

SAVED BY THE CINEMETOGRAPHE

A Complete Story.

I

The wind was blowing hither and thither the few dead leaves that still remained as evidence of their once verdant existence upon the frost-bound grass of Hyde Park, while a few desultory flakes of snow here and there lightly flecked the ground, to fade away almost as soon as they had found rest.

Bertram Rae walked moodily on beneath the leafless trees, swishing viciously with his stick at all sorts of imaginary foes. His usually pleasant-looking, though not handsome face wore an expression of evident disgust by no means usual. So thought Nora Despard, with whom he suddenly found himself face to face.

In a moment his hat was off, and the anger died out of his eyes.

"Ah, Miss Despard," he said, "I was just thinking of making a call upon you. I wanted to congratulate you—on—er—your engagement."

Nora Despard blushed, whereby her pretty face was rendered even more pretty.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Rae," she said; "I think you know Tom—Mr. Frith—don't you?"

Rae hesitated for a moment. His face was rather white, and, when he spoke, his words seemed to come with an effort.

"Yes, I do know him."

Nora looked up quickly into her companion's face. They were walking along together.

"Mr. Rae," she said, "why don't you like Tom?"

Rae bit his lip, and his face darkened. "I had rather not tell you," he said; "please don't ask me, Miss Despard."

Nora stopped. "Mr. Rae," she said, "I have always looked on you as a gentleman. But a gentleman does not speak ill of another behind his back. So I think I will say good afternoon."

And with a stiff bow, regardless of the white, pained face of the man who loved her, she turned and left him.

II.

The hall was crowded with a large and appreciative audience. In the stalls sat Tom Frith and his fiancée, Nora Despard, who had persuaded her lover to take her

to see the perfected cinematographe and the marvellous pictures, that were drawing the whole of London.

A new series of scenes was to be presented that night, most of them presentments of everyday London street life. The curtain went up before the darkened auditorium to reveal the great white screen upon which the pictures were to appear.

Nora was delighted with the tableaux. They were so real, so vivid, and without that disagreeable flicker so common with many like entertainments, and as the scenes came and went, she found unflagging delight in all of them.

"How funny if one were to see oneself, Tom," she whispered, to her cavalier. The words were scarcely out of her mouth, when another picture was set in motion. And this is what she saw.

A crowded street, down which a drunken man was reeling. The man was lurching along, the crowd making way for him as he proceeded. Suddenly a young girl walked on to the screen. The drunkard staggered forward, and put his arms around her. In a moment, a tall, well-built man rushed out of the crowd, and seizing the intoxicated sot by the shoulders, proceeded to lay about his back with a lithe cane. The crowd surged forward, and then, with a roar of applause from the audience, the picture flickered away to nothingness.

Spell-bound, Nora had watched the scene, white to the lips. With its completion a cry broke from her lips, and she fell forward in a dead faint.

Why, you ask? I will tell you. The drunkard was the man to whom she had betrothed herself, Tom Frith; the man who had chastised him, Bertram Rae.

Nora Despard did not marry Thomas Frith, Esq. If she had, she would not now be Nora Rae.

S. P.

Old Gentleman (to young man who had not offered his seat to a lady who was standing)—"When I was a young man, sir, I never let a lady stand while I remained seated."

Young Man—"Indeed! Then I am sorry to find you have lost your politeness with your youth."