

[CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.]

griefs and grievances No doubt in time, if we let it alone, the grass will grow green above it. It I have lost you and your love, or rather the love I fondly believed you felt for me, the fault is mine. No doubt it was very foolish of me to keep my real name and rank a secret from you, and to 'court' you, as I did, in the character of a wandering artist who had his living to earn—for I knew that your father, had I waited for his return, or written to him, would have welcomed me, the only son of the Earl of Briancourt, with open arms as a son-in-law—but I wanted to make sure of being loved for myself alone, and not for my riches or rank, and so, like Tennyson's Lord Burleigh, I made up my mind to woo and win, if not to wed you, as a poor landscape painter. It was no doubt a romantic and ridiculous idea, but it suited my purpose.

'I do not complain. Had you known or suspected my actual position in the world, without even knowing my name he added, with a cynical laugh, 'you would possibly have waited for me a little longer, and taken some trouble to ascertain my identity and find out the reason of my long silence—when I did not return; but then, in that case, it would have been worth your while; yet as I said just now, I regret nothing, for I have learned to know you as you are. Magdalen—beautiful beyond the privilege of women, but shallow hearted and worldly wise. Still do not think that I reproach you,' he went on, in the same cynically indulgent tone. 'You are rather to be congratulated on the facility with which you are able to forget; and then, it is only fair to say that you had every excuse for believing that I had forgotten, too.'

'I had every reason for believing that you were dead,' retorted Lady Briancourt with a gesture of proud impatience, and a weary sigh. 'Read that!'

And, as he spoke, she unfolded and spread out before him the first sheet of the Times, bearing the date of a certain day in October of the previous year.

Among the death announcements was one which had been marked with a blue lead pencil.

Her ladyship's jeweled finger pointed to it, and her companion read as follows—'On the 15th inst., at Rose Villa, Richmond, Claude Reynolds, aged 24.'

For a moment the young man remained silent, staring at the printed column his handsome face expressive of complete bewilderment.

'This is a most extraordinary coincidence he observed, at length, 'most extraordinary! I chose the name Claude Reynolds as an incognito, simply because it happened to combine the names of two great painters whose work I admire. It is also perfectly true, as I told you, that I own a small villa at Richmond, and, what is still more strange, the villa is called Rose Villa. It was left me by an old aunt, together with other more valuable property. My solicitor had the letting of the villa, and it is quite possible that the name of my tenant may have been Claude Reynolds; but I certainly never heard of the individual, nor was I aware of his existence till now.'

Magdalen made no comment. Both were silent for a few moments. Not a sound broke the stillness of the softly lighted place.

Lady Briancourt, leaning back in her chair, was looking straight before her, grave and rather sad—lost in thought.

Lord Lovel stood with his hands in his pockets, still staring vacantly at the open sheet of the Times.

'I am very glad you showed me this, Magdalen,' he said at length, in a tone that was no longer cynical or bitter, but full of infinite gentleness, and slipping back for the moment unconsciously into the habit of using the once familiar name; 'forgive me for having misjudged you. I understand it all clearly now, and it has consoled me more than you can imagine to know that you were not fickle or faithless—you, my ideal of perfect womanhood.'

'You met my father; he tell in love with you—there is nothing surprising in that—and you were won by that subtle and sympathetic charm which I have heard so many women say makes him irresistible whenever he wishes to please. 'No one admires or appreciates my father more than I do,' but—added the young man, bending forward, and speaking in a more eager tone, with kindling eyes—'tell me—only tell me for my comfort, Magdalen—it is the last time I shall ever touch on this topic—I know now that your motive in marrying the earl was not a mercenary one—you did not, as I feared and believed, throw me over to become his

wife—but tell me—and his voice dropped to a passionate whisper, as the love that contempt had been killing flamed up afresh in his heart, and made him, for the moment, forgetful of honour, filial duty, loyalty to his fiancée, self-respect, and every other consideration, 'tell me that you would never have married the earl had you not been convinced that I was dead.'

