

When he had come about half way at a steady gallop, he drew rein and proceeded at a somewhat slower pace. He was delighted with his purchase and congratulated himself on his good luck in having secured such a treasure as Firebrand.

He told himself that Sybil would certainly admire the horse and would acknowledge his wisdom in buying it. As to Firebrand's evil temper, why, he might be so but certainly thus far he had not shown any trait that could be termed absolutely satanic, and even if he did, he—Arthur would let the beast see that he was master, he liked his horse all the better for having gained the reputation of being satanic. Oh yes! he had been a very fortunate man in getting a horse like Firebrand, poor old Sultan was getting worn out; he would do for Ken to ride on very soon. So thinking, he rode slowly along patting the horse's sleek head and smiling as Firebrand tossed his mane and showed an inclination to shy at every object along the road.

"Steady old boy; steady, we will be good friends when we come to know each other, you and I." As he rode slowly along, he observed a female figure advancing towards him at some little distance ahead. It was a lonely part of the road; there were no houses near and not another living creature in sight but this woman; perhaps that was the reason he watched the approaching figure, almost unconscious that he did so; then as they gradually neared each other he did become conscious that he was watching her; there was something strangely familiar in that figure, as it came slowly along; a peculiarity in its gait that puzzled him. He walked his horse so that he might look into her face as they passed each other.

They were close now—very close; now they were passing each other, the woman raised her head and looked into the face of the horse man and her own grew white even as his had done.

"Grace Roberts!"

"Arthur Macdonald!"

For a few moments they stood staring at one another; each, as it were, measuring the strength of the other for the impending battle.

Arthur was the first to recover himself. Raising his hat, he bowed with a mocking smile and said:

"This is a pleasure I did not anticipate; I hope I see you quite well, Miss Roberts and—I wish you good evening."

He bowed again and replaced his hat, the next instant he would have ridden away; but her voice arrested him; perhaps he felt that it would be more expedient to listen to her now on this lonely road, and to have done with her there and then, than to run the risk of her showing herself at the house on Jarvis street, where he might possibly encounter some difficulty in dealing with her in such a manner as to avoid arousing Sybil's wonder and suspicions. Therefore, when she spoke, he stopped to hear what she had to say.

"You probably wonder why I have returned to Canada?" she said in a hard voice.

"No I don't," he answered doggedly. "I presume you are free to come and go as you please."

"Ah! then you have quite forgotten that more than six years ago, you bade me never return to this country."

"Then why have you come?" he asked sullenly. "Is it more money you want?"

"No; I would not take your money: there is a curse upon it."

"What do you mean, woman?" Arthur Macdonald demanded, and his face grew white, but whether from fear or anger, Grace did not know.

"Mean—I mean this, that the money you gave me, the money that bought my silence was *curse'd*. But I will tell you my story Arthur Macdonald and then you will know why I have come to Canada again."

"I refuse to listen to it, your miserable tale can have no interest for me; I am in a hurry to reach home."

"It has an interest for you and you shall hear me or—your lady wife shall."

"Go on then, curse you and cut it short."

If he dared, Macdonald would have trampled this woman beneath his horse's feet, he writhed in his fury and his hand grasped his whip fiercely, oh! if he could but have raised it and stricken her to the earth!

"I will tell it in as few words as possible, but had you not better dismount, your horse seems unmanageable."

"No, I shall remain where I am, proceed with your story, it will be dark before you finish."

"You remember," she began, the day I went to Buxly and demanded money from you, I over-took you on a quiet country road and we stood there talking; at first you refused me the money, and said you did not have it, and I told you you must find a way to get it, or I would go to Miss O'Brien and tell her my miserable story. Then you swore you would get the money and give it to me, on, or before the third day previous to your wedding. Arthur Macdonald, as God is my witness I never dreamed of *how* you would get it, if I had I would have taken my child and gone away without troubling you for a cent; though both I and my boy had perished of hunger. I knew you were wicked but I did not think you were bad enough to do what you did; I would have died sooner than have caused you to sin more deeply than you had already done."

"What do you mean woman? you are mad," cried Macdonald hoarsely.

"Mad—no I am not mad and I will tell you what I mean—you robbed the Bank and the money you brought to me was the money you had stolen and there was a curse upon it."

"You lie," he shouted.

"No I don't lie, and if you will listen further you will see that I speak the truth."

"You remember that day as we stood talking on that quiet road at Buxly, that a gentleman passed by on the other side of a hedge that divided the road from a foot-path; you bade me hush, and we ceased speaking till he had gone from sight, but I saw his face and thought what a good, kind face it was. When I left you I went straight to the station, but I was just five minutes too late; the train had gone, and there was no other till nine that night. There were nearly four hours to wait, a long time, but I was used to waiting; towards nine o'clock the station was pretty well crowded with people, mostly men; amongst them I recognized the gentleman who had passed by us on the road. When I went to buy my ticket, I found my purse was gone and I had no more money with me. I was much distressed and did not know what to do; but the gentleman, I afterwards learned that his name was Despard—came to my aid and bought me a ticket besides pressing into my hand a dollar bill; for cab fare, he said. I was very grateful and thanked him, but I did not think I would ever see him again; however, I did; it was at your wedding—yes, I was there, standing amongst the crowd at the church door to see the beautiful bride who had usurped my rightful place. Mr. Despard was one of the groomsmen and with him was a pretty, sweet-faced young girl, to whom they told me he was engaged to be married. I took a sudden, strange fancy to her; she looked so girlish and happy; perhaps she made me think of my own happy girl-hood when I was as pure and innocent as she. When the wedding party had driven away, I hastened to my boarding-house and packed up all my belongings; that day I left Toronto with my child, and as I had to pass through Buxly I resolved to get out there and remain over one night on the chance of seeing her again; I thought maybe she would return to her house that evening or early next morning and I wished only to have one more look at her sweet face; I thought I would be a better woman for having seen her, ever after."

I reached Buxly by the half-past three train, and leaving my trunk at the station, I took the child and walked up to the village; a man directed me to a quiet boarding house where I engaged a room for the night; the landlady was a friendly, gossiping woman, and when she heard I had just come from Toronto, she began talking of the grand wedding that took place there that morning, the bridegroom, she said, was from Buxly, and the bride had been lately visiting in the village, at Mr. Halliday's. Of course I knew she meant your marriage, but I said nothing to let her suspect that I knew you. Well, from her gossip I learned that Mr. Despard had for many years been a suitor for Miss O'Brien's hand, a fact which I had reason to recall very soon afterwards. When it began to grow dusk, I left the child in charge of the landlady and walked up to Fernside, there did not seem to be anyone near the house or about the grounds, so I went in and crept up to the veranda, when I found myself close to an open window, and from the room within I could plainly hear the sound of voices. Thinking Miss Stuart might be in there, I went up on to the veranda and crouched beneath the window. I looked in, but only Mr. and Mrs. Stuart were there,