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The Heir of Bayneham

Lady Hutton's Ward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"You may trust me," he said; "you might trust me with your life. Let us we're down the path; you will be cold if you remain standing."

They then went down the path together.
"My time is very precious," said

Lady Hilda coldly. "I run great risks by remaining here." "I know it," he replied. "I asked

you to come for your mother's sake.

Do you know who she was, and what
was her story?"

"I know it all," said the young

"I know it all," said the young girl sadly. "My mother's fate has clouded my life."

"Thank Heaven, I am spared that long explanation," he replied. "I half feared you might still believe you were Lady Hutton's daughter."

"I never thought that," she replied; and one must not ever so lightly blame the dead; but I wish I had been left to share my mother's fate. I should have brightened her life and have been saved all the sorrow and shame of feeling myself half an impostor."

"It was done for the best," he sai dreamily.

"I suppose so," she replied; "but this is not what you wanted me for. You knew my parents—what have you to say of them to me?"

"You speak of your mother." he

continued; "did you never hear your father? Did no one ever mention him to you?"

"Yes," she replied bitterly. "My mother, on her death-bed, told me of him."

"May I ask what she said?" he inquired. "Some people do not possess the art of painting an agreeable portrait."

"That cannot possibly concern you," she replied. "Tell me your business quickly and let me go. My father's name brings no music to my ears. Perhaps before now he has met my mother and rendered her justice."

She raised her pure, calm face to the night skies as she spoke, and Paul Fulton stood abashed and humbled before the serene innocence and dignity of his child.

"Hilda," he said, "has it never

A cold dread seized her. She had never thought of him until the day he touched her golden head with his lips and looked so sadly upon her.



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O. M. Shrove Price Str. w an awful fear came over her to could he be that knew the secret mother had kept? She turned an sked at him; coldly and calmly her rested on his agitated face, and the faint light of the moonbeam

living being.

"Have you never thought of me he said, "or wondered who I was!"

"Never!" she replied.
"Would you not care to see your father. Hilda? With all his faults, he

"My father broke the sweetest and truest heart that ever beat," she replied passionately; "how could I wish

"Hush, child!—hush!" he said sadly; "your words stab me. Try to care for me, Hilda. I am your father, Stephen Hurst, and I place my

Her fair face grew even more dead ly pale.

er," she said sadly, "are that I wish I had died when I was a child, before I knew my hopeless, dreary fate."

"Can you say nothing kinder,

Hilda?" he asked; and for once there was real dignity and true feeling in his words. "I have not-been a saint; but you are my child, and I love you."

She walked on unheedingly, her fair hands clasped passionately. The fate her dying mother had predicted

and feared had come to her.

"What have I done?" she said wild ly, looking up to the still, serence heavens. "Why should this fate have fellen upon me?"

"Hush, Hilda!" said Paul Fulton.
"I shall do you no wrong, child; we can keep each other's secret. I do not want to interfere with you. I should not have said one word, but I feared you would tell Lord Bayneham about what occurred the other afternoon; you looked so like your mother when I saw her first that I

At her husband's name a low cry came from Hilda's lips. What a web of sorrow, shame, and disgrace was woven round her, and he knew noth-

ing of it.

"Will you tell me how and when you saw your mother, Hilda" asked

She told him the story of her mother's death. Through the hard worldly nature some sharp sting of

"Great heavens!" he cried; "to think that I came here seeking my new life, and find my wife's grave and my living child!"

"She gave me one message for you," said Lady Hilda gently. "It was to tell you that, dying, she blessed

and forgave you."

"Did she say that?" asked Paul
Fulton hoarsely, while his eyes dim
with tears, "Poor Maggie, she loved

me dearly and well!"

That moment's softening touched his daughter more than any words could have done.

"I have been a bad man," he said;
"but I think I am punished when I stand here abashed and humbled before my own child. It is a strange world for all of us."

He drew his daughter's hand in his own. There was no warmth in her manner, and he felt some keen disappointment, yet acknowledged it was just.

"Would you care to hear the history of a black sheep, Hilda?" he said, and something of his old gay manner came back to him. "I am very black indeed, but perhaps you may think more gently of me if you hear all that I have to say. You need not be ashamed of me; by birth, as well as everything else, I am a gentle-

"A gentleman!" repeated his untended to so non-decise of

scorn in her voice that she could not control. "Do gentlemen usually trample upon the heart that loves them best, and go about the world under a false name—a living lie."

He bit his lips distening to her in-

dignant words.

"Hilda," he said, "do not rouse all that is bad in me. I wronged your mother, I repaid her love with ingratitude, I spurned her from my door and broke her heart. I own it all and am sorry for it can mortal man say more?" She made no reply and he continued, "You love her. I could feel jealous that of two unknown parents you cling to one and regret the other. But you say she died blessing me; would she like to know that you, my daughter, were my bitter enemy—that you could not repeat her love and her pardon?"

Paul Fulton knew human naturhe had touched the right spring

"For your mother's sake say to m

He waited for her answer, but hot anger and fierce, bitter sorrow were warring in her heart. The quiet stars, with their pure, holy eyes, shone down upon her, and the night wind laden with the fragrant breath of sleeping flowers, whispered sweet messages of peace to her; she saw again the clear, beautiful face, the cold, still lips that even in dying had whispered of love.

"For your mother's sake," urged Paul Fulton again. She turned to him and laid her

"It shall be so," she said gently; for her sake I repeat her pardon and her love."

He felt again the bitterness of his punishment; his fair young child so near him, her golden head drooping under the weight of sorrow he heaped upon her, her sweet face wet with tears, her soft hand touching his own. He did not dare to do as other fathers do; he dared not clasp the weeping, sorrowing girl in his arms and comfort her; he felt that in her sweet innocence and guileless purity, she was far above him. He could have knelt at her feet, but he dared not

"Hilda," he said gently, "you are an angel to me; if you had sent me from you in disgust I should have gone straight to the bad, for I am a reckless man. You have saved me. I will try—it is never too late—I will try and be more worthy of you; I will not shame you again. I told you it was my life you held in your hands. Now time presses. Listen to me. We must both preserve our secret. I have entered upon a fresh life. I am rich and men respect me. I am going to marry; nay, do not start from me, child; that cannot hurt your mother now. I am going to marry one who will do great things for me. I see honor and rank and the good word and praise of men before me. I see a better and higher life, but all this depends upon you. I suffered, Hilda; no one knew it. Shame and disgrace cankered my very soul. I believe I hated your mother because her loyal heart ever found excuses for me."

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