# IN THE TOILS;

## But Happiness Comes at Last.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PAINFUL CONFESSION.

Her lips twitch, but she utters no denial.

"That it is; you would have me find some woman in my own set—as I know how you would phrase it—and offer the hollow mockery and shadow of what I have given to you—never to be taken back—never—and marry her. You would have me act the liar and the coward, for he is a liar who marries a woman he does not love, and a coward who is afraid to marry the woman he does love."

He paused, to draw a long breath, and Olive trembled with the passionate admiration that filled her heart.

And this noble mind, the knightly heart, loved her! Oh, Heaven, how bitter was the punishment which was meted out to her in the barrier which her own hands had years ago erected between them.

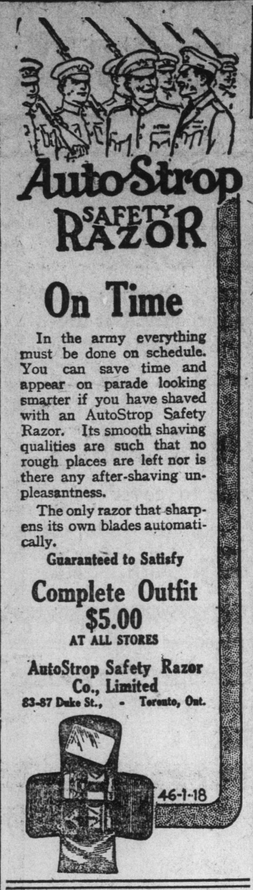
Charlie pushed the light golden hair from his forehead.

"That is in plain language—and no other is possible between us two. My heart is bare to-day and you may—you shall read it! That is what you would have me do. And why? Because you fear the world will say I married beneath me. Beneath me!" he repeats, with a short, fierce, self-scornful laugh. "Beneath me! Look at us two," he raises his clenched hand a moment and lets it drop to his side. "Look at me! What have I beside my birth—that birth which you make a curse—nothing! And you? What have you not that is worth the having: Youth, beauty, intellect, power, fame! Night after night hundreds hang on your every word and look; you smile and they rejoice; weep, and their tears mingle with yours. There is not a peeress in the land but would give her coronet for one of your hundred graces. There is not a society in which you would not shine preeminent. Stop—you must, you shall hear me out! And more! Oh, my love! Do I not know how stained and flecked with folly my life has been—do I not know how pure, how spotless is that I crave from you."

With a white face, she put up one hand to stop him, but he will not be silenced.

"Do I not know," he repeats passionately, "cannot a man learn a woman's worth from her face, her eyes, her voice? I know that beside mine your life is as the snow to the rain and the mud of the slough. Adrienne, you have given me your love—oh, my darling, give me yourself. Give your life to me with all its infinite wealth and treasures. Think not that the advantage is on my side. I—Heaven help me—have nothing but a useless, barren past and an empty title to give you in exchange. But such as I have shall be yours—they are yours! I cannot take them back if I would."

Trembling like a leaf, she covers her face with her hands. With a tender word, murmured inaudibly, he puts his strong arm round her. At his touch, she starts to her feet, and shrinks back.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"Oh, my love!" she cries, holding out her arms imploringly; "do not tempt me! Have pity upon me, and let me go! It cannot be! It is all wrong—wrong—wrong! Even if it were as you say, there is still a gulf between us which even such love as yours—as ours—cannot pass!"

His hands drops to his side, and his face, a moment before flushed with hope, pales apprehensively.

"All wrong!" he says hoarsely. "What is this that comes between us?"

Her head droops, and her clasped hands writhe painfully.

"Are—are you another man's wife?"

The question seems wrung from him, it comes so slowly and painfully.

Drooping, as if overwhelmed with grief, she is silent.

He looks at her, his heart in his eyes, for a moment, then his head droops, also.

"God forgive you, Addy!" he says brokenly.

With a cry, she puts out her hand.

"No! no—not that! I am not so base—so vile as that!"

He looks up with a wild hope.

"No!" he says. "There is no legal barrier—no law between us?"

