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'Margaret,' The GIRL ARTIST, OR, The Countess of Ferrers Court.

CHAPTER XXXII

"Come away, your highness," he said, in a whisper, "this is no place for us."

"Her husband! Her husband!" breathed the prince, like one in a dream. "Impossible!"

"It looks only too possible," said the general, gravely. "Doubtless Lord Ferrers will offer a full explanation later on, but this is no time for it."

"That it isn't, but you can take my word for it that it's true!" said a voice, broken with a sob.

It was Lottie's. The general turned and stared at her.

"You are Miss Leslie's—that is, the countess—friend, madam?" he said, still staring at her in amazement, that overwhelmed his politeness.

"No, her worst enemy, but one," said Lottie, in her old curt manner. "Oh, I can't tell you half of the story, but if you want to know, it was I who separated them," she said defiantly, through her tears. "But," she added, pathetically, "it was I who brought them together again!"

"This is strange!" murmured the general. "Come away, Rivani!"

The prince started as if from a trance and strode toward Blair and Margaret.

"One word, my lord!" he said, hoarsely. "You know, you have known from the first, the reason for our meeting. Will you tell me, as man to man, that it had no basis? Will you pledge me your word that you have not injured this lady, for alas, I cannot trust her! It is her heart that has spoken—"

"As man to man I pledge my word that I have not knowingly injured this lady," said Blair brokenly. "She is my wife, Prince Rivani!" then his voice faltered, and he drew Margaret closer to him with a passionate pressure.

The prince bowed, his face white as death, his lips quivering.

"That is sufficient," he said. His eyes turned to Margaret. "Madam, will you forgive me? It was for your sake—" he stopped.

With a sob, Margaret put out her hand to him. He took it, bent over it as if to kiss it, then, as if he could not trust his forced composure another moment, he let it fall and strode away.

Two minutes afterward Blair and Margaret and Lottie were left alone. What pen could describe the joy which fell upon those two hearts, so long parted by worse than death, but now reunited! Mine shall not attempt it. For a time they stood, her head resting upon his breast, his arm holding her tightly, as if he feared that the next moment he might lose her again. For a time they could only speak in broken, passionate murmurs, and it was not until Lottie timidly drew near them that Blair led Margaret to a fallen tree and implored her to tell him how it came to pass that she, whom he had mourned as dead, was now again in his arms.

For an hour they sat, while with

many breaks and much faltering, she told the strange story, he listening the while in an amazement that almost overwhelmed his joy. He forgot Lottie, forgot that the city had awakened into its daily life, and above all, he forgot that another woman claimed to be his wife; that, at no great distance, Violet Graham was awaiting him.

It came upon him suddenly, so suddenly that he almost sprung to his feet with a cry of terror and agony. "Oh, Blair, be calm!" said Margaret, clinging to him, for she thought that he had suddenly realized who it was that had wrecked their lives, though she had cautiously and carefully refrained from mentioning Austin Ambrose. "Be calm, dearest. All our trouble is over now. Let him go. What does it matter? Promise me, Blair—Blair, my love, my husband!"

He groaned, then he started. "Let him go! Him? Who?"

His wildness frightened her, and she would have soothed him and put the question by, but Lottie was within hearing, and it was too much for her.

"Who? Why, Austin Ambrose!" she exclaimed.

"Hush, hush!" said Margaret, warningly, and she held up her hand laughingly, for, much as Lottie had done to restore her to happiness, she could not endure the sight of her or the sound of her voice.

"Hush!" exclaimed Lottie, half indignantly. "What! are you going to let him go on trusting that wolf in sheep's clothing any longer? Why, it's past reason! Give him a loophole and he'll ruin everything yet. I know him and you don't, no, neither of you, and Blair—I mean Lord Ferrers—least of all. Why, my lord, you two would never have been parted but for Austin Ambrose."

"Austin! Austin!" echoed Blair. Then Lottie poured out the story of her villainy and her weakness. Out it came, despite Margaret's command; and entreaties, and, like a lava torrent, it seared Blair's heart.

White and speechless he listened until, almost breathless, Lottie cried in conclusion:

"And he is down at the palace still, and he'll ruin everything yet if you don't crush him. Oh! I know what he is. He is there with her—"

"Her! Who?" asked Margaret, bewildered.

