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Her Promise True.

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. — HUGH GILBERT and Belle Wayland are bidding each other good-bye at Brighton as he is about to sail for India with his regiment. Belle promises to be true and agree to meet him that evening for a final farewell. Upon her return to the hotel, where she and her mother are stopping, she finds that Lord Stanmore, whose brother was the husband of Mrs. Wayland's sister, has arrived and has invited her mother and her to dine with him that evening. Mrs. Wayland goes out to Belle, tells her of the invitation, and leaves Belle to her own devices. Belle is left alone in her room. After dinner Mrs. Wayland discovers that Belle has gone to meet Hugh and is very angry. Mrs. Wayland writes an account of the affair to her sister, Lady Stanmore, and the latter comes immediately to Brighton.

CHAPTER II. — Lady Stanmore comes to Brighton and has an important interview with Mrs. Wayland in which they decide Belle's future. Lady Stanmore reads a letter from Hugh to Belle and tells her plans accordingly. She decides to intercept the letters between the lovers. Lord Stanmore becomes deeply interested in Belle and invites his sister-in-law, Mrs. Wayland, and Belle to spend several weeks at his country residence.

CHAPTER III. — Belle begins a diary in order that she may send an account of each day to her absent lover. CHAPTER IV. — Lady Stanmore thinks over the situation. She decides that Belle is not in love with Hugh. Lord Stanmore, who is in love with Belle, and invites her to visit him at Hurst Hall. He is greatly smitten with Belle. Lady Stanmore opens a letter from Hugh Gilbert to Belle and burns it. CHAPTER V. — Lord Stanmore becomes jealous of Sir Dick. Belle tells Lady Stanmore of her engagement and that Lady Stanmore's idea. They go to Hurst Hall.

CHAPTER VI. — Belle's diary continued. She tells Lady Stanmore of her dream about Hugh. They decide to write Mrs. Balour. CHAPTER VII. — Lady Stanmore destroys a letter Belle has written to Hugh Gilbert. Jack Stanmore confesses his love for Belle to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Wayland falls ill and the story at Redvers court is pronounced. Sir Dick Probyn proposes to Belle and is refused. Lady Stanmore gets a letter from Mrs. Balour, who went to India on the ship with Hugh Gilbert. It contains the starting news of Hugh Gilbert's marriage to Miss Vane. Belle is told the news and is greatly shocked. In taking a morning walk she breaks through the fence.

CHAPTER VIII. — Stanmore rescues Belle from drowning. She takes cold and has a severe illness. A letter arrives from Belle telling her illness and is destroyed by Lady Stanmore. CHAPTER IX. — Belle is convalescing. Stanmore proposes to her and in her anxiety to show Hugh Gilbert that she too has forgotten her, she accepts the offer. Stanmore and his sister-in-law arrange matters and Belle acquiesces. The marriage is arranged for an early day.

CHAPTER X. — The wedding. Lady Stanmore writes to her friend in Bombay and tells her of the marriage and specially requests that the news be told Hugh Gilbert whom she represents as a friend only of Belle's. CHAPTER XI. — The Ice Woman. Lord and Lady Stanmore return to Redvers Court. Belle is not happy and Stanmore feels that she is not learned to love him. Sir Dick and Lady Probyn call upon them and invite them to dine at Hurst.

CHAPTER XII. — PLAYING WITH FIRE. Sir Dick grows more in love with Lord Stanmore's wife which causes his mother much uneasiness. Lord Stanmore also notices the young man's infatuation and warns Belle against encouraging him. They dine at Hurst and Belle is presented to Mr. Trevelyan the vicar and Sir Dick's old tutor, and his daughter Amy who has known and loved Sir Probyn from his boyhood as they have grown up together but who only regards Amy with a sisterly affection.

CHAPTER XIII. — Sir Dick offers a diamond pendant to Belle but it is refused; she tells him that his confession of love must end a pleasant friendship and he goes home in despair. He decides that life is not worth living and attempts to shoot himself but his mother who had feared something and had followed him screams when she sees what he is about to do and the bullet goes through his cheek. Lord Stanmore believes Belle is to blame for encouraging Sir Dick and reads her a lecture which she resents.

