

# A Terrible Tangle.

CHAPTER II.

In His Power.

The wedding was over, the guests were scattered, and all the relations had gone back to their respective homes. Even Mrs. Griffin had been obliged to leave Elizabeth, but perhaps, with that tact which was hidden so deeply beneath her gruff manner, she felt that it was a kindness to let the girl face these first hours of separation from her sister alone.

Lord Ottershaw had taken Mrs. Griffin to the station. They were very old friends, and Ellen Griffin was fond of venting some of her cynical humor upon him. She imagined, indeed, that he would have accompanied her to London, but he made some excuse—he really hardly knew what—and the train went without him.

His mother had left the neighborhood early in the afternoon. It was evening now. Ottershaw kept his room at the hotel in Warminster. A curious kind of dream had fallen upon him; his mind was haunted by a vision of a woman—of Elizabeth, in fact—as she had looked that morning in the church when she had given her sister away. She had garbed herself almost as though she had been Lil's mother; her dress had been of softest gray, with priceless old lace, and she had covered her beautiful hair with a small bonnet tied with white strings.

She had looked very white herself, but though she had carried herself proudly and with dignity, she had never looked so young.

Ottershaw's attention had been riveted on her. He had noticed that, though she had been swept away by a very whirlwind of emotion, she had kept a good grip of herself. He liked a woman who had plenty of self-control. Perhaps he alone—for he watched her keenly—had seen the hungry way in which Elizabeth had put her arms about Lil when the pretty bride had gone around to be

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kissed by everybody. At any rate, he had been quick to see that, as Lilian and her husband had gone away, Elizabeth's courage had faltered for one moment, and if he had not put out his hand to support her, she would have fallen. He could feel the soft touch of her hand now. He ordered his dinner to be served very late, and then, yielding to an almost irresistible temptation, he drove out to the farm. Some instinct seemed to lead him to the garden, and he found Elizabeth sitting lost in thought under the trees which she loved so well.

"Send me away if I am a nuisance," he said.  
But Beth did not send him away; she gave him a welcome instead, and made his heart thrill with an extraordinary sense of happiness; indeed, Elizabeth was glad to see him. He had been so helpful all through the long, busy day just ended—so amusing, so resourceful, so full of tact, and she felt that it had her good to be aroused.

What they talked about she hardly knew, but she realized when she arose to go that this evening, that should have been fraught with so much sorrow, had unexpectedly brought to her tender pleasure such as she had never experienced before.

It cost Ottershaw an enormous effort to leave her.

"I must be mad," he said to himself, as he drove back to Warminster. "I know I am in love with her, but why should I imagine that this gives me the right to speak to her? And yet," was his next thought, "I believe she would not misunderstand me. To her the fact that we have known one another only a single day would not count. She is a woman made for love, not a pretty pink-and-white doll such as poor Henry has married, but a living creature, who could endure all things for love. I must go back to-morrow."

Elizabeth tended her aunt and pretended to eat some dinner, still in the same, dreamlike way. The sound of a certain voice haunted her ear, the grip of a man's hand thrilled her in imagination.

When she had helped Aunt Willy upstairs to her room, Elizabeth turned from her own bed; tired as she was, she could not face the prospect of sleep for many hours yet.

She went out into the garden again, and slowly she paced away from the house, down through the orchard with that same confused sense of consolation upon her. The twilight was about her, there was no moon, but away in the distance the sky was clear and beautiful with night effects.

"It will be another lovely day to-morrow," said Elizabeth, and somehow the word "to-morrow" made her pulses beat, for it brought with it the promise of seeing Ottershaw again. And then, all at once she started violently, and gave a little cry of fear, for a figure had passed from behind some trees, and stood immediately in front of her, looking at her in a strange and almost menacing way.

Dim as the light was, Elizabeth recognized him. It was David Barostan, the man she had been discussing with Mrs. Griffin the night before.

Elizabeth's heart beat so fiercely that she could feel the throb in her throat; the loneliness of her position oppressed her, and the man's attitude alarmed her. She found her voice at last, but even as a question trembled on her lips, the man before her made a movement forward and imprisoned both her hands in his.

Elizabeth was no coward, but this sudden attack made her heart quail.

If her life had depended on it, she could not have spoken or have cried aloud; her fear was so acute it made her dumb.

It was Barostan who spoke. "So we meet at last, face to face, Elizabeth Forsyth," he said, and there was uncontrolled passion in his voice. "How I have waited for this moment! How I have prayed to have you in my power! And now my prayers are answered."

Elizabeth dragged herself back from him, but he clung to her hands, and words broke from her in a hoarse whisper.

