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'LADY ALICE.'

Continued.

He was beside Alice in an instant; then, as his ears heard her muttered feverish words, his eyes saw her flushed face and wild gaze, he sank beside the bed, and burst into tears.

Unconscious that the man she loved was so near, poor Alice murmured on incessantly. Then Roy heard all that she had suffered. She moaned to be free of the horrible dark man—for aid to escape the fear and horror that surrounded her.

A confused stream of words bubbled from her lips, and as he bent over her and tried to draw her into his arms, she shrank from him with a stifled shriek that went through him like a pang.

He heard nothing but her childish pleadings—the unburdening of all that her young heart had borne. The struggle that was going on below did not reach him; even vengeance itself was lost as he knelt beside this girl, delicious—ill unto death, perchance—and prayed that she might be spared to him—the woman he loved.

As Roy had disappeared up the stairs Geoffrey Armistead gave a signal to the two policemen. They pushed aside the landlady, a villainous-looking old woman and in another instant were in the dirty beer-stained coffee-room.

Jura was sitting with his back towards them reading, the diamonds close to his hand, when a sudden exclamation from another man in the room caused him to turn round.

With a muttered oath he started to his feet, and put his hand into his pocket for the revolver; but the men were too quick for him, and though he hit at them and struggled violently, they overcame him, and Count Jura, Alice's enemy, stood at last in the hands of the law.

"What is this?" said Geoffrey Armistead, coolly lifting up the cloak and looking at the case containing the diamonds. "Ah, the jewels, of course! Now my men, off with him to the police-court. He is a dangerous customer—has committed murder to-day!"

"Curse you!" muttered Jura fiercely, white as a sheet. "Who are you? What right have you to say anything to me. I'll have the law of you for this."

"You are a clever man, Geoffrey answered with a laugh, but the game is up. Count Jura: your companions are at this moment closely guarded prisoners at Darrell Castle; you will join them very soon in the dock. Away with him!"

So like the felon he was Myra's destroyer—villain, murderer—Count Jura—was dragged off to the fate he deserved while above lay the girl whose brain through his devilish cruelty, was mad with fever, whose frail young body was sinking beneath the weight of fear and anguish she had born these last few days.

CHAPTER XX.

The autumn sun was tinging the landscape with its red glow. It penetrated into the seclusion of a bedroom, and lingered on the wondrous masses of golden hair that crowned the head of a lovely girl standing in passive attitude by the window. It was Alice—frail, white and delicate.

As yet she scarcely comprehended all that had happened.

A dim mist of dreams was in her mind, mingling pain, horror, and fear with the sense of comfort and peace she felt now. She had been ill for one month—ill unto death, but she knew nothing of it

neither did she know one of the loving faces that hung over her sick bed, praying fervently for her life.

Now she was able to stand, to move about slowly, and try to recall her scattered and bewildered thoughts.

She was awakened from her present dream by the entrance of Davis.

"'Lo, my lady, have you been standing all this time? It's too much," Davis exclaimed sympathisingly.

"I feel better—stronger, Davis," Alice answered with a faint smile; "but I am trying to think of all that has happened, and it is so difficult—so difficult."

"What's the use in thinking, my lady? You'll only tire yourself out. Here, let me push the chair to the window, and—there! her ladyship wants to see you."

"Here ladyship wants to see me!" repeated Alice vaguely.

"The earl's mother. She has nursed you all the time, my lady—"

"And she is going to nurse you some more weeks yet," spoke a voice at the door, and Roy's mother came in.

Then a sort of mist cleared away from Alice's mind—she seemed to see and know all that this gentle white-haired woman had suffered and done for her.

She rose feebly and stretched out her hands, and Lady Darrell drew the slender form to her heart.

"Rest there, my daughter," she said tenderly; my poor little darling!"

Then, still clasping her in her arms, the older woman moved to the chair, and placed Alice in it.

