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REMORSE and REPENTANCE.

OR
For Daisie's Sake

CHAPTER XIII.
"HER OWN AGAIN."

"So they have quarreled? About me, of course. She is true, after all, my own sweet love! Ah! what a weight of yoke is lifted from my breast! Oh, I must manage to see her presently, and beg her to forgive me for my rash flight, jealous fool that I was! As for Royall, I am not sorry for him, since he acted in a mean, underhand way to gain her love. Well, he had his day, and failed; now comes mine."

Meanwhile, Letty was watching him with some compunction, owing to a guilty conscience.

Her first womanly pity for Annette had prompted her to mail to Dallas the letter she had stolen from the young girl's pocket, but on trying to get the address from Mrs. Fleming, the latter's suspicions had been aroused, and she had persecuted Letty till she found out everything. This done, she exchanged a gold piece with the devoted maid for poor Daisie's love letter.

"However," thought Letty, "there's no harm done, for I can tell him all about his pretty sweetheart, and maybe his cruel heart will turn back to her again."

So, getting close to his ear, Letty poured out in moving terms the story of Annette's accident, though she did not tell him the fate of the letter.

When she had ended, he sighed, and answered:

"Poor girl! I'm sorry for her; but there's some mistake, surely, Letty, for little Annette was never my sweetheart—never! I never loved any girl in my life but Daisie Bell, and I want you to slip in there and get her to come out here and see me. Won't you?"

Two big silver dollars pressed into her hand clinched the argument, and Letty tripped blithely away on her errand, leaving Dallas waiting with wild impatience for the coming of his little love.

And presently she came with a look of wonder on her fair face, for the maid had simply whispered to her that some one wanted to see her on the balcony, and she must just slip out without any fuss.

Daisie thought it might be a messenger from Aunt Alice about something, so she stole away, pretending she wished to lay aside the bridal veil.

In the hall she gave it to Letty to carry upstairs, and then glided out to the balcony, all unconscious of the joy that awaited her there.

When Dallas heard her coming he stepped back from the window into the screen of a climbing vine, where there was a seat for two, and waited. She came close to him, and the moonlight shone on her fair face and white gown and waves of golden hair. Oh, how beautiful she was in evening dress, with her neck uncovered, and her perfect arms, so white and rounded, bare to the shoulders!

She saw the dark form sitting in the shadow so silently, and as the hem of her white gown brushed against his knee, she faltered:

"Who wants me?"
Dallas half rose, holding out impassioned arms, whispering:
"I want you, Daisie, darling! I want you to forgive my folly and madness! I want you to be my little love still, as you promised that day before I left you! I want—"

But then his arms closed around her yielding form, and his last words were smothered in the kiss he pressed on the top of her shining head.

Ah! what joy for little Daisie, what sudden rapture!
Dallas Bain drew her down to the seat beside him, and in the shadow of the rose vines he kissed her lips, and she kissed him back again, dear little Daisie, forgiving everything in a moment, forgetting all the past, thinking of nothing else on earth but that he was her own again.

CHAPTER XIV.
"LOVE IN HEAVEN."

Inside the drawing-room, now that the last act of the entertainment was over, all was joyous confusion, people fitting about in merry converse, while over all rose low strains of music, now sad, now joyous, each finding an echo in some tender heart.

But Daisie Bell was too beautiful not to be missed, even in that brilliant throng, even had not Royall Sherwood impatiently questioned his cousin as to her absence.
"She has gone upstairs to remove the wedding veil that she was so reluctant to don, and will return presently," answered Mrs. Fleming; but though Royal loltered near the stairway for half an hour, she did not come.

Half an hour of the keenest impatience and longing for him, of the most exquisite joy for Dallas and Daisie.
Between the two lovers there had been full explanations of everything, and renewed trust and confidence.

As they lingered there in the moonlight beneath the fragrant rose vine, with the voices of the sea blending in their ears with the lilt of merry music, their hands entwined, their hearts in unison, there came to them a foretaste of heaven, if 'tis true, as poets tell, that—

Love is heaven, and heaven in love,
"And you will give up your fine, rich lover for me, my Daisie—for me,

with love in a cottage?" cried Dallas fondly.

