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## For Her Sake;

### The Murder in Furness Wood.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Her father said "Hush!" when she appeared.

But Lady Cameron rather snappishly remarked:

"No, I see no need for silence. I think Diana ought to know what is said about her mad, foolish marriage." Then, pointing to an open letter which lay on the library table, she went on: "The Duchess is seriously displeased. She has heard of your engagement, and writes to say how much she disapproves of it, as she, with many others, saw the devoted attention Lord Clanronald paid to my daughter."

Diana did not condescend to make any reply.

"It is a very serious thing to offend the Duchess," remarked Mr. Cameron—"most serious."

"Diana laughed aloud, a scornful, bitter laugh that jarred terribly upon her father. "I should not care in the least if all the duchesses in England were offended with me," she said. "How can it possibly matter to her, I should like to know."

"It will be a serious thing for you if you provoke her ill will," said Mr. Cameron.

"My dear papa, it will not matter one jot. In a contest with the Duchess I should be quite sure to win. It is not even worth while to tell me what she thinks or what she says. I do not care in the least."

Peter Cameron knew that his daughter was in earnest, and wondered that she should differ so greatly from himself. To him there was nothing on earth so blissful or so precious as the friendship of a duke or duchess while to his daughter it was far more of a trouble than a pleasure.

Lady Cameron looked, as she felt, mortified. Diana was in very deed a thorn in her side.

There was another side to the picture. Congratulations poured in from all quarters. Lord Clanronald's friends and relatives professed to be in raptures; the whole country seemed delighted. Letters poured in; but not a line of congratulation came from the Duke or Duchess; and Peter Cameron asked himself anxiously more than once if Diana's marriage would undo the good effect of his own.

Sir Lisle had not been able to secure

an interview with Diana, he had not been able to press once more upon her the love that he felt for her. He had made up his mind to leave Ferness; but he waited from day to day, hoping always to be able to see her, and perhaps to unravel the mystery that perplexed him. His opportunity came at last.

It was the last day in October, and the morning sun was shining brightly, while a gentle breeze rustled musically among the still leafy trees. Diana thought the whole of the party had gone for a drive to the ruins of an old abbey a few miles distant; she had declined to accompany them. Finding at the last moment that Diana was not going, Sir Lisle also resolved to remain at home. He was determined to speak to her that day, no matter what happened.

Lady Cameron understood Sir Lisle's anxiety to see Diana, and she placed no obstacle in his way. If he could persuade Diana to change her mind, she would be only too delighted. She was therefore not displeased when he said:

"I want to speak to Diana, Lady Cameron; I will take this opportunity, with your permission."

"You will find her in the rose-garden," said her ladyship; "I saw her go there a few minutes since."

Diana, believing they had all started, thankful to be alone, and relieved from Lord Clanronald's unwelcome attentions, had gone to her favorite spot. The roses were nearly all dead, but the sun shone brilliantly, and the spray of the fountains glittered in the sunlight. She felt secure from intruders here. She could sit down and give rein to her thoughts; she could bury her face in her hands and weep the bitter tears that were seeking an outlet. How long was it since she had sung of sunshine and roses, since she had rejoiced in the brightness of her life? The roses had but bloomed and died once since then; yet she was now bewailing the unhappiness of her lot in life; before the roses bloomed again she hoped she would be dead. Still her pride was stronger than her love. She could weep here with no one to laugh, to sneer, or to console. She was alone. And Diana did weep, with uncontrolled grief and passion, quite unconscious that any one was near her, until a hand was laid on her shoulder, and Sir Lisle said, in a grave, low voice:

"Diana!" She started at the sound of her name, and gazed upon the intruder with flashing eyes and flushed cheeks. "Do not be angry, Diana," he said. "I have watched and waited for days to see you. This may be our last interview, and I beg that you will listen

to me in patience, for the sake of the love I bear you, and the thought of the love I believed you had for me."

"You had no right, Sir Lisle, to intrude upon my solitude," returned Diana, haughtily. "I came here to seek quiet; I wish to be alone."

"You will be alone in a few minutes," he said; "I shall be gone. If I were dying, Diana, would you refuse to speak to me?"

"No," she replied.

"So far as you and I are concerned, Diana, I am dying," he said—"for when this interview is over, life will cease for me. Not that I shall lay violent hands on myself, but I shall seek an honorable death. You would not refuse a few minutes to me if I were dying—do not refuse them now."

Her heart throbbed with an intense love. She longed to place her arms round his neck, to lay her fair head on his breast, and declare her love. But he was a Scarsdale; neither love nor liking should go from her to that hated race. She steeled herself against him, and tried to remember every insult, every wrong, that she had suffered at the hands of his relatives. She drew back as he approached.

"You need not fear, Diana," he said; "I will not touch your hands. The first kiss I gave you was the last; and I wish that I had died in that moment."

"So do I," echoed Diana, deep down in her heart.

"I will not touch you, dear. Listen to me for a few minutes, and then you shall see my face no more—no more until we stand together where all men shall be judged. You will answer then for the mercy you mete out to me now."

