

Boards

AUTUMN.

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attention concentrated upon the singular scene before her.

The bride looked wretched, not happy, as she should do; the friends seen dazed and miserable.

As they stopped before the altar-railing the rector turned from one to another as if to say, "I am glad that you are here."

The groom for a moment released his iron grip upon the bride's hand, and he pulled at the folds of her dress.

As they stepped before the altar-railing the rector turned from one to another as if to say, "I am glad that you are here."

The bride and groom had made his appearance. The Earl of Derwentwater, and the bride's natural guardian and protector, was not present.

When he came to that solemn charge, "if any here present know anything of these two should not be made one, let them now speak, or forever hold their peace."

For several moments after the bridegroom had passed, the bride's eyes were fixed upon the spot where she had stood.

"I feel as if I had been crushed. But oh, how must that bride feel! And poor Miss Fairbairn, did she not seem to heat, she was leaning forward, her whole attention concentrated upon the singular scene before her."

Such were some of the whispered ejaculations that followed the entrance of the wedding party, who had just been pronounced the meaning of the strange scene enacted before them.

And those words were echoed, repeated, and repeated during that no day, and for many days, and there was no one able to solve the mystery.

CHAPTER II.

A PARTIAL RESOLUTION.

In order to interpret our first chapter, we must take a backward glance, and describe a few thrilling events that took place during the space of a few days immediately preceding the wedding just described.

Upon a balcony just outside a brilliantly lighted room in a stately mansion, there might have been seen, one lovely moonlight night, a pair of lovers in earnest conversation.

"Only three days more, my Pearl, and then I need 'hope' no longer, for you will be mine for so long as we both shall live. Dearest, I can never tell you of all the bright plans that I have for you and our future. The prospect fairly dazzles me sometimes, to think that I have won so fair a bride, and to know that her heart is all my own. Pearl, my darling, do you realize it? Are you glad that you are to be my wife?"

"I am extremely sorry, dear, that you have conceived this dislike for me," Richard Byrnhelm said, with a deep sigh, "but for my sake, try and conceal your feelings. It will only be for a few days, and then we shall have nothing to mar our happiness."

"I will try, Richard. Forgive me if I have wounded you; but the feeling has been so strong upon me that I could not control it," the fair girl said, repenting of what she had told him.

"And will you allow him to attend you to the concert to-morrow? I have already asked him to escort you," Pearl's heart sank at that request, and she grew pale as she listened.

"Yes—if you wish it," she said. "Thank you; I do, as long as it has been mentioned. And now good-night, sweet. I hope by tomorrow all your gloomy fears and presentiments will have disappeared."

Richard Byrnhelm bent down and pressed a fond caress upon her lips, with a sigh that was almost a sob, Pearl threw her arms around his neck and returned it passionately.

"What can trouble her so?" he asked himself, as with anxious brow, he sprang lightly over the low railing of the balcony and turned towards his own home. He had never seen her composure so disturbed over anything.

At the end of twenty-four hours, however, he again made his appearance in the room, proceeding to his own chamber, where he locked himself in, and neither threats nor entreaties from teacher or pupil availed to make him open the door which he had evidently been fighting with himself.

Richard had plenty of money, and spent it freely, and his new friend found himself in "high clover." The lad admired the grave, dignified student. His vanity was touched, to be thus noticed by a scholar in the upper form, and from that time forth he was his model par excellence, and there was nothing under the sun too good for him.

Richard was unusually capable for his years, and the ambitious desire seized him to go ahead of his own class, and gain admittance to the form of which his friend was a member.

His natural ability, his untiring application, together with the assistance which he received from Cheatham, won the day, and at the beginning of the second year he was promoted to the upper form.

The praises he received from his instructors, fired him anew, and he determined he would stand second to none. He dared to have a contest with his friend—he dared to contend with one who could bear no such thing as defeat.

It would be impossible to describe the tumult of feelings which raged in the heart of the conquered hero, or the expression of blank amazement and rage upon his face, when the verdict of the examining committee was rendered.

"Byrnhelm won the prize! I didn't even know he was trying for it," he was heard to mutter, as he passed his hand over his perfectly colorless face.

For a moment it seemed as if a very demon of hate and bitterness possessed him. His teeth were locked together like a vise, his hands clenched until the nails were purple, and his eyes perfectly frightful in their expression.

Richard Byrnhelm gratefully took the proffered hand, believing the reconciliation complete, and voted his friend the "noblest fellow alive," never dreaming that behind those apparently careless words there lurked a meaning which only the ranker hatred could conceive.

To all appearance, the friendship which this event had threatened to destroy was renewed, and prolonged until the young men finished their course, and each had gone their own way. Excepting the time that Adison Cheatham had assisted Richard to procure his commission, they had not met since then until now.

Richard had written his friend concerning his engagement as soon as it occurred—a year previous to the opening of our story, and had received in reply the customary congratulations and good wishes.

WHAT AILS YOU?

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WATERBURY'S

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