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away, or until you bid me go, I shall consider myself your guest."

Madoline gazed rather disconsolately on the comfortless surroundings, and then her glance rested again on the handsome haggard features of the man she was sheltering, she knew not from what danger.

"I am afraid you find me a neglectful hostess," she said, wishing the while she could gain refuge for him beneath her father's roof. "Already you must be fainting for want of food, and I have not yet thought how I am to bring you anything. I will go now, the sooner to return, and in the meantime you must lie down and give that poor arm a rest."

A slow flush stole over the pallor of his cheeks.

"I feel that I am exacting too much from you," he muttered, conscious of his obligation to her; "I—who cannot even reveal to you my name."

"You know mine—that is enough," she answered lightly. "I shall remember you, not as a stranger, but as one to whom I have promised my truest friendship."

The next moment she had disappeared through the low arched doorway, and he heard her spring lightly down the ladder and hurry away.

"She is an angel," he thought, a great softness coming over his face. "So pure, so trusting? Since I have seen her, the world does not seem so full of bitterness. It is strange that to this girl I should owe so much—a grand staff on which to rely—and yet her very faith in me must be my strength."

He managed to drag himself to one of the windows; the breeze blew refreshingly on his face, and his gaze rested thirstily on the sunlit track along which Madoline was hurrying.

Could he but move with such freedom—could he but leave this prison, and step boldly forth in the open country!

"It was an unlucky accident," he muttered looking fiercely down at his helpless arm; "unless my plan of concealment succeeds it may cost me more than my life!"

CHAPTER II.

Madoline went towards her home with a new responsibility upon her, and she did not notice the sunshine that brightened the gold of her hair, nor the new-born flowers budding beneath her feet.

The stranger's darkaching eyes haunted her; she could not get them out of her mind, and she felt as much sorrow at leaving him thus, as though the brief half hour of their acquaintance had influenced all the past years of her young life.

"I do not know what his secret is, nor will I seek to discover it," she mused, as she pressed forward with bent head, and lips pressed resolutely together. "I am certain that whatever his reason for concealment, he is not to blame, and none but a good motive keeps him silent."

It was not unnatural that such thoughts should come to Madoline. Had it been some wretched tramp who in an hour of distress had claimed her pity, she would as willingly have gone on this errand; but apart from his dependence upon her, she felt a separate and deeper interest in the stranger, whose voice was at once so full of gentleness and bitterness, and she knew he did not belong to the common order of men.

She had walked more than a mile across fields before she reached the farm.

At the gate she paused, and looked back at the mill with a soft smile in her eyes.

"Fate sent me there to-day," she thought, repeating to herself the words she had uttered to him. "Poor fellow! What a night of agony he must have passed, and I all the time so unconscious."

She hurried through the dairy into the kitchen, and astonished the busy cook by going over to where the shining pots were steaming on the stove, and lifting the lids one by one.

"What have you here, Martha?" she asked, almost breathless from her long walk and the excitement of the moment. "Soup! That will do. I must have a big cup of it. Yes; and some cold chicken and new-laid eggs."

"Dinner will be ready in half an hour, Miss Madoline," the woman said, her voice expressing considerable surprise. "Don't you think you may spoil your appetite?"

"My appetite! Oh, I do not want the things for myself—that is not to eat now." She stopped suddenly, confused. Had she not nearly betrayed herself—betrayed the man who could not tell her how much depended on her secrecy?

Martha noticed the change in the girl's manner, and smiled meaningly.

"I know what Miss Madoline wants," she said with a good-natured shake of the head; "it's for some poor cottager again. I can't say what the sick folks would do without you, to be sure. There, I'll get a parcel packed nicely for you, and one of the boys can carry it whenever it is required."

"I would rather take it myself," Madoline answered in a faint voice; "the fact is—I do not wish anyone to know where I am going with it—especially I do not wish my journey known to my father nor to Aunt Esther."

It cost Madoline an effort to say this much, but there was such a great earnestness in her manner that Martha was more than willing to fall in with the girl's plans.

"She's helping some of the poacher's people," the woman thought coming to

the only conclusion that seemed to call for concealment. "Mr. Clyde is so determined in his anger against them, that they have to be very near starving before he gave them a crust of bread."

Aloud she said:

"Depend upon it I'll not say a word about it. I'm the last one to stand in the way of your good actions; and when poor people are in distress, it's not the time to visit their sins upon them."

Madoline was embarrassed to decide how far this speech applied to the present need, but not feeling herself free to make a confidante of Martha, she did not reason out the thought, and contented herself with having so far succeeded.

"I am in a great hurry, Martha," she said wistfully; "you will put the things together quickly, will you not?"

