

## DESMOND'S LOVE.

## CHAPTER I.

Romilly Desmond was unconsciously angry when he heard that his mother had asked Vera Pallis to Desmond Chase.

As a rule he did not mind in the least whom she asked, and was glad that she should amuse herself, and fill the house with young people, as long as she left him in his own suite of rooms in the left wing to chew the cud of his bitter fancies.

He had not in the smallest degree objected to Miss Darnell, a fat, fair, handsome girl of eight-and-twenty, spending a year in his house, though she did invade the sacred privacy of his own particular den on the smallest pretext in the world, and sometimes with no pretext whatever; but then he saw through her, and knew quite well why she decked her comely person in magnificent attire, pink satin and pearls, blue satin and diamonds, mauve silk and amethysts, and sailed about his rooms like an empress, or a vessel, or an albatross, or anything else big, handsome, portly.

Neither did he object to Miss Richmond, a little, fair-haired, dove-eyed thing, who tried to win his heart and affections by quiet, gentle, white-mouse-like attentions, that afforded him a certain amount of amusement, though he would have preferred to have been left in lonely solitude.

Now with Miss Pallis it was totally different. She was a beauty, and the fashion, had been photographed by nearly every photographer in London, in every attitude and costume, wore gowns manufactured by Worth, and boots by Leconte, and gloves by Jouvin, bonnets by Louise, and lingerie by White; was asked to every fashionable gathering of the season, made much of by great personages, adored by lesser individuals, and thoroughly spoiled as course, he concluded, never having seen her.

Mrs. Desmond had met her at the City of the Seven Hills that autumn, when staying there with her second son, Clarence, and being fascinated, like all the rest of the world, had invited her to the Chase, an invitation which she at once accepted without the smallest hesitation, knowing that there was some strange story, some mystery about her master, and that only a favored few ever went within its portals, and also because she was an orphan, and lonely, despite the brilliant life she led, and all the homage she received, and Mrs. Desmond's beautiful motherly face, with its frame of silvery hair, made her yearn to see more of her, and make her true friend if she could, for acquaintances were many with her, friends woefully few.

And so she was coming, and the Chase was in a state of ferment and flurry. Old brocades, and damasks, and tapestries were being brought out and hung up; all the silver cups and goblets won by horses from the Desmond stables were polished and rubbed, and decorated the oaken sideboard in the old paneled dining-room, where the massive plate of the family shone in its golden glory, and great sea pieces in heavy dusky frames hung; and the armor in the entrance hall was all taken down, polished, and put up again, with whips, and spurs, tigers' heads, foxes' brushes, owls, herons, and other trophies of sport gained by dead and bygone Desmonds; while the little boudoir designed for the lovely guest was hung with flowered blue silk, threaded with silver; leopard and tiger skins were thrown about on chairs and sofas, rare Turkish mats covered the polished floor, statues and china decorated the brackets and cabinets, and a grand piano in a magnificent inlaid case took up one corner.

Romilly did not object to his mother doing all this, only he grew rather weary of hearing the stranger's praises endlessly sung by the well-loved lips, and angry when his young handsome brother went into raptures over her beauty and grace.

He was not naturally churlish, only his whole life had been spoiled and ruined by a woman, one young and fair—a beauty like Miss Pallis.

Desmond loved Leonora Cargill with all the passionate fervor of his young heart. He simply adored her, and was ready to do anything, no matter how extravagant, dangerous, or risky, at her bidding.

It was doubtful if she returned his love. She was vain and ambitious, and saw in him a means of gaining position, and those luxuries for which she longed.

Of love, true, deep, devoted, she knew nothing, and she used her power over her lover in a cruel tyrannical manner.

Everyone else saw her defects—the sad blemishes in her character; he alone was blind to them, and went on worshipping her in an insensate fashion.

This suited the vain beauty well, and she never lost an opportunity of showing the power she possessed over her lion-like handsome lover.

And handsome he was, with his dark eyes, raven hair, straight features, and splendid figure—broad, tall, muscular, yet graceful and lithe.

A lucky girl her friends called her, but she would only laugh and toss her dusky head, and say she might marry a duke if she chose.

Still in a way she was proud of him—proud that she a little helpless thing, should be able to order and control a great grand creature like Romilly.

He never refused a request of hers—never showed annoyance when she issued

her imperious commands; and one unhappy day when they were walking on the cliffs together, and she ordered him to go and get her a spray of the glowing rosan berries growing perilously near the edge, he went to obtain them without a word, though for the first time a doubt of her crossed his mind.

Could she care for him to send him for such a trifle, where he might lose his life? Still, he cast the thought aside. She was his promised bride; in a month's time they would be man and wife. And he went on cautiously, hung over the face of the cliff, plucked the berries, and then—there was a crash, the ground gave way beneath his weight, and he was precipitated on to the sand and rocks below.

Unfortunately he was not killed, for death would have been more acceptable to a man like Romilly Desmond than the misfortune that befell him.

One hip was injured, the limb withered, and he was a hopeless cripple.

