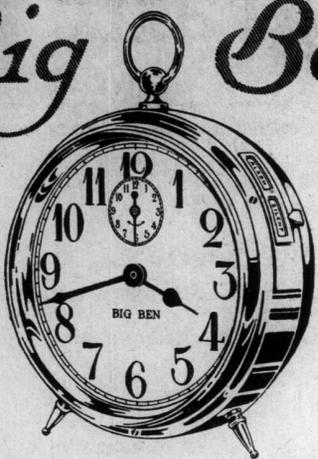


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though you have won in one sense, you have lost in another. Elizabeth will never be your wife." "I take no such assurance from your lips," said Ottershaw, savagely. He advanced toward the girl, trembling in her arms. "Speak to me, Elizabeth," he said. "Be true to yourself. You have been playing a part far too long. Once your soul belonged to my soul, your heart was a part of my heart. Can such things be forgotten or set aside? For the sake of your sister, you cut yourself away from me, and took upon you the humiliation of calling yourself David Barostans' wife; and since then, because you are a pure and a good woman, you have tried to force yourself to believe that you healy owed allegiance to this brute—this half-educated farm laborer. But though you deceived yourself, you never deceived me. I have honored you," Ottershaw went on, approaching still nearer to the girl, who had released herself from her cousin's protecting arms, and stood with her hands pressed to her heart, and her face like a carved image of stone. "because you have made such a determined fight to do what was honorable; but now all that is ended; fate has swept this barrier from your path. You owe no more duty. Your duty is not to the dead, but to the living."

At that very moment there was an interruption. Mary ran into the room, tears were streaming down her eyes, and her face working with agitation. "Oh, Miss Beth, will you come?" she said. "That poor child—" and then Mary broke off with a great cry, in which astonishment and pleasure mingled. "Oh, you have come, my lord," she said; "she told me that you would come."

Mrs. Griffin stepped forward. "What do you mean, Mary?" she asked. "I mean," said Mary, with quivering lips, "that the poor child we have been nursing has told me her real name. It is not Mabel White, but Mabel Hammond, a daughter of one of Lady Ottershaw's tenant farmers, and she has been praying all this long night that his lordship would come to her. I think," said Mary, turning to the young man, who stood with his words silenced and his voice frozen. "I think my lord, that she wants you to carry some message to her mother, and to give some sort of explanation to her ladyship, the countess; that is all."

Mrs. Griffin motioned Mary away, and once again she put her arms about Elizabeth.

The story of Mabel Hammond's disappearance was one that had been discussed freely with her by Lady Ottershaw, and one that she knew had lain heavily on Lady Ottershaw's heart. And it chilled her as she looked at Ottershaw and quickly realized that this girl's wrongdoing lay also at his door.

"I think you had better go," she said, in a low voice that was not very steady. Just as she was, and hateful as Ottershaw's conduct now made him in the eyes of all honorable persons, she could not forget how his mother adored him.

Without a word Ottershaw turned, and with a bowed head he walked from the room.

Outside he paused, as though fighting some influence stronger than himself; then, with a half moan, he picked up his hat and coat and went out to the cab that was still waiting. He knew now that whatever might come, he had lost Elizabeth. And as he walked slowly toward the gate a man who was crouched behind a kind of hedge watched him go with almost a mad look in his face. This man had a wretched appearance, his clothes were shabby in the extreme, his face wasted, his beard rough. He looked as if he had not tasted food for some days, yet there was fire in his eyes, and an extraordinary look of fierceness in every line of his body.

(To be continued.)

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A Terrible Tangle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the Darkness. (Concluded.)

The man laughed, sat down in a chair, and threw himself into a graceful and comfortable attitude. "A cross-examination," I suppose," he said. "Well, Ellen, suppose you start."

"I am quite ready," said Mrs. Griffin as she rose. "I understand that you have persuaded my kinswoman, Mrs. Barostan, to consent to become your wife very shortly?" she said.

"You understand rightly," said Ottershaw.

"Mrs. Barostan is very young," said Mrs. Griffin; "she has neither father nor mother, nor brother to act for her, therefore I, because I love her, I am going to play the part that her parents would have played if they were alive. And I am going to satisfy myself that you are a fit man to marry her."

