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## REMORSE and REPENTANCE.

For Daisie's Sake

### CHAPTER XVII. FAITHFUL.

"Never, never, with my consent! I have heard all about him from Mr. Sherwood, and he is no match for you. No one knows aught about him. He is poor, of course, and some dreadful disgrace may possibly be attached to him. You must give him up now, and my advice to you is to make up your quarrel with Royall, and be thankful to get him."

"Ah, how cruel it is to have not a friend on earth! To get such advice from you, who ought to fill the place of my poor, dead mother!" sobbed Daisie, heartbrokenly; but the old woman, who could be very hard and coarse when she chose, retorted sharply:

"Your poor mother would be alive now if she hadn't married a poor man, and broken her heart because her parents disinherited her and refused ever to see her again. She was as pretty as you, and had her pick of lovers; but she fell in love with that poor artist, Vivian Bell, my husband's brother. And what came of it? You know their struggles, for they died one after another only two years ago in New York, and left you, their only child, to fight the battle of life alone. So how can you throw away this splendid chance fairly beats my time."

"But I am used to poverty, Aunt Alice, so it does not daunt me. And I am sorry you have arrayed yourself in the ranks of my persecutors, for it makes me feel so friendless. True, you are not really my aunt; but as Uncle John's wife, I have loved you just the same, and now—suddenly—you have turned against me, and I must go away alone and unhelped, unless by my true little friend Annette."

She dragged herself wearily upstairs, and, throwing off, with a shudder of disgust, her white gown, donned a loose robe, and sat down beside the window to keep a vigil that was sad and strange for a new-made bride.

How long she sat there she never knew, so confused were her thoughts; but it could not have been more than an hour, when she heard carriage wheels grating on the stillness of the street, then pausing before the house.



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and a man sprang out and came into the porch, ringing a furious peal on the doorbell.

Daisie put her head out of the window, exclaiming nervously:

"What is wanted?"

At the same moment she recognized the young minister, and heard him say:

"Your husband is dying—they have sent for you to come!"

### CHAPTER XVII. HIS CRUEL RIVAL.

A cry of angry incredulity came from Daisie's lips.

"It is not true. This is some new plot against me. I will not go!"

But just then Mrs. Bell jerked open the front door, and held an anxious colloquy with the young man.

As a result of it, she came upstairs presently, exclaiming:

"It is all true, Daisie. That young man is a preacher, so, of course, he wouldn't tell you a lie! Royall Sherwood was shot to-night—shot in the back as he was walking along with his cousin—and they think he is dying. He begs for you, and my dear, you can't refuse to go."

No, she could not refuse. The wishes of the dying are sacred.

But her lips trembled so with the shock that she could hardly stand upright. Aunt Alice helped her to put on a warm, dark gown suited to the chilly midnight hour, and supported her feeble steps down the stairs.

"You will come with me?" she said, in a dazed way, and the old woman assented readily.

The young minister helped them into the carriage, entered himself, and the door was closed. The driver whipped up his horses, and then Mrs. Bell asked, in a tone of awe:

"Who was the wretch that did it?"

"I do not suppose any one knows. It was all very sudden. Mrs. Fleming and her cousin were walking in the grounds, discussing his marriage, when the shot was fired from behind by some one who must have been concealed in the shrubberies. Instantly all was confusion, as there were other parties also out in the moonlight. A crowd gathered instantly. It was found that Mr. Sherwood was shot through the body. A physician was by, fortunately, and, on a hasty examination, he pronounced the wound mortal. He was removed to his room, and, on recovering consciousness, asked for his wife to be summoned. Mrs. Fleming begged me to come with the carriage and urge her to return with me."

Daisie sobbed aloud in grief and pity for the man suddenly stricken down in youth's early dawn, and the young minister thought:

"Mrs. Fleming was right: She loved him, after all, and they would have been reconciled to-morrow. What a calamity it is that sunders their wedded lives so soon!"

But he did not attempt to offer any condolences to the sobbing girl. It seemed to him that she had been rude to him all through in her pettish anger.

A silent, miserable cortege, they filed into the hall, where so lately mirth and joy reigned, now still and lonely, with scared servants gliding to and fro, turning down the brilliant lights, and removing the traces of festivity.

