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The Romance of a Marriage.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"What?" springing towards her; but Paula raises the hand holding the letter to keep her off. "Do not touch me," she says, without a trace of passion or feeling, just as one might imagine a statue, had it voice, would speak. "I have changed my mind. I will go with you to-night. That is all," and she turns.

"Stop!" and Alice catches her by the arm. "What—what does this mean? Paula, look at me! What is it? Do you really mean it?" fearfully.

"I am in earnest. Yes, I will go with you. I will—do what you wish!"

"Paula—with a hushed delight—"is it possible! I mean—how glad I am. But what made you change? Of course I knew—I knew you would when you thought it over quietly; and I am very sorry I spoke as I did, I am indeed. Of course, you wouldn't refuse—you wouldn't. What—what's that in your hand—a letter?"

"Yes."

"It's—it's from Bob!"

"Yes, it is from Bob. You ask me why I have changed my mind. It is because of this letter."

"Is—he ill?"

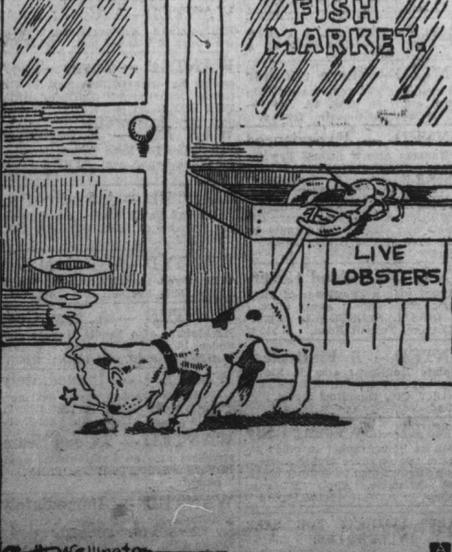
Paula shakes her head.

"No. Read it," and she thrusts it forward.

Alice takes the thin paper and devours it. It is a long letter for Bob.

"Dear Paula—The game is up. I am a ruined man, and heart-broken; and this just as I was on the point of success; when I might even now succeed but for a miserable thousand pounds. Fancy a thousand pounds standing between me and May. Can't you understand when I say that I am heart-broken? I can't explain. I haven't the heart. A man, who has suddenly come into a fortune, has offered me his cattle-run here for a thousand pounds. I could make twenty of it in a year with luck; but—I cannot write any more. Go to May, and tell her that I will not waste her young life any longer. I yield her up. Fate is too strong for

And the Worst is Yet to Come—



FISH MARKET.

LIVE LOBSTERS.

Wellington

me; my poor little darling. I am working at cattle-driving with a man; shall give him notice and go—Heaven knows where. Don't be down-hearted; break it to May.

"Your affectionate brother,
BOB."

Alice draws a long breath. Surely fate is working for her. The letter has come just in the nick of time.

"I see," she says in a low voice, "poor Bob! But—but the time?" she stammers.

Paula smiles an awful smile.

"I have thought of that. Yes, I must, I will have the money at once. That is my price. I will sell myself, but on no other terms. Give me the letter!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Look here, Paula," says Alice, an hour later, as she stands watching while Paula dresses for the dinner-party—dressing for the sacrifice! "If you don't feel well enough, don't go. Why should you? I—I can tell them and explain; they will quite understand, and it really doesn't matter; I mean there is no necessity for you to go, now that it—it is all right."

But Paula does not pause in her dressing.

"I am quite well," she says. "Do I look ill?" and she turns with a hard, mechanical, mirthless smile.

"No, certainly not," says Alice. "I never saw you looking better," and, indeed, there is a flush on the cheeks that were so deadly white an hour ago, and a light in the dark eyes that, if not the brilliance of happiness, will pass muster.

