

# The Chalice of Courage

(Continued)

"I am the man that did that thing, but what do you know?" he asked quickly, amazed in his turn.

"Old Kirky, my uncle Robert Maitland, told me your story; they said that you had disappeared from the haunts of men."

"And they were right. What else was there for me to do? Although innocent of crime, I was blood guilty. It was mad. No punishment could be visited upon me like that imposed by the stern, awful, appalling face that swore to prison myself, to have nothing more forever to do with mankind or womankind with whom I was unworthy to associate, to live alone until God took me. To cherish my memories, to make such expiation as I could, to pray daily for forgiveness, I came here to the wildest, the most inaccessible, the loneliest, spot in the range. No one ever would come here I fancied, no one ever did come but you. I was happy after a fashion, or at least content. I had chosen the better part. I had work, I could read, write, remember and dream. But you came and since that time life has been heaven and hell. Heaven because I love you, hell because to love you means disloyalty to the past, to a woman who loved me. Heaven because you are here; I can hear your voice, I can see you, your soul is spread out before me in its sweetness, in its purity; hell because I am false to my determination, to my vow, to the love of the past."

"And did you love her so much, then?" asked the girl, now fiercely jealous and forgetful of other things for the moment.

"It's not that," said the man. "I was not much more than a boy, a year or two out of college. I had been in the mountains a year, this woman lived in a mining camp, she was a fresh, clean healthy girl, her father died and she was left alone. There was a trust, looked after her, and all the young men in the range for miles on either side were in love with her. I supposed that I was too and—well, I won her from the rest. We had been married but a few months and a part of the time my business as a mining engineer had called me away from her. I can remember the day before we started on the last journey. I was going alone again, but she was so unhappy over my departure; she clung to me, pleaded with me, implored me to take her with me, insisted on going wherever I went, would not be left behind. She couldn't bear me out of her sight, it seemed. I don't know what there was in me to have inspired such devotion, but I must speak the truth, however it may sound. She seemed wild, crazy about me. I didn't understand it, frankly I didn't know what such love was—then I took her along. Shall I not be honest with you? In spite of the attraction physical, I had begun to feel even then that she was not the mate for me. I don't deserve it, and it shames me to say it of course, but I wanted a better mate, a higher one. That made it harder—what I had to do, you know."

"Yes, I know."

"The only thing I could do when I came to my senses was to sacrifice myself to her memory because she had loved me so; as it was she gave up her life for me, I could do no less than be true and loyal to the remembrance. It wasn't a sacrifice either until you came, but as soon as you opened your eyes and looked into mine in the rain and the storm upon the rock to which I had carried you after I had fought for you, I knew that I loved you. I knew that the love that had come into my heart was the love of which I had dreamed, that everything that had gone before was nothing, that I had found the one woman whose soul should mate with mine."

"And this before I had said a word to you?"

"What are words? The heart speaks to the heart, the soul whispers to the soul. And so it was with us. I had fought for you, you were mine, mine. My heart sang it as I panted and struggled over the rocks carrying you. I said the words again and again as I laid you down here in this cabin. It repeated them over and over: mine, mine! It says that every day and hour. And yet honor and fidelity bid me stay. I am free, yet bound; free to love you, but not to take you. My heart says yes, my conscience no. I should despise myself if I were false to the love which my wife bore me, and how could I offer you a blood stained hand!"

He had drawn very near her while she spoke; she had risen again and the

fore he could divine what she would be, she had seized his hand and kissed it and this time it was the man whose knees gave way. He sank down in the chair and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" he cried in his humiliation and shame. "If I had only met you first, or if my wife had died as others die, and not by my hand in that awful hour. I can see her now, broken, bruised, bleeding, torn. I can hear the report of that weapon; her last glance at me in the midst of her indescribable agony was one of thankfulness and gratitude. I can't stand it, I am unworthy even of her."

"But you could not help it, it was not your fault. And you can't help caring—for me—"

"I ought to help it, I ought not love you, I ought to have known that I was unworthy to love any woman, that I had no right, that I was pledged like a monk to the past. I have been weak, a fool. I love you and my honor goes, I love you and my self-respect goes, I love you and my pride goes. Would to God I could say I love you and my life goes and end it all." He stared at her a little space. "There is only one way of satisfaction in it all, one gleam of comfort," he added. "And what is that?"

"You don't know what the suffering is, you don't understand, you don't comprehend."

"And why not?"

"Because you do not love me."

"But I do," said the woman quite simply as if it were a matter of course not only that she should love him, but that she should tell him so.

The man stared at her amazed. Such fierce surges of joy throbbed through him as he had not thought the human frame could sustain. This woman loved him, in some strange way he had gained her affection. It was impossible, yet she had said so! He had been a blind fool. He could see that now. She stood before him and smiled up at him, looking at him through eyes misted with tears, with lips parted, with color coming and going in her cheek and with her bosom rising and falling. She loved him, he had but to step nearer to her to take her in his arms. There was a trust, devotion, surrender, everything, in her attitude, and between them like that great gulf which lay between the rich man and the beggar, that separated heaven and hell, was that he could not cross.

