

# "Safety First"



Some men, sometimes, can board the flying street car or "monkey with the buzz-saw" in a mill or factory, and get away with it. But that's how accidents happen. Some men, sometimes, can shave with an open blade razor and avoid cutting themselves. But thousands agree that the chances are against it.

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his choice. We Comynghams are not secretive, whatever our faults. This concealment was purely unavoidable." Mrs. Alwyn felt as though, if denied retort, she must die of spleen. Rashly she answered, "Unavoidable! Possibly. Some people might—I don't say I do—consider it dishonorable."

It is dangerous to attack a woman's son. Lady Comyngham swiftly brought an unexpected weapon to the front. Drawing her inches to their fullest height, and looking from top to toe the countess, spite of her tumbled muslin gown, "Mrs. Alwyn," she said, "according to what I hear through my friend Lady Wynne, in Worcestershire, you can scarcely claim to be an acceptable critic on what is or what is not honourable. Allow me"—her fingers on the bell—"to wish you good-day."

Cowed out of ready speech for once, John Alwyn's clever widow was in another minute gone from Oakleigh Place, never to return.

"Give me a fan!" cried Lady Comyngham to her reappearing daughters. "Open all the windows. That woman has poisoned the place with frangipane. I hate frangipane. I'm afraid I hate her. By her own showing, girls, she lured Edward to her house, and had the effrontery to imagine she had secured him for her daughter, Leonora! I told Edward he was foolish to praise that Miss Villiers's complexion, even before me. He said it was like Mary's, so he couldn't help the compliment. This is what comes of it. Your father is right; we must draw the line closer. From this day forth, that woman from The Dale goes off our list."

The countess need not have troubled to make this amendment. The "woman from The Dale" speedily betook herself beyond the range of the most noble Comyngham circle.

From that day's disastrous drive Mrs. Alwyn went home so exasperated with this fresh stroke of ungracious fortune that, had she been a South Sea Islander, badgering her blessings out of a wooden idol, the probability is, in her last access of downright rage, she would have had that idol off its pedestal and thrashed it soundly for its baneful contrariness. Denied that consolation, she took best that circumstances permitted. Leonora, her vanity smarting most poignantly, was only too ready to quit the scene of her unsuccessful youth. Preparations for lengthened absence were hastily made. A stack of cards, *pour prendre congé*, went forth by post; and almost as soon as these reached their destinations, the senders were gone from the dwelling they had graced so many years.

Later, Mr. Russell and railway-vans put in an appearance. The Dale was dismantled. From the earl's agent it eked out that the property was in process of purchase for the Comynghams, negotiations being carried on through the late owner's brother. Having long before risen on the village, from no one knew where, they disappeared none could tell whether, but henceforth St. Clair's knew nothing more of state Mrs. Alwyn and her handsome daughter, Miss Villiers.

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New Glasgow, N.S., February 28th, 1914.

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Yours very truly,  
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C. A. C. BRUCE, Manager, St. John's.

## Grand Alliance;

—OR—

## Love That Knew No Bounds.

CHAPTER XX.

"And might have remained so had she taken my advice," replied Mrs. Alwyn, vastly relieved to find no idea of the truth concerning Sydney existed at Oakleigh; "but," going on more confidently, "my younger child is not like my elder, and she must abide by her own independence. Some day, dear lady Comyngham—but not now—I do go wish to tell you part, at least, of my last month's vexations" (the countess just bowed, without any appearance of being charmed at the prospect). "To-day it is pleasanter to dwell on my Leonora's trust in her mother. She, dear girl, leaves all things, her closest hopes, in my hands."

"Very becoming," said the countess, dryly.

"And to be very, very frank, it is this confidence my child puts in me which brings me here now."

"Indeed!"

The ejaculation was cold. Mrs. Alwyn felt the ground terribly delicate, the sympathetic atmosphere not exhilarating. She endeavored to impart warmth into the situation by a touch of sentiment, and with her diaphanous square of lawn at her eyes, murmured,

"Mothers will do anything for their children, dear Lady Comyngham."

"Of course they will," answered her ladyship, wondering why in the name of fortune such a truism was launched at her just now.

"And—I was most unfortunately prevented seeing Mr. Duvesne when he called at The Dale." (Her hearer's eyes suddenly shot forth appreciation, then contracted with a dangerous sparkle). "So when I saw my dear little anxious, dispirited, reluctant to leave St. Clair's, though her health is suffering, I took my resolve for her sake. I said to myself, 'Don't let false delicacy stop you. Elders may set everything right easily.' So I came straight to you."

"Oh, really!" said Lady Comyngham, upright, and about as yielding as a post. "And pray, Mrs. Alwyn, what is it you wish us elders to set right?"

