

HELENA GRAHAM,  
THE BRIDE'S SACRIFICE.

CHAPTER X.

It was two days after the departure of Helena ere Herbert Clinton visited the personage again.

And then he heard of her departure with real surprise and affected concern; but he did not follow her to London, as Mrs. McAlmont had prophesied.

His passion for Jessie was yet too new—the novelty had not worn off—the joy of knowing she was his wife, his own indisputable property, had not yet abated, as it would do some day, as it must do; for such quick, fierce, passionate, selfish love could not last. As suddenly, as completely as it had come, so it must die; for he was not one of those who, in loving once, love for a lifetime. Jessie was, and so was Helena; but in each that love despised or neglected would produce different results. Jessie would have folded her hands, drooped, faded, and perhaps died of a broken heart, but Helena would rise majestic with the strength of her wrongs, and hurl to destruction all those who had acted a part in her downfall. Something of all this would at times fit through Herbert Clinton's mind, and once more the ungenerous thought that perhaps after all it would have been better had he never seen Graham's Isle. But one smile from Jessie, one fond caress from her gentle arms, and all this was forgotten, and all the world was again bounded for him by its wave-dashed shores.

So the days of Helena's absence were wearing away, and Herbert still lingered a willing captive. Even Mrs. Ben's eyes were beginning to open to the fact that there must be something more than met the eye in those long solitary rambles—those moonlight walks and sails the young people were so fond of. Aunt Allie had long been out奔 sundry mysterious hints which Mrs. Ben—who disliked scandal—had paid no attention to; but now she began to think that, after all, it might be more prudent to keep this gay young man of pleasure a little otter from Jessie. So one day she surprised Jessie by a sound scolding on her "goin' wandering through the woods at all hours, when she ought to be at home doing her work," and positively forbidding her going out again for a week.

Jessie listened in dutiful silence, but promised nothing; and in spite of all Mrs. Ben's watching met Herbert as often as ever. For that young gentleman would visit the cottage each day, and the little widow was altogether too hospitable to hint that he came often than was exactly desirable. And so there was nothing to do, but to hope that Miss Helena would soon return to the Isle, and look after her lover herself, for Mrs. Ben was growing tired of it. Besides, she really liked the youth exceedingly, and would have thought him a paragon of perfection if he only would be less attractive to Jessie.

And Jessie, the shy little child-wife, had gone on dreaming "Love's terrible dream," and never thinking how terrible one day would be her waking.

Since the bridal night, the mysterious phantom had never been seen; and both were beginning to hope it had only been an illusion of a heated imagination. Mr. Clinton had accounted for the terrifying look and Jessie's fainting-fit in somevious way of his own that quite satisfied the old lady, and lulled to sleep any suspicions she might have conceived.

One evening, as Herbert set out to keep an appointment with Jessie, he observed Evan standing, or rather, sitting perched upon a gate, shading his eyes with his hands, and looking anxiously out to sea.

"Well, my boy, what has caught your attention in that direction?—wild geese?"

"No, sir," said Evan, solemnly, "I see a sail."

"Well, and what of that?" said Mr. Clinton. "A sail is not such an unusual sight here, is it?"

"But there's a storm brewin', an' if the Lord ain't took 'special charge of that vessel the first land it makes will be Davy Jones's locker," said Evan.

"A storm, you blockhead?" exclaimed Clinton. "There's not a cloud in the sky."

"Jes look over there, sir, and see that black cloud, about the size o' your hand."

"Well!" said Herbert.

"Pretty soon that will be all over the sky, and then we shall have a tearing squall. The trees tall the wind's rising already, and you needn't be surprised if to-morrow mornin' you see the ruins o' that vessel spread all over the shore."

And Evan, with a doleful shake of his head, descended from his perch and sought the house.

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