feet pale as if she had seen a ghost.

She glanced around. A little behind and just below her stood a gentleman—a blue-eyed man with a fair beard, a great tawny dog fawning at his feet.

He met her startled gaze with one equally startled, and she saw that he lifted his hat. After an instant he came slowly upon the rocks, almost reluctantly it seemed. He, too, was pale now.

"Laurel," he said gently, "you might have understood then why people called Miss Vale cold."

Her fair mobile countenance seemed to harden over her spirit like a mask. She had but one thought—that after five years' suffering she had come to be happy, when here, before her eyes, stood the destroyer of her peace.

She made a swift involuntary gesture, as if to keep him off. A quick puff of air, and she was swept across his face as he saw it. "And so you hate me?" he said, slowly. "I do not know," she gasped.

The great tawny dog sniffed at the hem of her steel-gray dress, and then looked up in her face, wagging his tail. His master motioned him away.

"No!" she cried, bending over the handsome creature. "He used to love me."

Baron Alverton looked at her with his blue eyes and groaned.

"Laurel," he said, with a fine appealing gesture, "I used to love you. Yet to-day you would not touch me with your beautiful hand as you touch that brute! And I deserve it!"

She seemed to look at him then for the first time, though only for an instant. If she saw how his face changed in five years, and was stirred to pity, she gave no sign. She turned her head aside and seemed to watch the two dogs frolicking down the beach.

"No excuse could be invented for me," he went on. "You were one of the sweetest, truest women ever breathed, and my promised wife. Not a shadow stood between us when I met Nellie Dimpleton. But I knew less of women than I do now. I could not measure you, appreciate you as I have done since."

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"No, indeed! There's nobody so stylish and high-priced. We must go—certainly we must, Laurel! But, by the way, Mr. Crabtree says his nephew—your old beau, Baron Alverton—and his wife are staying there now."

"Where?" asked Laurel, bewildered. "At his boarding house. People say that his marriage didn't turn out well."

Mrs. Pardon rattled on, unheeding her niece's silence, "for his wife acted like a crazy woman when he lost some of his money last year—rated him so, it was really quite scandalous! Did you see her on the beach last fall? Such a white-faced thing! They say she takes arsenic for her complexion. I don't call her pretty, though she was all the rage five or six years ago."

I believe she's lost her health—too much dissipation. I've heard that she's awfully jealous of her husband, though he don't give her the least cause and bears it like a lamb."

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As for her niece, her greatest apprehension was that she should encounter Baron Alverton; but a little dissimilarity in meal hours warded off this event until the very last night of her stay in town.

She had been restless and could not sleep. At about 11 o'clock she thought she would go to her aunt's room, as that lady did not retire early, and get a certain book, which might divert her mind and quiet her nerves. As she passed along the rich halls in her velvet-shod feet, a door was flung open and a wild-eyed maid rushed out.

"Oh," she cried, at sight of Laurel, "you're come in a minute! I'm afraid she's dying!"

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All summer she drooped alone at the sea-wood. In the autumn her physician declared that she must go down by the sea.

"Go down to the Dolphin house for a few weeks with my family," Dr. Stone said. "Victor will be there and will take care of you," referring significantly to the son, who had long openly admired Miss Vale.

But she went only with her maid and Juba, though she found the doctor's family congenial company.

The sea received her kindly. It blew its salt breath in her face, brightened her beautiful eyes, quickened her strength. The hurried pulsations began to beat more slowly and evenly.

But there was a secret want. "Oh, for some one to love me—some one whom I could love," she cried one day, dropping her face in her arms upon the ragged rocks.

"I love you, Laurel, but it is too late for you to love me," syllabled a voice at her side.

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So the famous mountain pass was made. Disease, like a Sionian, stands in the way of fame, fortune and honor to many who by Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery" might be healed and so the mountain would disappear. It is specific for all blood, chronic lung and liver diseases, such as consumption (which is scrofula of the lungs), pimples, blotches, eruptions, tumors, swellings, fever-sores and kindred complaints.

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