

A CASE OF HUMBLED PRIDE

BY GRACE W. CHRISTMAS.

"Do not mention her name to me!" And then Mrs. Dean closed her lips in the firm line which her friends knew to mean finality of purpose.

She and her nephew, Jack Clayton, were the only occupants of the former's special sitting room where the fire light flickered rosy on priceless china and inlaid cabinets, and where the subtle scent of violets and yellow roses made it difficult to realize that it was Christmas eve.

Her nephew—he was a good looking young man of twenty six or twenty seven—glanced at her in a somewhat depressing fashion over the edge of his newspaper.

"It seems awfully rough on her," he murmured, "and—"

"Now, once for all, Jack," interposed his aunt, "let us drop the subject. My daughter has chosen her own lot and elected to live her own life, and she must abide by what she has done."

She was a striking looking woman with clearly cut aquiline features and masses of luxuriant gray hair piled high upon a well-shaped head, and she made an effective picture in her ruby velvet gown leaning back in the recesses of a silken cushioned chair.

The diamonds and opals on her long white fingers flashed with a radiant lustre in the firelight, an emerald star gleamed among the folds of her point lace fichu, and her whole appearance betokened one whose lines are cast in pleasant places, and who has never known what it is to have a material want ungratified.

But there is a crumpled rose leaf in every lot, a skeleton in every cupboard, even if the door handles are of gold and the shelves of polished rose wood.

Five years ago Dorothy Dean, an impressionable girl of eighteen, who had inherited her mother's beauty without her strength of character, and given her impulsive little heart into the keeping of a handsome young actor, with the features of a Greek God and a pronounced taste for stimulants.

She had met him at the house of a married friend, who, as she expressed it, "went in for lions," and where celebrities of nationalities and various degrees of distinction "roared" more or less loudly at her crowded "at home."

It must, in justice, be acknowledged that Edward Lisle had honestly fallen in love with pretty Dorothy, and if the fact of her reputed wealth added an impetus to his impressioned wooing—well, there are better reasons than he found that discretion is an admirable quality where affairs of the heart are concerned, and that if a "stalled ox" can be joined with the sauce of mutual affection, its flavor surpasses that of a "dinner of herbs."

The "stalled ox," however, was conspicuous only by its absence. One fine morning in early spring Dorothy, carried away by her lover's personal magnetism, consented to a private marriage, and left her home while her parents were sleeping the sleep of those who fear no evil.

sake, and as poverty put its intrusive head in at the door, love, as is his usual custom on these occasions, made a speedy exit by the window.

It had once been Edward Lisle's idea to leave the stage and enjoy a life of ease and luxury on his wife's money, but this pleasing little scheme had to be abandoned, and when the household necessities had to be provided out of his salary, it left but a microscopic margin for his "mensis plautis."

The craving for alcohol grew upon him, as it is apt to do when a man is self-indulgent and minus a moral backbone, and before very long the hand of some young actor, the hero of Dorothy's girlish dreams, had become a confirmed drunkard.

This melancholy fact had reached Jack Clayton's ears, and by him had been communicated to her father and mother, but, at any rate, so far as the latter was concerned, without making any visible impression on their minds. He had made one last despairing attempt this Christmas eve in Dorothy's behalf, and now as he pretended to be a sorbed in the new of the hour, the contrast between his aunt's luxuriously-furnished rooms and her father's shabby lodgings weighed heavily on his honest heart.

This was the season of reconciliation, he reflected, the time when peace and holy will were appropriate adjuncts to golly berries and plum pudding, but Mrs. Dean was as immovable as a rock and as unimpressionable as the diamonds which glistened on her fingers.

"How late uncle George is," he remarked, presently.

Mrs. Dean glanced indifferently at a Louis XV. clock on the mantelpiece. "Yes," she said, "it is nearly 8, and he has promised to be home for dinner. He had to go into Chesterfield on business, but the train ought to be in by now."

"Missed it, perhaps," returned Jack, as he took up his paper, and his aunt resumed her former occupation of doing nothing, while gazing idly into the glowing embers of the wood fire. She was fond of her husband in her own imperious fashion, but it was very seldom that she allowed him to perceive the fact, while he, on his side, cherished a dog-like devotion to his undemonstrative wife, and looked upon her as the most superior of created beings.

There was, in fact, but one will between them, and that was hers. As the clock struck 8 a peal at the door bell announced the arrival of the normal master of the house, and Mrs. Dean roused herself from her reverie.

"There is your uncle, Jack," she said, "you had better go and dress, or you will be late again as you were last night."

Jack rose obediently and strolled toward the door, when the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall below made him pause abruptly. His uncle had arrived—yes, but it was on a stretcher, and four men were carrying his prostrate form.

"You had better not come out, aunt," he said, turning to Mrs. Dean, who had risen from his chair and was in the act of crossing the room.

"I—I think there has been an accident." With an unconscious hand she pushed him out of her path and descended the broad staircase with an unfeeling step.

feigned astonishment. His imperious aunt, who stood upon such a lofty pinnacle of superiority, that she should condescend to ask for information on any subject, especially one which so closely concerned her husband? Surely, he reflected, trouble must be troubling her brain.

"He has said nothing of the kind to me," he replied, when he had sufficiently recovered his power of speech. Then in a conciliatory tone:

"Don't worry yourself, aunt; he would have told you right enough if there had been anything to tell."

A slight shadow crept over Mrs. Dean's impassive face. Her confidence in her own infallibility had received a distinct shock at this unexpected confirmation of the doctor's words, for what but "mental excitement," or in other words, the knowledge of some fact of which she was ignorant, could have caused his agitation at the sight of his adored wife?

