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He followed her to where she had paused by an open window, and tried to look into her eyes.

"Why do I harp on this one thing?" he repeated in a lower tone. "This is a question you can answer yourself, Madoline. You know I want you to be my wife, and the memory of this man alone stands between us. Can you wonder at my desire to cast this shadow out of your life? I have waited patiently enough, but I cannot go on like this for ever. I must rouse from this dream which makes you as cruel to yourself as you are to me. I must open your eyes to the sacrifice you are making in vain—the sacrifice which will darken all your future and mine."

"It need not be so," she replied, answering the thought of himself. "We are cousins; a stranger would make you a better wife! Leave me to myself, and take another into your heart. I should not rest there content, and I should bring pain and trouble!"

"Bring me what you like," he exclaimed fervently. "So that I have you for my own, what could hurt me? Madoline, surely my love deserves some return; what have I done to be treated with such rigid coolness?"

"What do you not do?" she asked, turning her great eyes full on him. "You make every moment you are near me a torture—sometimes I think you will drive me mad. Since I cannot love you why do you not leave me in peace?"

"You can love me if you will," he urged, won to her the more by that look of pleading on her pale face. "Madoline, I will be your slave, my life shall be one devotion to you; but you shall be my wife."

"I cannot. You must take those words to another."

"What other?" he asked, throwing back his head scornfully. "No, Madoline! A man doesn't so easily give up a hope that has grown with him from boyhood. I have loved you as far back as I can remember, and long ago I promised myself you should be my wife. That promise must be kept, in justice to myself."

"You mock me!" she said with a touch of anger in her pure tones. "You have no right to persecute me with a suit so distasteful to me. Again I tell you, I can never care for you."

This time she gave him no opportunity to reply; moving swiftly from his side, she went from the room, and left him to brood over what he considered her obstinate refusal.

"I can't give her up," he thought, his grey eyes staring almost fiercely at the beds of primroses and hyacinths in the garden beneath the window. "My heart is set on winning her, and if I could only get that fellow out of her head, she'd come to me soon enough. Confound him! I wish to goodness I could show her some proof of his d-ath. Perhaps Uncle Bert will be able to bring her to her senses, if only he wouldn't lose his temper. She mustn't be worried too much about it."

Of late Cuthbert Clyde had been troubled with failing health, and knowing that he suffered from some ailment of the heart, De Courcy shrank from agitating him with fresh details of Madoline's persistent defiance of his wishes.

He was not prepared for the shock near at hand. Hardly had he made up his mind to seek his uncle before he was met by one of the servants, who rushed towards him with wild disregard of all ceremony.

"Oh, sir? Come quick!" she gasped, the tears coursing down her cheeks; "I fear master's dead!"

De Courcy staggered as though he had been shot; and then, pulling his senses together, as it were, followed the woman across the hall to a room where Clyde usually read his morning papers.

The sunlight streamed brightly in through one of the windows, and fell on the outstretched form of Cuthbert Clyde, lying motionless on a couch, one hand helplessly at his side; the other clutched convulsively on his breast.

Lucien gave a quick comprehensive glance at the ghastly face, and then, quick as thought, he snatched a decanter from the sideboard, and pouring some brandy into a glass, forced some between the rigid lips.

"It is only a swoon," he said, addressing Mrs. De Courcy, who was moaning helplessly as she watched his movements. "He will recover directly. Has anybody gone for a doctor?"

"Yes; but he can't get here in less than an hour. What can we do?"

"I have hope; he will be better soon," Lucien replied assuringly. "Give me pillows, so that I can change his position."

They obeyed him; and before long they had the satisfaction of seeing a tremor of life flit over the pallid features, and Cuthbert Clyde slowly recovered consciousness.

The first word he uttered was Madoline's name.

Up to the present moment nobody had missed her presence. Now one of the maids hurried to the room of Clyde's daughter, and told her of the scene that had just taken place.

"Why did no one call me?" Madoline asked as she passed swiftly down the stairway to where her father lay. "I should not have been kept in ignorance of what was going on!"

Lucien met her at the door, and led her up to the sofa.

"I think the danger is over," he mur-

mured, wondering at the chill composure of her pale face. "Fortunately I was at hand to do what was necessary. He is still asking for you."

Without heeding his words, Madoline bent over the prostrate man.

"Dad," she said softly, "I am here. What can I do for you?"

He opened his eyes slowly, and fixed them dimly upon her.

