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the accusation dragging it down, my first thought will bring me back to your side. I shall come to ask what service I can render you—to offer you a life's devotion, a life's love. Maybe you will have forgotten me; maybe you will not heed my presence; maybe another will have won my beautiful dove. But I shall return to bless you for the tenderness you have showed when fate pressed hardest against me."

He gazed down at her yearningly. In the growing shadows the slender form, clad in spotless white, looked almost ethereal—her clasped hands and golden head showing faint against the old beams, that formed a sort of weird background to her drooping face.

She did not meet his glance. The delicate lids, with their dark fringes, hid the deep blue wells trembling beneath, and his heart gave a little throb as he saw tears stealing down her pale cheeks.

He bent down and laid his hand softly on her bent head, while her name lingered on his lips:

"Madeline!"

The touch, the voice, sent a thrill through her veins. She did not raise her face, but with a heavy sigh she clasped his other hand, and drew it down to her bosom.

"You speak of coming back," she murmured with passionate intensity—"of sharing your life with mine, when the world shall have learned to honor you—when you bring back an unsullied name—the name you still keep secret from me! Do you think those things could buy you my love—could make your soul truer to my senses? You do not know. With your past a mystery, comprehending nothing of the horrible suspicion that seems to be crushing you like the weight of an undesired curse, feeling nothing but the power and truth of your manhood—I would be content to follow you to the end of the world—to be your comfort, your solace through all trials, even if the worst you fear should overtake you!"

His hand trembled in her clasp; he felt the hot tears falling upon it, and for some seconds he could not trust himself to speak.

This unselfish devotion—this compassionate love, how keenly it touched him! Would her heart have gone out as closely to him had he been free from danger—had no iron hand of justice been raised against him?

He smoothed the bright hair away from her brow, and laid his hand gently over her eyes to stay her tears.

"Don't make me feel I am leaving my sorrow with you," he said brokenly. "That would be my greatest punishment, to know I had cast a cloud on your young life. Put your own happiness before mine, Madeline. I am a stranger whom you have saved, perhaps from death. Unless I can return to you in a different light, let me only seem to you like one you have seen in a long dream."

"And if you should not come back?" she asked, lifting her eyes to his face.

"Then you will know it was for your sake I kept away—for your sake I did not reveal my name. Whatever happens, Madeline," he added with deep earnestness, "whatever happens concerning me, remember what I say to you now. I am not guilty of wrong towards any man, and while you believe in the truth of my word before Heaven your faith will be given in a just cause."

"I know," she answered, trying to speak bravely; "but it is cruel to think of your wandering about in the homeless, friendless way. If I knew how there is nothing—nothing I would not do to give you happiness."

"My good angel, the time may come when I shall ask you to fulfill those words," he said, his voice thrilling with tenderness. "For the present your task is done. Let me see you smile, dear, before we part; give me your sweet hands, and look into my eyes. There, Madeline, my darling, good-bye, and God bless you for what you have done for me! My heart is so full I can hardly say thank you."

He had drawn her up to his side, holding both her hands; and gazing into her face with an infinite tenderness, he led her towards the doorway.

"Thus we part," he murmured, as she went before him down the uneven steps. "Good-bye, Madeline, my white-souled dove—good-bye!"

Madeline did not speak. At the foot of the ladder she turned and looked at him, a bewildering pain, undefinable to herself, filling her eyes with pathos.

He was following her. His own life seemed nothing compared with the loneliness of that slender form he had sent out into the damp evening mists.

Dusk had deepened into darkness; the country was deserted, and he felt he could walk by her in safety until she was within sight of her home.

"You must not come!" Madeline said, quickly; "you will be seen—my people may even be watching for me, not understanding my long absence. Pray go back—you do not know to what result your carelessness may lead!"

"I cannot let you go alone," he replied fiercely. "It is too late. I should be afraid some harm might overtake you. As to any danger—do not fear for me; the deep shadows will screen me, and if I am seen in this ragged guise," glancing half derisively at his torn dust-stained coat, "I shall only be mistaken for a tramp."

"No—no!" she exclaimed, sinking her

voice almost to a whisper; "they have had warning to watch suspiciously every tramp found on these lands. Do not come, I entreat you—do not come!"

"I have to make my escape some time to-night," he answered, with a touch of recklessness in his tone. "As well now as at any other hour—not even to shelter myself could I let you walk through these dark fields alone. Come, my darling we are losing time."