CHAPTER XIV. — An forgotten face. Lord and Lady Stanmore have an understanding and are better friends. She tells him all about her interview with Sir Dick. The Stanmores get an invitation to a ball at Marchmont Court. They go and there Belle and Hugh Gilbert meet. After the shock has somewhat died away she requires for his wife and learns that he has never been married. CHAPTER XV. — The lost letters. Belle and Captain Gilbert have mutual explanations in which Lady Stanmore's treachery is revealed. Lord Stanmore is introduced to Gilbert and asks him to dine with them the following day. Belle accuses her aunt of destroying her letters and the latter acknowledges her guilt but nothing of the situation is told to Stanmore who receives Captain Gilbert very kindly and invites him to Scotland for the shooting season and at the latter's request the latter consents to go.

CHAPTER XVI. — Gilbert hears of Belle's accident on the lake and of Stanmore's appearance on the scene in time to save her life and the result. CHAPTER XVII. — The whole party go to Strathearn and are charmed with its beauty. A row on the lake and the result. The Marchmonts furnish their own shooting box and invite Gilbert to join them. He is inclined to do so as he does not feel at ease at Strathearn, but he and Belle discuss the matter and she requests him to stay for a few days more.

CHAPTER XVIII. — A stray shot. Gilbert is wounded by a shot from Mr. Marchmont's gun. Belle hears the news and almost betrays her love for Gilbert. A doctor and nurse are summoned from London and the wound is pronounced not dangerous. CHAPTER XIX. — An old friend. Belle makes many anxious enquiries about Gilbert and sends him a rose by Jim Marchmont. Lady Stanmore receives a letter from Mr. Marchmont who is expected in a day or two to stay at their new shooting box, in which she tells her that Mrs. Seymour is coming to stay with them at Glenwarth. She tells Belle and wishes her to go away with her during Mrs. Seymour's stay but Belle declines.

CHAPTER XX. — Mrs. Seymour. Lady Stanmore leaves Strathearn after first telling Lord Stanmore of Mrs. Seymour's expected arrival. The latter comes to Scotland and Belle meets her. Gilbert makes his first appearance downstairs since the accident and is received by Belle. He is still very weak and faints away while listening to Belle's tale. CHAPTER XXI. — A new fear. Stanmore and Sir John Lee discuss the Marchmonts who have called and persuaded Belle to accompany them to a picnic. Gilbert continues to improve and goes daily to Belle's boudoir for a cup of tea.

CHAPTER XXII. — A spray of heather. Gilbert is able to be out again and he and Belle have a walk on the terrace. They are joined by the Marchmont girls who have come to carry Belle off to a picnic. Lord Stanmore suggests to Jim Marchmont that it is time for Gilbert to leave Strathearn and he accordingly makes preparations to go to Glenwarth for a time. "That spray of heather shall lie on my breast after I am dead!" CHAPTER XXIII. — A picnic. Belle overhears a conversation between Mrs. Seymour and Lord Stanmore, in which the latter says he regrets the mistake he made in marrying Belle. A storm comes up during the picnic party, and Belle and Gilbert take shelter in a cave.

CHAPTER XXIV. — More than life. Belle and Gilbert have an interview in which their flight is planned. Stanmore discovers that Belle has left him and gone with Hugh Gilbert. CHAPTER XXV. — Belle's letter is received by Stanmore; she tells him now that she married him through pique and relates the deceit practiced by her aunt and its awful consequences. Stanmore tells Mrs. Seymour the news and Jim Marchmont defends Gilbert. Lady Stanmore receives a call from her brother-in-law in which he accuses her of her deception and they become enemies.

CHAPTER XXVI. — A new light. The news of Belle's flight is heard at Hurst and Lady Probyn breaks the news to Sir Dick and also tells him of Amy Trevelyan's love. Sir Dick proposes to Amy and is accepted. CHAPTER XXVII. — HER ANSWER. "Tell me, Hugh, tell me what are you thinking of, dear," Belle said, interrupting a long pause. "My thoughts are always occupied by one person," he answered, and taking her hand, he raised it to his lips. "Dearest," she whispered, just above her breath, every letter of the word sounding as delicious music in his ears.

pipe, but for once tobacco failed to have any relief for him. An engagement made some days before with some brother officers took him out after breakfast, and he left with the promise of returning before the mid-day heat set in, for never did he leave her for long alone.

