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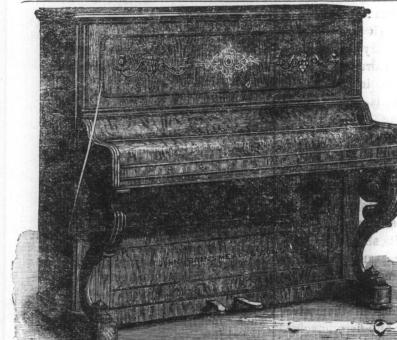
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By the Author of Dora Thorne CHAPTER XLVII.

(Continued.) 'It must have been so,' he said. 'She came no doubt, across that expression in your letters -" the secret of the will"—and resolved to find out what it meant.'

And then they looked at each other—the man to whom honor was the breath of life, and the girl who preferred it to life-and that glance was Margarita's condemnation.

'I am sorry,' he murmured. 'My poor darling! She must have been beside herself when she planned this.'

'I am sorry, too,' said the clear, low voice. I am sorry that she acted so foolishly.'

'It was not worthy of her,' declared Lord Rylestone, 'to plan and to scheme, to manœuver, to plot, to deceive—it was unworthy of her, unlike her. I can only imagine that her great love for me misled her and overcame all scruples.'

And then Adelaide repeated to him the conversation that she and Margarita had held about the end justifying the means. He listened intently.

'Adelaide,' he said, calling her for the first

came to the surface then. With a grave, tender smile she raised her fair face to his.

'I will love her as though she were my own sister,' she replied; and he clasped her hands here quietly for some weeks." in his own as a seal upon the words.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

No HALF-MEASURES contented Lord Ryle stone. He sent a telegram at once summoning Mr. Beale; and when that astonished gentleman arrived, his lordship told him the truth. 'You cannot blame me,' said the lawyer. I acted in Miss Cameron's interests, and acted, as I honestly believed, for the best.'

'You have driven her to her death, I am afraid.' declared Lord Rylestone; and then he sent for the housekeeper.

'The innocent lady you arrested—the innocent woman whom you hunted down and drove out into the world-was my wife,' he saidthe mistress of this house and all it contains. 'Then, my lord,' rejoined the dauntless old lady, 'the blame is yours, for not letting the world know she was your wife.' And Lord Rylestone was candid enough to own the truth

Mr. Beale listened to all the explanations. 'It is a strange thing, Lord Rylestone,' he said, 'but Mr. Layston had some faint idea of this. I am very sorry; I will do what I can to atone. It was natural enough that your wife should wish to see the will; but it was unfortunate for her own peace of mind that she should discover anything about it.'

Lord Rylestone insisted that the whole household should be informed of the truth.

' Not the faintest shadow shall rest upon her fair name,' he said. 'Let all the world know that she is my wife—that I kept from her certain testamentary secret, and she came here to find it out; let them know that it was to read will that she opened the safe, but that she would not justify herself lest I should be

So complete a justification of Margarita ensued, and, from being looked upon as a criminal, she became a heroine. They could remember her beauty then, and the grandeur of her graceful manner, they could say then that she was a lady—that they had always made sure of it. They could remember a thousand graceful, gracious qualities now that it was too late.

Where was she? That was the first question to be considered after her fair name was reestablished; and no one could answer it. From the moment she walked out of Mr. Layston's house, cold, impassive, a woman turned to stone, no one had seen Lady Rylestone, no one had heard of her. Miss Cameron had made inquiries—they had been useless; and the first thing now to be done was to find Lady Rylestone. It was more easy to say than to do, but her husband never rested.

As the days passed on he began to despair. 'I fear the worst,' he said one day to Mr. Beale. 'If she had been living and well, she would never have omitted to send to the postoffice for my last letter. My heart is sick with

There was some grounds for it. More than six weeks had elapsed since the fatal morning when Lady Rylestone had passed out of their sight. Inquiries were made in every possible manner at the railway-stations, the towns and villages near, but no information was gained. Lord Rylestone had offered large rewards for intelligence, but none came. He had not remained at Walton Court-he was staying with Mr. Beale at the 'Rylestone Arms;' but go where they would, stay where they would, no news came of his wife.

One cold, dull, bleak day the head-waiter at the hotel asked to speak with Lord Rylestone. He came into the room where his lordship and Mr. Beale were seated.

'You are tooking for a lady, my lord, who left Walton Court at the latter end of Sep

'Yes,' replied Lord Rylestone, his face flushing hotly; 'and I will make you a rich man if you can tell me anything about her.'

'I have a sister, a widow who lives at a little farm called Nettlebank, fifteen miles from here. It is a lonely farm-house in Nettlebank Lane. 'Well,' said Lord Rylestone, 'speak

'The last week in September, my lord, my sister's two little children were out at play, and, running through Nettlebank Lane, they found a lady lying on the ground at the foot of a tree. She was lying with her face to the earth, and they thought at first that she was dead. They fetched my sister, and my sister. when she came, raised her from the ground time by her Christian name, 'will you try to and gave her water to drink. When she recovered, my sister, Mary Meadows, took her All the nobility and generosity of her nature to her house. The lady, my lord, seemed very feb25 ill. She said to my sister-

"I am in great trouble, and you would oblige me very much if you would let me stay

' My sister was quite willing. The lady took out her purse and paid handsomely; and then she asked my sister to give her a room where night and day she would be quite alone-where no one should see or hear her, or be allowed feb23

"I shall get better," she said, "if I am

'My sister thought it very strange, but she acted as requested, and for three whole weeks. by night and by day, the lady sat alone; she never read, worked, or walked out, but she sat always by the same window looking out at the bare, leafless trees. One night, just as my sister was going to bed, the lady cried out loudly, and when they went into the room, she stood in the middle of the floor, her face burn-

ing red, her eyes all aflame. " Quick, quick," she cried-" it is November now, the leaves have fallen from the trees! Quick-I must go-for it is November, and he feb27 is come!"

And then, my lord, she fell with her poor face on the ground. They picked her up, and sent to Chelverton for a doctor; he said it was brain fever, and, I am sorry, my lord, but they do say she is dying now.'

'You shall have the reward,' cried Lord Rylestone, rising hastily. 'Now see that I have a carriage and a pair of good horses. Mr. Beale, I am going to this Nettlebank Farm, and I must take Miss Cameron with me.'

' Heaven grant that you may find your wife, and find her alive!' said the lawyer, rather ashamed of the moisture that dimmed his eyes; and shortly afterward, without further word or comment, Lord Rylestone drove away-ordering the coachman to drive as he had never driven before-and reached Walton Court with the horses covered with foam.

'I have found her!' he said to Adelaide. Do not wait for explanations-come with me.' Quietly and composedly she obeyed him, hardly waiting for the bonnet and shawl that were brought to her; and as they drove rapidly along he told her the head-waiter's

· It is just what I should have fancied,' she said. 'I can imagine that she walked on and on until she fell. Poor Margarita, it was a mercy that she fell there !'

They reached Nettlebank at last. It was a small house, and Mary Meadows herself answered the door. For once Lord Rylestone quite lost his self-control.

'Is she living?' he cried. 'For Heaven's sake, speak quickly!'

'Living-and that is all,' was the brief reply; and then they entered the house. The doctor had just gone, and he had given no hope. He said his patient might last two or three days, but no longer.

'You can go in, sir,' said Mrs. Meadows; she will not know you; she will never know any one in this world again.'

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