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CHAPTER XX.

A TRAGIC END TO A FATEFUL LIFF. The strain which Edith had endured was only too visible in her face to the observant eyes of Steele, though he would not appear even to question her as to its cause. The fearless, open glance with which she met his eyes fully satisfied him that she had adhered to duty through a sterner ordeal than passive submission to inevitable circumstances. But the price of that victory was being paid. Her manner was listless, her step more languid, and the minister's heart grew heavy with apprehension.

When the summer holidays relieved her from the routine of teaching she was looking so pale and tired that Mabe do observed it and suggested Mabe also observed it and suggesting to her brother a little plan for giving their favorite enforced recreation. "Go with us to the convention in Cleveland, dear Edith," she urged in her most persuasive tones. "My brother is going in a few days and wishes me to
accompany him. We will not be absent more than two weeks, and Mrs.
Harold can surely spare you for that little while

"Certainly," Mrs. Harold responded, entering warmly into the proposition despite the imploring looks of her niece. "It will do you a world of good, my dear, change of air and scene. In spite of yourself you will be interested, and will come home better fitted to

resume work."

Overwhelmed by the weight of argument Edith kielded. She felt too weak to resist the united good intentions of her friends, but a superstitious terror of leaving home overbrooded all her preparations. Mrs. Harold's health had seemed to improve, with the creeping deceitfulness of consumption. She was evidently stronger, and Mr. Steele used this argument to convince the girl that now was the best time to take rest herself, and recuperate in case she should be called upon to bear a heavier

"I only go because you wish it, Aunt Amy," she exclaimed at parting. "I know I shall not have a moment of peace till I am safely back once more." Steele and his sister exchanged tele graphic looks of triumph when they fairly seated their captive in the excursion train. They chatted incessant-ly and called Edith's attention to the beautiful scenery through which they were passing. But their companion, though she stirred and smiled at each appeal, seemed lost in a dream, a nightappear, seeing lost in a dream, a high-mare dream which the circumstances of travel produced, while the roar of the cars shut out external impression. At each station she started into an attitude of strained listening, and when the name of "Booneville" was shouted into the car her agitation inco an extent that was noticeable.

"We are delayed here two hours, believe," said the voice of Steele at her He had gone out to inquire the reason of the protracted waiting. Edith hardly heard his explanation. She felt that every movement was being hurried onward by the control of Destiny. It was all an inevitable nec-essity that they went to the hotel and had some refreshment, after which she allowed herself to be persuaded to retire upstairs and lie down.

Having won the assurance that she believed she would sleep, Steele hastily explained to his sister that he had some small business to attend to which would keep him absent for an hour perhaps, and started forth once more into the city, while Mabel went back to watch over Edith's slumber and read, never questioning for a moment that her brother would fail in his punc-tuality to be back in time for the train. We will follow Steele upon the errand that led him out that eyening, as he hailed the first co and rode through the busy streets of Booneville, hardly bestowing an observant eye upon the stately edifices recently erected in the improved portion of the town, except to note the distance he had traversed and watch for his esired destination. He had given hir elf just so much time to accomplish his work, and alighting directly opposite a large build-ing containing offices of various practitioners in the city he mounted the steps at once with his usual rapid step and paused before the sign of "Flint & Egerton, Attorneys."

"It is late, still I may find him to and hurry, by personal insistance perhaps, this dilatery action. At least the time and opportunity should not be thrown away," he muttered under his breath, and turning to the door on his right upon mounting the stairs he knocked sharply.