She watched him pass through the little compound, with its trees and trailing flowers, and saw him walk down the white road with its border of dusty cactus leaves and rank dried grass. A few yards down he turned to where she stood in the verandah, and kissed hands to her, she waving her handkerchief to him. When he went, her heart went with him, and with a listless step and a grave air she entered the shadowy sitting-room and sat down to think out her thoughts.

Since she had left England no letter had been written to her by friend or relative; no message from them had reached her. If she had died she could not have been more separated from all those she formerly had known. The Marchmonts, Lady Stanmore, the Probyns, were now to her as the people of a dream. Save for the one friend, she had no friends in the world but he was all the world to her; she needed none but him.

Through solicitors in the first instance, and later through the English newspapers, she had learned of the divorce instituted by Lord Stanmore, and of the release from his marriage which he had no difficulty in obtaining, and the six months necessary to elapse between the verdict and the re-marriage of either husband and wife being now almost at an end, she looked forward to the day when in the sight of men Hugh Gilbert would be her husband.

Only a few days more and they would be united legally—a prospect that gave her intense satisfaction; not that she would then be bound closer to Hugh, or he to her than now, but that the life which would be ushered into the world before long, would then be free from a heritage of shame.

At this thought a thrill of delight passed through her, and her eyes became dim with unshed tears. In a placid happy mood she busied herself all day long about the household cares of her dainty little home, going now and then into the shaded verandah to gain the benefit of the breeze sweeping up the hill from the sea, which in imagination she saw as a glittering floor of emerald, stretching away into limitless space.

At last the time came when Hugh had said he would return, but as yet he had not come back. He had probably, she considered, gone to the recreation ground, where English people meet to play tennis, drink tea, and talk scandal; a sacred circle into which she had as yet no right to penetrate, and into which, indeed, he had seldom intruded, and then only by the desire of his brother officers.

Later she began to wonder what detained him, and to desire his return, for she was never happy for long in his absence. Her restlessness increasing, she again stepped into the verandah, in the hope of catching sight of him, when she saw him far down the road. She was not sure at first it was he, for he walked slowly and as with an effort and looking again she saw he was not alone. He was leaning on the arm of a friend, Captain Richards, who had frequently been his guest.

As he caught sight of her, she could see that he made an effort to resume his usual gait, and as he came near, she realised that though his winsome grey eyes were heavy and dull, their expression sought to reassure her that there was nothing amiss with him. He called out to her, when she went forward, and laying one hand on his arm, looked searchingly into his flushed and weary face.

"What is it, Hugh?" she asked, in a low, nervous voice. "Only one of my old headaches, dear," he responded. "The fact is," volunteered Captain Richards, striving to speak cheerfully, "the heat has been too much for him, and so I thought I would run up with him, you see."

"Thank you so much," Belle said. Hugh sat down heavily on a couch, and placing his elbows on his knees covered his face with his hands. She touched his forehead with one of her cool palms, and then turning round said, "His head is terribly hot."

"It will be nothing, dear. I shall be all right when I have rested here in the shade with you," Hugh answered. With a world of concern in her eyes, she looked enquiringly at their visitor, who answered her unspoken question by saying, "I wanted him to see the doctor but he wouldn't. It wouldn't have done any harm, you know."

"I will send for him at once," she said. "Belle, dear, there is no necessity. You mustn't alarm yourself. I shall be all right in an hour or so," Hugh said unwillingly that she should distress herself. "Yes, dear, but it will do you no harm to see him," she answered, soothingly, and was about to summon one of her servants when Captain Richards offered to send the doctor up without delay.

"That will be very kind of you," she answered, "and pray beg of him to come at once," she added anxiously. When he had gone, and she was alone with Hugh, she knelt on the floor in front of him, gently removed his hand from his face, and kissed his forehead. He looked at her a second, as if he failed to recognize her, but it was only for a second, for immediately his tired face brightened, and he placed one hand heavily on her shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, dear," he said, noticing the look of vague terror in her eyes. "It's only that my head is bad," and his words were followed by an involuntary groan. She led him into his room, which was carefully darkened, made him lie down, and began to bathe his temples. The while she dared not think, so crowded by apprehensions was her mind. Once or twice she had spoken to him, but it was evidently by an effort he had answered her words, and she feared to disturb him further, lest any strain might have an injurious effect upon him. Never had his headaches been so bad as this.