"Become Lucien's wife," he muttered, with a suddenness that sent a cold pang to her heart. "My life is broken up; I may be taken at any moment; and I want Lucien to look after my land—you to have a protector against—against the man who has ruined your happiness. It must be settled; I have made my will so; and the marriage must take place without delay."

He paused, and drew his breath with difficulty.

In his weakened state the effort to connect the syllables had been great, and his breast heaved heavily.

Mrs. De Courcy laid a relentless hand on Madoline's shoulder.

"Make his wish yours," she said in a whisper that seemed to pierce the girl's soul. "Remember his life almost hangs on your answer!"

Clyde did not hear the low spoken words. He had closed his eyes for a few seconds, and when he again met Madoline's gaze some of the old threatening anger was on his face.

"You will obey me, Madoline?" he gasped, struggling for power over his voice. "It may be my last earthly request. Look at me with the answer I want, or leave me and never let me see your face again. Go; and my curse go with you, for you have brought no blessing to me! In life or death I hope we may never meet again."

"Peace—peace, father!" she exclaimed, a sudden flash of color surging into her face. "Rather than your soul shall hold these bitter thoughts, I will do your bidding—I will give my life to Lucien."

Although after that attack Clyde did not regain his full strength, he grew rapidly better, and was able to be present at Madoline's wedding.

Like one in a dream the bride went through the ceremony, and when all was over, and she moved from the altar, with its crown of dead-white lilies, she was hardly conscious that Lucien held her frozen hand—the hand which was bound in a link only to be severed by death.

"She will yet learn to love me," De Courcy repeated to himself over and over again, when the marble pallor of her cheeks made him think of one walking without life. "Poor little Madoline! if she would only forget."

But Madoline could not blot remembrance from her mind; her lips were dead to Lucien, and it seemed that no earthly power could ever rouse her from the stony calm which had come upon her with her first promise to be his wife.

It was harvest-time; the men were busy with their scythes, and the golden sheaves heaped together in the fields promised a rich reward to the toil of past months.

"It's a sight to gladden a man's heart," Clyde said as he and De Courcy watched the swift sweeping down of the ripened wheat. "It is profitable land, and you are to be master of it all."

Lucien sighed.

"It may fill my purse, but it will not fill my heart," he said, gazing on the scene with gloomy eyes. "It will not bring me my wife's love."

"You are too impatient, lad—too impatient. She'll be herself by-and-by—by-and-by."

De Courcy shook his head.

"No," he replied, with the air of a man who touches on his deepest disappointment; "she'll never turn to me. Her life is one silent living reproach; it makes my heart ache to look at her. Sometimes I fancy it could not be sadder to see her lying in her grave."

Clyde frowned, and his hand clenched on the staff supporting his weakened frame.

"Does she still think of him?" he asked bitterly.

"His name has not passed between us," Lucien said, his lips growing a shade paler. "But to-day the papers had news of him. It is proved he did not commit the forgery for which he was condemned. The guilty one has been brought to justice, and Ronald Castleton is a free man."

"Does she know?" Clyae asked.

"It was Madoline who placed the paragraph before me."

For some time neither of them spoke again. A cloud seemed to have fallen over the glory of the harvest, and the sunlight that a few moments ago had gladdened their eyes glared down on them with scorching heat, making the scene one of vague meaningless mockery.

And how was it with Madoline?

The printed works which had revealed so much to her husband and to Cuthbert Clyde proved to her nothing, except that Ronald was living; for had he not told her long ago how falsely the charge had been made against him?

"And this should have been the signal of his return!" she thought as she laid down the paper and went out into the open air. "Ah, pray Heaven he has forgotten! If he should come back now—"

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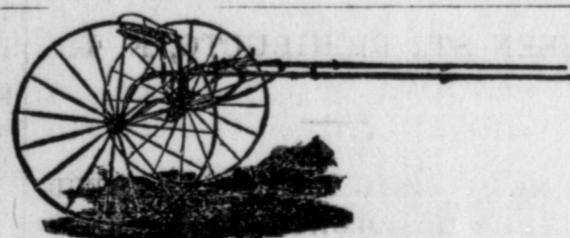
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New Assurance Written in 1889, 175,234,100  
Premium Income in 1889, 25,337,523  
Interest and Other Income, 5,035,765  
Total Income, 30,373,288  
Payments to Policy holders, 11,842,858

Assets, 107,150,309  
Liabilities (4 per cent.) 34,329,255

Surplus, \$22,821,074

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