

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

admit I am at the same time serving you in the best way I can.

"But you do not think what banishment means to me—the starting life in another country, alone, among strangers."

"Isn't it better than risking—"

"Yes," she interrupted; "I will go certainly; but I am wretched—wretched!"

For the first time she broke into bitter weeping—low, heart-breaking sobs tearing her slight form.

Mr. Wyvern was greatly relieved when he at last stood with Helen's hand in his, saying good-bye.

The whole arrangement had been so hurried, they had had to hustle so over their purchases and hasty packing, that both were tired, in spite of the long rest in the train.

The arrival in the early hours of the morning at Liverpool, their breakfast together, and final chat, all came back to Helen in after years like the recollection of a troubled dream.

"Good-bye," whispered the man, with a tender inflection in his voice.

Now that he believed the threatened danger past he felt very much softened towards the girl whom he had once loved more dearly than any creature in the world save himself.

He would have taken her in his arms, but she held coldly aloof, and there was that in her face which he dared not defy.

"Good-bye," she returned, her fingers clutching his spasmodically for a moment, then shaking themselves free.

"You have all you want?"

"I think so, thank you."

"Don't forget you are entered as Miss Mary Vincent, a governess on her way to a family in Brooklyn. Send your address to me as soon as you arrive, and I will write. Good-bye."

And so these two parted, the two who had hoped—or at least one had—to pass life side by side.

Helen Vicars dashed away the blinding tears that filled her eyes, and turned, with despairing courage to face the new life which lay before her.

CHAPTER VIII.

Back to town as fast as an express train could take him went Hilton Wyvern, hoping his absence had not been noticed, or commented upon.

His course lay clear before him. He must marry Miss Curzon as soon as possible.

But how invent a plausible reason for wishing the ceremony to take place sooner than the time decided upon?

He racked his brains for an excuse which should satisfy his somewhat imperious lady-love.

Once married, his wife's interests would be identified with his own, and should the truth ever come out, and he be ousted from his own, and his father in law would feel compelled, for the sake of family pride, to find him some easy post in the government service where the work would be nominal and the pay high.

For, to the selfish, luxury loving man, the thought of downright honest hard work, with dependence on himself solely, was singularly distasteful.

As the train rushed along, leaving a blur of misty landscape on either side, with intervals of masses of houses and chimneys, which proclaimed a town, the young man sat with knitted brows trying to lift the veil of the future.

When he reached London, a heavy rain was falling, the streets were greasy and slippery, and everything looked depressed and miserable.

Hilton called a cab and drove to his rooms.

He had left word with the boy that he should retain his apartments for another day, so a cheerful fire was burning, and the cloth partially laid for a meal.

He rang the bell and ordered a chop to be grilled at once.

Breakfast had been a mere farce, and in the worried, unsettled state of his mind, he had not thought of food until now, when he felt faint from fasting.

Having eaten a large chop, with some delicious potato chips, and drunk a bottle of stout, he felt much better, and lighted a cigarette, preparatory to drawing up to the fire and enjoying a quiet hour.

He wheeled his chair round into the right position, and threw himself into its welcoming seat.

His eyes languidly followed a blue wreath of smoke which curled slowly upwards.

As it died away, he was attracted to a letter on the mantelpiece which stood bolt upright in front of the black marble clock.

He reached forward and took it up. To his astonishment, he recognized Helen's handwriting.

"When did this come?" he asked of the girl, who at that moment entered to clear the table.

"I found it here, sir, under the newspaper, when I did your room this morning."

"Helen must have written it while she was in the room alone," he thought, and tore the envelope open.

It contained only a few lines, but they caused his face to blanch and his eyes to gleam with baffled fury.

"Dear Hilton,"—it ran—"I meant to be brave; but I am a coward, and cannot resist the temptation to run away and hide myself, as you suggest. But I know that your anxiety to get me out of the way is solely on your own account, so I feel little compunction in telling you that the precaution comes too late. I have already acquainted Lady Laura, through a friend, with the fact that her child lives and will speedily be restored to her. I meant to take him back myself, and stay to hear the punishment I have earned, but my courage has failed me at the last minute.

"My love for you was a blind, unreasoning passion which has been more of a pain than a pleasure to me from the first.

I can say truly that I am thankful my eyes are opened at last, though it has been a painful process. Good-bye. Perhaps when your first anger is over you will be able to think of me sometimes with kindly regret.

"Almost before he had grasped the full meaning of what this meant to him a visitor was announced.

"I cannot see anyone," he said sharply. But the caller was already in the room—tall, gracefully formed figure with a refined face and penetrating eyes, in clerical garb.