At this instant there was a ring at the bell and she rose from her chair with her usual air of calm dignity.

"That is the nurse, I suppose. I must speak to her before she goes upstairs."

Jack followed her to the door just in time to witness the entrance of the new arrival, and to hear the musical modulations of a voice which fell upon his ears with a strangely familiar cadence.

"Nurse Mary," as the doctor had called her, was a tall, slight young woman, apparently about twenty two or twenty three, with delicately moulded features and a somewhat sad expression, and as she stepped into the room she uttered a stifled exclamation.

"My God—Dorothy!" Mrs. Dean started and cast a swift scrutinizing glance at the nurse.

"Are you out of your senses, Jack?" she began, and then realizing the situation, with an angry flush in her eyes, she drew her stately figure up to its full height, and re-entering the dining room closed the door behind her.

The moment they were alone together, Jack turned towards his cousin and took both her hands in his.

"I am delighted to see you, Dorothy. It is more than two years since I had a glimpse of you in that wretched hole in B—do you remember? But how is it that you are here? Did you know where you were coming? What are you doing in a nurse's dress and where is your husband?"

Dorothy looked up at him, the tears glittering in her hazel brown eyes, and a faint smile on her lips.

ly desirous of obtaining information. "On what dark crime do you suspect me?" he asked, "or is this only a Christmas eve charade?" Then, in a graver tone, "Come, come now, Mr. Dean is the person to be thought of at this moment. I will take you up to his room," addressing Dorothy, who was weeping silently under her thick veil.

"Doctor, I protest," interposed Mrs. Dean. "Nurse Mary, as you call her—Mrs. Lisle, as she is in reality—shall not go near my husband. Her unbecoming conduct has already caused him sufficient sorrow in his life, and what may be his last hours on earth shall not be disturbed by her presence."

"Mrs. Lisle," murmured the doctor, vaguely. Then, with a well-assumed air of concern, he approached Mrs. Dean and laid his strong, nervous fingers on her wrist. "Pulse very quick. This sudden shock has been too much for you, my dear lady," he said soothingly.

"B is the best place for you now, and I will send you an opiate which will calm your nerves."

"Bed, indeed!" exclaimed the now thoroughly irate Mrs. Dean. "Grant me patience! Do you think I don't know my own daughter, man?"

"There, you have acknowledged her," said Jack, coming forward, with a triumphant expression, "and you swore you never would! It is only the first step that costs, don't you know, now it will be all plain sailing, aunt," he added, pleadingly.

"It is the sea-son of forgiveness, and Dorothy has been more sinned against than sinning, I forgive her."

There was a momentary silence during which the fate of two future lives hung trembling in the balance. Pride and love were fighting a duel in Mrs. Dean's stormy heart. Both were strong elements in her nature, and the power of their forces were about equal.

It was twelve months later and the Christmas bells were once more chiming over the glad tidings of peace and good will. Mrs. Dean's daughter—she had been a widow for two years when she made that unlooked for appearance at her parents' house in the dress of a hospital nurse, was living with her mother in a quaint old foreign city, where the necessities of existence were inexpensive and sunshine plentiful.

Her skillful nursing and all her loving care lavished upon him had been powerless to save her father, and the sudden failure of a dearly cherished speculation had utterly sapped his strength and weakened his hold on life. So he died in his daughter's arms on New Year's eve, and it was not till after his death that the news of his financial difficulties was broken to his mourning widow. She bore the blow bravely. Adversity had softened her proud nature and she had already begun to realize the fact that wealth alone does not constitute perfect happiness.

And Dorothy? She, too, had felt the stern touch of sorrow's finger, more intensely, perhaps, than had been the case with her mother, and all that she could hope for in the future was a life of placid content. Jack Clayton had done his best to persuade her to allow a husband's protection to take the place of consoling love, but she had explained to him the impossibility of his suggestion. The man she loved and married in her hot-headed impetuosity had grown weary of her, had treated her with contempt and coldness, outraged her womanly feelings and driven a sword into her heart, but she had loved him, and for the sake of that love she remained faithful to his memory. There are some women who are fash ioned like that.—The Rosary Magazine.

IMITATION OF CHRIST. Of Judgment, and the Punishments of Sin. Then the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the covetous be straitened with most miserable want. There one hour of suffering will be more sharp than a hundred years spent here in the most rigid penance. There is no rest, no comfort there for the damned; but here there is some times intermission of labor, and we receive comfort from our friends. Be careful at present and sorrowful for thy sins, that in the Day of Judgment thou mayest be secure with the blessed. For then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have sinned then.—Wisd. v. 1. Then will he stand to judge, who now humbly submitteth himself to the judgment of men. Then the poor and humble will have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who learned for Christ's sake to be a fool and despised. Then all tribulation suffered with patience will be pleasing, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.—Pa. ev. 42. Then every devout person will rejoice, and the irreligious will be sad. Then the flesh that has been mortified will triumph more than if it had always been pampered in delights. Then will the man habit shine, and fine clothing appear contemptible. Then will the poor cottage be more commended than the gilded palace. Then constant patience will be of more avail than all the power of the world. Then simple obedience will be more prized than all worldly craftiness.

Then a pure and good conscience shall be a greater subject of joy than learned philosophy. Then the contempt of riches shall weigh more than all the treasures of wretchedlings. Then shalt thou be more comforted because thou hast prayed devoutly, than because thou hast prayed devoutly, than because thou hast fasted diligently.

Then shalt thou rejoice more for having kept silence, than for having made long discourse or talked much.

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