



TAKE IT FOR  
**CRAMPS—COLIC—  
DIARRHŒA**

APPLY IT FOR  
**BRUISES—SPRAINS  
— SORE THROAT**

## Happiness At Last,

OR  
**Loyalty Recompensed.**

CHAPTER XXIV.

"He has lost a great deal of money, and at first we thought we feared that— But it does not matter now." Her voice was very still and subdued. "It is all over now, all put straight."

"Why did you not tell me?" he began, almost fiercely. Then he stopped as she looked at him with faint surprise.

"I would have told you," she said, simply, not reproachfully, "but I did not know where you were—no one knew."

"No; that is true. Forgive me!" he said, almost inaudibly. She had been in trouble, and in need of him, and had not been able to come to him! What a brute he had been!

"And you would have come to me?" he said, rather huskily.

"Yes," she said, simply, but a little timidly. "There was no one else, and you are always so kind. You would have told me what to do, advised me, would you not?"

"Yes," he said, still more huskily, "I would; God knows how gladly!"

"Thank you," she said, and the sweetness of her voice hurt him. "But it does not matter now; it is all over."

"I am glad," he said, "and yet sorry, that—that I hadn't a hand in getting rid of the trouble. Are you sure that it is past—done with?"

"Yes, quite," she said in the same still voice. She put her hand up before her face as if the fire were burning it. He rose and took a Japanese screen from the mantel-shelf—his hand touched the portrait lying face downward—and gave it to her; and with a murmured thanks, she took it and screened her face. Relentless Time again broke the silence with his sweeping scythe.

"How did your father come to lose this money?" asked Gaunt.

Decima turned her face as if her thoughts had been wandering from the subject.

"I don't quite know. It was through some speculation—something to do with one of his inventions. Mr. Mershon and he started a company, I think."

"Mershon!" Gaunt started and looked at her earnestly. "Was he in it? How did he—ah, I remember! And your father lost his money? I can well believe it! I don't know much of Mr. Mershon, but I should say—"

"Oh, hush!" she broke in, looking up at him as if she dreaded the next words. "You must not say—I must not listen to—anything against him!"

Gaunt stopped and stared at her with a frown.

"Why not?" he said—demanded, rather.

The color rose to her face, then left it pale again. She raised her eyes to his with a world of sad resignation in them.

"I am going to be his wife," she said in a low voice.

Gaunt did not move for a moment, but sat like one suddenly turned to stone. Then his face broke up, as it were, and he rose and stood before her.

"Going—to—be—his wife!" he repeated, hoarsely. His own voice sounded like a muffled drum. His love for her, his jealousy, rose about him like a great wave of fire, and swept over him, scorching him as it passed. "You are going to marry him?"

She looked up at him with a faint wonder in her sad eyes.

"Yes," she said, almost inaudibly, for his face, his voice frightened her. He turned from her and walked to the end of the room. Then he came back and stood over her, a tall figure almost threatening in its aspect.

"Do—do you love him?"

"No," he said, almost inaudibly, for his face, his voice frightened her. He turned from her and walked to the end of the room. Then he came back and stood over her, a tall figure almost threatening in its aspect.

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born joy, delight. But all she did was to gaze up at him as the devotee gazes upward at his god, the god which had power to deal out misery or joy unspeakable.

"You—love—me!" she said, unconsciously.

Her voice thrilled through him, and dispelled the last remnant of honor that clung to him despairingly.

"I love you!" he said. "You are just life to me! Decima, if you had not been as innocent as a child, you would have known it! Think, look back! Do you remember nothing? Have you seen nothing? Why was I always with you—why did I stay at Leafmore—why did I do all—everything you wanted? Do men act like that unless they are in love? See! He thrust his hand in his bosom and dragged out the ribbon which had fallen from her hair. "I have worn this next my heart day and night. Sleeping or walking, it has never left me. You had worn it."

The blood rushed to her face, her eyes glistened with a pure passion, and she drew still nearer to him.

His arm went round her waist, and he crushed her against his heart, and for the last time—the first time!—his lips sought hers and kissed her.

She did not shrink, but lay in his embrace, her face upturned, flower-like, to his kisses.

"You are the whole wide world to me!" he said, hoarsely. "Life is not worth having without you. I can not live without you. I thought I could. I have tried—but you see, you know—I can not! Decima, child, my dearest, tell me! Tell me! Do you love me?"

She looked up at him, and the look sent a hot wave over him. Her lips parted, but for a moment no words would come. Then she said, in a faint whisper which thrilled him:

"I love you!"

"Decima!"

She hid her face against his heart for a moment, then she raised her eyes to his.

"Yes; I know now! How—how stupid—how ignorant I was! I—I must have loved you all through—from the very first!"

He bent and kissed her hair passionately yet reverently. Her avowal of love awed him. It was as if he had suddenly penetrated the sanctum, sanctorum, the holy of holies of some shrine. Her innocence cried aloud to him.

But his passion deafened him.

"Decima, since the day we met at Leafmore, I have loved you. Day by day that love has grown until it has become the master-passion of my life! I have struggled with and fought against it, but Fate and circumstances have been too many for me. You know the truth now, and—and I am not sorry."

"Sorry! Why should you be?" she said; and love lent a sweeter music to her voice, so that he paused and listened before replying.

"I am not sorry! For us nothing matters, nothing is of consequence but our love. Nothing, no none, shall separate us, Decima!"

She smiled up at him, and her hand stole to his face with a womanly touch which thrilled him.

"No!" she said. Then she started. "But—but Mr. Mershon! I have given my word—my promise!" Her face grew grave and fearful. Gaunt laughed slowly—a laugh of scorn and defiance.

"A word wrung from you—cozened by an artful scheme!" he said. "What does it amount to? He—he bought bribed you! Bah! I buy, bribe you! I'll do all he offered." He laughed, and pressed her to him. "And I buy with love, love, love! My child, do you know now what you were about to do—to marry a man you did not love?"

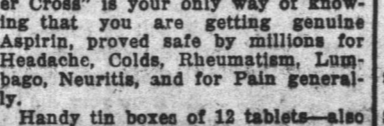
"Yes," she said, and a shudder shook her, so that she clung tighter to him. "I know now! Oh, how could I!"

"How could you!" he exclaimed, with a desperate, reckless laugh. "But that is all over, finished with, dearest. It is I—I—I whom you love! Are you glad, Decima! Tell me!"

(To be continued.)

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