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## Destiny

CHAPTER XXX THE CURTAIN UPLIFTED.

"Bruce," mournfully, "what they told me would have mattered little, but-but I saw for myself!"

"Saw for yourself! Saw what?" he

She turned her head away.

on the afternoon'you came back from Scarfross to meet Lady Blanche, and saw and heard all that passed between you! Oh, Bruce, Heaven forgive you as-I-I have done!" and the tears welled to her eves.

There was silence for a moment, silence broken by an awful oath.

She started and turned to him. He had flung the gate open and stood before her, his eyes blazing into hers,

at me! Look at me, I say!"

She raised her eyes to his fearlessly, though there was something awful in the expressioin of his face.

"Now tell me, slowly, carefully, what you mean; what you think you

She opened her lips once, twice; the scene came back in all its force and

"Bruce, I saw you at her feet. heard you implore her to fly with you. I heard you tell her that you had never loved-loved-any other than her! I heard you say that I-oh, I cannot go on! Spare me!"

"You saw-you heard!" he said, his face close to hers. "Great Heaven! am I going mad! When was this?" "The day you left Ballyfloe for Scarfross. Ah! have you no pity on me no mercy?"

"The day I left Ballyfloe!" he re peated, disregarding her entreaty. "You say I came back to Ballyfloe-that I saw Blanche? It is a lie! Do you hear? It is a lie! Whoever told you-but you saw me, you say? Floris, let me look at you. Is this my Floris who stands here and tells me this? Am I mad-are we both mad? Merciful Heaven, what does this mean? Listen to me!" and he drew her closes to him by her arm, so close that his hot breath fanned her cheek. "Listen to me as if the words I am going to speak were those of a dying man! Floris, you could not have seen me on that day-you did not see me as you describe it, on any day, at that time; but on that day!-I tell you solemnly, here face to face, with Heaven above us to hear me, that I did n come back to Ballyfloe that day!"

She panted, and drew back he head to gaze at him.

"Bruce!"

in a frenzied voice. "I went straight to Scarfross! Great Heaven!-do you prove it. There were men whose side I never left, Lord Harry-Donald. Go back!-why I did not go back for weeks: I was nearly killed the following morning-"

"Ah!" she breathed, her breath

coming in quick gasps. "Was struck down by a stag, and kept at Scarfross for weeks confined to my bed-to my room. All this can be proved! Are you listening? Why do you stare at me so?"

not write?" she gasped, an awful sense of mystery enwrapping her. "Yes! At first I was senseless for days; unable to write for weeks. When I was able, they told me that you had-had fled with Bertie! Now do you understand that you cannot

She uttered a cry of despair.

"Bruce, I saw you-" "Great Heaven! I shall go mad!" "And if it was not you-who was

He looked at her scared, frightened

have seen me with Blanche, as you

ou speak to her. The girl Josine-"Josine!" he muttered. ed me to the place; stood beside me.

If you speak of proof-ask her. Oh, Bruce! and yet-and yet-" He laughed grimly, savagely. "And yet you think I speak the

truth. My poor Floris! My brain is tery at the bottom of this! What it is, Heaven only knows; but I will learn. The girl Josine, you say-where is she? and Blanche-"

"Who told you that I had fled with Lord Clifforde?" asked Floris, quickly. "Blanche!" he returned quickly. A cold shudder ran through her, and her head drooped.

could not go on for a moment-"that Blanche lied, and purposely deceived me?-deceived both of us?" he said,

She shook her head wearily. "I do not know! I cannot say! It is all dark, dark to me!"

"But there shall be light!" he exclaimed. "Blanche is here in Florence. She shall tell me the truth: the girl Josine, I will wring the truth from her! Oh, my darling! Oh, Floris, my Floris! thank Heaven it is not too late!" and he put out his

mured, gently. "We cannot bring me?"

turned his face away.

"Why should she suffer? For us, Bruce, all is lost save honor. You ed. "You promised to-" must still keep that! There has been some dark mystery: I do not know what it is, no, not even yet; but we low. "Is this England? I have not

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meet as friends-dear, true friendsbut no more, Bruce. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" he cried, hoarsely. "Do like this? No! Floris you are mineyou love me still-"

"Ah yes." she breathed, the tears you still; but it is because of that we must part. Stand firm by your honor, Bruce; do not play Lady Blanche false as-as-I once thought that you had played me. Good-by!"

