

DICK DENISON'S MISTAKE.

"So, you've accepted Dick Denison, Mary?"

"Of course. Did you suppose I would not, auntie?"

Mrs. Morgan put down her sewing, and turned her eyes towards the window with a deep sigh.

"Well, yes," she replied, thoughtfully. "I can't say but I did; yes, I'm sorry for it."

Mary glanced up from her embroidery with a deepening flush in her cheeks, and a quick dash in her blue eyes.

"Why, auntie?" she said half indignantly.

Mrs. Morgan considered a moment before she replied; and then her lips trembled, and her kind eyes filled with tears.

"One reason is, I'm unwilling to give you up, child. You've been very dear to me through all the long years we have been together, and I shall miss you sadly; but I'm not selfish enough to think only of my own happiness—my fears are for you, Mary. I'm in doubt whether Dick Denison will make you happy."

Mary's tears had gushed out freely at her aunt's first words; but they dried on the instant at this implied doubt of her lover, and she interposed eagerly.

"What fault do you find in him, aunt? He's temperate, and industrious, and good-hearted."

"But he's jealous, Mary?"

The girl blushed, and dropped her eyes for a moment in evident confusion; then she said, with an effort:

"But he'll get over that; he won't be jealous after—after—"

"After you are married you mean?" added her aunt, kindly. "I don't know about that child; marriage doesn't change a man's nature—and Dick Denison is very jealous and exacting. I've noticed it ever since he's been visiting here; but more particularly last night. He was on thorns while you were singing for young Lathrop, and hadn't self-possession enough to conceal his feelings."

Mary smiled, glancing down at the diamond betrothal ring that encircled her finger.

"Well," she continued, "it is done past recall now; and I believe I'm half glad that Dick loves me well enough to be jealous. You know I like to be loved a great deal, auntie."

"Yes; and I know you deserve to be; but calm, reasonable affection, the perfect love that casteth out fear, is better than hot-headed jealousy, Mary. But as you say it is done past recall now; and I won't cloud your first sunshine by my misgivings. Dick's a good fellow and loves you with his whole soul, and I trust you will make each other very happy. But just here, my dear, allow me to give you a word of advice, and then we'll drop the subject forever. Knowing your husband's one failing, as you do, never trifle with it; be discreet, prudish even, rather than his suspicions. Above all, never give you to out his acquaintance."

Mary flushed a little, and bridled her neck, showing plainly enough that no metal was there; but the moment she answered meekly:

"I mind what you say, auntie. As Lathrop, he and I parted for good last night, and now I mean to do my best to Dick happily. I promised him as last night when he put this ring on me—and I'll keep my word. A ring, isn't it, auntie?" she added, up the flashing diamond with pride; "there was only another one in the city—and old Squire Darrough bought it for Carrie. This cost Dick pretty sum, I know."

"Yes, more than he can afford to expend for such a trifle," replied Mrs. Morgan, gravely. "He would have been wiser if he had bought a plain ring, and saved his money to set up housekeeping with."

"Yes, I know; but he said he meant to be extravagant for that one time," broke in the girl, eagerly; "and he did it to please me, because he knows I love beautiful things so. Don't blame him, auntie."

"Oh! I've no thought of blaming him; and if I had it would be all the same to you," laughed her aunt, as she arose and left the room.

Mary bent her lips, and kissed the great, lustrous diamond; and then went on busily with her embroidery. She had need of it in a few months—for just before Christmas she and Dick were married; and went to housekeeping as cozily and happily as a pair of robins in a little vine-wreathed cottage, on the suburbs of the city.

For twelve months their happiness was perfect. Dick was a model of all husbands, and Mary a pattern for all wives; and the baby—for, of course, so complete a household was not without its baby—was just the sweetest, rosiest, dearest little cherub that ever gladdened a mother's heart. Dick was content to his heart's core, yet his old failing was strong within him. His wife saw it, when they went out spending evenings together, and her fresh beauty chanced to call forth some little admiration; but it caused her no trouble, on the contrary she liked to see the great fellow sit glooming on her, with his fierce brows lowered, and an expression in his face which said as plain as words, "that handsome little woman's my wife, let any man look at her if he dares."

