

this. I want him to begin this afternoon."

"The request seemed to him a very strange one, but everything connected with this lover was strange."

"It will be a little difficult to set him to work until I know what his capabilities are. But I will speak to Simpson about finding him a place. Send him to me as soon as he arrives and I will do the best I can. I should have thought you would have liked the afternoon free to talk to him, as you have not seen him for so long a time."

"I am going to meet him at the station at lunch time. I can talk to him then."

"And you wish him to do manual work. As you know, I employ two or three clerks in the factory for routine accounts and letters. I could set him to work with them."

"Thank you, the other work would be best."

"You have never told me his name?"

She blushed crimson and was silent.

"His name if you please," said Ronald gently but firmly.

"I cannot tell you a lie. If I say his name is Henry Jackson, I am bound to tell you at the same time that it is not his real name."

"And you come to me, both of you, under false names!" he said with marked disapproval.

"I am ashamed and humiliated that it should be so, but I felt obliged to tell you the truth. May I have my work?"

He handed her the papers in silence, and when she had left him revolved the situation in his mind until he felt irritated beyond measure. Of her probity he had no doubt, but he greatly doubted that of her lover. Why should such a man be introduced to his premises, and he be made a cat's paw between them. And yet it was for such a man, a man that could not appear in his own name, that he was thrown on one side, he the master of the mill, in favour of a tailor!

After a time he went to her office and asked if a certain letter was finished.

She gave it him in type. He returned in a few minutes with a frown on his brow and said: "I am sorry to complain, Miss Williams, but there are a great many mistakes in this, and the letter is one of some importance. May I request you to write it over again?"

THE words were reasonable enough but the tone was very hard, causing sudden tears to rise in her eyes. He saw them, but he went away and shut his door. It seemed to him that a very long interval elapsed, and yet she did not bring him the letter. After the lapse of another half hour he entered her room. The table was strewn with papers.

"Is the letter finished, Miss Williams?" he asked speaking coldly but more gently.

"Yes, she replied, "I was just coming in to you with it. I have only this moment finished it."

"But what are all these?" he asked taking up the papers from the table.

They were all transcripts of the same letter. She had written it over and over again and made mistakes in each copy; only the last was perfect, and this was so by intense effort of will.

"I am very sorry to have wasted so much time but I could not write correctly this morning though I tried hard; I did indeed," she said in a low pained tone.

"I wish," he said suddenly, "that someone would kick me and tell me that I am an utter brute, for it would be true. Here I select this morning on which you are thoroughly unhinged, to find fault with you and make you do your work ten times over, and cause you to speak to me as if you were afraid of me. I should be rejoiced if someone would kick me."

She smiled. "Indeed, Mr. Westlake, I am quite sure that no one would kick you for being so kind an employer. As my work was done so badly it was only right that I should do it again, and I ought to make up overtime for my stupidity. Only I am afraid I cannot do so to-day."

"I can now understand your show-

ing compassion to those convicts, for I feel as great a villain as any of them. I shall never think of this morning without compunction. If I had had the sense of an owl I should have known that you were altogether unfit for work to-day, you who have worked so well on other days. But you must make a little excuse for me when I tell you that I too am unhinged this morning."

"I am sorry for that."

"Perhaps you would not like it if I told you suddenly that I was going to employ another young lady as typist, and if I gave her a far better room and larger pay, and transferred all my confidential letters to her, giving you only the drudgery."

"I am sure that I should dislike it very much, and should probably make myself very disagreeable."

"I suppose none of us like being left out in the cold. This is my only excuse. I shall keep these papers as a remembrance of my ill temper."

He gathered them up in spite of her remonstrance. "What time are you going to the station?"

"At one o'clock."

"Then you will have no lunch?"

"I can eat biscuits."

BUT at half past twelve he brought in a daintily spread luncheon tray, which he had ordered apparently for himself, and insisted on her taking something. This was a work of difficulty as appetite had failed her, but, with the assistance of some champagne, she succeeded in eating sufficient to propitiate him.

"Now," he said, "I daren't go home to lunch after this, as the tray is supposed to be for me; besides I am very busy, so it will be convenient, for I also could not do my work this morning. You must let me finish your lunch in here."

He seated himself by the fire as he spoke and placed the tray on his knee. He saw that her nervousness had come on again and he was resolved not to leave her alone until she started for the station.

"You will want another plate and glass and knife and fork."