Ottershaw laughed.

"Dear Ellen," he said, "why waste your time? Elizabeth has accepted me. She is not a child under age, and I am not an altogether unknown person."

"I begin to think that you are," said Mrs. Griffin, quietly. "The world knows you as a man of rank—a handsome, a delightful man, a man of brilliant talents, and a man of honor. Yet I am afraid, Mark, that the world should be undecieved with regard to the last."

Ottershaw's lips lost their smile, and he half rose from his chair. Then he smiled again most disagreeably.

"Everybody knows that you are an old-fashioned person, Ellen," he said, "with ridiculous out-of-date ideas."

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs. Griffin; "I believe that there is nothing very much out of date in calling a man dishonorable who would coerce a woman in such a way as you are attempting to coerce Mrs. Barostan. And I don't know," she went on, pitilessly, "whether I am so very old-fashioned in regarding the man—even a man of rank—who could connive at the death of another man as both base and unscrupulous!"

Elizabeth retreated with a little cry, and she trembled from head to foot. Lord Ottershaw rose to his feet.

"You are mad," he said to Mrs. Griffin.

She looked at him sadly.

"Alas!" she said, "I wish I were

From my heart, Mark, I wish that the day had never come when I should have learned what I have learned about you."

He did not look at her, but looked at Elizabeth. His face was drawn; it had lost its youth and handsome air at this moment.

"And what wonderful, what mysterious secret have you learned about me?"

"I have seen James Malcolm," was Mrs. Griffin's answer.

Ottershaw involuntarily started. This took him utterly unawares.

Ellen Griffin turned to Elizabeth. The girl was seated by the table, with her face shadowed by her hand.

"You remember, dearest," said the older woman, "that Mr. Gooch brought you the information that there was

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one of the crew of the Clytie who persisted in asserting that your husband had not been quite alone when he had gone on deck that foggy morning? Well, the company declared that they had tried to obtain the necessary evidence from this fellow passenger, Mr. James Malcolm, but that, as he was so ill, it had been impossible to have this satisfaction. Now, the same James Malcolm," said Mrs. Griffin, in her quiet way, "carried with it, in her quiet way, "carried with it something familiar to me. I cast my mind back, and I recalled a visit that once paid to Lord Ottershaw when he was at Oxford, and how I was here introduced to a friend of his, the whom report said at that time, was also a rival in university honors. This man's name was James Malcolm; and the James Malcolm whom I saw die in some wretched rooms in the East of London two days ago was the wreck of that handsome fellow whom you, Mark, introduced to me so proudly at Oxford years ago."

Ottershaw said nothing. He could say nothing, and Mrs. Griffin turned to him swiftly.

"Shall I go on?" she asked; "shall I let Elizabeth know the real barrier to this projected marriage?"

It was Elizabeth who answered. She rose suddenly.

"You need not question Lord Ottershaw, Ellen, nor ask his permission to speak. I can guess what all this means! That—it is—a story of treachery—of the most terrible wrong—and because of this treachery my husband is lost to me!" Then she put her hands out to her cousin. "Ellen," she said, wildly, brokenly, "I—I cannot breathe while he remains here. Send him away!—oh, send him away!"

Ellen Griffin looked at the man standing by the fire.

"You hear?" she said.

"Yes, I hear," said Ottershaw; "but it will take more than that to move me. Even supposing that I have done what you assert that I have done does not that link Elizabeth to me more closely? She gave me her promise that she would be my wife if ever she would be free. If I love her so much that I should stoop to treachery and trickery to get her, am I alone to blame?"

Elizabeth was crying bitterly.

"Oh, Ellen," she said, "I gave no promise. I could have given no promise! When my whole spirit was bound up in my love for David, do you think it likely that I should have done such a thing as this?"

"No," said Mrs. Griffin, quietly; "and no other person would believe it, either. It is over, Mark," she added; "you have played your game, and

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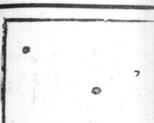
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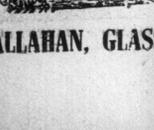
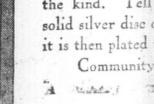
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