This self-made woman, being as discreet as she was handsome, managed her cards so skillfully, and conducted herself with such marked delicacy, that her jealous lord had never been able to find a solitary flaw in her character; and a twelve-month went by and the honey-moon was not on the wane.

Another of Dick's peculiar characteristics was love of dress and display. It was this weakness, or whatever we may term it, that led him to purchase the diamond betrothal ring; and which, on more occasions than one, had left him a light purse, and an uneasy consciousness of having committed an unpardonable folly. In this respect his wife was just the opposite; although her love of beauty and completeness amounted to a passion, she never suffered it to lead her out of the path laid down by prudence and economy.

"No, Dick, no; I don't need a new silk this season," she urged, as they were overlooking their wardrobe one fine spring afternoon; "I shall have this lavender silk turned, you see; and my black one's as good as new. I don't need one, really; we must be economical now, you know, since we've got baby to provide for."

"Ay, ay, wife; if you're content, I am," sighed Dick, strolling from the room, and down the street.

But his face belied his words—he was

not content; at every step he was thinking of the pretty hat, with its long, drooping plumes, he had bought for Mary, and how shabby her old silk would look beneath it; and grumbling in his heart because of his poverty. Presently he was passing Stewart's window, and chancing to glance in, a very marvel of loveliness caught his eye—a silk, blue as the bosom of a May sky, and lustrous as light itself. He fancied Mary wearing it, with her curls down, and her blue eyes all aglow, and his heart fairly stood still. He stepped in, and the obliging clerk had it before him in an instant.

"Just see, sir, it will stand alone; and such a color—only one more in the market like it, and that went off today. Shall I fold it up, sir?"

"But the price?" faltered Dick; "what of that?"

"Oh, a mere trifle! Only a hundred and fifty, trimmings and all."

Dick's eyes dilated, but he was not the man to back out of a thing when once in; so he bought the silk, and went home without a dollar in his pocket. Mary unfolded it with eager hands, and when she caught sight of its beaming luster, she screamed, and laughed, and clapped her hands like a child; and then fell to kissing and hugging her husband till the great, silly fellow was ready to cry for joy. But the instant his back was turned her face sobered.

"Oh!" she burst out, "poor, good Dick; what does make him so foolish? I shan't wear it half a dozen times this season, as little as I go out—and to think of the money, oh, dear! We shall be ruined, unless I can devise some plan of retrenchment; here's nurse's hire, and the coal-bill—both due, and not a cent. Oh, dear!"

But the dress was made up, and trimmed very elaborately, in obedience to Dick's fancy; and on the coming Sabbath evening Mary was to wear it to church. On Tuesday afternoon Dick sat at the open window of his room in the City Bank, in which he and Lawrence Lathrop were brother clerks. It was warm and sunny—the air sweet with the odor of roses and lilies; and leaning on his elbow, with the slanting sun-rays falling round his head, the young husband fell into a dream of the past, and the happy days of his courtship. Then his eyes grew soft and almost tearful, as his thoughts came back to the busy, happy, little wife and cooing babe that awaited him at home. He glanced up quickly at the western sun, impatient for its release; and just then a figure passing below attracted his attention. He started, looked more closely, and then flushed to his temples. Mary's figure—Mary's new hat with its sweeping plumes, and Mary's blue silk dress. He recognized the very trimming on the skirt; and he could have sworn to the golden hue and graceful droop of her waterfall. But what was Mary out for, and in her new frock, too? She had said she wouldn't wear it until he could accompany her. He felt hurt that she had forgotten her promise. But at that moment she came opposite the bank and paused. She meant to call for him—that was why she had worn the new dress. He started up, and hastened down to join her; but at the door he found young Lathrop ahead of him. His first impulse was to rush past him and overtake his wife, who had started on again at a loitering pace; but a second thought struck him, and that thought was a suspicion, born of an old, jealous wound that had once rankled in his heart. He drew back in the shadow of the open door and watched them. He saw his wife move on for a square or two, then pause again; and then Lathrop hastened on, joined her, and the two passed from his sight. What in God's name did it mean? He went back to his desk with a restless pain at his heart. We will do him the justice to say that he suspected no ill; but he was puzzled beyond endurance. What right had his wife to be walking with this man—her old admirer and suitor? An hour or so went by, and then Lathrop returned. Dick rose up from his blotted book and confronted him as he passed through the hall.