"You are stronger to-day," she said—'strong enough, I think, to hear all I have to say?"

"Tell me quickly—is anything wrong—is there more trouble?" Alice's pale cheeks flushed.

"No more trouble, dear. I trust nothing but happiness. See, I am going to sit beside you, and chat a while. Davis, you may go, but don't be far away. I shall ring for you presently."

Alice gazed at Lady Darrell's face most anxiously.

"Now, my dear child, I will tell you all. First let all fear and dread pass from your mind. The man who did you so great a wrong is separated from your path forever. The murder of that poor girl and your own sufferings have been avenged."

"She died, then?" breathed Alice faintly. "And she was so good to me."

"I was with her when she died, and I hope and think her end was peace. She had been cruelly treated, but her nature was pure through it all. We will not wish her back again, for life, as she found it, had been very bitter."

Lady Darrell paused an instant.

"When you were found delirious in the inn, at first they feared to move you, but after a while the doctors opined that your recovery would be more certain if brought into purer air, so we moved you here, my child. This is a farm a few miles out of town, which, I dare say, you cannot remember."

"No," answered Alice; "it is like a hideous dream."

"Ah, well, it is gone! And now, dear, let us go back further. Do you remember when I asked you once if you could recall nothing of your childhood, you said you had a faint recollection of a sweet face?"

"Yes—yes."

"That face was your mother's. Let me finish my surprise at once. You are the child of Fulke and Margaret Durant; your parents are dead; but your grandfather, Sir Humphrey Durant, is outside this door, waiting to clasp you to his heart."

Alice rose to her feet, her face white even to the lips.

"My grandfather?" she repeated. "But Aunt Martha—"

"Was no relation. Sir Humphrey is your dead father's father. You are the dearest creature in the world to him. I will call him."

Lady Darrell moved across to the door, and Alice saw a tall stately man enter, whose dark eyes beamed with love, whose trembling hands were outstretched to catch hers.

"My child—my poor boy's child—found at last!"

Sir Humphrey pressed the girl to his heart, tears in his eyes.

Let me look at you, my flower—my star—come to brighten my old life. Merciful powers! How like—"

"She resembles poor Fulke?" Lady Darrell asked gently.

"More; she is the living image of my precious wife—Fulke's mother. See, you knew the Arnolds well? Is not that the Arnold's face?"

Alice looked up, and she remembered Lord Radine's words to her that miserable day of the ride to the Abbey.

She bent her fresh lips to Sir Humphrey's hand and kissed it.

"I have known no father or mother till now," she murmured. "I will love you as both."

Then, as the old man kissed her fondly she turned to the earl's mother.

"And now you must rest awhile," Lady Darrell said affectionately.

"Wait an instant," broke in Sir Humphrey. "My darling is there no one else you would like to see?"

A wave of color dyed Alice's lovely face; she drew herself away and turned to the window.

"There is no one who would care to see me," she replied.

Sir Humphrey and Lady Darrell exchanged glances, and in answer to a sign he made, the lady went slowly from the room.

"Well, my darling," Sir Humphrey said tenderly, "I will leave you now. When you are rested I will come back, and then you shall hear how a Mr. Meredith helped us to find you, and how many friends you have that you know nothing of."

Alice kissed him, and he left her sitting in her chair, feeling strangely happy and proud in the knowledge of her illustrious birth and new-found relative, yet with a sense of heaviness and depression that she could not push aside.

Presently Davis came in while she was sitting thus.

"You know all, my lady," she said lightly. "Ah, what did I always say? I knew

you were a born countess. Why, it is quite a romance."

"Some of it was a painful romance, Davis," Alice said slowly. "Yet how strange it all seems! A year ago a farm help, ill-treated and alone. Now a countess with—"

Her voice died, the memory of her husband came with startling clearness, and with it the thought that she lived and was the barrier to his happiness with Valerie.

She lay languidly back in her chair, looking sadly out of the window while Davis chattered on.