The minutes that elapsed before the doctor arrived seemed long as hours. Like every English resident at Malabar Hill, he was familiar with all the incidents of the history of this man and woman. Though well acquainted with the former, he had never seen the latter before, and was immediately struck by the grace and beauty of her face and figure, but more still by the expression of immeasurable love and deep concern which she showed to the invalid.

The doctor, a low sized, stout bodied, good hearted little Irishman was touched by her distress, and took her into his favor at once. Henceforth he would be her champion when women spoke ill of her. Whilst he felt Hugh's pulse, looked at his tongue, and asked him a few questions, the doctor saw her eyes were turned on him searchingly, tearfully, and he strove to avoid meeting them that he might not witness and perhaps add pain to their expression. At last she could bear the suspense no longer.

"What is it, doctor?" she asked, her voice trembling with apprehension. "A slight attack, just a touch of his old fever," he answered, striving to speak lightly of his patient's illness. She drew in her breath, and a look of dread crept into her face.

"It cannot be serious," she muttered with dry lips, as if she would be convinced herself there was no need to fear. "It surely cannot be serious?" "No, no," Doctor Malone answered cheerfully. "It may pass away in a few hours. Keep him quiet, my dear lady, let him sleep as long as he can, and give him the medicine I will send you immediately you receive it, and he prepared to leave."

"You will come soon again," she said, imploringly. "Of course I will; and then I hope to find him better, much better," he added jauntily, as he had her good day. When he left she flung herself down beside the bed on which Hugh lay sleeping fitfully. But for this one creature she was alone in the world, but for him her heart would be empty, her life would be desolate. She bowed down her head in humbleness, in supplication, in appeal, but for long her parted lips could frame no words. Then suddenly in a paroxysm of terror she flung out her arms, and raised her white face, crying aloud—"O, God, spare him to me; spare him, or take me too!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.—HIS GREAT DESIRE. All through the quiet night Belle watched beside the man who was to her the sole reality in life. True to his promise the doctor had called in the evening, advised certain treatment, spoken some hopeful words, and took his departure, saying he would call next morning as soon as he possibly could.

Belle, who knew the sudden developments and quick changes of Indian fever, dared not think what might happen before morning came. The sun might rise to find him gone; a new day might dawn upon a world empty to her. Seated beside him, her heart overflowing with tenderness, she heard him murmur disconnected sentences, in which her name occurred again and again, whilst he implored her to remember her vow, to keep her promise true, and then upbraided her with marrying another man. Her anguish deepened because of his distress, and because of her own helplessness to make him understand that she was beside him, and would remain with him faithful and true so long as life remained to her. For hours she held one of his burning hands between her own, hoping that in some dim way she would make him realize her presence, and perhaps lessen his fever by absorbing it into her own system. Now and then the lean and brown skinned native servant came and went softly as a shadow, carrying cooling drinks he had prepared, or noiselessly fanning the master whom he loved with the abject devotion of a slave.

Outside the world was beautiful in the serenity of moonlight. The bungalows surrounded by their white walled compounds, seemed made of silver; the great boulders of rock that rose here and there lost something of their grimness; tall palm trees stood out dark and well-defined against the light, their shadows falling on masses of brambles or across the white precipitous road that wound its way to the summit of the hill, whilst beyond lay the ocean, scarce stirring in its sleep, its violet surface stretching into limitless space.

From the dim room where she watched, Belle caught a glimpse of the white splendour of the night, which re-called to her the hours of silent happiness, when she had watched the scene outside with the man beside her whose sympathy read her thoughts before she had time to express them. How happy they had been, what dreams they had dreamt, what a future had they painted for themselves! Surely he who holds life and death in his hand would be merciful and not visit her with punishment because she had sinned; surely he would leave her this one life which was all the world to her.

Her lips were motionless, but her soul was full of prayer that petitioned, and pleaded with all the force of her strength, with all the hope of her faith, that the one creature she valued on earth might be left to her. When morning came Hugh fell into a deep calm sleep, from which he did not awake for hours. When eventually he opened his eyes they met those of the woman bending anxiously above him, and

with a wild heart-throb she saw the fever had lessened, and consciousness had returned. There was a world of gratitude in his grey eyes; a world of happiness, in his smile, the smile which was to her the most welcome thing on earth.