These were solemn words, and she shrank from them as his grave tones fell upon her ears.

"There are many ways of slaying a man," said Sir Lisle, "all more or less cruel; but I think the most cruel is when a beautiful woman wiles the heart from a man's breast, plays with it as a toy, and then crushes it and flings it away. That is what you have done with me, Diana. It is the most cruel of murders, because all good, all light, all hope is extinguished in a man's nature; naught but desolation remains. He has nothing left to live for; life is simply a burden. I swear that had I to live my life over again, I should prefer any death to this living torture. If your white hand, Diana, had plunged a dagger into my breast, it would have been far more merciful. It is my heart of hearts that you have destroyed; the life you have left is valueless to me. Diana, you are weeping!"

"Indeed I am not," she answered, sharply; "and you, Sir Lisle, are talking great nonsense to me!"

Sir Lisle was silent for a few moments; but his heart was full of the wrong done him, and he could not tear himself away until he had made another desperate effort to win her.

"It may sound like nonsense to you, Diana," he continued, "but it is a deadly truth to me. Think a little, dear, and you will realize it. When I met you, my heart had never known the love of woman. As I have told you, I had dreamed sweet and peaceful dreams of my ideal queen. They were realized when I met you. Your face, so fair to see you, Diana, went straight to my heart. I have since loved you with a true, faithful love that will die only with me. Do you believe me, Diana?"

"I believe you," she replied.

"I am glad of that. I set myself to work to win your love. My one aim, my one object has been to make you my beloved wife. You acknowledge that, Diana?"

She was conscious that his was a pure, an honest love; but no answer escaped her.

"When a man sets before himself an object in life, to destroy that object mercilessly is almost to destroy him. You have willfully wrecked my hopes and shattered my life; and that is my charge against you. I bring it now, Diana, and I shall bring it again, when I have to account for my lost and blighted existence."

"I do not see why you should thus charge me," said Diana, more startled than she cared to own by the terrible fervor of his words.

"Do you not? Then I will tell you. I loved you, and I showed my love for you in every possible way. You did not repulse me; you were kind to me. I can recall a thousand actions of yours that were all so many signs of love. You gave me hope. It is true that together with the signs of your love for me there were certain whims and caprices for which I could not so-

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count. I cannot account for them now; but I thought—knowing you to be so proud, Diana, proud as you are fair—that they were merely the petty rebellions of a young girl against submission—against being conquered, as it were; and I admired them. I cannot bring myself to believe that the same girl who fought against yielding her love to me could yield it to Lord Clanronald. I cannot believe it."

He looked so noble, so grave, so sorrowful, that her heart yearned to cry out that it was not true, that she had yielded her love to him, and him only. But she could make no such admission.

"That is why I bring this charge against you," he went on—"because you encouraged me, you accepted my love, you made me blindly, madly happy. You gave me your love most surely, if ever woman loved man, and you have taken it from me, just as surely. Can you deny that you loved me?"

"I must decline to answer such a question. I am the betrothed wife of another," she replied.

"Most falsely so," he said, bitterly. "If you are betrothed to any one, it is to me. I am sure there is a mystery, Diana; but I cannot fathom it. As surely as ever the sun, moon and stars shone in heaven, you loved me. You are so proud and dignified, you would never have allowed me that kiss had you not loved me, Diana. That kiss was sacred to me as a betrothal; and I know it was the same with you. I left you that night—ah, Heaven," he cried, passionately, "I pray that I may forget—I left your presence that night the happiest man in the world. I left you with love shining from your eyes, the clasp of your hand still warm in mine, your kiss sweet on my lips. I left you to dream of you, to long for the morrow, to count the moments that must pass before I should be again in the heaven of your presence. The morning came. Oh, Diana, how can I describe it? I left you all sunshine; I found you cold, frozen, dead to me. Neither your lips nor your eyes have smiled since. What have I done? Tell me—tell me—what have I done?"

Sir Lisle's earnest appeal touched the depths of Diana's heart, and she felt acutely the degradation of her position. She had encouraged him, and she loved him—yet she would marry another. The thought of revenge came to her in this moment of suspense, and she steeled herself against making any confession. The man she loved was a Scarsdale—her fate should never be linked with that name. She did not tell Sir Lisle this, but maintained a stolid indifference to his pleading.

(To be continued.)

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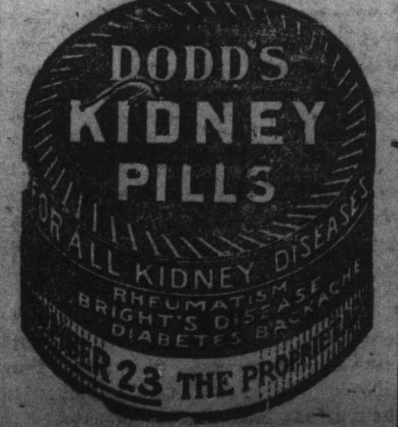
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