He laughed. "Anything is good enough for me. These will do exceedingly well."

As a matter of fact he had both clean glasses and plates in his own cupboard, for it was no unusual thing for him to lunch in his office.

"Now," he said, when he had finished, "it is time for you to go. And send Mr. Jackson to me whenever you like; I shall be here."

He spoke the name as if it were that of a friend, and Mary knew that he would make no further allusion to the fact of its being assumed.

"She plays on me as if I were the keys of that typewriter," he said to himself when she had gone, "and what the upshot of this business will be I'm sure I don't know."

There was a knock at the door. It was his father who entered.

"It's many a long day since you came here," said Ronald, "is anything wrong?"

"No, nothing. I thought I'd look in and see why you didn't come to lunch."

"I am far too busy."

"You are working too hard. Why you haven't given up a single day to hunt, and you always used to."

"I prefer remaining here." And this was literally true. His love for Mary had even outbalanced his love of hunting, and devotion could no further go.

"And how's this typist of yours getting on, poor old soul?"

Again there was a merry twinkle in Mr. Westlake's eye.

"She isn't so very old."

"Or very ugly."

"You have seen her." And Ronald laughed, for there was an infinitely good understanding between father and son.

"Yes, I have. Come, introduce me."

"I can't. She is gone now."

"Let me see her room."

There seemed no reasonable ground for refusal, especially as Mr. Westlake owned the entire premises and was Senior Partner, still his son opened the door with great reluctance.

(To be continued.)



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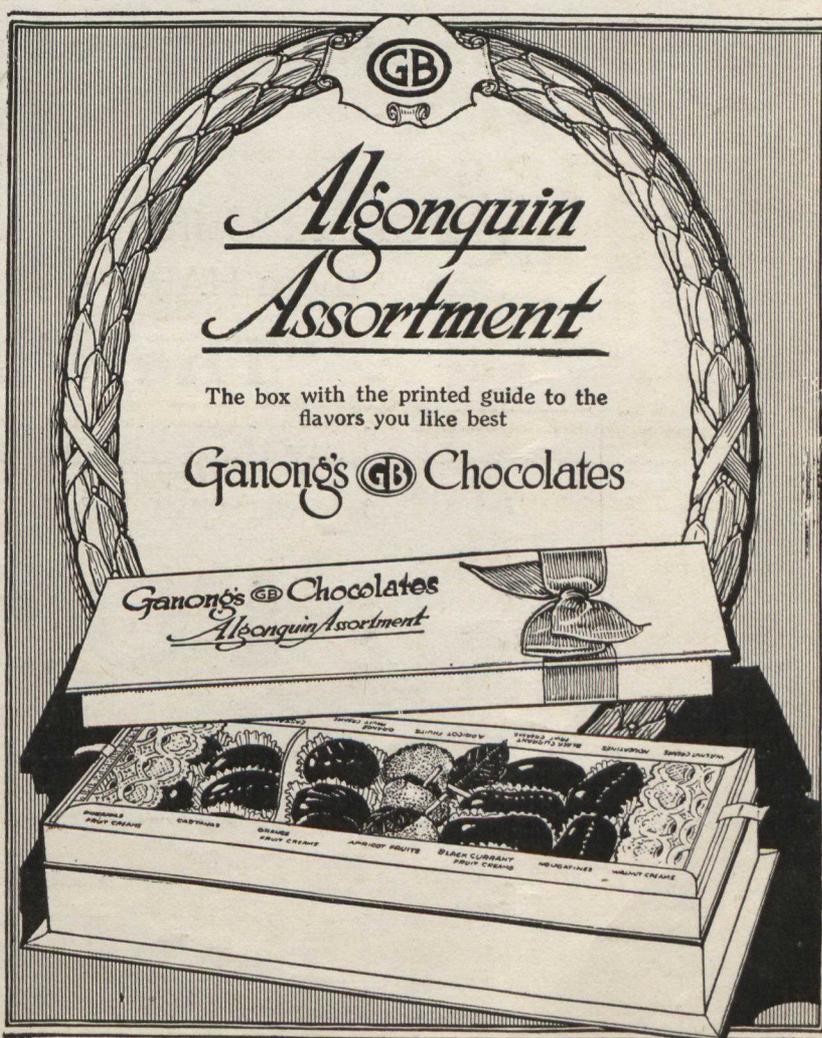
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