"Belle," he whispered. She strove to steady her voice and answer him cheerfully, but the effort was unsuccessful, and she burst into tears. "Poor little woman, poor little woman," he murmured soothingly, as he stroked her hand. "I believe I have given you a fright. I, who would do anything in the world to save you from uneasiness and pain."

"I have been nervous, dear; but I am all right now. Tell me, has your headache gone?" she said, striving to smile. "Yes, dear; I think I am nearly well, only a little weak. I must confess I was nervous myself, for you see I have had this fever twice before, and I suppose I am superstitious, for I feared there must be something fatal in the third time," Hugh said, and taking one of her hands kissed it. "Don't say that, oh, don't say that, Hugh," she cried out.

"I would not say it, but that the fever has gone. I suppose I have been unconscious?" "Yes, dear, you have," she answered. "Yet I felt sure you were beside me all the time, and that seemed to give me strength."

"Whilst they were talking the doctor came into the room mopping his round boyish face, that lit up with pleasure when he saw his patient looking so well. "Pon my word you have behaved admirably," he said to Hugh. "I may tell you I didn't expect to find you half so well; but I know what your recovery is due to—the careful nursing you have received," and he smiled at Belle.

"I believe you are right, doctor," replied Hugh. "Pulse almost normal, though not quite; temperature all right; not much strength to speak of. We must remedy that." "I suppose I may get up during the day," said the patient. "If so it will be in disobedience to my wishes."

"I will see you obeyed, doctor," remarked Belle. "Thank you, my dear lady; I am sure you will be able to manage him," replied the doctor cheerily. "It's more than I can."

"But the fever has gone," protested Hugh. "Not quite; it's intermittent. You must take every care of yourself for a few days. You must have no excitement, nothing must be allowed to disturb you; keep your mind and body as tranquil as you possibly can."

"You are quite an autocrat," Hugh answered laughing. "You must submit to my tyranny for a few days." "I promise you that he will, doctor," Belle said. "My dear lady, I take your word for it," he rejoined.

Then promising to send up some medicine, he was about to leave when he heard that Capt. Richards and another officer had called to inquire for Hugh. "I won't have them admitted," said the doctor. "You see I am not going to have the name of a tyrant without exercising my tyranny. I'll take these young men away with me, and tell them how you are on the road." Saying which, the cheery, bustling little man left the room.

"How is he?" Richards asked the doctor as they got beyond ear sound of the bungalow. "As weak as water," replied Malone. "Poor chap! You don't think there's any danger?" "Not unless he has a bad return of this fever; remember this is the third attack and every time it comes it's harder to shake off. I hope for his own sake, and for the sake of that poor girl, he may recover."

As the doctor spoke all his cheerfulness seemed to have vanished, and an unwonted gravity settled on his round good-natured face. "And to think that old painted rascal, the Major's wife could say such things of her," he added presently. "Some women are bitter bad to each other, anyhow. God forgive them!"

Whilst the doctor and his companions were walking down the white dusty road, the sun pouring down on them, a conversation was being carried on in the sick man's room. "I have but one anxiety in the world, Belle," Hugh said. "I know, dear; don't let it disturb you," she answered, striving to assume an air of cheerfulness.

"The day after to-morrow I shall be free to make up my mind. It seems so near to me, a few hours, and yet it seems a terrible way off." "Don't speak of it, Hugh, it only excites you," she said, as she bent over and kissed his forehead. "No, I feel it relieves me. I did not tell you, dear, that I have already spoken to

our chaplain about the ceremony. He is a man of the world, a good fellow, and he's ready to get through the business as soon as the law will allow him."

"Let me beg of you, dear, not to think anything more about it for the present," she implored. "I cannot help my thoughts, and it shared with you, Belle, they don't harass me half so much; so you had better let me talk, unless you want to play the tyrant too."

"Very well, dear; but there's no need to be anxious about it, the ceremony will be gone through in good time," she said, striving to soothe him. "I will have it performed the first hour, the first minute, that the chaplain is free to say the words."