"I never dreamed, I never hoped—oh, I never dreamed, as if he rot his death wound, 'this cannot be borne.' He turned away but in two swift steps she caught him.

"Where do you go?"

"Out, out into the night."

"You cannot go now, it is dark; hard to the storm, you would miss your footing you would fall, you would freeze, you would die."

"What matters that?"

"I cannot have it."

"It would be better so."

He strove again to wrench himself away, but she would not be denied. She clung to him tenaciously.

"I will not let you go unless you give me your word of honor that you will not leave the plateau, and that you will come back to me."

"I tell you that the quicker and more surely I go out of life, the happier I shall be for you."

"And I tell you," said the woman resolutely, "that you can never go out of my life again, living or dead." She released him with one hand and laid it upon her heart. "You are here."

"Enid," cried the man.

"No," she thrust him gently away with one hand yet detained him with the other—that was emblematic of the situation between them. "Not now, not yet, let me think, but promise me you will do yourself no harm, you will let nothing imperil your life."

"As you will," said the man regretfully. "I had purposed to end it now and forever, but I promise."

"My word of honor."

"And you won't break it."

"I never broke it to a human being, much less will I do so to you!"

She released him, he went into the other room and she heard him cross the floor and open the door and go out into the night, into the storm again.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Face in the Locket.

Left alone in the room she sat down again before the fire and drew from her pocket the packet of letters. She knew them by heart, she had read and reread them often when she had been alone. They had fascinated her. They were letters from some other man to this man's wife. They were signed by an initial only and the identity of the writer was quite unknown to her. The woman's replies were not with the others, but it was easy enough to see what those replies had been. All the passion of which the woman had been capable had evidently been bestowed upon the writer of the letters she had treasured.

Her story was quite plain. She had married Newbold in a fit of pique. He was an eastern man, the best educated, the most fascinating and interesting of the men who frequented the camp. There had been a quarrel between the letter writer and the woman; there were always quarrels, apparently, but this had been a serious one and she had not come back as he usually did. She had waited for him and then he had come back—too late!

He had wanted to kill the other, but she had prevented, and while Newbold was away he had made desperate love to her. She had besought him to leave her husband to go away with him. He had used every argument that he could to that end and the woman had hesitated and wavered, but she had not consented; she had not denied her love for him any more than she had denied her respect and a certain admiration for her gallant, trusting husband. She had refused again and again the requests of her lover. She could not control her heart, nevertheless she had kept to her marriage vows. But the force of

## THE LEWIS MACHINE GUN IN A FRONT LINE TRENCH IN FRANCE



Here is shown the Lewis machine gun in a front line trench in France. This is the gun which was invented by Colonel I. N. Lewis, formerly of the United States army, and turned down by the United States Ordnance Department. He sold the patents to England, and the Allies have now spent from \$50,000,000 to \$70,000,000 in the manufacture of this gun.

her resistance had grown weaker and she had realized that she would perhaps inevitably succumb.

Her lover had been away when her husband returned prior to the last fatal journey. Enid Maitland saw why she had besought him to take her with him, she was afraid to be left alone! She did not dare do that upon her husband and end it all. Her only salvation was to go with the man whom she did not love, whom at times she almost hated, to keep from falling into the arms of the man she did love. She had been more or less afraid of Newbold. She had soon realized, because she was not blinded by any passion as he, that they had been utterly mismatched. She had come to understand that when the same knowledge of the truth came to him, as it inevitably must some day, nothing but unhappiness would be their portion.

Every kind of an argument in addition to those so passionately adduced in these letters urging her to break away from her husband and to seek happiness for herself while yet there was time, besieged her heart, seconded her lover's plea and assailed overthrow that ideal, shatter that memory.

She sat down again with the letters in her hand. It had been very simple a moment since, but it was not so now. She had but to show him those letters to remove the great barrier between them. She could not do it. It was clearly impossible. The reputation of her dead sister who had struggled so bravely to the end was in her hands, she could not sacrifice her even for her own happiness.

"Quisite," you say? I do not think so. She had blundered unwittingly, unwillingly, upon the heart secret of the other woman; she could not betray it. Even if the other woman had been really unfaithful in deed as well as in thought to her husband.

Enid Maitland saw a great light. The woman in her hand, the letters in her hand, she had loved another. That passion of which he had dreamed had not been for him. By a strange chain of circumstances Enid Maitland held in her hand the solution of the problem. She had but to give him these letters to show him that his golden image had stood upon feet of clay, that the love upon which he had dwelt was not his. Once convinced of that he would come quick to her arms. She cried a prayer of blessing on old Kirky and started to her feet, the letters in hand, to call Newbold back to her and tell him, and then she stopped.

Woman as she was she had respect for the binding conditions and laws of honor as well as he. Chance, nay Providence, had put the honor of this woman, her rival, in her hands. The world had long since forgotten this poor unfortunate; in no heart was her memory cherished save in that of her husband. His idea of her was a false one to be sure, but not even to procure her own happiness could Enid Maitland overthrow that ideal, shatter that memory.