"You will soon be able to leave here and go back to the Castle, my lady."

Alice shuddered.

"I cannot go back there yet," she said in low tones.

Davis made no answer. She went to the door.

Lady Darrell was beckoning her out. She slipped away, and some one entered the room softly.

"No, Davis," Alice went on slowly; "I cannot even think of the Castle yet. Davis," she asked suddenly, keeping her face well turned away, "did—the earl ever ask for me when I was ill?"

No answer.

Alice gave a deep sigh.

"Never mind, Davis; don't think of my stupid questions. I was only—I—"

She covered her face with her hands, and someone bent over her and took them gently away, kissing them passionately at the same time.

Alice started, grew crimson, then white as death.

Beside her on the ground knelt the very man of whom she spoke—the earl—her love—her husband.

"Did I ever ask for you, my darling?" Roy said tenderly, a flush on his handsome face, a love-light in his eyes. He still grasped her slender hands in his.

"You have not known, you have not seen me near you night and day. I have never left you, Alice—my wife! I have prayed that you might recover, if only to say you knew me, and that you forgave me. Before you utter another word, say that, Alice—you forgive me!"

She drew back a little.

"I have nothing to forgive you," she said faintly. "You were right. I was then so much beneath you—a farm girl—and I separated you from—from her."

"Listen, sweet, I beg—listen. Remember the night before you were torn away. Did not my eyes speak plainly then? Could you not guess what my heart felt? Ah, Alice, you did know. Then, my darling, I knew nothing of your birth. It was you I loved, and I love now. Were you forty times a farm-girl, I must love you the same. You are my very life! Say you love me!"

Alice's heart thrilled, her hands, held in his trembled, her voice was faint.

"Love you!" she murmured. "I have loved you from the moment I saw you—it was that love that nearly broke my heart."

"My darling!" said the earl passionately, drawing her head to his shoulder, and pressing his lips to hers. "My own—my very own wife!"

Six months passed.

Dorrell Castle is alive with people; it is the home-coming of the earl and his beautiful young countess.

Sir Humphrey Durant and the dowager Lady Darrell stand together in the wide entrance to welcome their children.

Behind stretch a line of servants, Davis with her face crimson in her excitement at once again seeing her beloved mistress.

Roy had taken no one with them who could remind her of what she endured. New scenes, new faces, and love, he determined should work away all traces from her young mind, so Davis had been left behind.

A group of guests were assembled, among whom were Frank Meredith and Geoffrey Armistead, whose friendship now the earl held as part of his dearest possessions.

A glimpse of outsiders was seen; the tenants in the grounds set up a cheer; it was caught up by the servants, and with shouts and acclamations of happiness Alice, Countess of Darrell, returned to her husband's home, and amid all the hand-clapping, the tender words, the genuine affection, gratitude and love for the being who had lavished all the good and treasures of life upon her during the last six months stood first.

When all was over, the guests gone, and the Castle silent, Alice put her head on Roy's shoulder, and kissed his hand, as he said tenderly:

"All has gone off well, my darling, yet without all this could you love me, as I love you, with no pomp, no grandeur, no riches—simply for myself?"

"I could," whispered Alice. "I do. Our life, Roy, shall, please God, be ever happy—not by riches, titles, or grandeur, but through simple never-dying love!"

And while peace and love came to the girl who had suffered, the one who had plotted against her honor, her soul, lived in darkness for evermore.

Foa when the mangled body of Paul was found on the ground beneath the balcony, from which he had fallen, and Valerie, who had recovered from her swoon, beheld all that remained of her erring brother, the full realization of all it meant to her—disgrace and ruin—was too much for her overwrought and scheming brain.

The frail cord that held reason to its throne snapped, and with a piercing shriek Valerie again lapsed into insensibility.

But this time, when her eyes opened up to the light, they bore the look of hopeless insanity.