He caught her hand to his lips and kissed it passionately, his hot lips burning it, and with a cry of mingled pain and joy that he could so kiss

CHAPTER XXXI.

LADY BLANCHE, recoiling against the balcony, gazed up at the wan, hag-She drew back from him, deathly gard face with the black, somber eyes pale, and her lips parted slowly, sad- glowing like lamps amid its whiteness. "Too late; it is too late!" she mur- gasped. "What do you want with

back the past. It is too late! Think He looked down at her with a fixed, and did, was revealed to me. Lady of Blanche, Bruce! She has done no intent expression on his face, as if he Blanche, you asked me when last we man playing some difficult part, and the question away. It is my turn to His hands fell to his side, and he trying to remember it. The look

haunted her for years afterward. "Why are you here?" she demand

"Keep away from England," he said, and his voice sounded dull and holhave met again too late. Good-by, sought you, you have followed me. It

you to-night I should have been a hundred miles away. It is fate! We played with it for some time, trod it under foot, and faughed at it; it is fate's turn now to laugh at us, to tread us under its avenging feet. Lady Blanche, the whirligig of time brings its own revenges; it has brought vengeance

with the cold hauteur which was her second nature; but the dark eyes did not flinch, the hard, hollow voice did here to the hotel? Do you want main here is one of peril. Lord Nor-

"Money!" he said, as if that word alone had caught his ear; "I have sold back his blood-stained gold; I bring you back yours, Lady Blanche."

pocket as he quickly spoke, and drew leather case out.

"It is here, all of it! Take it! It has been a curse to me. Look at me, Lady Blanche, and see that I will

She looked at his haggard face, with its deep lines telling of dissipation and remorse; at the white hair which as Lord Norman's; at the cavernous eyes gleaming with a feverish inten-

ing the price of my treachery with me, I have been living the life of a gambler. I have been like one drifting toward the whirlpool of destruc-"What are you doing here?" she ors. It is as if a veil had been torn ask you if you feel none?

"It has fallen upon me, it will fall upon you. Thank Heaven, while you pair your evil work!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, in voice of suppressed anger and doubt "Thank Heaven that you are not

arried to Bruce Norman! The task yould have been a thousand times arder for you if you had been; it is lenty hard enough now!' "What is hard? Why do you talk

and look so strangely?" she demanded, trying to speak haughtily, but trembling. "This night, Lady Blanche, Lord

Norman must be told all that you and have done." "What!" she gasped.

"This night he must be shown how ruel an injustice has been wrought an innocent girl; he must be told that it was you who were false, and not Floris Carlisle!"

She looked at him for a moment with a very wild, incredulous stare. then laughed a suppressed laugh of much scorn and defiance.

"I see! You want more money." He dropped the leather case at her feet with a dull, grim apathy. She started.

"If it is not money, what is it you want?" she said. "You will not deceive me with this rant! You forget that I am acquainted with your love of the melodramatic. This is, I suppose, a piece of play-acting for my especial behoof and amusement, orshe turned pale, and her eyes flashed -"you have met with Floris Carlisle and betrayed me! Is that it? She has bought you over-perhaps promised you half of Lord Norman's wealth. Is that it? You have met her?"

He eyed her listlessly, wearily, with

for the first time a faint touch of color came into his face. "I have seen er, and I love her!" "You love her!" she echoed

"I love her. Do not misunderstand ne, Lady Blanche. I love her without hope; I am content to love her so that I can make her reparation. It s all I have to live for, and I will do

There was silence for a moment. (To be Continued.)

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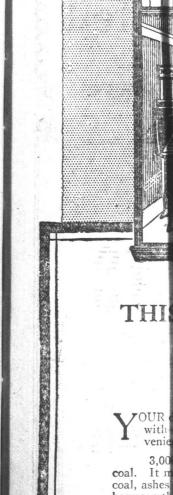
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