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MADE IN ENGLAND.

AT

## HENRY BLAIR'S

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## HENRY BLAIR

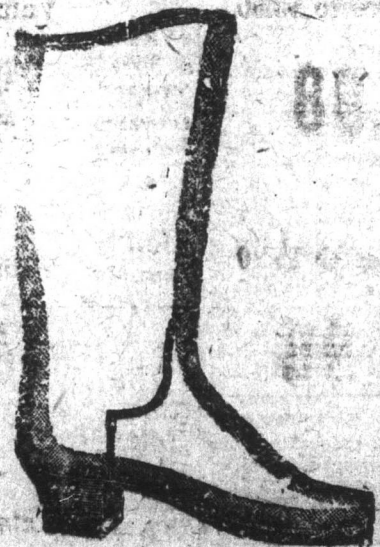
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## The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"There is only one thing to do," he went on, after a moment of silence: "Madge and I must leave here. We ought never to have come; I see that clearly enough now. We ought to have gone away, abroad, somewhere—anywhere where we were not known, and where this couldn't have happened. Poor Madge! poor Madge!"

The countess looked at him, and then from him. "Everything has gone wrong—a curse has rested upon me and upon the house since—" She stopped and drew a heavy breath. "And yet all seemed so smooth and straight. My plans—and God knows I planned and schemed for your happiness, not my own—my plans were going to their end as if Providence had blessed them. Irene loved you—"

"Mother!" he cried.

"Yes," she said in a dull, persistent way, "she loved you. She loves you still. I know it, I see it plainly every day. It is not only I whom she wretched. I watch her face, I know by the look on it—by the tone of her voice when she speaks to you—"

"For God's sake, be silent! Say no more, mother!" Royce broke out, hoarsely.

"It is the truth," she said, dully, stubbornly. "You have been and are blind not to have seen it. I meant you to marry her. You would have been rich, you would have been happy and my great sin would not have borne its fruit."

Royce went up to her and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder.

"What are you saying, mother?" he demanded, hoarsely. "You sin!" She started and looked at him for a moment like one in a dream then she put her hand to her head.

"What have I said?" she exclaimed in a trembling voice. "Why do you come here and drive me to despair? Why—"

Then she seemed to recognize him, and her hand dropped again. "What were you saying Royce?" she said.

"I—I am upset and bewildered. I don't know what I am saying."

"My poor mother!" he said, with a strong man's pity. "God forgive me for bringing all this upon you. But there shall be an end of it from tonight. We will go away, Madge and I—"

She rose, and seemed to struggle to her usual old self-possession.

"Go on!" she said in a constrained voice. "I remember all now. Go on and tell me your plans."

"We will go away," he repeated. "It will be best for all of us, especially for poor Madge. She would never be happy here. I see that now. I passed out into the night."

"No one was in the hall. The servants—even the porter—were congregated in the servants' hall, discussing with feverish excitement the events of the night. She went swiftly to the great door, and, opening it, she looked out into the night.

"Who is it?" she panted. "I—I don't know you. I've nothing to give—"

"It is I—Mrs. Landon," said poor Madge. "Let me come in." She could get no further.

Martha Hooper uttered a cry of astonishment and nervous apprehension, and drawing her in, closed the door.

"It's you, ma'am!" she gasped, as Madge sunk on to a chair. "Oh, what has happened? Why are you dressed like that? You are ill."

"I—I am faint," said Madge, faintly.

Martha Hooper ran for a glass of water, and brought it to her, and stood by as Madge drank it, wringing her hands.

"What has happened, ma'am?" she repeated. "Has—has he been there? Oh! tell me, quick. My poor heart!" and she put her hand to her side.

Madge set down the glass.

"I am in great trouble, Mrs. Hooper," she said, faintly. "I—I have left the Towers."

"Left the Towers—you?" gasped Martha Hooper. "Why have you done that?"

(To be continued.)

It was dark, and a keen wind was whistling through the leafless trees. It seemed to her to be singing, in a mocking voice: "Irene loved you; she loves you still."