Lady Briancourt rose to her feet and faced her step-son with kindling eyes, but serious, even to sternness.

It is best for you to know the truth, Cuthbert, though, perhaps, you will think less highly of me when you hear it. I should have married your father just the same had I known you to be alive, and had I even been aware of your real name and rank. You may believe it or not, as you like; but it is the truth. I married your father not because he happened to be the Earl of Briancourt and very wealthy, but because I loved and admired him. Had he been a poor curate or a city clerk I should have married him just the same.

'Perhaps, when I met you, I did not, 'know my own mind,' and mistook a girl's first emotional fancy for a deeper feeling. The fact of your being, as I imagined, a poor artist, added to your own strikingly handsome personality and the wild romantic scenery amidst which we met and made acquaintance, doubtless exercised a certain influence on my mind.

'All that I can tell you is, that when I came to know your father, I was conscious of being drawn towards him more and more closely by that very sympathetic charm of which you have spoken, and then it was I gradually realized that I had never loved before. My fancy had been captivated, but my heart had remained unmoved.'

'You may think me fickle, I cannot help that; but you shall not go on believing, as you hitherto believed, that I am, or ever was, mercenary.'

'I would sooner have swept a crossing, or gone out to service as a scullery-maid, than to sell myself to any man for the sake of a coronet, or a palace, or a pile of gold; and I would rather be the servant or the slave of the one I love and tramp the roads in his company through sun and shade, than I would be the wife of an earl, marquis, or even a prince whom I cared not for.'

Never had Magdalen Briancourt appeared to greater advantage, or looked more superbly beautiful than at this moment—standing, with head thrown back, under the suspended lamp, the softly-shaded light of which fell upon her noble, grand face and stately figure clad in its rich, clinging velvet robes, and decked with diamonds such as a duchess might have envied, for the earl thought nothing good or costly enough for his worshipped and peerless bride.

CHAPTER VI. CRUEL, BUT KIND.

Her companion, meanwhile, stood very pale and silent, with bent head and brows drawn together, biting his lips.

The blow he had just received was a terrible one, not so much, perhaps, to his heart—though he honestly believed that was broken—as to his vanity.

'We are all liable to make mistakes, Cuthbert,' continued Lady Briancourt, more gently, after a pause, 'especially where our feelings are concerned, I think. 'If it were not so, there would not be half as many unhappy marriages as there are. . . I had no intention, Heaven knows of deceiving you; but I deceived myself. There are, as the poet says, 'many ways of loving.'

Many ways, and but one true way, Which is very rare; And the counterfeiters look brightest, Though they will not wear.

'You are ready to tell me at this moment perhaps, that I have spoiled your life, and driven you, in desperation and pique, to propose to my cousin, Juliet Fane. But believe this: that, whatever the motive was which prompted you to ask her to be your wife, it is a step that, however rashly taken, you will never have cause to repent.'

'I repent already,' cried the young man, vehemently, 'and I shall go and confess the truth to her, and ask her to release me. She will not refuse.'

'Oh, no; she would not refuse,' replied Magdalen, quietly. 'Juliet is not that sort of girl. She would be far too proud and unselfish to hold you to your engagement against your will. She would force a smile to her lips, and pretend not to care, and you would never find out what she had suffered till it was—too late! She would die, and give no sign I know her.'

The young man did not answer. Dropping into a chair, he sat in an attitude of profound discouragement, his face in his hands.

'Do you really think Juliet would break her heart if I were to give her up?' he asked, suddenly lifting his head.

'I am sure of it, although you would not find it out until it was too late. But you will not give her up Cuthbert!' added Lady Briancourt, laying her hand lightly on the young man's shoulder. 'You would not do anything so cruel, so brutal!'