"Can you doubt it?" she whispered back, blushing beneath the kiss with which he rewarded her devotion.

"You will be my own sweet bride! Oh, what joy—what bliss! How—how have I deserved such a boon from Heaven!" he cried, remembering his agony just now, when he believed she was giving herself away to his rival.
"Oh, Daisie," he continued, "you shall never repent your sweet trust in me! I will make your life a dream of love and happiness. You say Royall Sherwood told you that my life was clouded with mystery, and that all mystery hid dishonor. Well, all shall be explained to you, and you shall know better, my precious love!"

But at that moment they heard a light, grating laugh, and saw before them Mrs. Fleming leaning on Royall Sherwood's arm.

Royall had grown so impatient of Daisie's long absence that he had insisted on having Mrs. Fleming find out the cause.

So the unsuspecting lady Letty Green, who was flirting with Cullen at the end of the hall, and demanded to know what Miss Bell was doing upstairs so long.

Letty tossed her pert brown head, and replied that Miss Bell hadn't gone upstairs at all.

"Didn't she go with you to remove her veil, girl?" cried Royall impatiently.

"No, sir; she sent me upstairs to take it, and went to meet her beau," returned the saucy maid.

"What do you mean, Letty?" Explain yourself, without any more trifling!" exclaimed her mistress, in a tone of sudden, sharp anxiety.

Perhaps Letty had a grudge against her mistress, and knew that she could pay it off now, for she proceeded to recount, with sly enjoyment, her rencontre with Dallas Bain.

"He actually thought at first that 'twas a real marriage, and I almost feared the man would drop dead at my feet, he was so upset," she cried. "But when I explained all to him—oh, what a change! His eyes just flashed with joy, and he crammed my hands full of money, saying: 'I never loved any girl in my life but Daisie Bell, and I want you to slip in there and get her to come out here and see me, won't you?'"

Letty thought her mistress would drop down dead, too, she clung so tightly to Royall Sherwood, and turned so deathly white, while she muttered, in impotent wrath:

"How dared you do it?"

Royall Sherwood went quite white, too, but he uttered no word; and Letty, with an air of innocence, tossed her head, twittering:

"La, ma'am, did I do anything wrong? If so, I'm sure I beg pardon."
"You should have come to me first," muttered Mrs. Fleming angrily; and the girl answered, with mock humility:

"I didn't know it, I'm sure, I didn't know you had a claim on him."
"Silence, girl!" cried Royall, interpreting her mood; and he drew Mrs. Fleming aside into a deserted anteroom to discuss the situation.

"Get me some wine, Royall; this is a terrible shock to my nerves!" she panted.

She drank, and the ruby liquid coursed through her veins like fire, inspiring her with new courage.

A low, hateful laugh thrilled over her lips as she cried:

"How very, very fortunate that he did not come ten minutes earlier!"
"How very fortunate!" echoed Royall; but his blond face was ashy pale, and dismay lurked in his eyes.

She held the half-drained glass to his lips, saying wildly:

"Drink! it will give you courage. We must go and face them with the truth!"

"No; I must keep a clear head," he answered, in a shaking voice, pushing her hand aside, and adding: "This is a terrible complication that one shrinks from meeting."

"Courage!" she answered gayly, slipping her hand through his arm, and leading him, half unwillingly, down the hall toward the door that opened on the balcony.

"I—I—hadn't you better break it to her first alone? I dread a scene!" he muttered tremblingly.

"Pshaw! don't be a coward, Royall. You know your role. Just stick to it like a man, and all will be well. Her fate is sealed, and their anger cannot change it, however they rage. Come," and, drawing him with her, the crafty



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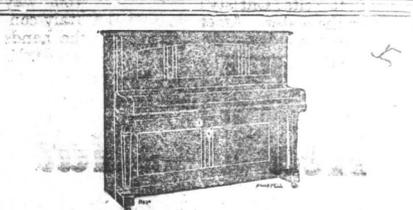
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