"That is right," says Paula, with a curve of the lip and an unnatural calm; "I am glad of that. I want to look my best. I want Stancy de Palmer to be pleased with his purchase; it is most important," and she laughs—a strange, mirthless laugh.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that!" says Alice, suppressing a shudder. "You make me feel uncomfortable. If—if you have not really made up your mind—"

"But I have," breaks in the clear, cold voice—"quite. Do you think I would hesitate? Who am I that I should refuse to make Bob happy? A thousand pounds stand between him and May, and their joint happiness, and I can give it him. I made up my mind before I had finished reading the letter. Besides, what does it matter? Life will not last forever! As you say—as you have said so many times—mine is a useless sort of life; a selfish, egotistical existence. Now is the opportunity to redeem my character. Do you think I am red enough?" eyeing herself with a cold scrutiny in the glass, "or shall I borrow your rouge pot?" irreverently.

Alice colours.

"You look quite well enough," she says. "You know that I have always thought you pretty; you have improved of late."

"Then Stancy de Palmer will be proud of his bride," says Paula, with the same cold, desperate smile. "Who would have thought that good looks were so valuable! Mine are worth three thousand a year, a thousand down, and Bob's happiness. I wonder plain girls don't commit suicide."

"For Heaven's sake don't talk like this!" says Alice, with a shudder.

me; my poor little darling. I am working at cattle-driving with a man; shall give him notice and go—Heaven knows where. Don't be down-hearted; break it to May.

"Your affectionate brother,
BOB."

Alice draws a long breath. Surely fate is working for her. The letter has come just in the nick of time.

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"I have thought of that. Yes, I must, I will have the money at once. That is my price. I will sell myself, but on no other terms. Give me the letter!"



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Gin Pills FOR THE KIDNEYS

"and—don't smile so. It—it frightens me!"

"Does it? That's bad. I don't want to frighten my adorer, or he will repent of his bargain. I want to look my best, to look irresistible, so that when I make my terms—" she stops with a sudden groan, and looks wildly round; but in a moment she recovers herself. "Have you nothing that you can lend me?" she says. "No glittering baubles such as the soul of Stancy de Palmer delights in? You have often offered to lend them to me; let me have them to-night."

Alice, cowed and silent, fetches her jewel-case, and Paula, with awful calmness, selects the most gorgeous and brilliant, and extends her glorious white arms for Alice to clasp the heavy bracelets on.

"That is better," she says, surveying herself in the glass with a mocking smile. "How does the slave look?"

And she turns and makes a sweeping curtsy.

Alice stares at her with awe, and admiration, and fear in her eyes.

"Yes," she says, breathlessly, "you have grown very beautiful, Paula; and you never looked better—never!"

Paula throws up her arms with an exaggerated gesture of triumph.

"Come, then, to conquest. Let us haste to the market."

And she turns away. Alice rises to follow her, and suddenly catches sight of Flossie Hamilton's bouquet.

"Where did these come from?" she asks. "They are just the thing. You must have this white rose in your hair."

And she is about to untwist the wire when Paula stops her.

"No," she says, "not that. Put it down. I will not wear it."

And for the first time her eyes grow soft.

Alice puts the bouquet in the glass without a word; she fully realizes that it needs but the slightest strain on the over-tired nerves to wreck the whole.

"Are you ready?" says Paula. "Why do you wait? We shall be late."

And she laughs.

"Wait—wait, for Heaven's sake!" says Alice, laying her hand on the white, rounded arm. "You—you must take something; you are overexcited and nervous. Stop; drink this!"

And she pours out a glass of brandy-and-water.

Paula takes the glass in her hand. "What will it do?" she asks, with a ghastly smile. "Will it make me drunk? Will it make me—forget? If it would only stop the awful pain at the back of my head, I would drink it."

"Drink it," says Alice, anxiously. And with a shudder, Paula puts her lips to the glass.

"No," she says, "I cannot drink it. I don't think I could swallow it if I tried. But don't—with a mocking smile—"don't look so alarmed. I shall be all right when I get to the hotel."

