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THE F. F. DALLEY CO., Limited
Hamilton, Ont. 188

THREE TRYING TIMES IN A WOMAN'S LIFE

There are three periods of a woman's life when she is in need of the heart strengthening, nerve toning, blood enriching action of

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The first of these is when the young girl is entering the portals of womanhood. At this time she is very often pale, weak and nervous, and unless her health is built up and her system strengthened she may fall a prey to consumption or be a weak woman for life.

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"It will make no difference in my intentions toward you," he wrote. "I shall leave the young lady a legacy, and I shall welcome your wife to Fusbroke. I do not object to your marrying a penniless girl; but, John, have you chosen wisely? The ladies of Fusbroke have one and all been of unblemished honor and of the highest repute. On no one of them did the least cloud of suspicion or disgrace ever rest; they are a noble, spotless line of women; and, if the girl you have chosen can take her place beside them, she is welcome. But again I say, be cautious. It is hard for a man to find after marriage that he has tarnished rather than added to the lustre of his name. Forgive me for saying all this; but in this world there is need for caution."

"A very proper letter," cried John, triumphantly. "What a dear old fellow he is, Charlie! And how pleased he will be when he knows that Alice's family is quite as good as my own! I must take this down to the Cottage to-night; they will be glad to know that it is all settled."

I went with him; for it was to be, in some way, a gala night.

"Of course," said John to me, as we drew near the Holloway Road, "dearly as I love Alice, I would never marry her if the shadow of any disgrace rested upon her or any one belonging to her; but there does not, and she will make as good a Lady Temple as any of them."

Alice was delighted with Sir Vernon's letter.

"I can just imagine your uncle," she said to John—"a regular preux chevalier of the old school, valuing honor far above all riches. Oh, yes, John, as far as caste is concerned, you may tell him I am fitted to take my place beside the last Lady Temple. We have been poor, but no stain of any kind has ever rested upon us. We have no skeleton in the closet—no dreadful family secret that treads the light. We are sans peur et sans reproche, are we not, mamma?"

Mrs. Poyntz murmured "Yes," and kissed the bright face uplifted to her own.

Three weeks afterward Alice and John were married. My uncle was asked to the wedding, but he did not attend; however, he invited the bride and bridegroom to pay him a visit. To John's great disappointment, he did not go into raptures over the lovely young wife; he was kind to her, but he did not evince any great satisfaction or enjoyment during her visit. John began to feel nervous again, and wonder if, after all, his uncle could not forgive his marriage. But all suspense was soon ended.

After their return to London, Sir Vernon came up to town and presented, as a present to the bride, the beautiful and valuable diamond ring, which John declared was to be considered a great treasure, and with it he enclosed what I believe Alice valued still more, a kind letter to his "dear niece," telling her how cordially and entirely he approved John's choice.

CHAPTER II.

For three or four months my brother John was, I believe, the happiest of men. The only drawback, if it could be called one, was that my uncle did not increase his allowance, as he would have done had Clare Roulston been his wife. He did not even, as we both felt sure he would, make John a present that would help to defray the expenses of his marriage. The income that had supported a bachelor establishment was found barely sufficient for the luxuries and necessities a lady's presence in our house required. Mrs. Poyntz resolutely refused to live with her daughter. In vain John and Alice begged her to do so, but all to no purpose; she continued her residence in Rose Cottage.

Some few alterations had been required in our house. John had fitted up a charming little suite of rooms for his wife. I ventured timidly to remind him of the expense.

"I should have been obliged to do it if I had married Clare Roulston," he said; "and Alice shall not go without what she would have required as indispensable."

I hinted at various economical means by which the improvements could be effected, but he seemed to scorn them. Nothing could be good enough for his wife; so he sent to one of the leading firms, and left the furnishing and decoration of the rooms in their hands.

Certainly the little boudoir was a gem in its way—nothing could be prettier; but even John was shocked when a bill for two hundred pounds was presented for payment.

"I did not think they would have made it more than eighty," he said, turning to me with a look of great perplexity.

"And you did not even know where to get eighty pounds from, I am sure," I replied.

"No," he said. "You see, I felt quite certain that Sir Vernon would have either increased my allowance or given me a wedding present."

It was no use quoting proverbs or wise saws or speaking of caution—it was too late. The only thing was to face the difficulty.

Alice came into the room while we were discussing the matter. John would have given anything sooner than have let any share of the burden fall upon her.

"What business," he said to me, "has any young wife, only three months married, to have trouble so soon over her husband's debts?"

In one moment she saw the anxiety in both our faces, and she had taken up the bills before we thought to stop her.

"Two hundred pounds!" she said. "What a great deal of money—all for furnishing three rooms. Oh, John, that is all through me! I cost you that."