'But, surely,' he cried, with a quick, impetuous movement, 'you would not have me marry a woman I do not love, even though in a moment of madness, I asked her to my wife? I should only make her unhappy as I am myself.'

Magdalen was silent a moment; then she said—

'Are you quite sure you don't love Juliet Cuthbert? Because I am not. I believe you have been in love with her for some weeks past, only you haven't yet found it out. Supposing now, for instance, that another man were to appear on the scene, and make love to Juliet before your eyes—can you honestly say you would not object?'

'Of course I should, and what is more, I—'

'But I thought, just now, you said would ask her to release you and break off the

engagement,' retorted Magdalen demurely. 'You will have to take one course or the other, you know, Cuthbert either marry her yourself, or let some other man have a chance of winning her; but I see plainly that idea does not recommend itself to you, which proves that you are jealous, and, therefore, more or less in love.'

'I am not in love, but I certainly like and admire Juliet Fane immensely—and I admit that nothing would be easier than to grow very fond of her—she is excessively attractive in every way.'

Lady Briancourt laughed softly to herself as she answered:

'My dear Cuthbert, you are really in love with Juliet already, only you are ashamed to confess it. Why should you be? I was not ashamed to confess that I did not know my own mind. The one hope of my heart at the present moment is, to see you and Juliet as happy together as your father and myself are, and if this hope is not realized, it will not be Juliet's fault—and certainly not mine.'

'But what would you have me do?' objected the young man, half convinced, and yet reluctant to own it, as he rose from his seat and began pulling the leaves from a shrub.

'Well, if you take my advice, Cuthbert,' replied Magdalen, adopting a maternal and persuasive tone, 'you will run up to London for a week and think the matter over, and mark my words! before the week is out, we shall have you back again, for I am sure it will not take you all that time to find out what I have discovered already—that you are very nearly as much in love with Juliet as she is with you, and that is saying a good deal.'

'Well, I'll take your advice, at any rate,' answered Lord Lovel. 'I must get away for a while. As for coming back, that is quite another matter. But, whatever I do,' he added, earnestly, as he took his step-mother's hand, and lifted it to his lips. 'I shall never forget that you appealed to my best and highest feelings, and that, if ever I do find happiness again, I shall owe it to you.'

'It would only be fair if it were so,' was Magdalen's smiling reply, 'since it was I who made you unhappy to start with. 'You are a very noble woman, Magdalen. If there were more women like you in the world, the men who live in it would be very different from what they are.' With these words he left her.

For several minutes she lingered where she stood, with the softened light from the hanging lamp falling round and upon her. A very sweet, but half-sad, smile curved her beautiful lips.

'Poor Cuthbert!' she said to herself. 'I wonder how long it will take him to find out that his heart is not broken and that he is in love with Juliet. Not more than forty-eight hours, I fancy. We shall see.' And, placing the black lace mantilla round her head, she quitted the pavilion, and disappeared through the passage that communicated with the billiard room.

She had not been gone many minutes when the figure of a man emerged from the shadow of the palms. It was the earl of Briancourt, who, conceal behind the foliage that screened the gardeners entrance, had seen and heard all that passed between his wife and his son.

On his fine, intellectual face, still pale and haggard with the anguish of recent despair, was an expression of ineffable relief and peace. 'My queeny, noble Magdalen!' he murmured. 'What have I done that I should be blest with such a wife? And to think that I should doubt her purity and honor even for a moment! I shall never forgive myself; but then, how could I be sure? She knew and cared for Cuthbert first and it seemed to me impossible—he being the splendid-looking fellow he is—that she should prefer a man of my age to him for a husband. And yet, it is true! How sweet should be her slumbers to-night, for by the wise, sweet words she has spoken, she has secured the happiness of four human lives, and restored peace and harmony where passion unrestrained would have stirred up strife.'