"Come in," responded a mild voice, and turning the handle Steele revealed an apartment with which we are al ready familiar, in its scrupulous nicety -none other, in fact, than that of the respectable Mr. David Egerton. Tha elegant personage had moved lightly in his easy chair at the sound, present ing to the intruder his bland, self-con tented countenance, and now rose wit a gesture of politeness and a look that implied that he was positively sure he remembered the face of his guest, only could not associate it exactly. Steeledid not stand upon ceremony for an instant in announcing his name, where upon the manner of Mr. Egerton because a little came a little more obsequious and ur-gent in its civility, and he waved his visitor graciously into his private room and pressed him to be seated. "I have only a few words," the min

"I have only a few words, the initiater said, a little annoyed by this officious courtesy. "I stopped on my way through the city because I was anxious to know if you had discovered anything definite, anything more since your last communication. I am excession to the communication of the communication."

your last communication. I am excessively anxious to learn the termination of this investigation."

The wrinkles about the eyes of the lawyer drew a little closer together, and the cunning expression contracted the pupils even of his diminutive eyes, as, avoiding the inquiring gaze of his interrogator with a stealthy movement, he answered: "I have no information.

to you. Everything is being done to advance your scheme, but it takes time. It is a delicate, difficult matter where a fact has been kept silent so long, when the old inhabitants have moved away, and we have not even the clew of a name. However, the detective I have employed is an expert, an un-commonly shrewd fellow, most thorough and minute in his investigations. Hold on a minute—let me show you"— David vanished into the next apartment, and Steele once more glanced at his watch with a feeling there was little more definite information to be



gained, and began to regret that he had wasted time in seeking this man personally, whose crafty manner dis-pleased him and whose voluble language impressed him as intentionally complicated in order to confuse by the multiciplicity of words and prevent him from putting decided questions. Perhaps, though, he was too impatient. He knew it required time, but then nine months had elapsed since first he had set this fruitless search in motion As he waited, revolving these varied

reflections, he hardly noticed the con-fused sounds in the next room, or the unnatural shrillness of tone of its proprietor would have awakened some uriosity as to its cause. At all events the lawyer had been absent examining his papers only ten minutes ere the loud report of a pistol, followed in quick succession by another, thrilled the nerves of Steele, accompanied in stantaneously as lightning by a frightful conviction. The next instant it was verified, for starting to the door, which stood ajar, he threw it open just in time to see Dr. Egerton fall backward, throwing up his hand to his head with the impotent gesture and convulsive contraction of feature of a dying man.

CHAPTER XXI.

HUSBAND AND WIFE. When Egerton quitted Edith that morning in the little church it was with the earnest determination to go ack to his home and make the his unfortunate lot, with a more worthy object than that of haughty endurance of unhappiness which none suspected, in defiance of the world which was envious of his prosperity. He had worked his way up to emi nence in his profession by devoted study and perseverence till he commanded the respect and admiration of all who knew him; but the luxury of his home and the infinite number of comforts lavishly spread around his path could not to a man of his nature make amends for a requisite atmos phere of congeniality. He had mar-ried young, against the advice of his best friend and counsellor, Mr. Steele, who took that deep interest in his wel-fare which an effer brother might have borne. The old result of haste was that slowly he repented the rashness of an act that bound him to a woman his inferior in refinement, in culture, in intellect, in everything in fact which could possibly have conduced to a happy union. At leisure he studied the character which had worn such a winning exterior, and yet, while he knew the task to be hopeless, he strove to remonstrate with her upon the frivolous pursuits that engrossed



Children Cry tor CASTORIA. was administered. It was resented with

pettish, unreason ble temper. Sensitiveness is almost invariably accompanied by irascibility. His own wrath rose; hers hardly needed that ncitement ere she uttered a reproach his teeth that fact which was a mis-fortune in his life, not a fault, and which he had told her in the exuber ance of his confidence. At that blow Egerton was silenced for she had wounded him in his tenderest part, blasting his devotion forever. There are some things witch can never be forgiven, whose promous sting must rankle in the case to all eternity. When bitter work are cone been exhauged it requires a divine conde changed it requires a divine condscension, a divine renovation of the being before true r onciliation is pos-sible. But she incombile of deep senti-ment herself. "leved that any speech could be glossed over and ignored, while her husband's eyes were opened with a withering insight into the nature of a woman whose anger could prompt her to aim such an arrow barbed with malevelent cruelty.