Victors to the celebrated establishment of Dr.—for the mentally afflicted, stand and gaze in piteous admiration at the regally beautiful woman, who never speaks, but with dead white face searches—the ground for the fallen form of her brother, and turns with tigers force to spring on the person who interrupts.

Sometimes she is visited by a handsome man and a fair lovely girl, but she knows them not, and they wend their

way sorrowfully from her till they lose recollections of her wretched life in their own happiness.

THE END.

KATE VALLIANT,

With -- the -- Circus!

CHAPTER I.

KATE VALLIANT.

"I wish you'd go up to town with me for a week or ten days, Kate?"

"Town! London now, in the last of the hunting days?"

Kate had right and reason on her side in being surprised at her brother's proposition. Here was he, one of the most steadily enthusiastic hunting men in West Somersetshire, proposing a visit of ten days to London, at the beginning of the Dale Bridge week.

Mr. Wyndham half laughed; it seemed absurd diffidence on his part, even in his own eyes, that he should hesitate about telling his little sister Kate, his junior by ten years, the real reason of his desire to visit London at this inopportune season.

"As you say, dear London, now, even in the last hunting days, is the bourn I'm longing for. Will you come with me? I want you."

"Then, yes, Phil."

"That's a good girl; that's a darling; now one thing more; can you start by the twelve up train?"

"If you like, Phil."

"That's right; I thought I could rely on you not to raise mole hills."

"Shall I take my habit?"

"No, you won't have any riding."

His sister looked at him keenly for a moment, and there was a question on her tongue, but she would not let it pass her lips.

"Dear old Phil!" she said affectionately instead. "I'll be ready, and glad to go Phil then?"

She whirled herself out of the room with rapidity as she finished her well-meant, but mendacious speech. And the brother recognised the struggle there had been in the girl's heart, before she had brought herself to say those words. For the Dale Bridge week was Kate's Carnival and she had been looking forward to it this year with a fuller, sweeter sense of what it might bring to her than she had ever known before.

"Jolly little thing she is," her brother thought admiringly; "this affair mustn't make any difference to her, the darling; and I'll take care too that she shall have enough to pay her mess when Charley Glanville carries her off."

It was rather a bitter draught to have offered for her acceptance, this sudden departure for London on the eve of the Dale Bridge week. Kate was a thorough country girl, though she had borne the brunt of two short London seasons under the auspices of Mrs. Laurence Wyndham, her aunt. And now when all the pleasures of her delightful country life were about to culminate for the season in the 'meet' at Dale Bridge of several packs of hounds she was to be taken up to London—to she knew not where! for she knew not why!

However, she went cheerfully, for to Philip her brother she owed all the joys of her life. He had given her the mare 'Nell Gwynn,' which was so well and homely known in many a hunting field both in Somerset and Devon. He was the friend of, and had been the means of her knowing Charlie Glanville. He was the kindest, most generous, least exacting of guardians. And last and highest of all his claims, he was the best and dearest brother in the world!

Since she, a little child of ten, had been left to his care by her dying mother, the girl could never remember the request he had refused, or the opportunity of shewing kindness and affection for her which he had omitted to take. Perhaps some of his kindness had been injudicious, as for instance when at sixteen she had besought Philip to consider her education complete, and to remove her from the unbecomingly restraint of school, to the beautiful liberty of life at Hasseton Place. It was admitted that he may have been a trifle injudicious in according to this request! But he never could bring himself to believe that he had been so when he saw how thoroughly happy the girl was, and how heartily and cleverly she took up her responsibilities, as mistress and hostess at Hasseton.

Kate was not a Wyndham. She was only the half sister of the young man who had devoted the whole of his grown-up life to her pleasure and well-being. His father had died when Philip was a baby, and his mother after eight or nine years of most contented widowhood had suddenly discovered that life would be unbearable unless she could pass it in the society of a Mr. Valliant, whose presence Philip had always thought extremely undesirable in their home. However the boy was too young to remonstrate with words of either censure or warning. He could only cry, and revolt at all Mr. Valliant's efforts to win him. Whereupon that gentleman, who was a philosopher in his way, taught the mother that her boy's dislike to him was a thing of no importance in itself, inasmuch as it could never have an evil or even adverse effect upon either her or him, and further, that it was merely the unreasoning outcry of an undisciplined nature, against one whom it felt would discipline it for its good.