"Will you tell me what your business was with the lady you joined a few moments ago?" he asked, in a civil but constrained voice.

The young man eyed him for an instant in cool amazement, which gave way to a flush of passion.

"I'll teach you how to meddle into that which don't concern you if you don't stand out of my way," he replied, hotly, as he passed on to his own room.

Dick snatched up his hat and made a rush for home. On the very threshold he changed his mind, and determined, instead of being frank and honest with his wife, to say nothing of what had happened, but to wait and watch for results. She met him in the passage, flushed and breathless, as if from a walk; but she put out both her hands to welcome him as usual, and held up her lips for his kiss. He took her hands, but did not kiss her.

"You look tired, Mary," he said, carelessly. "Have you been out?"

"Only a little way," she replied evasively, "but don't stand here—come in and see baby."

He held her hands, looking straight into her eyes.

"First, Mary, tell me where you've been," he said, sternly.

She flushed painfully, and her lips began to quiver.

"Don't ask me now, Dick," she implored; "you shall know all soon—only trust me a little."

He dropped her hands, and turned from her with a cold, hard face.

"You're a fool for your pains, sir!" screamed a poll-parrot, from its cage near by—giving expression to a phrase that some person had taught it.

Mary went into her own room, and, catching up her baby, burst into tears.

"What can be the matter with Dick?" she sobbed; "I never saw him look so before. I must tell him everything, I suppose—and then he'll put an end to it all. Oh, dear! it is too bad."

At supper, when Mary met her husband again, she wore her brightest smile, and strove by all her arts to amuse and please him. But he was gloomy and silent—pleaded a headache—went to bed early, and left the following morning without bidding her good by. Mary was deeply hurt, and her pride was touched besides.

Wednesday afternoon came, and Dick Denison, scarcely looking like himself—so deeply had the suspicions of a single night told on him—took a seat by the window, and set himself to watch for the blue silk dress; not much expecting that it would appear, however. They wouldn't have the audacity to meet again so soon, he said. But in course of a few moments he saw Lathrop go out; and, yielding to an impulse wholly unworthy

of his manhood, he stole down and followed him.

Only a few squares, and on the corner of a quiet street, there was the veritable blue silk dress, the plumed hat, and golden waterfall. The sight seemed to turn his very brain to fire; and he rushed after them like a madman. But striking into some by-street, they eluded him; and an hour after he returned to the bank, dripping with perspiration, and half beside himself with baffled rage. In the hall adjoining his room, he encountered Lathrop.

"Stop, sir!" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, seizing him by the arm.

The young man faced him with a look of genuine alarm; he had begun to believe that Dick Denison had in truth gone mad.

"For God's sake, Denison," he began, "what has possessed you?"

But Denison did not heed him; his eyes, wide and wild with horror, were fixed upon a ring that glittered on Lathrop's finger. Releasing his arm, he grasped his hand with a grip like steel.

"What's this?" he gasped, his face white and haggard, "my wife's ring—I'd swear to it amongst a thousand—and on your hand, sir. Your life shall pay for this insult; your life—do you hear?"

Lathrop, fully believing himself in the hands of a man bereft of reason, suppressed the angry retort that rose to his lips; and wrenching his hand free, beat a precipitate retreat to his own room, closing and locking the door after him. Poor Dick fairly foamed with rage.

"You sneaking, cowardly villain!" he shouted, "I'll make you pay for this!"

Then seizing his hat, he rushed down to the street, and toward his own cottage. His wife met him at the doorway, in her prettiest dress, her face all smiles and good humor. She had wisely determined to bear him no malice for his unmanly moroseness the evening before; but her first glance at his face made her quake with terror.

"Oh, Dick!" she cried, clasping him in her arms, "what has happened—what's the matter?"

He threw her from him with a suppressed oath, and then his passion found vent in a terrible outburst of accusations and reproaches. She heard them all, standing before him as white and still as sculptured marble. When he had finished, she said, quietly, but with a steel-like gleam in her blue eyes:

"And you believe all this, Richard Denison?"

"Yes, and more," was the savage retort.

"Very well; I shall not trouble myself to change your opinion."

