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Forgive us Our Trespasses.

By Alan J. Thompson.



GOOD night, Mr. Cordingley. Thanks for the escort." "Aren't you going to ask me in?" inquired the man, slowly.

"Hardly—this time of night! Think of the proprieties, Mr. Cordingley!" A sharp

glance at Olive Quesnay's expressive countenance warned Cordingley that it would be unwise to urge the request. He yielded with good grace, but as his companion turned to go he placed a restraining hand on her arm. "You won't forget—Thursday at six," he said, then, lowering his voice, added, "You will come? I shall expect you."

"Perhaps," was the airy rejoinder. "Good-bye." And Mrs. Quesnay ran lightly up the steps.

"Auf wiedersehen," responded Cordingley. For a few moments after the maid had closed the door the man remained motionless. Then he walked slowly away, with a rather unpleasant smile. "I think," he murmured, lingeringly—"I think, my dear girl, you will come."

Mrs. Quesnay was humming a gay air as she ascended to her room. She unclasped her luxurious cloak and tossed it upon the bed. A delightful evening—quite a success. She had not enjoyed herself so much for ages! She had been positively brilliant! The cheval-glass afforded her a radiant vision—flushed cheeks, sparkling eyes, and really the most becoming toilet.

A most delightful evening! She relaxed into an easy chair before the cheerful fire and slowly sipped her chocolate. At Cordingley's, too—of all people. Malcolm had "disapproved very strongly" of the Cordingleys—had stigmatized them as "fast." Fast! Why—yet—well, she could not altogether suppress the consciousness that more than once during the evening some of the remarks had rather disquieted her. And then Mr. Pembroke Cordingley—her host's brother? Very accomplished—very fascinating, certainly, but almost too—attentive. There was really no occasion for him to see her home, and the assurance with which he had dismissed the brougham without consulting her bordered perilously on impertinence. Homage from so distinguished a quarter was, of course, extremely flattering, yet—she was obliged to acknowledge that her attitude towards him was not altogether favorable.

Mrs. Quesnay looked down at her bare, shapely arm. The pressure of the man's fingers still seemed to linger. She rubbed it slowly—not with gentleness. From a diminutive silk purse dangling from her wrist she took several coins—golden coins. Bridge winnings. It had been very exciting, and fortune had favored her. It was nice to win. Yet the gesture with which she put the little purse of gold aside a minute later was curiously suggestive of aversion.

"Suppose," she asked herself, "Malcolm could see me now, gloating over my gambling harvest! Her husband's strongly marked countenance, pale and stern, rose before her mental vision. He had looked at her like that when—The girl shrugged her shoulders to the accompaniment of a hard little laugh. "The Puritan!" That is how she had named him after their very first meeting; and events had more than justified the designation. What a sober, strait-laced, righteous—Ugh! She would not think of him. Vestali had played that last movement superbly tonight. It seemed almost uncanny from so young a man. Malcolm would have enjoyed that, and—Malcolm, Malcolm, toujours Malcolm! What was the matter with her to-night? With an impatient exclamation Mrs. Quesnay rose to her feet and commenced pacing restlessly about the room. Her efforts to divert her thoughts from her husband were futile. She was undergoing one of the periodical experiences to which the most orderly minds are liable—when the thoughts assuming control refuse to be diverted from a particular topic, no matter how unwelcome. And Olive Quesnay's thoughts

of her husband were certainly far from pleasant.

Nine months before they had quarrelled fiercely—and separated. Before Eustace was born there had been little disagreements, light clouds had flecked the domestic azure—but nothing serious. The real storms had arisen after the birth of their child—or, as Olive would have said, her child. That was the trouble.

Her little son. The passionate mother love of her intense nature had developed abnormal proportions, shutting out for the time all other considerations. She desired no hand to touch, no voice to soothe, the child but her own, brooked no interference in his management, grudged an hour spent from his side. Her love was supremely selfish, a dangerous obsession. Her husband, completely neglected, soon showed his natural resentment; gently at first, then unmistakably. He was unable to comprehend, to make any allowance for, this devotion to the first-born which relegated him so completely from his wife. His temporary insignificance was too galling to disregard. He claimed his rights to the mother's society. Olive heard his complaint in silence, inwardly rebelling against what she considered dictatorial interference, and the result was bitter strife. She thwarted his plans, made light of his wishes, and ridiculed all his suggestions where the boy's welfare was concerned. Disobeyed before the eyes of his servants and humiliated in his own, Quesnay's sensitive nature at length reached the limit of its endurance. He protested angrily to his wife; she temporized, and there was a truce. But relations became deplorably strained; it only required the slightest provocation to revive hostilities. Olive provided this by refusing to submit to the orders issued by the doctor Quesnay brought in to attend a slight ailment Eustace had contracted. She consulted another doctor on her own initiative. Slow combustion produces the most violent conflagration. Quesnay's habitual repression disguised strong passions, and, now thoroughly roused, he let loose the full torrent of his wrath. At first Olive quailed before the storm, then her customary hardihood reasserted itself, and her counter-demonstration was more effective than the man's. She taunted him with jealousy and unnatural abhorrence of his own son, ridiculed with pitiless scorn every foible he possessed, every mistake of his she would remember and exaggerate with feminine ingenuity. "She was a clever woman, and—she did not spare him. Beneath the bitter lash of her tongue Quesnay became pale and still. When her eloquence was exhausted he asked her a question. "You say I am embittering every hour of your life; you wish you had never met me. There is a remedy. We can part. Do you wish that?"

"With all my heart."

"You do? Remember Olive, if I go I shall not come back to you until you beseech me—on your knees."

"Thank—you. You are very considerate. This is more than I dared hope for."

And so he left her, only staying to make the provision absolutely necessary for this rearrangement of their lives. There had been no publicity, no scandal, and Olive had kept the boy.

Nine months ago! Mrs. Quesnay sat back with her hands resting idly in her lap, letting insistent thoughts have full play. Nine months! She had heard nothing, seen nothing of him. And at one time she had thought a month without him would be unendurable. Why, she had had a splendid time—the time of her life! A round of delightful visits, dances, theatres, dinners, concerts—an uninterrupted stream of gaiety, a series of social triumphs. "Her husband?" asked the curious. "Oh, yes, abroad—travelling, you know. No; I have been obliged to stay; my little son."

Her little son, Eustace. A slight frown marred the smooth expanse of her white brow. It was strange how her absorption in the boy had diminished after—Malcolm had gone. Of course she loved him quite as devotedly, she told herself. But then he was growing and did



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