"By what—right—do—you come here? How—dare you touch me? Let me go! let me go!"

Barostan only tightened his grip on her wrists.

"I am here," he answered, "because I have the right to be here. Perhaps they may not have told you what has passed with me this day. My brother—the only creature left to me in the world—is dead. He died by his own hand, shot through the heart, and this is your doing, Elizabeth Forsyth. His blood lies on your soul!"

A cry that was half a moan escaped from Beth's lips.

"You are mad!" she almost gasped; "what have I to do with your brother? Let me go! You—you are a coward to hurt a woman! Loose me—I will be free!"

He released her so suddenly that she almost staggered and fell.

"Coward?" he repeated. "I am no coward—I am a judge—your judge—Elizabeth Forsyth, I am here to shame you—to demand justice—it shall be a life for a life—your life for his! No—I'm not going to kill you," he laughed hoarsely; "there are better ways of getting vengeance than by dealing out death. I mean you to live—and suffer. For the blow you struck at my poor lad you shall be given back a hundredfold. You found him too poor and mean a creature, even to look at your fine lady sister. You shall be taught to know the proper place of a Barostan, and I will be your master! You should have remembered me when you dipped your pen in gall and wrote the word that sent him to his death. I have suffered your contempt too long not to be ready to hate you with a cruel, a merciless hate and now"—his voice rose and he stretched out his hand to ward her—"you are in my power, and by God! I will show you no pity!"

Elizabeth had retreated a yard or two, and with her hand clasped to her heart, trembling in every limb, she listened to his words, spoken deliberately, not wildly.

A sudden and awful anguish had fallen on her heart, a sudden conviction that this man was not mad, but only too terribly sane.

The poison of an almost incredulous doubt crept into her veins. As he ceased speaking she gave a low cry and covered her face with her hands.

CHAPTER III.  
A Shocking Revelation.  
Words came to Elizabeth at last. She lifted her face from her hands, and, overwhelmed as she was with the most cruel mental suffering, she rallied herself.

"I do not understand anything of what you are saying," she said, promptly. "Justice—"

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wrong—what does this mean to me? What have I to do with your brother? To my knowledge, I have not even passed him in the road these last two or three years. And yet, strangers as you are to me," she added, with a catch in her voice, "the news you give me shocks me—and—I offer you my heartfelt sympathy."

David Barostan laughed. "You are a liar!" he said, emphatically.

She started as if he had struck her, and the whole wealth of her anger, or her offended dignity, swelled into a passion that swept aside all remaining weakness.

"Leave me," she said. "How dare you speak to me in such a manner? By what right are you in this place at all? Here I am mistress, and I command you to leave me—"

But he laughed again. "No, I will not go. I meant to have shamed you to-day in the face of all your grand friends. I meant to have gone to the church and have shouted aloud your sin—but then I reflected: I said to myself, 'She will be protected—they will drive me away, and she may escape—so I decided to wait, and let the wedding proceed. I watched you holding yourself proudly, and looking like a saint, and I waited—I knew you would be alone to-night—it is not for the first time.' Barostan added, "that I have watched you walking to and fro in the garden at this hour. I chose my time well, and now—you cannot escape me, nor your just punishment!"

Elizabeth drew back till her hand rested on the nearest tree. She steadied herself, grateful for that support, and she looked at him in the eyes. She looked very tall, and slim, and graceful in the mist of the night.

(To be continued.)

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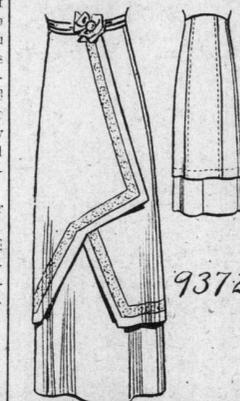


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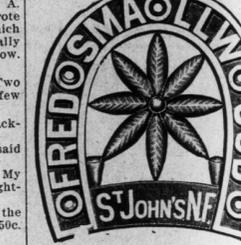
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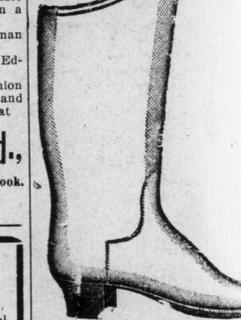
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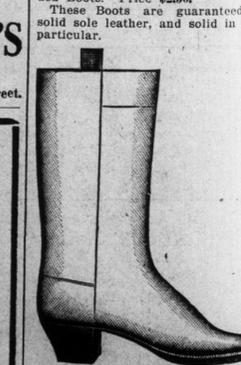


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