

"The Modern Portia" is being shown at the Majestic Theatre on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Today's Best Moving Picture Story

A Modern Portia

[By Edwin M. La Roche.]

"It's a question of minutes, a stimulant and the resources of a clinic." He watched, peering up into the ghostly fog. "What a death!—burst into a hole in the street—unfaded save by a helpless alibi."

"Help, help, help!" His voice sounded like a wail in the night.

Then a glad, distant sound came down to him, the clang of an ambulance bell, and he almost swooned with the reaction its message brought.

Weeks flitted by, months flicked themselves off the calendar, and, with the swift passage of time, the emergency ward of the City Hospital came no more to know its own urgent patient. The time had come when Isabel Vincent, with her shattered frame starting to knit together again, had been picked up and wheeled off to a secluded room.

And with the face of the man bending over her, the dark, fixed face that had become an integral part of her resurrection, her hand sought his and was immeasurably comforted by its glow of warmth and strength.

"So it has come to this," she said the words half to herself.

"Yes, Isabel, I stood in the path of death and harried him while the hospital staff worked over you."

"You forget the long nights—I remember only your face alone."

"Ah! is it memory or desire that paints itself on your eyes?"

"Have it either way"—the first, new pink found its way into her cheeks—"I feel that you love me."

His strong hand closed over hers, and she lay in comforted silence.

In an hour she was awake.

"I'm stronger already," she said; "with your love comes strength. Have I slept long?"

"No longer than my hand has—it's quite lifeless."

"Then take it back," she smiled; "I want only the wilful part of you—the indomitable face of my dreams."

One could hardly believe such invalid words an engagement, yet each took it as such, and, with the passage of convalescent days—days of close communion for the brilliant girl and the famous specialist—the whispered word passed through the hospital that they were engaged to be married.

When the day came that Isabel was able to walk coitously and was sent back to her home, the wonder of her love-affair began to dawn upon her.

In her girlhood, in the breathing spells of her long periods of study, in the unmanly fortress of her law-office, she had calmly faced the possibility of falling in love. First, it should be a meeting of the minds, a checking-up of congenial points, an analysis of secret thoughts—after that, love unbounded, if you will.

Now, with the lust for her work beginning to fasten on her again, and her mind filling with freshened thought, the twinkling stone on her finger caused her to stare at it in almost dismay.

But when the dark, compelling eyes of the doctor daily faced her, her soul felt only delight at their probe. She loved him; he felt it in her deepest core, yet her mind revolted at this panicky surrender of herself without restriction and covenant.

Soon, she thought, she would be mixing and battling with other people again, and her judgment would run clear.

On the day that Isabel Vincent prepared to journey downtown to her office and to pick up again the tangled reins of her practice, she had never felt more physically fit. Yet her nerves were not quite prepared for the shock that gripped them with eerie suddenness.

It was a street car, and two ladies sat in a cross seat with their backs to her.

"Yes, he's engaged to marry Isabel Vincent, the talented and beautiful, they say, young woman lawyer."

"Do you suppose she knows he's gambled away everything he has?"

"You never can tell—what won't a girl do in the heat of infatuation?"

There was a pause, and Isabel listened, fascinated.

"It's a pity—they say she's awful nice."

Rather an anticlimax, this remark, but she was off, and she swung off, at almost timidly, at her corner. A fiery, wavering path seemed to cleave her brain; on the one side, love, the best of her, holding forth for this man; and on the other, doubt, disdain, revolt, creeping up with sickening, forced strength.

Isabel bowed to her smiling office force and shut her private door behind her.

"Well, it's come at last," she said, half-aloud, "my trial of myself. Whatever the value of tattle in a street car, the thing has to be faced."

She flung her gloves on the desk and stared hard at them, her eyes gazing unmeaningly before her.

"It's got to work itself out—now, at the beginning of my life again. It's my one great case—myself, I versus my life and my happiness."

Doctor Carpel stood in the presence of Mrs. Norman, with the light of pity shining from his dark eyes. It was night, and, save for him, she lay alone, dying.

A shaken, fearful voice over the telephone had bidden him hurry to her bedside. And he stood there now, counting her measured breathing.

Not even her wealth could save her, he thought, nor could the bulwarks of her bank account stand between her and the Reaper. And the strangeness of it all! The whim of a remarkable woman. When he arrived, not even her most confidential friend and agent, Isabel Vincent, was near her. It was all a mockery, too, that Helen, her beloved niece and principal beneficiary, was absent from the great house.

At the dying woman's faint gesture, he bent close to her.

"It is—my wish to go, thus—alone and without pain—to my—"

A fit of violent coughing seized her and shook her transparent shoulders. Her eyes shone supernaturally.

"Over there, in the desk—a secret drawer—bank withdrawals—oh, God, let me finish!"

"Yes, yes," he said, "I understand everything."

She dropped her eyelids hopelessly, and he saw that the spark of life was preparing to quench.

"Quick—get—"

Doctor Carpel sprang to the massive piece of furniture and ran deft fingers over its array of drawers and compartments. A little brass knob, among a dozen looked significant to him, and he twisted and turned it, until he heard a spring uncatch, and a secret drawer lay open to him.

He glanced over his shoulder. The woman on the bed lay deathly still.

There they lay naked to his eyes, a sheet of one-thousand-dollar bills. A princely fortune, judging by the thick look of them.

Doctor Carpel picked the packet up, weighed it in his hand, closed the secret drawer, then, with a gasp, he saw the secret of the desk; he felt positive, and here was a new lease of life, fortune, fame, and his head again, and a chill ran down his spine. His forehead broke out in clammy beads of moisture. Surely, surely the dead woman had not moved her hand?

[To be Continued.]

She was utterly routed, according to the dispatch, with a loss of about 500 men killed, captured or wounded. The Federal losses were not stated.

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