With these thoughts in his mind, he returned to the shadowy corner, where he had remained hidden during the recent interview between Magdalen and his son, and brought forth the gun he had provided himself with in case he should need it—sinister suggestion of the tragedy with which, had Magdalen been a different woman from what she was, the meeting between his wife and Cuthbert would have ended.

Carrying it into the billiard-room he placed it in safety out of reach. Neither the countess nor Lord Lovel ever

suspected the pearl that had menaced them throughout the interview or guessed that the earl had discovered the fact of their former acquaintance.

Lord Briancourt kept the secret he had accidentally found out to the end of his life, and if, from that never-to-be-forgotten night, Magdalen noticed a deeper tenderness in her husband's tone and manner to her, she never fathomed the cause, but congratulated herself on having the very best and kindest husband in the world.

Lord Lovel adhered to his resolution of going to London; but before the end of the week, as Magdalen had predicted, he was back again, and willingly to confess that, if his heart had been broken, Juliet Fane mended it; nor was the latter's happiness, either then or afterwards, married by the knowledge that her ideal lover, who was always 'Prince Charming' to the end of the chapter, and who, she felt convinced, had fallen in love with her at first sight when he found her lying asleep in the hammock in the hush of a September evening, had proposed to her in a fit of pique.

'All's well that ends well, and no ending could be more satisfactory than that of fair Juliet Fane's romance, and the one less sweet, but more serious, love-affair of Magdalen Lisle.

Not having the key to the mystery, Meredith Fane never was able to solve it to his own satisfaction; so, like a wise man, he gave it up, content to know that the 'clouds' he had seen gathering so ominously had 'rolled by,' leaving the heavens blue, and that the lives of the two he loved best upon earth—his daughter and Magdalen—were lighted and warmed by the only sunshine that can never fade—the golden sunshine of perfect love.

The wedding of Juliet Fane and Cuthbert Dunallen, Lord Lovel, which took place in the first week of December, was not such a quiet one as the earl's and Magdalen's had been.

The Court and the Dowry House were both closely packed with guests invited for the occasion.

'Which is the more beautiful of the two brides of Briancourt?' was a question continually asked in the world to which they belonged, and by the simple country-folk in the surrounding neighborhood—a question which people seemed to find very difficult to answer, because both the brides were so very beautiful, differing only as one star differeth from another in glory.'

Juliet, with her dainty grace and fair ethereal loveliness, reminding one of an exquisite pastel signed by Greuze or Lebrun; and Magdalen, with her grand, proud, tragic face, so full of power and passion, her wealth of ruddy-brown tresses, and her stormy, yet sweet, dark eyes, recalling in her person vividly those stately, tender women that Titian delighted to paint.

Such as each was, her husband thought her perfection, and what greater happiness can any woman wish for than to be without fault in the eyes of the man she loves?

Do you remember? 'Twas in September, Just you and I, love, Seated alone; Breathing so softly, Words sweet and tender, Do you remember? Do you remember? THE END.

MONEY IN FIRE DAMAGED GOODS. How Apparently Ruined Articles are now Made Salable.

'One of the greatest boons to insurance companies and merchants whose wares have been partially destroyed by fire is the salvage or wrecking company which steps in immediately after a conflagration and begins the work of rescuing damaged stock from the ruins,' said the veteran insurance agent. 'Such concerns exist only in New York and three or four large cities but the demand for their service is growing so that in time every community of importance will have a salvage company of its own, no doubt.'

'Sometimes the salvage concern is employed by the insurance companies and sometimes by the firms which have sustained a severe loss by fire; it depends usually on the term of settlement between the insurance men and the owners of the goods or that portion of them pass the possession of the insurance companies by the terms of settlements made with insurers they are handed over to the salvage company, which 'wrecks' them, as the process of restoring to something like pristine condition is termed, and the goods are sold for the account of the insurance companies which had paid the former owners for total loss. The salvage people receive a certain percentage of the amount realized for their compensation.'