She was turning from him; but he seized her hand, and drew her back.

"You dare not even deny it," he went on, his voice hoarse with mad rage. "You turn from me without a word of explanation. Great God! that I should come to this—to call a woman my wife who does not scruple to take her betrothal ring from her finger and bestow it on another man!"

"This false, sir, and you know it," his wife replied, startled out of her lady-like calmness.

"Prove it so, and I'll acknowledge myself a fool and a liar," he cried, impetuously. "The ring is gone from your finger—where is it? Produce it, and I'm satisfied."

A quick flush rose to Mary's cheek, and she darted past him and into her own chamber; but returned a moment or two after with a white, frightened face.

"I did put it there, Dick," she said, forgetting everything else but the loss of the ring; "but it is gone—I can't find it nowhere."

He laughed in her face, a bitter, taunting laugh.

"I thought as much. Didn't I see it on his finger, with my own eyes? Don't try to deceive me—your game's up. I'm your dupe no longer. Get out of my sight; I hope never to look upon your false face again. I have loved you well, but my hate is stronger than my love. Away out of my sight, before I forget you are a woman and I a man."

Mary obeyed him without a word; and fifteen minutes afterwards she was on her way to her aunt's, with her babe clasped convulsively to her bosom. Dick Denison went into his own room, and took down his silver-mounted revolver, and after examining it carefully, to assure himself that it was in good shooting trim, he left his desolate home, and bent his steps in the direction of Lawrence Lathrop's lodgings. His face had a strange wild look, and his eyes wore the baleful glare of sheet lightning. But Mr. Lathrop was not at home, the porter said; he took the evening train for Boston. Dick ground his teeth with angry disappointment.

Then he went into a restaurant and calling for half a pint of brandy, swallowed it at a single draught; after which he soon forgot all his troubles in a drunken sleep. The morning found him weak and pale, with a terrible misery in his head, but feeling grimly resolute. He would never take back his wife; and as soon as he had settled accounts with Lathrop, he was off to the continent. Accordingly, he wrote an advertisement for the sale of all his property at auction, and having deposited it with the daily paper, he spent the remainder of the day hanging around the bank, in hopes that Lathrop might return. But he did not; and the evening closed in cold and rainy. Guided more by the force of habit than anything else, the miserable man sought his own home; but he found it dark and desolate. No pleasant lights, no loving face to welcome him. He entered his wife's room with a heavy step. There stood the baby's crib and Mary's work-basket and her slippers pushed beneath a chair—a thousand little things called up her image before him. For the first he felt the true sense of all he had lost; and throwing himself into a chair, strong man as he was, he shook and sobbed like a very child.

"You're a fool for your pains, sir!" screamed the parrot from his cage.

"I know I am," poor Dick responded; "but I can't help it."

Then remembering that the bird was his wife's, and a great pet, his heart being softened, he took pity on it.

"You're hungry, no doubt, poor fellow!" he said; and making his way to the pantry, he succeeded in finding a handful of crackers.

"Here, poor poll!" he said, "I'll feed you for your mistress' sake, though she's broke my heart."

The bird pecked at his hand voraciously, and something dislodged from the wires of the cage fell to his feet with a sharp tingle. He stooped and picked it up, and a hot flush of shame burned to

his very finger-tips. It was the diamond betrothal ring—the self-same one he had accused his wife of giving to young Lathrop. He stood like one bewildered, holding the gleaming thing in his hand, and at the same instant there came an impatient ring at the door. He tottered out, and stood face to face with Lawrence Lathrop.

"I believed you to be a madman yesterday, Dick Denison," he began; "I know you to be something worse to-day. I am here, at your wife's request, to make an explanation, sorely enough against my will, sir. I was summoned to her aunt's home immediately on my return to-night, and from her own lips I heard of the infamous charges you had brought against her."

"The lady who met me at the door of the City Bank, on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons was Miss Carrie Darwin. She chanced to wear a silk dress, bought at Stewart's, from the same pattern as your wife's; she also owns a diamond ring, the counterpart of your wife's. She and myself—Miss Darwin, I mean—are betrothed, and have exchanged rings. I still wear hers upon my finger—do you see?"

"Yes, yes, I see," gasped poor Dick.