Madge fastened her shawl round her and stood for a moment poised, as it were, upon the broad step. Whither should she go? The answer, breathed by the same inner voice, seemed to whisper, despairingly: "Anywhere from this place—anywhere!"

Obediently, as before, she passed down the steps, and swiftly crossing the lawn over the patches of light thrown from the windows of the still lighted rooms, was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXV.

She went swiftly, with the shawl drawn closely round her head, along the drive, its wonted smoothness cut up by the carriages, passed the gates, and into the high-road. She paused a moment or two to gain breath, and looked round her. As she did so, the stable clock of the Towers struck five. In another hour or two, she reflected, the workmen would be about, and she would be seen. She must hasten on—but whither. At that moment it and idea at all found room in her bewildered mind, it was that of going back to her own people if she walked long enough—if she could only manage to avoid recognition, she must in time come across a band of cypresses. Whether they belonged to her own tribe or not, she knew that they would succor and, if necessary, hide her.

She hurried on, and for a time, supported by the excitement of her flight was not sensible of fatigue. But presently she became conscious of it. Her feet seemed to be of lead, her head ached, her eyes burned. She knew that she could not go much further. Suddenly she found herself off the road and upon the grass. She looked round confusedly and saw that she was on Gorse Common. As she looked, a faint light attracted her attention, and she realized, after a moment or two, that it was from Martha Hooper's cottage. It seemed like a beacon, not to warn but to welcome, and it occurred to her that she might rest there for a short time, perhaps until the night had fallen again. The woman had evidently known that sorrow was, and could sympathize with and hide her. It was true, there was some secret understanding between her and the countess, but Madge reflected that she could show Martha Hooper that she, Madge, was flying from Monk Towers to save the countess from further humiliation, and that would induce Mrs. Hooper to help her in her flight.

She made her way across the common, and nearly fainting now with the exhaustion produced by the reaction of excitement, she leaned against the door and knocked.

Two or three minutes passed—minutes that seemed an age to Madge—and she was asking herself whether she should have strength to keep herself falling upon the step, when Martha Hooper's nervous voice was heard from behind the door.

"Who is it? It is you, Jake?" she asked in trembling tones.

Madge moistened her lips, she was almost incapable of speech.

"It is I," she said, at last.

Mrs. Hooper opened the door, then shrunk back and uttered a cry of alarm.

"Who is it?" she panted. "I—I don't know you. I've nothing to give—"

"It is I—Mrs. Landon," said poor Madge. "Let me come in." She could get no further.

Martha Hooper uttered a cry of astonishment and nervous apprehension, and drawing her in, closed the door.

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"Left the Towers—you?" gasped Martha Hooper. "Why have you done that?"

(To be continued.)



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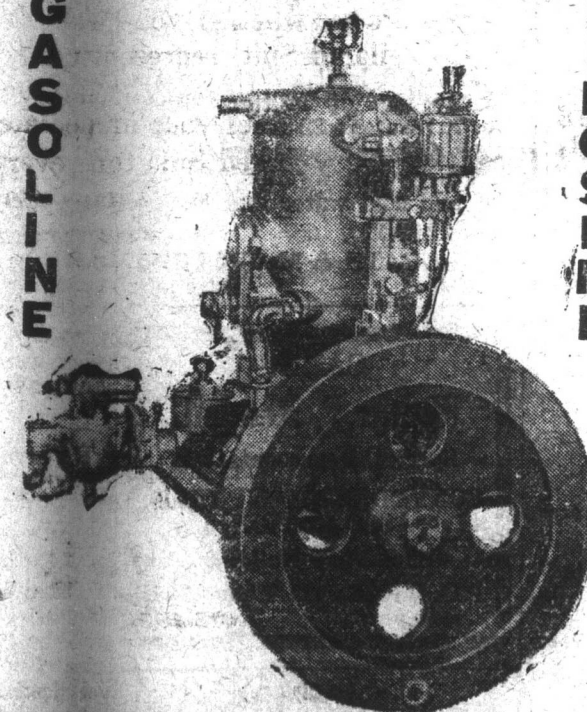
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