'Making goods which have passed through a fire salable necessitates quick action and very skillful handling. The operation must be in charge of men who are entirely conversant with the line of articles damaged. Most often, in the instance of a large fire, the stock will be found in the cellar water soaked and in-humed in heaps of stones, plaster, fallen beams and all manner of incidental rubbish. But no matter in what condition the goods may be the salvage company noses them out, carries them away to warehouses or stores rented for the purpose and there are endeavors to restore them as far as practicable to something like their original condition, so that they may be readily converted into cash. Quick-drying plants are provided for clothing, dry goods and similar merchandise. When the goods are thoroughly dry they are surrendered to cleaners and

renovators. Fresh tags, bands, new labels, boxes or ornamental wrappers according to the needs of the case, are provided, and very often goods which at first glance appeared damaged beyond all possible restoration are forwarded to the auction rooms by the salvage company looking as fresh and good as new. When cloths, silks or fancy dress goods have been so spoiled by water and smoke as to render them useless because no long pieces can be saved, they are trimmed and sliced into small pieces for the use of makers of covered buttons, gaiters, slippers, neckwear and caps, and others who consume short pieces of goods.'

'Such perishable goods as groceries are easily ruined by fire, smoke, and water, yet the salvage concerns cheerfully contract to repair such stocks, and there are men in their employ who endeavor to save even a grain of rice. The main thing to be considered by the salvage people in handling a stock of fire-damaged groceries is cleansing it of all odor and signs of smoke. That accomplished, there is small difficulty in selling the dry stock, repapered and carefully repacked, for almost as much as it would have brought before the fire. Thus where the salvage industry is conducted for the benefit of the insurance companies which have paid insurers for total losses, the insurance men very often receive back a sum of money which considerably lightens the burden of their losses.'

'One stock which is quite capable of appalling even the most experienced salvage man is fire-damaged clothing, and the fellow who takes charge of the work of restoring it for a salvage company must know the business from A to Z. After the garments have been dried they must be gone over and thoroughly inspected by experienced tailors, who diligently strive to obliterate all evidence of damage. In order to destroy such marks garments are frequently changed in size and style. Perhaps an entire stock of coats occupied such a position in a great fire that a sleeve of each was burned away. That, however, would not make the garments a total loss to the salvage company. The coats would be so patched up as to bring a satisfactory price at the forthcoming 'fire sale,' which terminates the offices of the salvage company. Sometimes at these 'fire sales' goods which were miles and miles away from the scene of the fire are mingled with the damaged stock for the purpose of striking an average, and to make them look like wrecked garments they are drenched before the sale.'

'Perhaps the real terror of the salvage man is a stock of hardware damaged by fire. Hardware and cutlery are invariably difficult to handle, because rust makes them unsalable. When they are tumbled and tossed from a burned out establishment, highly polished steel, rifles, shotguns, revolvers, pocket knives, razors, plated ware, saws, chisels, planes and axes appear to be utterly useless and only fit to grace the refuse heap. But shortly after they have been carted off by the salvage company to rooms especially engaged for their rehabilitation these articles take on a vastly different aspect. By means of grindstones, polishing machines, burnishing tools and acid baths the metal is made to look fresh and new. Old handles are replaced with new ones made of rubber, horn, ivory, celluloid or other suitable materials, and all of the small articles common to the hardware and cutlery trade are fastened on fresh cards or packed in new boxes. Stock which is ruined beyond recovery is disposed of to the junk dealers.'

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On the third day a solemn-looking man came in, and after taking his place at the table, pointed to the advertisement, and asked if it meant what it said. He was assured by the waiter that it was exactly true.

'Then give me some bread, butter and potatoes,' said the solemn man.

'Nothing else,' replied the man. 'Is there anything else free?'

The waiter had to call the proprietor to explain matters, but the solemn man pointed to advertisement, and the proprietor, who was a man of humour, let him have the bread, butter and potatoes free, and threw in a cup of coffee.

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