

**HELENA GRAHAM,
THE BRIDE'S SACRIFICE.**

CHAPTER XII.

"Promise!" she said, in a hollow voice, coming nearer, and raising her arm, as if to accomplish her words.

"I cannot! O Miss Helena, I cannot!" faltered the almost fainting Jessie.

"Promise!" again cried Helena, glaring upon her with her wild, dark eyes.

"I cannot!" still wailed Jessie, pressing her hand over her heart.

"Promise, or die!" exclaimed the mad girl, grasping her by the arm in a vice-like grip.

"I cannot—I would sooner die!" said Jessie, as, unable to stand, she again sank at the feet of her vindictive foe.

For a moment it seemed as though the threat would be accomplished, as Helena stood over her like one turned to stone. But the next instant, releasing her hold, she hurried her from her; and as if fleeing from temptation, fled down the rocks, over the rough path towards the castle, and sank fainting and exhausted on the sitting-room floor.

An hour after Allie entered, and beholding the prostrate form of Helena, with her streaming hair, lying prone on the floor, grew alarmed, and coming over, she shook her gently, saying—

"Miss Helena, are you ill? Come, get up now like a good lady, before you catch your death o' cold a-lyin' on the bare floor. Indeed, 'tis no right for young people to leave themselves into the draft this way."

But Allie went through all the phases of the potential mood—"commanding, exhorting,"—in vain. Her young mistress neither moved nor stirred.

At length Helena lifted her head, and half rose, disclosing a face so pale and haggard, a form so sunken and collapsed, that Allie started back in terror.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Miss Helena. I declare to heaven if you have not almost scared me out o' my wits, sure enough. Are you ill, my lady?"

"Yes, sick at heart! sick at heart!" said Helena, in a despairing voice.

"I knowed 'something was the matter with you. Well, get up like a good child, and let me get some tea for you, it's the best cure in the world for sick complaints."

"O Allie, leave me. My illness is beyond your art. Neither 'poppy nor mandragora' can ever medicine me to that sweet sleep I once slept upon this roof."

"Now, don't say so," said Allie, touched by her hopeless tone. "Folk are no took so sudden as all that, you know. I ain't got no poppy nor man dragoon; but tea is just as good, 'ordin' to my way o' thinkin'. An' when you take a good night's rest, you'll be all well in the mornin'."

"Rest? Rest? When shall I rest again? Allie, leave me. I want to be alone."

"Indeed, Miss Helena, I dare not do it—'twon't do to leave you here in the draft all alone. Let me help you to bed, an' make the tea, an' you'll be better to-morrow, sure."

"Oh, this heart, this heart!"

"Yes, Miss Helena, I know. It's the cramps you're got, an' I advise of you to get up. Come, Come."

And Allie put her arm coaxingly round her young lady's neck, and attempted to lift her up.

"O Allie; if you only knew my affliction! What matters it whether I die or not, since I have nothing more to live for? I might as well die now as live; for the living death of a loveless life."

"You mustn't talk so, Miss Helena! it's no right, nor likewise respectful to the Lord who sends the cramps as well as health sometimes. 'Tis really 'stonishin' the way you take on about it."

"Allie, I am not bodily ill—only wronged, suffering, despairing, deceived, broken-hearted almost," said Helena, looking straight before her, with a fixed, anguished look.

"Dear heart, don't take on so about it. I'm very sorry."

And good old Allie passed her hand gently and caressingly over the glossy dark locks of the young girl.

"Oh, there is nothing but falsehood in this world! I, who loved and trusted so much, to be now deceived! I would have staked my life, my soul, on his fidelity. And now, this awakening from my blissful, delusive dream, is worse than death. O Allie, my dear old friend, is there any one who really loves me in this world but you?"

And, wholly overcome, Helena's strong despair gave way to a passionate burst of tears.

Since Helena had been a child, Allie never remembered to have seen her weep before; and now, in her quaint, tender manner, she strove to soothe her grief. But still the young girl wept and sobbed with wild vehemence, until nature was relieved, and she looked up, calmer, and far less despairing than before.

"Allie," she said, suddenly, "what time does Evan go over to Craig's End to-morrow?"

"Before noon."

"Then tell him to be ready to take me to Glenleith before he goes for him! And now, Allie, I will follow your advice, and retire."

"But won't you take a cup of tea, my lady?" persisted the old woman, who had some vague idea of the all-powerful virtues of the herb.

"No, no, thank you; I do not need it."

"But it'll do you good, my lady; you will feel more comfortable for it."

"Comfort? comfort! Can anything ever restore comfort here?"

And she struck her breast with her hand.

"Yes, my lady, some strong tea."

"Good night, Allie."

And Helena flitted like a shadow up the long staircase, and disappeared in the gloom beyond.

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New Goods.—5 cases of all the latest novelties in fancy goods opened this day. See them and compare prices. Anderson's Fancy Bazaar is the cheap spot.

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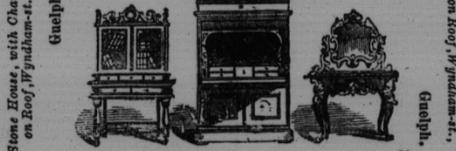
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Guelph, July 18, 1874. dw

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Guelph, 1874. d2aw-w

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