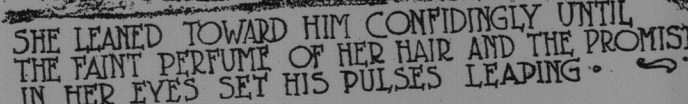


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return no more. From time to time evidences of his thoughtfulness reached the door, but he still in the opposite section, chin on hand, her unseeing eyes on the country that day, all blurred, past her window. Charlie, the porter, touched her with a letter of unmistakable enthusiasm, had become her assiduous slave. When after weary waiting night had fully come and brought that smothered, stifled and held her silent so long and timidly asked for the one who had sent it.

"Yass, m", he had gone for a walk long ago. "I might say the hour zazzy, but he caution me mighty hard not to forget number seben. Yass m", he not be de train; couldn't rightly say. "I can do so; yass m".

The interminable evening was over at last, filled as it had been with incoherent quest and failure and the continual recurrence of hope and disappointment as the door opened to admit—every one but the one, who never came. Charlie, looking very important, and a note. Sitting in the shadow of the curtains, where no one's eyes could see, she opened the envelope, took up the greenback that fluttered to her lap. The note began abruptly—

"The hours have brought decision and discontent. It was cowardly to rest my struggle on your shoulders. I have kept your watch—perhaps you guessed that I had it?—and I want to take into my own hands to keep it if you can."

"I have dared to expose something that I beg you to use, as I fear you have, in going into a city, and I have no friends, and it will be a comfort to me to feel sure that you will not be inconvenienced until your grip is forwarded."

"I cannot say that you guessed it. My sole strength is none too great. It is not easy to go without a watch. It is impossible to go without asking me to believe that you will have no irritation for that which I have in the life of—"

"A STRANGER."

Throughout the long night, when it was the first time she awoke—a first time she never forgot—until the slow dawn creeping into the section showed the crumpled letter she held tightly against her breast. When, with no permission to herald its coming, the limited drew to the Grand Central and Charlie's voice was at the curtain. Pressing hastily back, she left her own sleeper, and with a fugitive glance at the unoccupied section, entered a cab and was whirled away into the early morning mist.

A half-hour later she was set down in Washington square, before one of the red and white relics of early New York. She brushed past the marble statues, and the frequent guest.

"No, Stevens, I know the way. Mr. Goddard is in the library, of course," he explained.

"He pushed open the inner door as she spoke and entered. A round faced, white whiskered man rose to meet her with outstretched hand.

"Here you are to last," he began generally, but she stopped him.

"Don't say a word," she said. "I haven't time to lose my watch and pocket-book, and everything." She nodded resolutely in answer to his gasp of astonishment.

"My minute, but now I must be quick. Mr. Malvern's station will be here any moment—I don't know how soon, and—and—"

She looked away a moment, and then came back steadily. "Now, don't interrupt, but listen. Mr. Malvern is to be trusted—positively. Oh, it doesn't matter what the laws say; and you must be sure to have money or anything else to work hard—this with another word I will submit to any dictated law on the subject. I have to know that to serve as a trust—whatever it may be—people call it—it would mean a sacrifice to him. He is not a man to be shorted, and he shall not be terrified. I have heard somewhere that I sing and hate the stage as much as—she said. Oh, he's horribly prejudiced. He can be awfully severe—he can. Her eyes were softly pathetic. He must be sent straight home, and when he comes, and he must never see me, never, under demand, never, never, well, it doesn't matter why, mustn't, and the freight show her cheeks.

"I don't wait a moment." They managed at last to stop her for a few attempts. "There is something for this gentleman. He has heard of sacrifice or refusal. Let me press Mrs. Malvern, Mr. McGreggor."

She did not move from the door. She was not a woman to panic and fright of a child. She turned slowly toward the great window, where the light came. A glance she cast in that direction, her eyes and the toe of her boot tracing the big mark on the floor, the frail cackle of the fire was the only in the room. Then Mr. Goddard came back a chair noisily pushed against the window frame forward to her.

"Oh, yes; so this is my stepdaughter, the fastest. She said with a pretty name, and she said, 'I don't want you here.'"

"I seem to notice where things are very thoroughly," said McGreggor, as you came in so quickly. I have an idea you were very sure."

"Yes, I know," she assured him, "doesn't matter at all"—with an air of toleration.

"It all the same, perhaps, to get from your duties."

"I refuse absolution," he returned, a faint smile.

"I don't know," she said. "This with McGreggor best nearer." "I will decide, have you forgotten?" Instantly the hand that she held against her breast fell again, she spoke angrily to cover her confusion.

"If you will not resign you are dismissed," she told him.

"I have been led to me," McGreggor with irritating tranquility turned upon him then with passion in her voice.

"I don't know how to be so ridiculous. I will not, what I want to make you understand, determine to make you understand, determine to make you understand."

"I'm a little afraid to tell," murmured McGreggor.

She drew away from him the hand that she held against the fire, which touched that glorious hair to where the soft browns and purple in the shadows. At length she pushed open the door, and

(Continued on page 7, fifth column.)