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She Had but to Show Him These Letters.

she knew, and then there flashed into her mind the writer of the letters. Who was he? Was he yet alive? Had he any part to play in this strange tragedy aside from that he had already assayed?

Sometimes an answer to a secret query is made openly. At this juncture Newbold came back. He stopped before her unsteadily, his face now marked not only by the fierceness of the storm outside, but by the fiercer grapple of the storm in his heart.

"You have a right," he began, "to know everything now. I can withhold nothing from you."

He had in his hand a picture and something yellow that gleamed in the light. "There," he continued extending them toward her, "is the picture of the poor woman who loved me and whom I killed, you saw it once before."

"Yes," she nodded, taking it from him carefully and looking again in a strange commixture of pride, resentment and pity at the bold, somewhat coarse, entirely uncultured, yet handsome face which gave no evidence of the moral purpose which she had displayed.

"And here," said the man offering the other article, "is something that no human eye but mine has ever seen since that day. It is a locket I took from her neck. Until I was ghost of a question for me she recovered herself in part at least and swiftly interrupted him in a panic of terror lest she should betray her knowledge.

"And what is the picture of another man doing in your wife's locket?" she asked.

"A man's face."

"Yours?"

He shook his head.

"Look and see," he answered.

"Press the spring."

Swelling action to word, the next second Enid Maitland found herself gazing upon the pictured semblance of Mr. James Armstrong! She was utterly unable to suppress an exclamation and a start of surprise at the astonishing revelation. The man looked at her curiously; he opened his mouth to question her, but she recovered herself in part at least and swiftly interrupted him in a panic of terror lest she should betray her knowledge.

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"No," cried the man, "you impose upon me tasks beyond my strength; you don't know what love is, you don't know the heart hunger, the awful madness I feel. Think, I have been alone with a recollection for all these years, a man in the dark, in the night; and the light comes, you are here. The first night I brought you here I walked that room on the other side of that narrow door like a lion pent up in bars of steel. I had only my own love, my own passionate adoration to move me then, but now that I know you love me, that I see it in your eyes, that I hear it from your lips, that I mark it in the beat of your heart, can I keep silent? Can I live on and on? Can I see you, touch you, breathe the same air with you, be pent up in the same room with you hour after hour, day after day, and go on as before? I can't do it, it is an impossibility. What keeps me now from taking you in my arms and from kissing the color into your cheeks, from making your lips my own, from drinking the light from your eyes?" He swayed near to her, his voice rose. "What restrains me?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said the woman, never shrinking back an inch, facing him



She Was Utterly Unable to Suppress an Exclamation.

with all the courage and daring with which a Goddess might look upon a man. "Nothing but my weakness and your strength."

"Yes, that's it, but do not count too much upon the one or the other, Great God, how can I keep away from you! Life on the old terms is insupportable. I must go."

"And where?"

"Anywhere, so it be away."

"And when?"

"Now."

"It would be death in the snow and in the mountains tonight. No, no, you cannot go."

"Well, tomorrow then. It will be fair, I can't take you with me, but I must go alone to the settlements, I must tell your friends you are here, alive, well. I shall find men to come back and get you. What I cannot do alone numbers together may effect. They can carry you over the worst of the trails, you shall be restored to your people, to your world again, you can forget me."

"And do you think," asked the woman, "that I could ever forget you?"

"I don't know."

"And will you forget me?"

"Not so long as life throbs in my veins, and beyond."

"And I too," was the return.

"So be it. You won't be afraid to stay here alone, now?"

"No, not since you love me," was the noble answer. "I suppose I must; there is no other way, we could not go on as before. And you will come back to me as quickly as you can with the others?"

"I shall not come back; I will give them the direction, they can find you without me. When I say goodbye to you tomorrow it shall be forever."

"And I swear to you," asserted the woman in quick desperation, "if you do not come back they shall have nothing to carry from here but my dead body. You do not alone know what love is," she cried resolutely, "and I will not let you go unless I have your word to return."

"And how will you prevent my going?"

"I can't. But I will follow you on my hands and knees in the snow until I freeze and die unless I have your promise."

"You have beaten me," said the man hopelessly. "You always do. Honor, what is it? Pride, what is it? Self-respect, what is it? Say the word and I am at your feet, I put the past behind me."

"I don't say the word," asserted the woman bravely, white faced, pale lips, but resolute. "To be yours, to have you mine, is the greatest desire of my heart, but not in the coward's way, not at the expense of honor, of self-respect—no not that way. Courage, my friend, God will show us the way, and meantime good night."

"Yes," she nodded reluctantly but knowing it had to be, "but you won't go without bidding me good bye."

"No."

"Good night then," she said extending her hand.

"Good night," he whispered hoarsely and refused it, backing away. "I don't dare to take it. I don't dare to touch you again. I love you so, my only salvation is to keep away."

(To be continued)

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