John, as in duty bound, kissed her, and declared that nothing ever could be good enough or costly enough for his little treasure. She went away happy and smiling, but the blank, dreary fact still remained—out of an income of six hundred per annum, barely sufficient to support us in the style we were living, we had two hundred pounds to pay.

"Give a bill, John," I said, "and renew it when it becomes due."

"Never!" replied my brother, almost solemnly. "I have done wrong, Charlie, by getting into debt; that is bad enough. I dread bills so much that I would rather sell up my home this day than ever have anything to do with one."

At last we arranged it. I had fifty pounds of my year's allowance in hand, John took fifty from his, and I waited upon Messrs. Hume & Green. I paid them one hundred pounds, and asked them to give us a little time for the other. They agreed willingly—six months or twelve, they said.

John was wonderfully relieved. It was the first time he had ever been in debt. He would not have acted so inconsiderately but that he had been sure Sir Vernon would assist him.

"I wonder," I said, after a few minutes' chat, "whether it would be wise to tell uncle of the difficulty, and ask him for the other hundred? He would give it to us instantly."

"No," replied John, "I will not do that. I will bear the consequences of my own folly."

Alsie often spoke to me about the bill. Her regret was that so large a sum had been spent for her.

My brother's wife was very much admired. She had been beautiful even in her homely dress; but, now that everything of the most recherche kind was at her service, she seemed more lovely still. The richest laces, the costliest silks, the finest velvets, were amongst the numerous wedding presents he showered upon her; and she became them well. We were introduced to Lady Roulston and her daughter, and went to one of their soirees. I was very proud of Alice that evening—almost as proud as John. She wore nothing but a dress of rich white silk and a few pearls in her golden hair, yet she was by far the most beautiful and distinguished-looking woman in the room.

Lady Roulston was very kind to Alice, and gave us no reason to think that she had known anything of my wish, or John's refusal. From that time she continued to be one of

our best and dearest friends, and I—well, I considered Clare the nicest girl I had ever seen or known.

We were much grieved when news came that Mrs. Poyntz was taken seriously ill, and had sent for her daughter. It seemed like a whirl of trouble. The messenger who came for Alice did not reach Claremont Terrace until after eight in the evening, and before midnight the poor lady had sunk into her last long sleep. We found then that she had been suffering for many months, and that this, the crisis of her disease, had killed her. She was sensible up to the moment of her death; but the power of speech had left her before her daughter reached her bedside.

The trial was awfully sudden. Alice was inconsolable for some time; it was the first great trouble the poor child had ever known; the love between the mother and daughter had been wonderful from its depth and intensity. It was her first trouble, and, alas, destined to be the forerunner of many others.

All the papers and belongings of the dead lady were brought to our house. Amongst other things, I remember seeing a small writing-desk; it was locked fast, and Alice took it up into her bedroom.

"I shall not open that yet, Charlie," she said to me as she did so. "I know what it contains. My mother told me once that all my father's letters to her before they were married are there. I shall look them through some day, but not yet."

One day, some four months after this, John went down to Richmond to spend the day with some friends. I came home as usual at seven to dinner. I saw Alice in the drawing-room. I went up to her with some jesting words about my brother, but when she turned round to me and I saw her face, I was almost stunned into silence. It was the same face, but the light and beauty seemed gone from it; the eyes were clouded as with a shadow of a mighty grief; the sweet lips had lost their smiles and were quivering like the lips of a grieving child; the beautiful color that was a charm in itself had departed, and a deadly whiteness was in its place.

"Alice," I cried aghast, "what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Matter!" she replied, with a forced laugh—"there is nothing the matter with me, Charlie. I think I have been asleep this afternoon and have dreamed bad dreams—do I not look as though I had?"

"You look as though you had seen a ghost," I said.

"So I have," she replied, with the same dreary laugh; "and such a dreadful one—or I dreamed so—I cannot tell which."

I felt anxious about her, and wished with all my heart that John was at home. We went down to dinner. I watched her intently. She did not eat, although she pretended to do so in order to avoid attracting my attention. She talked at random, as though her thoughts were far away. I could not make her out. After dinner I wanted her to go to her own room and rest, but she would not leave the room.

"Why should you think I want to be alone?" she said, almost fiercely, and with such a ring of pain in her voice that I could hardly endure to hear her speak.

"I fancied you were tired, Alsie," I said, gently; "but if you prefer it, come to the drawing-room, and we will have one of our cozy conversations, as John calls them."

I drew her favorite chair to the fire—it was a low one; and as she lay back upon the rich crimson velvet, the firelight playing upon her face and her golden hair, I thought I had never seen a woman so lovely. I talked with her for a few minutes on indifferent subjects; then she gradually, and, above all other things, to his pride, and his rigid notions of honor.

"I suppose," she said, "he is one of the Brutus kind—if his own son got into disgrace of any kind, he would disinherit him."

"Yes," I replied, "I have heard him say so over and over again. But what makes you think of him, Alsie?"