But worse than this was in store for him; the woman—the faithless, heartless woman who had been the cause of the mischief, declined to marry him when she found he would lose the use of his leg, and married in less than three months an earl, old, ugly, but very rich.

So ended Romilly's love-dream, and the awakening was bitter enough.

He could not realize then that he was better without such a woman—that she would never have made him happy; his pain and wounded pride was too great.

She was a gorgeous blossom without fragrance, a lovely statue without a soul; her feet would have stayed at the threshold of his heart, she could never have found her way into its utmost recesses, and many girls who would have been humbly thankful for his love, maimed as he was, who would have followed him into the jaws of death, wondered if she could be a woman to thus desert him in his hour of need and trial.

For fifteen years he had been almost like a dead man; he shut himself up in his room, refusing to see anyone save his mother and brother.

To them he yielded up the management of his vast estates, and left them to do just as they pleased about the house.

Occasionally at dusk he would descend to a side-entrance, laboriously mount into his phaeton, and drive away for two or three hours, or longer, sometimes not returning before midnight.

These nocturnal drives, taken quite alone, somewhat alarmed his mother; yet she did not say one word, as it was his only pleasure save music.

He generally spent a portion of each day in the music-room, in which was a splendid organ, and while there no one dared intrude, for the master of Desmond Chase was sensitive, and did not care for wondering eyes to gaze on his deformity.

Of late, his mother had coaxed him down a few times to dinner with them, and she often had young people in the house, hoping some day the child would lift, and he become something like his former self.

Every morning she spent an hour with him, and her gentle care and tact, her depthless love and pity, kept him from cursing all womankind, as he had cause to do.

Of his handsome brother he was secretly a little jealous. He had what he lacked—perfect limbs, perfect beauty, health, and strength. He saw in him what he had been, and groaned in anguish when he reflected what he now was.

For fifteen years debarred from all joy and happiness, the sweets of life turned to gall for him, what wonder that he was morose, suspicious of people's *bona fides*, and bitter and caustic of speech.

The future was a blank to him, no woman would rest on his bosom and bear his name; no children would cluster around his knees, cheering him with their laughter and childish voices, comforting him in his old age; he would be alone—alone!

When he lost his mother—and she was well stricken in years; he could not hope to have her with him long—his sheet-anchor, his only hope in the world, would be gone.

"Well, my dear boy, how are you this morning?" she asked one bright December day as she entered his room, which always struck her as so dismal and funereal, with its purple velvet hanging and ebony furniture.

"Much the same as usual, mother, thanks," he returned, rising from the easy chair in which he was reclining, and kissing her soft cheeks fondly.

"Much the same!" she repeated, shaking her head sadly; "when will you give me a different answer—the answer I hope daily to hear, and long for so much?"

"I fear never," he said gently.

"Do not say that, my boy," she implored piteously, tears glistening in her bright brown eyes.

"It is no use trying to deceive you, mother, buoying you up with false hopes. I shall never be again as I was. This," touching the withered limb, "can never be made whole again, neither can my broken spirit, my broken heart—if there be such a thing," he added in a lower tone.

"Don't—don't!" she repeated, raising her clasped hands.

"I must, dear mother mine."

"You can't tell; you may recover a great deal of your lost happiness, your lost enjoyment of life."

"How?"

"By trying hard to forget your misfortune."

"I cannot forget that I am not like other men," he returned, a deep look of melancholy on his handsome face.

"You might if you would only give yourself the opportunity of doing so."

"Mother, how can you think that I could?" he asked bitterly.

"By mixing once more with your fellows, by coming among us again and resuming some of your old habits and employments."

"There are not many I could resume."

"I think there are."

"Hardly. I could not ride to hounds."

"You might drive to the meets."

"Like a timid woman."

"You might resume the superintendence and direction of your estates."

"What could I do? What more than you and Clarence?"

"You are master; the tenants, and peasants, and most people would rather see you—you face—for five minutes, than they would ours for a whole day."

"You imagine that, I think, my partial mother."

"No, my dear, I don't. Chalmers told me so. He says they would all be so pleased if you would go round with him and let them see your face once again."

"I am afraid I would be a long time getting round; I could not stride out now beside him as I used. Why we would visit Trewelwyn and Polwhistle, chat with the quartermen and overseers, see that all was going on well, and get back in time for dinner, walking all the while."

"You might drive, Romilly."

"Hardly. Some of the places near the quarries are rather rough for a phaeton."

"Nevertheless you might go a good way and Clarence, of course, would go too, and walk on when you could not manage it."

"And a pretty object I would cut beside him with my dot and carry one."

"You know you bear favorable comparison with your brother."

"He has perfect limbs."

"And you have a perfect face. You are far the handsomer man of the two."

"You flatter me, wishing to save my wounded spirit."

"No, my child; I speak the honest truth."

"Dear mother, you are partial," stroking her hand gently.

"Not too partial," she objected, caressing his dark silky locks as he knelt before her. And oh, how I wish you could see things with my eyes, and try and come among us once more!"

"I cannot see with your eyes, dearest; only with my own."