Mrs. Wyndham disregarded her lover's crying fits and believed her little boy who shortly became her husband and persuaded her to send Philip to a private tutor, whose charges were as heavy as the education he imparted was light.

This tutor was another Mr. Valliant, an elder brother of the man who had married Mrs. Wyndham. He was a careless, good natured, extravagant, clever, amusing citizen of the world, who made the best and the most of everything for him, self under all circumstances, and regarded all those from whom he could extract anything as his lawful and rightful tributaries.

He extracted a fair income through

Philip from Mrs. Valliant for the desultory education he gave and for the unqualified indulgence and kindness he extended to her son for six years. Then Philip, though he was happy enough physically with his amiably unconscientious tutor, mentally revolted at the playful system of education towards himself which that tutor pursued. After combating his mother's disinclination to run counter to the wishes of her husband successfully and getting her consent to his (Philip's) going to one of the universities, he had to meet and overcome his stepfather. In this contest of wills greatly to that stepfather's surprise, his own brother, Philip's tutor, joined issue with the lad, honestly and openly avowing that he was not doing and never had done justice to his pupil. Finally Philip carried his point. But he never distinguished himself at Cambridge, save as the stroke of his year.

During Philip's frequent visits to Hasseton place—the house that was his own though he allowed his mother's husband to lord it there as master during his mother's life—the young fellow who had had but little love lavished upon himself, poured his own out ungrudgingly upon his little sister Kate.

From her babyhood Kate Valliant had bewitched all those who were about her, not by any unearthly or superlative beauty, but by a brave self-assertion, combined with a winning, affectionate, loyal power of self-abnegation, that was very fascinating.

At five she was a frolicking lump of mischief; at twelve she played cricket, rode barebacked ponies, waded through rivers in hot pursuit of the retreating otter, climbed trees, and was as ready to use her fists in furtherance of her own rights, as a plucky boy.

At eighteen, the age at which she is introduced to you, her hazel hair and eyes, brightened with a gleam of gold when the light fell on the former or caught the latter, her graceful, erect, and not too slender figure, the matchless freedom and ease with which she walked the earth, or swayed in the saddle, the atmosphere of sunny joyousness which her intense vitality created about her, the delight she took in making things as pleasant as possible for all around her, all these combined to make good her claim to the title given her by her brother "our bonnie Kate."

Mr. Valliant had cheerfully surrendered the charge and maintenance of his daughter on his wife's death to his stepson Philip Wyndham. He had ruled so long and so absolutely at Hasseton Place as master, that the majority thought he behaved very nicely, some even went so far as to say, very nobly, in giving up the reins to Philip Wyndham. As for Philip himself, he said no words, and thought few thoughts on the subject.

"You'll stay here as long as you like, and you won't take Kate away, will you?" he said to his stepfather on the day of his mother's funeral.

"I find I require a warmer climate than this, and as under Providence, your dear mother has left me sufficient to satisfy my few wants under a bluer sky and a warmer sun, I shall probably make my home in some sequestered nook in the Riviera," Mr. Valliant said softly, waving his hands gently and deprecatingly.

"But Kate! how about Kate?" Philip asked tremulously, a horrible vision of Kate growing up in the sequestered shades of Monte Carlo, looming before him.

Mr. Valliant shook his head dolefully.

"Your poor dear mother has utterly forgotten to provide for Kate," he said dolefully.

"That's of no consequence. I shall always provide for Kate," Philip answered ardently. "My mother knew that—don't think she was careless of my sister."

Continued on first page.

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