"Then, sir, one thing more, and I'm done. Your wife—a true, tender woman, worthy of a better husband—had been out, as you perceived, on one of those afternoons; but she hesitated about telling you where. Hear the reason. She had been giving music lessons secretly, for a week or so, to help you along, as she said, because you had expended so much for that fatal blue dress; but she feared to let you know, lest you should object to it. Now, sir, you are satisfied—are you convinced that you are not a man, but a fool and brute?"

"Yes, I'm convinced," the poor fellow replied, creeping back to the desolate sitting room.

The rain beat against the windows, and the wind whistled mournfully; and the pain at his heart became intolerable, as he sat there, pondering over the bitter work of his own folly. She would never come back to him again, and from henceforth life would be a curse.

The best thing he could do would be to take the revolver, with which he had intended to shoot young Lathrop, and blow his own brains out.

But he must see her first, and beg her to forgive him, that very night, no matter how bitterly she reproached him. He was starting to his feet, but the opening of an outer door arrested him; and the next instant a tremulous hand touched his shoulder. He looked up. There she stood at his side, with her babe in her arms.

"Dick," she said, her eyes filling with tears, "I've come back to you again."

He went down on his knees at her feet.

"I've found the ring, Mary," he gasped, holding it up.

"Oh! where? How did you find it?" snatching it from him, with a glad cry.

"In the parrot's cage—he must have stolen it; but Mary, can you ever forgive me?"

She kissed the ring, and put it on her finger.

"Yes, that was the way," she said. "Poll was out that day, and roamed all over the house—he stole it, from the window where I laid it."

"But, Mary," urged poor Dick, still on his knees, "you haven't answered me yet. I've been a fool—can you ever forgive me?"

"Yes, Dick," she replied, at last, dropping a soft kiss on his brow. "I shouldn't have come back if I hadn't meant to do that. Come, get up now, and take baby; and don't you ever doubt again."

Dick obeyed very meekly; and all the while the wicked parrot screamed maliciously:

"You're a fool for your pains, sir!"

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The Modern Farmer.

Most young men in choosing a life business would rather select an occupation which requires only a little physical effort. That is one reason why young men from the country overcrowd the cities. For a clerkship which enables them to wear fine clothes and see the glare of city life they leave a good home and more comforts than they can positively compass by the meagre salary for which they work, provided, always, that they are so fortunate as to secure a situation.

On looking at the variety and perfection of life-saving farm machinery it seems to me only about half needs to be done by hard hand labor which was necessary 25 or 30 years ago. To a person who can appreciate and therefore value and admire the various plows, harrows, potato diggers, threshing machines, with a band-cutter and feeding attachment, or a fanning mill, which separates oats from spring wheat; a self-binding reaper, a straw-stacker, a hay tedder, a hay loader and pitcher, and the thousand and one labor-saving machines; including corn planters and corn cultivators, seeders of all sorts for wheat, oats, grass and flax-seeds, etc., it would be but little hard work was left to be done by hand. Old men from other walks of life on seeing all these implements are heard to exclaim: "Oh! that I were a young man now, with 80 or 100 acres of land; how I would like to farm it! I tell you my tools would not rot out in the fields where last used; my granary and cribs should show even last year's grains and corn; my barns and stacks should burst out with hay, fodder and comfort for my family and live stock. The best I raised would not be too good for us."—St. Louis Republic.

A Woman's Way.

"Marie," he cried in desperation, "I shall wait no longer! Either you must consent to become my wife or end this farce. Your repeated delays are killing me."

"Very well, Hubert," she answered, calmly, "if you take that ground, there is but one alternative for me."

She drew off the diamond ring which sparkled on her finger and handed it to him.

He took it sadly and bitterly exclaimed: "Oh, false, cruel girl, to thus carelessly trample upon a heart whose every throb is for you alone? For this bauble I have no further use. Let it perish, as I hope may also the love of which it was an emblem."

His hand was raised to throw the ring into the grate, but she grasped it quickly.

"I merely wished to say, Hubert, that I would like you to have the wedding ring made just a trifle smaller than this."

She—"George?"

He—"Yes, dearest?"

She—"It is just 10 o'clock and as papa says you must not stay longer than 12 don't you think it is about time to begin saying good night?"—Up-to-date.