"Mr. Ellis—you?"

"Yes, Mr. Wyvern. I have come from Lady Laura Wyvern to ask if you know anything of the whereabouts of Miss Vicars. Her ladyship is very anxious."

"Why should you suppose I know anything of the young lady?" retorted Hilton, offering a chair to his visitor in a perfunctory manner.

Mr. Ellis, however, remained standing. "Miss Vicars wrote me a long letter, which I received yesterday afternoon. In it she made some singular revelations. It will save time if you will tell me whether you have cognizance of the facts with which she acquainted me."

"Again I must ask why you should imagine that the lady would make me her confidant."

Hilton asked this to gain time while he reviewed the position.

How much did the parson know? Mr. Ellis did not keep him long in doubt. "Miss Vicars has made a full confession of her abduction of the baby heir of Rushmead, and the substitution of her dead nephew in his place. Having stated the fact, she was bound to give her reason for such a cruel and criminal action. She besought my aid in breaking the news of her child's safety to the mother. I need not try to describe the poor lady's frantic delight, nor the agony of my sense with which she awaited its coming."

"The night passed, however, without the appearance of Miss Vicars with the little one. Only a message came the young lady had been detained in town. I was up at the house this morning, and was talking the matter over with her ladyship, when a young woman arrived with an infant. She explained she had been called in to nurse the little one about two months ago when its mother died."

"I suppose you wish me to understand that the child in question is the lost heir?"

"There is little doubt about that. The woman said her employer, whom she believed to be the father of the child had explained that he was suddenly called away, and told to take the baby to Rushmead Hall. He had paid up his rent, and left the apartments they inhabited on the previous evening, first giving her full directions how to act, and supplying her with money for the journey."

"All this proves nothing," said Hilton, who clutched at every straw in his desperation.

"Taken in conjunction with Miss Vicars letter, it impressed us greatly," returned the curate; "but we wished to remove every doubt. At Lady Laura's request, I came straight to town, and engaged the services of a private detective. But I believe I could have fathomed the affair myself. Mr. Collier, Miss Vicar's brother in law, was soon traced. He had, on the death of his wife, followed by that of the child in a day or so, simply removed to fresh apartments, where he appeared with a nurse and a living baby."

"After receiving a visit from his sister-in-law yesterday, he had quickly made preparations for a sudden departure, as I have already told you. So far he has not been found, and Lady Laura is very wishful to avoid a scandal so long as the child's identity can be proved beyond a doubt. Now, Mr. Wyvern, perhaps you will tell me anything you know regarding this business?"

And Hilton, recognizing that subtterings would be of no avail, told of Helen's visit and subsequent flight.

In spite of the caution adopted, the next morning's papers contained sensational accounts of the kidnapping of the baby heir, with various embellishments, mostly fictitious.

There was the usual nine days' wonder then the affair died a natural death, to be followed by a newer interest.

Lady Laura regained health and vigour with astonishing rapidity now that her son was so marvellously restored to her loving arms.

There was one vacant place in her heart which could never be filled, but the baby satisfied all the rest.

The nurse to whose care the baby had first been committed, came to see him, and she showed his mother the queer little mole on the palm of the hand which had caught Mrs. Dimesdale's attention.

If proof of the child's identity had been needed this was conclusive.

Neither Helen or her brother-in-law was discovered, in spite of the most stringent search, which was not surprising in the case of the girl, as no one, save the few who maintained a careful silence, knew of her departure from England under a feigned name.

Hilton Wyvern to his great astonishment found himself an object of general interest.

Great sympathy was felt for his disappointment, and certain influence, brought to bear in high quarters, obtained for him one of the very plum offices for which he had craved.

Nor did his betrothed father prove obdurate with regard to the engagement.

It was May herself who threw him over, regretting that she had mistaken her feelings, etcetera.

So, in spite of his bright prospects, the young man bit the dust of humiliation in its most painful form.

As the years passed, there were times when the vision of a beautiful face, framed in wavy brown hair, rose before him, the light of love in the soft grey eyes, stinging him with a keen pain of longing and regret.

Like many another, he realized when

too late the worth of the love he had utttr ruthlessly aside.

The hot summer sun flooded the large office where a number of girls sat at tables, either typewriting or verifying addresses from books of reference.

"Miss Vincent," called a sharp-faced man from a high desk at the end of the room, "have you finished those letters?"

The girl addressed rose from her seat, and, gathering a number of papers in her hand, took them over to the man who had spoken.

"Thank you; all correct, I suppose?" Then, with a quick glance, and slight change of tone: "You are looking pale this morning. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"I am quite well, thank you; it is only the heat."