"Never fear," the woman replied, busying herself already with her task, and Madoline, feeling that her presence might delay the preparations, hurried to her own room, and searched out some strips of old linen—fitter bandages, she thought, than the slender handkerchief with which she had bound the stranger's arm.

When she returned to the kitchen, she found the basket neatly packed, and with an earnest "Thank you" to Martha, she took it gratefully, and once more hurried out into the sunshine.

This time she did not cross the fields to the mill; she was afraid she might be seen on the way by somebody she knew, and be forced to give some account as to her journey.

Madoline wished to avoid all questions to which she dared not give a direct reply; and with this aim in view she took a narrow path, skirting the woods, and reached her destination unseen.

She found the stranger much as she had left him, and again she was alarmed by his ghastly appearance.

"I believe this place will kill him," she thought, the old fear returning to her. "Poor fellow! I wish he would let me tell about him."

The stranger greeted her with a wan smile.

"You have kept your promise," he said rising painfully and moving towards her. "I pray Heaven I may be able to repay you for your kindness to me some day!"

"Did you not expect me?" she asked, a little reproachful, lest he had not put full faith in her.

"Indeed, yes," he answered gravely. "If I tell the truth, I must confess I did think you would come back; but why you should I cannot understand, for one of whom you know nothing."

She laughed softly as she lifted the snowy *serviette* from the basket and offered him the cup of soup she had brought hot from the fire.

"Why does it seem wonderful?" she asked, glad to see how gratefully he emptied the cup. "Would you not have done as much for me?"

"That would be a different matter altogether. What man would see you in peril and not risk his life, if need be, to save you? But for myself, what claim have I on such compassion?"

"The same. Besides, do you not think it is a pleasure to be able to do something useful for one in trouble? I have wasted so many hours, so many days, doing nothing, helping nobody; now I feel that I am living for some good, and as long as I can help you, I shall be happier than when I had no care in the world."

Her words moved him strangely. She was close beside him, and looking at her with his deep gaze, he took her hand, and touched it almost reverently with his lips.

It was a kiss of loyalty, of homage, such as he might have given his queen, and there was a courtliness in his bearing that was not lost upon Madoline.

"My good angel—my Maid of the Mill," he answered, the depth of his soul expressed in a few words; "you are to me like a pure fountain springing up out of a scorched desert—a star shining out of a night full of bitter tempest. You have given me hope and strength. I feel now that it is worth fighting to live."

Madoline scarcely comprehended all he meant. She had befriended him in a time of need, and he was grateful. This was the one conclusion she drew from his manner, and she was content to have it so.

That her soft winning ways had aroused any deeper emotion in his breast did not occur to her; and yet when she left him, some of the half wondering tenderness—such as Marguerite's voice had called to the heart of Faust, governed his thoughts, and he reflected that if men ever loved at first sight, it must be for the sake of such innocent purity as shone in the eyes of the girl who had lightened the dark prisoned hours from which he could not escape.

Madoline returned to the farm, without her mission having been discovered, and although, for the rest of the day, she was silent and preoccupied, no one suspected anything unusual had transpired to take her thoughts from her home, and she was left to dream, uninterrupted, over her secret.

It was not until late in the evening that she had any cause for immediate alarm.

In spite of the sunshine that had made the day so warm, the air grew chilly towards night, and a cheery fire burned in the large handsomely-furnished sitting-room, inviting the inmates to gather round the hearth for a cosy chat.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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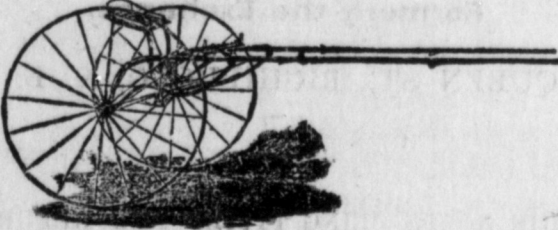
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 New Assurance Written in 1890, 175,284 169
 Premium Income in 1890, 25,257 223
 Interest and Other Income, 5,085 743
 Total Income, 30,343 288
 Payments to Policy holders, 11,842 858

Assets, 107,150 309
 Liabilities (4 per cent.), 84,229 235
 Surplus, \$22,921 074

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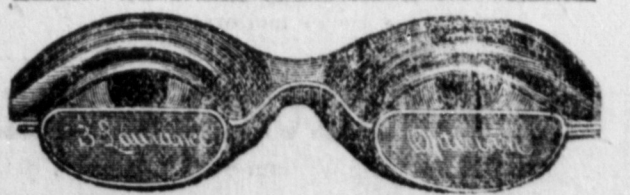
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