"Stop!" she breathes, with a shudder, putting up both hands to keep him off. "No! no! Do not touch me! I am not worthy!"

He pauses, and stares at her wildly.

"I'll not believe it!" he cries hoarsely. "You yourself—your life gives the lie to such a thought! You—not worthy!"

"Not worthy—not worthy!" she echoes, with utter despair.

"I'll not believe it!" he exclaims hoarsely. "Do you want to send me mad? If you are not worthy to be my wife, you are not worthy to be the wife of any honest man! Is that what you would have me believe?"

He waits breathlessly for her indignant denial.

None comes; instead, her drooping, shrinking form seems to confirm and set the seal on his words.

He sinks onto the tree, and hides his face in his hands.

With a cry, she falls on her knees beside him, and clasps his arm in an agony of entreaty.

"Oh, my love! my love!" she wails pitifully, "not that!—not so black, so vile as that! I cannot let you go with such loathing in place of your love for me! Oh, my love—my only love!—the barrier between us is a wrong—a cruel wrong—for which there is no redress, no expiation! Do not shrink from me! I am not so vile as you think me—I am a martyr!"—grandly, solemnly the words rise to Heaven—"wronged—cruelly wronged, but blameless! Oh, my love, believe that!—believe that, whatever else you doubt! Tricked, deceived, thrown upon the world for the whole world to scorn and scoff at—I am blameless! sinned against, but sinless, even in thought—until now, when my great sin consists in loving you!"

Her white, working face droops and rests for a moment on his knees.

"Oh, my love!" she murmurs—"one word, only one! Say, 'I forgive you—I forgive you!'"

He lays his trembling hand upon her head, his voice breaks hoarsely.

"Oh, my darling, I forgive you! God bless you!"

Her lips cling to his hand prayerfully, passionately, then she starts to her feet, pushes back her hair from her face, as if she was blinded, then, with a last look, turns and flies from him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WAKENED TO LIFE.

All the day, the cruel day, the hard, staring light, which but a few hours ago appeared so joyous, and bright, and beautiful, and now seems to smite her on the eyes as if in pitiless scorn! Kneeling beside her bed, Olive hides her face in hot, burning hands, and prays for the night.

By the aid of her sunshade she had managed to conceal her woebegone face from the eyes of simple, trusting John, had managed to reach her room unseen by Katrine or the servants.

But she cannot remain in hiding much longer. Already they have knocked at the door, with anxious inquiries. She must efface the red and black marks which rim her eyes, curve the tightly drawn lips into a smile, change the whole face, and put on the mask of calm composure. She knows that she cannot face the anxious, affectionate questions with which Katrine will greet her—questions which she cannot, dare not, answer. Oh, heaven! she thinks, crushing her face into the clothes, if there were but one soul in whom she could confide!

But the cruelest feature of the wrong that has been done is the inevitable, unavoidable silence which she must keep concerning it.

The bare suggestion of it has crushed the heart that loved her best, and kept it forever from her.

No! She, and she alone, must bear the burden which fate has put upon her, bear it, groaning inwardly, to the death. The short spring day goes at last—all too slowly, and dusk comes like a mantle upon the river, which soon will be shimmering again in the softer light of the moon.

Olive knows by the sounds that rise from below that they are setting dinner; she must go down.

Sooner or later she must face the keen, loving eyes of the woman who is more than a sister to her; sooner or later must face, not only her, but the world.

One thing her art has done for Olive: it has taught her the great secret of restraint and composure.

She rises and walks to the table giddily, and almost sternly confronts the looking-glass.

What a white, haggard, woebegone face stares at her.

Quietly she took her place at the table, but she could not eat; an epergne hid her face from Katrine, who suspected nothing, and put the dreaded question in the most innocent manner when they were in the drawing-room after dinner:

"Why did not Lord Heatherdene come back with you, dear?" she asked, leaning back in her chair, with half-closed eyes.


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ZAM-BUK


Olive was standing before the low fire—it was scarcely warm enough to dispense with one altogether—in her old attitude, her hands clasped closely, her eyes cast down.

She looked up, with a start, and moved to the piano as she spoke.