"Ah, it is warm?"

Miss Vincent returned to her place and went steadily on with her work, quite oblivious of the various scrutinizing glances the sharp-faced man cast on her from time to time.

The sun was still pouring down ardent rays when the employees of the firm of Holden and Hickman left the place.

Miss Vincent walked quickly along, but she had not gone many steps before she was accosted by the gentleman who had spoken to her in the morning.

"By gum, you don't give a fellow much of a chance. I guess you don't feel the temperature as much as I thought."

"I want to get some, Mr. Naylor," Helen returned quietly.

"So I should say. But come now have you thought over what I said the other day? Have you found out yet which side your bread is buttered? You've only to say the word, and 'click, the things done! We will be married right away."

He bent his thin, eager face close to hers.

There was little encouragement in her averted eyes.

"Mr. Naylor, you are very kind, and please believe I thoroughly appreciate your—your disinterested affection, but what you ask is impossible. I cannot marry you."

"Ah!"

The short exclamation was one habitual to him, and was exceedingly expressive.

"I guess you left your heart behind you in the old country. Don't throw it away on me. Just tell me this; was there somebody across the pond who—you knew."

Helen made an attempt to speak, but her trembling lips refused to frame the words.

"There, there; I won't torment you any more! The fact is, I have been a selfish brute, because I hoped to get you for myself; but as that is not to be, I'll make things square. There has been a chap inquiring for you—a dandy parson fellow—and I put him off the scent—told him you had left our place some time ago. But I will make it alright; he is still in New York. There, don't say a word. I care too much for you to be a dog in the manger."

He squeezed her hand, and was off without listening to her faint protest.

And that very evening Mr. Ellis came the warm-hearted manager brought him right up to the flat, and left him at the door.

Helen would have fled but Mr. Ellis took her in his arms and held her fast.

"Thank Heaven, I have found you at last, my darling!"

For a few blissful moments she lay quietly in his embrace, then drew herself away.

"You are good, I am thankful to have seen you once more; but we must part."

"Why?"

"Can you ask; you, who know my utter unworthiness?"

"Helen, you did wrong; but your reason was blinded, and you have suffered. I can see what you have gone through by the lines round your dear eyes, and you made what reparation you could when you came to your senses."

"Lady Laura—is all right?" she asked.

"Is happy and content. The child is growing and thriving."

"How glad I am!"

"Did you not see the advertisements I put in the papers for you?"

"Yes."

"And you would not answer them? But I do not care now I have found you. Helen I have been appointed to a vicarage in Manitoba. Do you care for me enough to cast in your lot with mine, and share my life-work? Darling, will you marry me?"

"Can you trust me?" she asked, a wave of colour sweeping over her pale face.

"Fully and entirely."

"Then I will marry you, and count myself the happiest woman in the world."

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inspired by an idea worthy of Solomon. "Why don't you marry and keep the pig in the family?" he said. This was a suggestion worth considering, so the parties retired for consultation. Each was over fifty years of age, and in a position to come to a quick conclusion. They came blushing from the conference, hand in hand, the justice married them, and they started home with the reprieved pig as a joint possession.

A Joke That Recollected

No one feels unhappy when retribution overtakes the practical joker. Even if justice is long delayed there is a pleasant feeling of satisfaction when at last it comes.

Ten years or more ago a Paris drummer was leaving Bordeaux when it occurred to him in a humorous moment that it would be tremendously funny, just as the train pulled out of the station, to lean out and slap somebody's face. This he did, and laughed all the way to Paris at the thought of the surprise and wrath of his victim.

Years passed, and the drummer went into business for himself, and settled down into a quiet and orderly citizen. One day, as he was walking along the Paris boulevard, he was stopped by a man who asked him if he had ever lived in Bordeaux.

The business man replied that he had not, but that as a commercial traveller he

had frequently visited the town. Thereupon the stranger recalled the face-slapping episode, and politely requesting permission to return the compliment, at once.

Pan-American Romance.

The tall, dark young man and the short, blonde young woman had accidentally met and became acquainted while on the way to Buffalo.

They had encountered each other in the Court of Fountains at the exposition, and renewed the acquaintance, and every day thereafter for a week they met at the same place apparently by accident and strolled through the grounds together.

But the last day allowed by his excursion ticket had come and he could stay no longer.

"It has been a delightful week," he said to her.

"She murmured an assent to the proposition.

"And I have come to know you so well that I hope you will not think me presumptuous if I ask you a question."

"What is it?" she asked, with down cast eyes.

"Will you please tell me your name?"

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