Unpromising this; but Mrs. Alwyn rallied her forces round Mr. Duvesne's many remembered attentions, and pushed on.

"Your son has been our frequent guest, Lady Comyngham, as you are aware."

"Your guest, I believe, Mrs. Alwyn, some five or six times during the past year. I have begged him often not to intrude. He has told me he has found it difficult to decline your frequent invitations."

"We were most delighted to see him, dear Lady Comyngham." ("Why so often 'dear'?" thought the countess getting restless). "Only too delighted. Had you been with him you would—you must, I believe, have put the same construction on his visits as we did."

"The construction I should have put," said the countess, in a very business-like manner, for she saw now what impended, and resolved to nip it in the bud, if practicable, "would have been that you made much of my son, and that, consequently, he relished your entertainment. Edward always liked ladies society. Young clergy enjoy that sort of thing. But I am sorry he imposed himself on you so much."

"Sorry! Oh, we need not be that. If all ends well!" said Mrs. Alwyn, her handkerchief at play again. "I assure you we felt him, we treated him, as one of ourselves." (The

countess had some ado to repress an indignant interjection.) "He consulted us continually on all connected with his 'new house. He took my dearest Leonora's opinion on every arrangement. What could I think but that he desired to—"

"Get his rectory as pretty as possible for his wife?" (The countess had made up her mind that the sooner further confession stopped the better.) "And you were right, Mrs. Alwyn. That is my son's aim. He gave you, I fancy, since you showed such politeness to him, many hints on the subject. More than were wise. For only within the last month he has been at liberty to speak out—"

"That," interposed Mrs. Alwyn, "is why I came."

"—And say that for years he has been engaged to a daughter of General Lermitt." (Poor Mrs. Alwyn's 'onyx beads jingled with her start.) "They are just returning from India, and my son is at Southampton, waiting to meet Miss Lermitt, whom he is to marry next month. The General is peculiar, and begged no engagement should be made public till close on their return. Of course we had to respect his wishes. Dear me, how warm this room is!" walking off without a glance at her listener, to fling a window open. "There, that makes it better."

Mrs. Alwyn wanted air. A chagrin, intensely real, displaced her well-acted smiles and sentimentalism. Mortification nigh choked her. As for that ill-dressed earl's wife so loftily ignoring her semi-confession—fool that she had been to make it!—if fate ever gave her the chance of repaying the slight, shouldn't that debt be wiped out with compound interest? There was battle within her bosom to fetch a syllable of decent courtesy to her twitching lips. But after brief silence she contrived to say, with emphasis as little bitter as might be, for acquaintance with the nobility must not be lightly resigned,

"I regret that Mr. Edward Duvesne gave us no chance of congratulating him earlier. Of course, we do so now—"

"Much obliged," said the countess, frostily.

"And beyond this I say no more. It is useless to dwell on the unfortunate concealment he adopted."

"Kindly remember," said the countess, nettled, "his reticence was not

wealth, felt prisoned in the small house at Capel Moor, with its prim furnishing and garniture, when the sense of having no other claimable shelter appalled her. A panic of this sort was on her to-day, which had brought her tidings that her mother and Leonora were leaving England for months, and her isolation seemed complete; when in her hand she held the coins that represented thirty days' hire, and felt staggered at the fact that she was in humbly paid service.

But she was sorry for her utterance when she saw Miss Hurst took it as a complaint.

"Mistress!" the lady repeated, reproachfully. "Now, Miss Grey, is it fair to use a word that insinuates I have given myself airs? when I've been so careful to speak of you as a friend who found it convenient to share our home; and I'm sure I have always treated you as such. I would not even let Mrs. Preece, the other day, call you my companion, for I said, 'No; 'lady's companion' always reminds me of those nasty little work cases, with scissors too small to get your thumb in, and thimble too large, and nothing that fits anything, and that's the very reverse of Miss Grey.' But if it's as a mistress you regard me, why, I should be sorry to detain you in a situation which, of course, I can see is far beneath you."

Sydney grew repentant as this speech proceeded.

"Dear Miss Hurst," she said, "please forgive me. It sounded ungrateful, but I did not mean to be so. I am thankful to be here, and I am not likely to go till you send me away."

"Which won't be in a hurry, then," said Miss Hurst, as easily mollified as moved, "and as for being down sometimes, why, every one is that. I am. I've things to grieve over that won't bear looking back on. Perhaps you have the same. Very likely, as you are younger, things seem harder; though, indeed, Miss Grey, neither the teens nor the twenties have a monopoly of very tender sorrows—A-h!"

A deep sigh courted invitation to confidential disclosures, but Sydney, conscious that her own story must remain sealed, kept silence, with a blush so deep that Miss Hurst drew therefrom her own conclusions, and with self-denial carried the conversation to other channels.

(To be Continued.)

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