"I fear if you excite yourself you will not be allowed up the day after to-morrow," she remonstrated. "Whether I am up or in bed, it shall be gone through the instant the law allows us to become man and wife. Therefore you must tell Richards to have the chaplain here in good time. Richards is to be one of the witnesses you know."

"Now rest, dear," she said; "strive to put the subject out of your mind for the present." "Don't you see, Belle, what importance it is to you and your unborn child that this marriage should take place," he said, his colour heightening, his voice becoming irritable.

"Of course, dear of course; but for my sake say nothing more of it now," she urged, and she playfully covered his mouth with her trembling hand. He remained silent after that, but she knew what the tenor of his thoughts were, and she strove to distract them by references to every day events and items of household gossip. Some hours later he dozed only to wake up with a startled impression on his face. He inquired how long he had slept, and she told him.

"Do you know," he said, "I thought the time had come for our marriage. Surely God would not punish us so severely by letting me die before I could make you my wife?"

"Why speak of dying? You are better, are you not?" "Yes, much better. How strange that I should have thought the time had come for our marriage, I must have dreamt it whilst I slept."

With a despairing heart she saw the fever had partially returned, and with all her strength she summoned courage and sought to calm him, and again he fell asleep, though now his slumber was continually broken. She sent for the doctor, who came at once, but before his arrival the patient woke up and talked incessantly and incoherently of his marriage, and every hour his excitement increased. Two days later a little group had gathered round the bed of Hugh Gilbert, consisting of a heart broken woman, the doctor, Captain Richards, and the Chaplain, the Rev. Meredith Jones. The fever had apparently gone, but not before it had done its fatal work in wasting all his strength. At long intervals he roused himself, when his mind seemed perfectly clear and active. He then invariably sank into deep lethargic sleep, from which those who watched him feared he would never wake.

Three hours before, on recovering from a long and profound slumber he had asked if the time had not come when his marriage might take place, and on being told it had he inquired why the parson was not present. That was just in the first flush of dawn, when the stars had begun to fade, and the gold to glow, low down on the horizon. They told him the chaplain had arranged to be with him by eight o'clock, but Hugh insisted on having him sent for at once, he would now brook no delay.

Long before Mr. Meredith Jones arrived the patient had been overtaken by one of these deep sleeps which the doctor well knew were the forerunners of that deeper sleep from which there was no awakening. The chaplain however, remained, as did the doctor and Captain Richards, all patiently waiting the moment when Hugh Gilbert's frail life might kindle to a flame or go out for ever.

Belle stood bending over him, watching his every breath, a pitiful tragic figure, already crushed by the desolation which she knew was about to befall her. Dr. Malone with a deeply grieved face stood at the other side of the bed, his fingers on his patient's pulse, his eyes watchful, his ears strained. Suddenly he made a motion, and then called on Gilbert loudly, when the dying man opened his eyes that at first were dim and vacant. As they rested on Belle's face they brightened with intelligence, then became anxious and looked around. Bending down the doctor told him the chaplain was here, when the patient drew a long breath and smiled faintly. But when he would move he was unable to stir, and his eyes turned imploringly to the doctor, who passed his arm under Hugh's shoulders, gently and carefully raised him.

"For God's sake be quick," the doctor said to the chaplain. In a moment the latter had opened his book and began the first words of the marriage service, Belle standing mute and terror-stricken by his side. The dying man raised his eyes to hers, eyes in which shone unfeigned love, undying tenderness and proud satisfaction. She took his hand which was already cold and clammy, when as it overcame by the happiness of seeing his hopes realised, he closed his eyes and sighed profoundly.

"Will you, Hugh, take this woman for your wife?" the chaplain asked, but the words remained unanswered. "Will you, Hugh, take this woman for your wife?" he repeated in a louder tone, and bending forward as he spoke. "He is dead," said the doctor, laying Hugh Gilbert's body back upon the pillows of the bed. A deep silence fell upon the room, the men reverently dropped on their knees, for they now stood in the presence of the Great Creator, but Belle remained standing, her speechless lips parted, her eyes staring, her body quivering. Suddenly the parson began a prayer which was broken by a piteous cry, that came straight from a woman's broken heart: "Hugh, Hugh, wait for me, wait for me. I will come with you," she said, and then before those nearest could catch her, she had fallen senseless to the ground. (To be Continued.)

STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW TO THE MARK.

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