"He has gone back to town—I think," she said, touching the keys.

"So John said," remarked Katrine. "Rather a sudden impulse for him. Did he hear any bad news, Addy?"

Olive played on softly.

"I think so; I do not know," she answered, in a low voice.

Katrine opened her eyes, and looked at her with a penetrating glance, that was at once keen and pitying. Then she leaned forward, with her head on her hand, and sighed.

She was not much older than Olive; but from the first night, when she had carried her all helpless and unconscious into her own room, her own bed, she felt as if there was a strange tie between them; as if she, Katrine, had been elected to watch over and protect the beautiful girl, who was but a child still in so much, and yet had won her womanhood by suffering.

The form that suffering had taken, Katrine neither knew nor guessed; that it had befallen the helpless girl through any fault or sin of her own, Katrine did not believe; there was a purity, a conscious innocence in Olive's eyes which forbade such an idea.

No; she herself kept concealed within her bosom a secret of the past, and she respected that as the young girl who had been thrown upon her protection and her love.

Scarcely a mother's, but rather a sister's, love was that which Katrine Haldine cherished for the helpless, beautiful girl to whom she had given all the rights of sisterhood—even to the name; asking nothing, demanding nothing in return, but a sister's love. And that she knew that she possessed.

In a thousand ways Olive proved it daily.

Yes, there was a strange, mystic tie between them which both left, but neither could explain.

So now the shadow of her sister's sorrow fell upon the quiet, self-repressed woman, and she sighed. For, half suspecting the source from which that trouble sprang, she knew that a painful duty was before her. Her love must not only protect, but guard, the helpless, beautiful girl whom she had taken to her heart. She looked at the gracious young head bent sadly over the piano, and the tears sprang to her loving eyes.

The plaintive air died away, and Olive came softly across the room and sank upon the rug at Katrine's feet.

Looking at them—both so young, the one so girlish and childlike in her attitude of graceful abandon, no one would have guessed that they possessed the power to thrill a crowded theater, to rouse an audience to passionate enthusiasm, or melt it to tears! They looked like two quiet, unimpressionable girls, ignorant of the world and its ways.

Curled up, like a schoolboy, on a sofa, sat John, turning over the leaves of a scrapbook.

Katrine glanced across at him, and, in a low voice, began her task.

"Lord Heatherdene went quite suddenly, Addy?"

Olive nodded, her epes fixed on the fire.

"Is he coming to-morrow?"

"No, I think not," was the scarcely audible reply.

(To be continued.)

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Editor Evening Telegram.

Dear Sir,—On February 28th, the following press messages were published by the Daily News.

"Blackhead, Feb. 28th. Great indignation over train service in this district. For two days no mails. A clear track and fine weather. Can Government not remedy this rotten service."

"Broad Cove, Feb. 28th. No mail to this district for two days. Important mail matter lying at Carbonear. People indignant and wondering who is responsible, Reids, Government or train hands. Where are the district representatives?"

If any explanation of this breakdown in the operation of the Conception Bay railway has been given by the Company, it has escaped my notice.

One report of the breakdown is to the effect that the engine which took the train out was unfit for service and actually fell apart on the road and reached Carbonear strapped with ropes.

This may or may not be correct, but in the absence of authoritative information which the Government should give the public regarding such matters the cause which general rumor ascribes to them gains currency and will be generally accepted.

The fact that neither freight, passengers nor mails for Bay de Verde district got beyond Carbonear for two days is the strongest condemnation that can be made of the management of the railway at the present time.

It would be almost incredible if there were not such incontrovertible proof of the fact. That such laxity in the operation of one of the most important sections of the whole system could exist, that such utter indifference to the rights and privileges of the people of Conception Bay could be tolerated is well nigh beyond belief.

Let your readers take a mental picture of the situation and they will grasp the extent to which the system has become demoralized. In this instance we see passengers, freight and mails side-tracked at a junction point for forty-eight hours because there was no motive power available to take the train to its destination. Admitting that an unavoidable accident occurred to the engine, surely that would not be a justification for detaining the train forty-eight hours.


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