Lottie stopped short and looked aghast. She had forgotten Violet Graham, the woman who stood before the world as the Countess of Ferrers, as Blair's lawful wife.

Blair held up his hand.

"Not a word more!" he said. "Go, now, Lottie. I—I will send for you, or see you later."

Lottie hung her head and left them, and for a few minutes Blair sat silent, feeling as if some fiend had dashed the cup of joy from his lips again.

How was he to tell this lovely angel whose image had never left his heart's throne, this lovable woman who clung to him as if to sever from him would be death to her, how could he tell her that, thinking her dead, he had taken another woman as his wife!

He could not then, at that supreme moment, at any rate.

He rose, still with his arm round her.

"Dearest," he said in a whisper. "You must go home—to your own home for the present—"

Margaret started and looked at him, then her face went white, but she said nothing, not one word.

"For the present," he repeated, almost beside himself. "In an hour or two I will come to you. Tell me where?"

She told him falteringly, yet calmly.

"You can trust me! Surely you can trust me! Ah, if you know what it costs me to part with you for a

single second! But it must be—it must be!" he groaned. "Believe in me, trust me, dearest Margaret, my wife, for a few short hours longer! You will?"

She looked up at him for a second with a deep earnestness, then she laid her head upon his heart and he kissed her.

With a consideration and delicacy peculiarly Italian, the prince had left his carriage, and Blair led her to it. He stood and watched as it drove away, with all that he cared for in life, with the treasure so marvelously restored to him, then he turned toward the city.

He seemed to be walking in a dream. What was the task that lay before him? He was to go to Violet Graham and say, "you are no longer my wife—you never have been my wife! Begone!" It was true he owed her no pity, for she had gained her ends by an unscrupulous alliance with the traitor who had marred and ruined so large a portion of his life, and still—still—it was from love of him that she had stilled! And now to go to her and tell her that Nemesis had fallen upon her, and that henceforth she must go before the world a thing for scorn to mock at.

With Austin Ambrose, Blair knew how to deal; there would be no hesitation there. Two or three short words, followed by one blow. But Violet—!

Slowly he made his way to the palace. Servants were running to and fro in the vast hall, the sounds of life were filling the air which a short time back was so still and quiet.

He entered the hall and mounted the stair with dragging step. In the corridor his valet stood aside to let him pass, and regarded his pale face with covert curiosity.

"Is—is her ladyship down yet?" asked Blair.

"No, my lord; it is not her ladyship's time for rising yet."

Blair glanced at the clock.

"No, no," he said. Then his face darkened. "Will you go to Mr. Ambrose's room and send him to me?" he said.

"Mr. Ambrose has gone into the city, and has not returned yet, my lord," said the man. "I thought your lordship knew—"

"Wait in the hall until he returns, and ask him to come to me," said Blair.

He passed on and entered Violet's boudoir. His note lay on the table where he had left it, and he tore it in pieces and dropped it on the fire. Then he paced to and fro, stopping to listen now and again.

All was still in Violet's room, and he began to ask himself the question if it was necessary for him to see her. Could he not write and tell her all that he had discovered; could he not break it to her in some way? Why should he not leave the place with Margaret alone, within an hour or two, and see Violet no more?

But his spirit rebelled against the suggestion. It seemed unmanly and

unworthy. No, he would go through with his task to the bitter end. First Violet, then the other conspirator, Austin Ambrose. Still he waited. The hands of the clock tolled round the dial, and chimed the hour. With a start he nerved himself and knocked at the door. No response followed, and he knocked again and again, more loudly. Then he opened the door and entered.

The next instant he staggered back with a cry of horror.

Stretched upon the bed was the woman he had made his wife, and lying at her feet was the man who had been her dupe and her master. As Blair bent over to raise her, he fell back shuddering, for he saw that she was dead! At the same instant the white hand of the man lying at her feet dropped lifelessly and slid away. Blair who had been about to strike him, saw a small vial lying at his feet.

Small as it was, it had contained sufficient poison for Austin Ambrose. It was the vial he had carried in his breast for months past, for which he had felt that night when he thought that Blair had discovered his villainy. It was for this that he had plotted and schemed with a heartless ruthlessness that an Iago might have envied! To find the woman he had loved and entrapped snatched by Death from his grasp in the very hour of his triumph, and to finish his career—a Suicide!

