

her by the name that is Love's own.

She did not change her posture. But her lips parted. Her lids drooped and quivered. She was as one in a lovely dream.

He stepped toward her and spoke again.

"You!" she cried; and her voice breaking from a whisper into a thrill of pure music: "You!"

There was, in the one syllable, so much of terror that his heart shivered; so much of welcome that his heart leaped; so much of joy that his heart sang.

Bending, he pressed his lips on her hands, and felt them tremble beneath his kiss. They were withdrawn, and fluttered for the briefest moment, at his temples. Then she spoke, hurriedly and softly.

"You must go. At once! At once!"

"When I have just found you?" "If you have any care for me—for my happiness—for my good name—go away from this house of dread."

"What?" said Sedgwick sharply. "Of dread? What do you do here, then?"

"Suffer," said she. Then bit her lips. "No! No! I didn't mean it. It is only that the mystery of it—I am unstrung and weak. Tomorrow all will be right. Only go."

"I will," said Sedgwick firmly. "And you shall go with me."

"I! Where?"

He caught her hand again and held it to his heart. "To

"See the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light!"

he whispered.

"Don't!" she begged. "Not that! It brings back that week too poignantly. Oh, my dear; please, please go."

"Listen," he said. "Heart of my heart, I don't know what curse hangs over this house; but this I do know, that I cannot leave you here. Come with me now. I will find some place for you tonight, and tomorrow we will be married."

With a sharp movement she shrank back from him.

"Married! Tomorrow!" The words seemed to choke her. "Don't you know who I am?"

Fear chilled his mounting blood as Kent's analysis of the probabilities came back to him.

"If you are married already," he said unsteadily, "it—it would be better for me that Kent had let him shoot."

"Who?" she cried. "What has been passing, here? You have been in danger?"

"What does it matter?" he returned. "What does anything matter but—"

"Hark!" she broke in, a spasm of terror contracting her face.

Footsteps sounded within. There was the noise of a door opening and closing. Around the turn of the wing Alexander Blair stepped into view. His pistol was still in his hand.

"Still here, sir?" he inquired with an effect of murderous courtesy. "You add spying to your other practises, then." He took a step forward and saw the girl. "My God! Marjorie!" he cried.

Sedgwick turned white, at the cry, but faced the older man steadily.

"I fear, sir," he said, "that I have made a terrible mistake. The blame is wholly mine. I beg you to believe that I came here wholly without the knowledge of—of your wife—"

"Of whom?" exclaimed Blair, and, in the same moment, the girl cried out, "Oh, no, no. Not that!" "Not?" exclaimed Sedgwick. "Then—"

"Marjorie," interrupted Mr. Blair, "do you know this man?"

"Yes," she said quietly.

"Since when?"

"Since two weeks."

"And he has come here before?"

"No."

"Then why do I find him here with you tonight: this night of all nights?"

"He is not here with me," said she, flushing.

"I came here from—from where you saw me," began Sedgwick, "on a reckless impulse. Believe me, sir—"

"One moment! Marjorie, I think you had best go to your room."

The girl's soft lips straightened into a line of inflexibility. "I wish to speak to Mr. Sedgwick," she said.

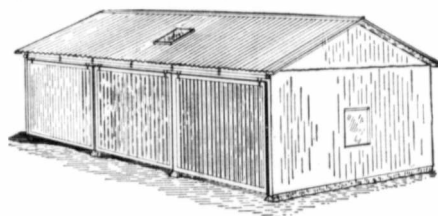
"Speak then, and quickly."

"No; I wish to speak to him alone. There is an explanation which I owe him."

"And there is one which he owes you," retorted Blair. "As he seems to have been too cowardly to give it, I will supply his deficiencies. In order that there may be no misunderstanding, let me present Mr. Francis Sedgwick, the murderer."

A low cry, the most desolate, the most stricken sound that Sedgwick had ever heard from human lips, trembled on the air. Before he could gather his senses to retort and deny, she had drawn herself to her feet—and the rose-bowered window framed only emptiness. Sedgwick whirled up on the other man. "Of course," he said with deceptive calmness; "you know that you lie."

"I know that I speak truth," retorted Mr. Blair with so profound a conviction that the other was shaken.



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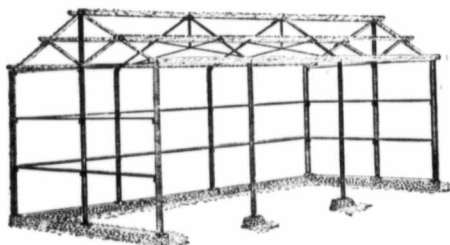
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