Though she could not appreciate his airbor nature, she had revelled in a selfish enjoyment of his caresses, an his sudden coldness alarmed her for her possession. She repreached him that he did not love her. It was then that the final blow was struck at the root of declining affection, for when once love is demanded, not voluntarily given, its native atmosphere is ex-tinguished. Where love has been strong and intense, reaction, if it ever comes, is equally violent in hatred, and ere four years had passed Egerton and his wife stood in bitter antagonism to each other. Then he felt the restraint of the bonds he had cast around his own life; flowery and soft as he had been deluded into believing them before, now their weight and controlling force became apparent and stung and tortured him. At war with the social laws that bound him, all the latent pas-sions in the man woke with demoniac violence, for he had entered upon a contract which he could not fulfil, and her claims upon him were galling de-mands. And yet the proud nature of the man would have made him scrupu-lously careful that not a feature of this domestic discord should ever be known beyond the threshold of his door; but there was one whose lynx eyes, bent upon evil, had pierced be yond the conventional exterior and read the dissatisfaction that was preying at the heart of Egerton's life. That vigilant spy was no other than the shrewd lawyer, his cousin, whose hatred had matured from a childish pet ty jealousy into vindictive malevo-lence. Dudley had ever stood above him in class, his superior ability throw-ing his own accomplishments into mortifying obscurity. They had quarrelled from boyhood up, and the perpetual discord in his uncle's family between

two natures distinctively adverse from earliest infancy was only augmented by unjust partiality. Dudley was pun-ished for conflicts not of his provoca-tion, while David's flagrant offenses were allowed to pass with impunity, sneers and taunts ensued from his cousin which Dudley's proud spirit could not brook from an equal, much less from one whom he knew to be his inferior. What though he was a foundling and dependent upon charity?

David should not remind him of it! Often in exasperation had he laid violent hands upon his tormenter, a prohis uncle, a severity stimulated per-

haps by the vivid contrast between own son and the unfortunate boy he had adopted, till Egerton burst from his tyrannical authority and ran away. Still the enmity of the cousins continued into manhood. The position Egerton's talents commanded and readily gained for him in his lonely strug-gle with life was a reproach to the cunning lawyer whose wealth and craft could not compensate for the deficiency in intellectual endowments. He hated him for his success, and finding the insidious hints at a fact with which he had often taunted him openly in childhood, but now dared not employ save in honeyed covert speech, failed entirely to either anger or humil-late, David had dogged the steps of his cousin like an evil genius, with the wicked design to frustrate his every scheme for advancement in the world But no efforts of his evil machination could keep under the ambition and energy of Dudley, who despised the cringing, obsequious lawyer too much to seriously regard him as an enemy, looking down upon his petty spite with an antagonism that would seek under hand means for its gratification, not an open satisfaction with equality on both sides, a cruelty that craved to hurt, to humble, to crush its object. There-fore in the absence of the doctor David inemuated himself into his home on the plea of relationship, and finding that his presence gave pleasure to Mrs. Egerton, perhaps from the fact that it was disliked by her husband, began by degrees the villainous work of poisoning the wife's ears with evil tales, which, however warrantable they might be of one of Egerton's temperament, were utterly devoid of evidence With unscrupulous delight he watched the avidity with which she received this surreptitious intelligence and the increasing discord upon Egerton's return home; and it was a grateful boon to David's greedy eyes when they fell upon the contents of the letter which his dishonorable conduct had placed in his possession, for here was an authen-tic proof of the suggestive hints he had fabricated for the torment of the wife

of his enemy. Her flashing eyes as she perused this missive fully satisfied him that he had laid the train to a certain and destructive avalation.

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UNSEEN SIGHTS

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cloak of friendship Nor the brush that a man he paints the town red

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