(To Be Continued.)

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George Peck is dead; and o'er his head, they'll place a slab of granite on which I'd write, "O! I d friend, g o o d night! You filled with glee this planet. How oft with joy your wicked boy in bygone days h a s filled me! How oft I blessed that imp possessed, while laughter nearly killed me! Old Comrade Peck, you were on deck, in after days, as speaker, did sober deeds, whose heavy covered, for lotty fame a seeker. You governed, so people tell, the province of Wisconsin; as magistrate you hit a gait that doubtless was entrancing! But no one cries, 'How nobly wise was Peck, the statesman, thinker; on statesmanship he had a grip, he surely was a clincker!' But by your bier we shed a tear, and draw our sackcloth closer, and say, 'Good night! Old friend, sleep tight, with Bad Boy and the Grocer!'"

WALT MASON

Your Boys and Girls.

Quite a problem which will confront mother a little later will be the providing of a wardrobe for the children that will help make their vacation a period of comfort and pleasure, and the high rates charged for laundering should also be considered when planning the small outfits. Comfort, of course, may easily be secured. A pair of overalls or a set of rompers will provide this, but no child will feel happy so garbed among associates wearing pretty clothing that may be as comfortable as well.

Children vary in feature and form quite as much as adults, and so it is quite necessary to study what will be becoming to them. A plump little maiden will look ridiculous in a short beruffled skirt, standing out like an over trimmed lamphade, yet her fairy like sister may be a ravishing beauty in the same frocks. For a sojourn in the country or at a farmhouse, a frock of some light woollen material and several thin white frocks of inexpensive material will be sufficient.

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1383

1665

War News

Messages Received Previous to 9 A.M.

OFFICIAL.

LONDON, May 15.—The Governor, Newfoundland: Around Verdun violent engagements continued during the night of the 14th. The French were attacked and recaptured positions lost on the seventh of the month.

There has been more activity on the British front; near Vermelle enemy captured five hundred of our front trenches. By a counter-attack we recovered a portion of lost ground. Enemy attacks at points were repulsed.

In the Caucasus the Russian advanced posts retired after heavy fighting to thirty miles west of Erzurum. The Turkish losses were extremely severe. The Russians have occupied Kasirsirin, in the direction of the city.

General Smuts reports the capture of a large number of prisoners and the repulsion with severe loss, after days' fighting.

BONAR LAW

ASQUITH ARRIVES AT BELFAST, MAY 15.—Prime Minister Asquith arrived here to-day from Dublin, where he has been investigating various parts of the recent uprising. Asquith arrived in the private car of Lord Wimborne, former Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was tendered a luncheon by the Lord Mayor, and then held a conference with about a dozen members of the local commercial community. This conference lasted for two hours, after which a brief statement was issued to the effect that the Premier, at his own request had met citizens with whom he had full and frank discussion concerning the present state of affairs. Mr. Asquith after the conference returned to Dublin by automobile. He was enthusiastically cheered by thousands of As no civil or military officials were present at the conference, which held at the city hall, it is supposed that the question of the future government of Ireland was not discussed. During the evening the Ulster Unionists council received the following telegram from Sir Edward Carson: "I know nothing of the rumors of the government of Ireland, appearing in the press, nor as to the foundation of them."

THE CASEMENT TRIAL.

LONDON, May 15.—According to testimony given this afternoon by Daniel O'Brien, an Irish prisoner who was at Limburg during Casement's visit, Casement was afterwards exchanged, Casement was hissed and hooted out of Limburg camp, and some members of the Munster regiment, including several prisoners, including O'Brien, were punished for it, though they testified their rations being down. Several other witnesses brought forward by the prosecution during the afternoon. Their testimony was corroborative of that which had been given relative to the activities of Casement in Germany. The court room was so crowded during the afternoon sessions as during morning. Almost as soon as the adjournment was taken for lunch, men and women gathered outside the building and waited patiently for gates to be opened. When Sir Roger Casement's place in the dock, it was evident

T. J. Edens

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Canadian Oatmeal 3c. lb.
Rice, Rangoon, 60c. stone; 5c. lb.