Letty Greer was waiting with Cullen at the door to conduct them to the dying man, and as they went along the corridor Mrs. Fleming herself came to meet them, her eyes dim with tears, that made her festal robes look strangely out of place.

She took Daisie's hand, and whispered:

"You will soon be free now. Poor Royall cannot live long. It is his love for you that has caused his death. That wretch killed him!"

"That wretch?" Daisie sobbed incomprehendingly; and Mrs. Fleming hissed in her ear:

"Who but his cruel rival?"

Daisie would have sunk to the floor but for the widow's supporting arm, and she moaned, in distress:

"Ah, no, no, no!"

They were almost at the door, the minister and Mrs. Bell in advance, when, pausing a moment, Mrs. Fleming muttered:

"Compose yourself. I have told you one the truth, and perhaps I never shall. That will depend on you, Daisie Bell. But listen: When the fatal shot was fired, I looked around quickly, and saw the cruel murderer rushing from the scene. He was tall, and dark, and handsome, and I knew him at once; and I shrieked out his name, but I think no one heard it. So presently, even while they were all crying out to know who did it, I feigned swooning, and answered nothing, for a thought

came to me, that— But come, let us go in to Royall now, poor boy!" dragging her over the threshold.

### CHAPTER XVIII. "BE KIND TO ME."

Half dazed with horror, Daisie followed Mrs. Fleming over the threshold into the darkened room, where a grave-faced physician watched by the bedside of the dying man.

She saw Royall Sherwood lying among the pillows, his delicate blond complexion changed to a purplish pallor, his eyes closed, lying as still as if already dead.

The physician came to them softly, and whispered:

"He has fallen asleep, and it might be better not to disturb him until he awakes naturally."

"But will he ever awake?" whispered Mrs. Fleming, with a stifled sob.

"Oh, yes, I think so. You may withdraw into another room, and I will call you as soon as he opens his eyes."

They obeyed him, going softly to another room, where Mrs. Fleming left Daisie alone a few moments, saying:

"I must go and see to your aunt's comfort; then I will return, for I have something very serious to say to you."

Daisie was left alone in the luxurious boudoir, where the electric lights, filtered through rosy globes, shed a warm, pink glow on her pallid face. But she did not think of envying the rich widow her wealth and splendor. Her heart sped on the wings of love to Dallas, from whom she had been so cruelly parted, and, with a sudden feeling that she was powerless in the grasp of the untoward fate that beset her, she fell on her knees, praying humbly:

"Oh, God, deliver me from the snare of my enemies!"

That was all, for she was too wretched to add another word; but in her despair she remained upon her knees, her golden head bent low in the attitude of prayer, and thus Mrs. Fleming found her when she presently returned.

The sight might have moved a tender-hearted woman to pity, but Lutie Fleming was as hard as the nether millstone.

She would rather have seen her successful rival crushed with grief and woe than happy in the love of Dallas Bain, as she had seen her such a little while ago.

"Their triumph was short-lived," she smiled to herself, as Daisie dragged herself up to a sitting posture, showing her wild, white, woeful face, from which all the light of joy had been stricken out by sorrow.

"Well, your aunt has retired, as there was really nothing to be gained by her sitting up, so you and I will keep our vigil together," the widow said, and Daisie bowed coldly, without answering. What, indeed, could she say? She felt herself caught in the toils of a terrible fate from which she could see no escape. "As I was saying to you a little while ago, Daisie, the outcome of this matter depends on you," continued Mrs. Fleming. "My position is a very delicate one. My cousin, whom I dearly love, has been murdered in cold-blooded malice by the man you love—by your lover!"

"Ah, no, no—never; he did not do it! Dallas would not be so cruel. You have made a mistake," sobbed Daisie piteously.

"There is no mistake. I saw the murderer done—saw Dallas Bain flying from the scene of the crime. And the motive is plain. It was murderous wrath because Royall had married you. He did it to set you free for himself, forgetting that even you could hardly dare to brave public opinion by marrying your husband's murderer."

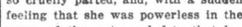
Daisie shuddered, without answering, and watched the light-blue eyes of Mrs. Fleming as if they were a basilisk's eyes, feeling the while as if a serpent's folds were tightening around her, slowly crushing her to death.

(To be Continued.)

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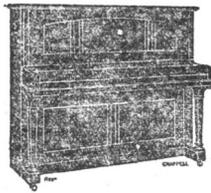
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