"But if you should be seen," she murmured, unable to resist the look of almost fierce determination he bent upon her. "Will you not let me dissuade you from this rash impulse?"

"Hush, my sweet girl. What is there to fear? Look round on the desolation—on the black gloom of the trees. What human eye is likely to recognize in us more than two moving shadows? For your sake, perhaps, I had better not keep too close to your side. Pass on, and I will follow at a few yards distance. I shall not rest till I know that I have left you in safety."

Fearing her hesitation should add to his danger, she took a few steps forward, then suddenly shrank back, and seizing her companion's arm dragged him into a thicket, and motioned him to crouch down silently beside her.

There was no need for him to ask her reason for the unexpected movement. They were scarcely screened behind the brambles when steps were heard approaching, and several men's voices broke the solitude of the air.

"Are you sure you are not mistaken?" asked one. "It will be a pity if we are wasting our time on a false chase."

"It's no mistake, sir. I saw somebody in the old mill at dawn to-day—a face fitting by the window. So white it looked, with its black restless eyes, that at first I thought it was a ghost, for there's talk about the place being haunted; but recollecting what we were to be on the watch for, I waited till my senses got cool, and when I saw the face again I knew it was no ghost. You didn't show me the photograph of Ronald Castleton for nothing! I recognised him, and hiding out of sight, kept my eye on the mill till I crept away just now to give you information."

"And you say you saw someone—a young lady—go to the mill not an hour ago?"

"I did, sir. It was Miss Clyde—there's no mistaking her; and it's not the first time, these last few days, I've seen her coming this way, though I thought there was nothing unusual in that, as she's frequently about this spot, and she thinks a rare lot of the old mill—in fact, I've never seen anyone but her ever enter it."

"Judging from what you say she may have mounted the steps in all innocence to-day," the first speaker said; "it was hardly fair not to warn her."

"I thought so at first," the other interrupted; "but, lor! there was no mistaking the way she looked about to see if anyone was watching, nor the way she ran up the steps and disappeared like a flash of lightning! She knew what she was about; and if ever two people were in league, they are without a doubt. And fine and close she's been with her secret; there's not a soul but me has guessed the truth."

"Well," remarked the first voice, "she will have to account for her conduct, and if what you say be a fact, more than one will stand condemned."

"Ay, you're right, sir; it's a serious business to aid a man to escape his country's law."

CHAPTER IV.

The voices passed on, and the muttered words were lost in the heavy thud of the men's feet.

Madeline, during these moments of suspense, had held her breath, an icy chill creeping through her veins, making her shudder convulsively.

Her hand had not yet relaxed its hold on her companion's arm, and now the voices that had so terrified her were no longer distinct to her ears, her trembling grasp tightened, and she turned her pale face slowly to the almost stern one bending over her.

"I have feared this many times," she whispered, her frightened eyes meeting his deep gaze. "You are Ronald Castleton."

He laid his fingers softly on her cold lips as though to drive back the words.

"Hush!" he murmured, dreading now only for her; "your safety rests in ignorance—so that you helped me not knowing my secret, no reproach can be cast on you. Ask me nothing more, nor seek to guess at what I have kept from you. To you I am nameless."

She hid her face in her hands, and quivered as though the cool wind had stricken her with an ague.

"It is true," she said beneath her breath. "You are Ronald Castleton."

"If you think that, why don't you betray me to them?" he asked, half jestingly, half bitterly, hoping with light words to change her thoughts, though his innermost feelings vibrated keenly in his tones.

Madeline shuddered again.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Henry James, a convict serving a five years' sentence at Dorchester for arson, and who escaped in July 1889, was lately arrested in Boston, handed over to the Canadian authorities, and returned to the penitentiary.

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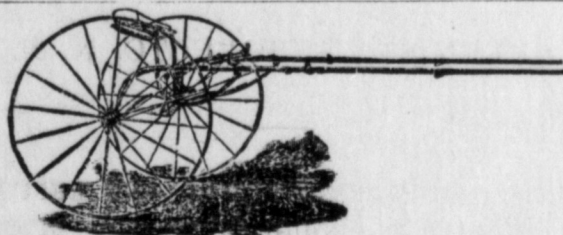
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Premium Income in 1890, 257,523

Interest and Other Income, 5,035,765

Total Income, 30,365,288

Payments to Policy holders, 11,842,868

Assets, 107,150,300

Liabilities (4 per cent.), 84,329,235

Surplus, 22,821,074

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