Still fearful—for never, since she can remember, has Paula looked like this—Alice leads her to the shaky fly which has been ordered, and they trundle along to the Golden Eagle.

At the Golden Eagle there are signs of no little excitement. Its windows rival in brilliance those of the casino close behind it. An awning has been put up from the door to the road; footmen—the Golden Eagle lays them on for special occasions—wait at the door-way. That this is a special occasion the landlord fully understands, for his not miller—every rich English-

man in Noville is called miller—has not Millor Palmer ordered the best dinner that can be prepared, and does he not expect two English ladies as guests?

Never since the hotel was built has the landlord entertained so wealthy a guest as Millor Palmer, nor one who sings his money about with more royal prodigality.

No doubt the lackeys are rather surprised at the two ladies arriving a private fly—but then the English are so eccentric!—and they bow to the ground as Alice and Paula alight, and are ushered to the superb apartments which the Palmers occupy.

"Oh, Paula!" exclaims May as she meets them at the door of her room. "How beautiful she looks!" and Alice smiles with quiet triumph.

"I am so glad you have come, dear!" May says, kissing her. "We were so disappointed that you did not join us to-day, but we are glad now. And Alice tell you what an awful time we had? But we are none the worse. Papa saw a doctor when we came home, and he said that we should be all the better. But it was awful! But how good it is of you to come. Papa—and Stacey—timidly—"will be so pleased."

Paula makes some reply, she scarcely knows what; and Alice, who keeps close to her, watching her, in face, chatters on to hide Paula's incoherence.

Then they go down to the gorgeous apartments which serve as drawing and dining-rooms for the eminent sugar-baker. As usual, the light is dazzling. Mr. Palmer cannot exist without a glare of gas or wax candles—gas he much prefers. The light seems to blind Paula, the gold and gaudy colour of the vulgar room strikes to her brain; but does not falter; she hard, set look in her eyes, so strange, so unlike their usual gentleness, meets the red, pompous face of Mr. Palmer unflinchingly.

"Delighted to see you, my dear young ladies," he says, squeezing Paula's cold hand in his warm, fat one. "Miss Alice, you're looking none the worse for our unpleasant sea trip. Dear me, it was wretched, wasn't it? Very fortunate you didn't join us, my dear!" he says, in a low voice, to Paula.

The familiar "my dear" strikes to Paula's heart, and gives her a sudden shock. This man is already treating her as if the bargain had been struck.

"Paula had a headache," says Alice, glibly.

At another time Paula would have given this a flat contradiction; but Alice may lie in safety to-night.

"Dinner, millor!" says one of the footmen; and as he announces it, the door opens and Stacey enters. He is in the most elaborate evening-dress; in addition to the enormous diamond solitaire on his shirt-front, diamonds shine at his collar, and on his thick, red fingers. He smells like Rimme's shop; half a bottle of scent has been poured on his handkerchief; his great, splay feet are squeezed into varnished boots a size too small for them; his hair is greased and plastered down in the approved fashion; in short, he is dressed to kill.

(To be continued.)

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Pattern 3101, cut in 3 Sizes: 14, 16, and 20 years, is here depicted. This crepe de meteor was used for its development, with head embroidery for decoration. This would be nice in brown satin or crepe, with embroidery in colors. The 16 year size will require 5 1/2 yards of 36 inches material, with 3 yards of ribbon or material 5 inches wide, for the sash. Width of skirt at lower edge is 1 1/2 yard.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 10c in silver or stamps.

A SMART GOWN.



Pattern 3107 here illustrated is cut in 6 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42 and 44 inches bust measure. Size 38 will require 5 1/2 yards of 44 inch material. Width of skirt at lower edge is about 1 1/2 yard. As here shown gray tulle was used, braided with white sateen. One could have this in brown serge of satin, with worsted, bead or chenille embroidery. Black velvet with facings of ivory satin, or taupe duvetyne with old blue pipings would be very attractive for this design.

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