"With your own you take a distorted, unreal view of things."

"Perhaps so; still I cannot help it."

"You might. You brood over things, shut up here, leading this solitary wretched life. Cast aside this pride, for it is pride that keeps you from us, come down to dinner each night, listen to the music in the conservatory, hear the ringing laughter of the young folk, and you will forget half your misery."

"Not so; the sight of youth and happiness would only make the burden press heavier."

"You have not tried; you cannot tell. I have little Blanche Richmond staying with me now. Vera Pallis comes to-morrow, and some other young folk. Make the essay. Their society would cheer you up."

"They would laugh at me."

"Oh, no, no; Vera is gentleness and pity itself."

"I want no one's pity," he rejoined almost roughly. "And Miss Pallis is no more than a professional beauty. Fashionable, worldly, painted probably, heartless certainly. I want none such to enter into the dreariness of my life."

"You wrong her," said Mrs. Desmond. "I hardly think so."

"I know you do. She is sweet and true—a good woman, and her society could not fail to make you or anyone else better and nobler."

"Indeed!" with a slight sarcastic inflection in his voice. "Still, you see, I am far from ambitious of making her acquaintance, now or at any future time."

"I see that, and regret it most bitterly," returned his mother.

"Don't trouble to do that, *ma mere*; she is not worth it."

"She is indeed, if you would only believe it," expostulated her champion tearfully.

"There, there, mother, don't cry," said her son, kissing her tenderly. "You are my dearest and best."

"Thank Heaven for that; still, others might do you more good than I can."

"Never think that. Your gentle love and kindness have prevented me from hating and cursing all womankind."

"My dear boy, reflect! You judge of all women by one."

"Can you blame me for that?" he demanded, looking at her earnestly.

"No," she acknowledged with a little reluctant gesture of her white hands. "I cannot blame you, nor wonder at what you say, when I remember how badly—nay, how infamously she treated you. But others are different."

"Miss Pallis?" he suggested with a little bitter laugh.

"Yes, certainly," returned Mrs. Desmond stoutly. "She is as different from Leonora Cargill as night is from day."

"I am glad to hear it, as you intend to make a close companion of her."

"I wish you would consent to know

D. G. SCOTT,

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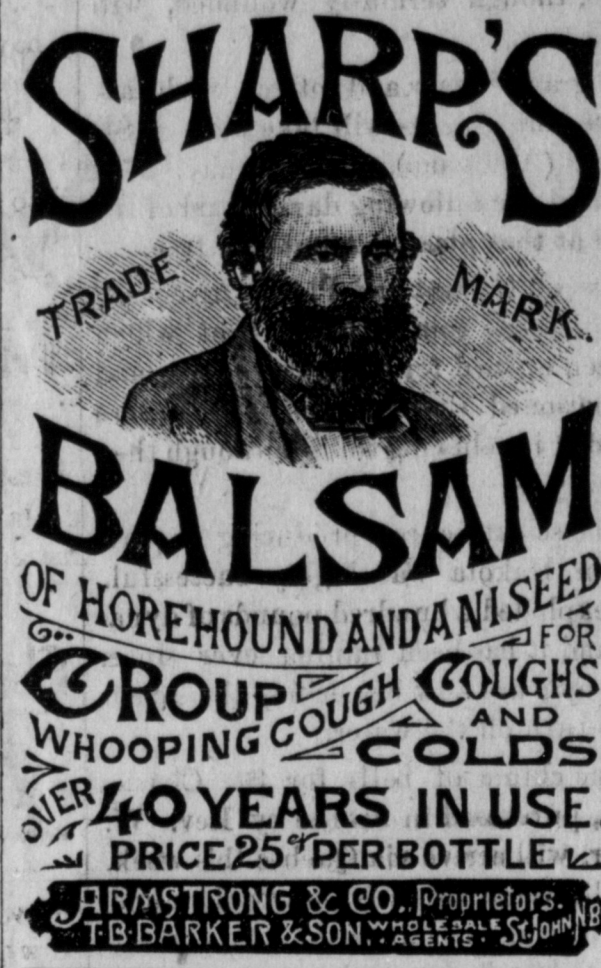
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Whereas, John Stevenson of Richibucto in the County of Kent, Crown Land Surveyor, and William Hudson of the same place, merchant, executors of the last will and testament of John Stevenson, late of Richibucto, aforesaid, deceased, have prayed that their accounts of the administration of the estate of the said John Stevenson, deceased, should be proved and allowed and that all parties interested in said estate should be cited to appear to attend the passing and allowing thereof.

You are therefore required to cite the heirs and all parties interested in the estate of the said John Stevenson, deceased, to appear before me at a Court of Probate to be held at Richibucto, in and for said county on Tuesday, the 30th day of June next at 11 o'clock in the forenoon at the office of the Registrar of Probate for said county for the purpose of passing and allowing the said accounts.

Given under my hand and the seal of the said Court this 23rd day of May, A.D. 1891.

HENRY H. JAMES,

Judge of Probate of Kent Co.

C. RICHARDSON,

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