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age woman. Oh, Vere, Vere! am I going mad? Or are you mad, and telling me lies about my poor murdered darling? For God's sake, leave me, and send my mother here! She loved her. She chose her for my wife. It can't be true that she was nothing but a Living Lie!

Vere Meredith rose precipitately from his seat.

There was madness in his brother's look and tone as he paced the room with frenzied step.

Half-way to Lady Meredith's apartment he met the private detective, David Agon, on the stairs.

'Has anyone told you anything, Mr. Meredith?' asked the latter, struck by an unusual agitation in the barrister's ordinarily self-controlled manner.

'Told me what?'

'That Mrs. Armitage died, twenty minutes ago, from the effects of a poisonous Indian drug.'

'Good heavens! Self-administered?'

'Yes; there had been a scene between her and that ayah. I got them apart, but it appears that, in her frenzy, the Indian woman had uttered some threat, and Mrs. Armitage, fearing its fulfilment committed suicide during a minute she was left alone.'

'Did the ayah mean to kill her, do you think?'

'No—no! She evidently abhors the idea of murder; she was beside herself with grief for the loss of her child.'

Lady Meredith and Cecily heard the news in silence, and the former said—

'Thank God, Alwyn is not responsible for that death! I will go to him at once Vere.'

Cecily turned to her fiancé as his mother left the room.

'Poor Alwyn! I wish we could comfort him,' she said.

'Only my mother can do that,' replied Vere Meredith. 'But by-and-bye I shall try and rouse him from his grief for the poor dead girl, by reminding him of the living sister, whom it is the duty of us all to succor and protect.'

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. and Mrs. Vere Meredith were sitting side by side in the cork-woods at Hyeres enjoying their rather rare opportunity of a tete-a tete during the closing days of their honeymoon.

'I hope Winifred won't be too tired after her journey to Carqueranne in that ramshackle old coach,' Cecily observed, as she laid her small, unglowed hand lightly on her husband's big brown one.

'Now, now, Nurse Hope! Don't fume and fret over that patient of yours. My mother and Alwyn are quite capable of looking after the child for a few hours.'

'Yes, but Lois—Winifred, I mean—is still delicate—'

'Oh darling, for goodness' sake do be careful about that name! You made Alwyn wince last night. It's only six months since the other Lois—'

'Yes; I was so sorry,' interrupted his wife. 'What a mercy it is, though, Vere, that the child takes so naturally to that second name of hers! That illness was a blessing in disguise when it carried away all her memory of the past, except the few early hours of her childhood.'

'I wish the waters of Lethe could have laved poor Alwyn's trouble soul; but, really, I think he's beginning to look less wretched and haggard than he did.'

'Indeed, he does. Vere, will you promise not to think me stupid if I tell you an idea of mine?'

'Well, what is it, goose?'

'I think that perhaps some way Alwyn may learn to love again.'

'My dear Ciss, what an enigmatical speech!'

'Oh! Vere, can't you see how Winifred appeals to your brother? He pities and cares for her because she's so fragile and tender, and pity is akin to love.'

'H'm! What match-makers you women are! My mother hinted at something of the kind to me last night.'

'I shall be so glad if it ever comes to pass.'

'It's early days to think of such a thing. Men don't forget so easily as you seem to imagine they do, my dear girl.'

'But you would like her for a sister, Vere?'

'Yes. She's a dear little soul. And strongly like, yet very different from the other Lois. I never quite cared for the idea of that poor creature as my sister-in-law.'

'I wonder what's become of that man Beauchamp—I mean James Winter?'

'Don't know, I'm sure. Yes; I believe Davidson heard that he had gone to the Cape.'

'He'll keep straight for a time, at any rate. He was so astonished at being let off.'

'He had good in him. Perhaps he re-

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pented at Lois's death.'

'Let's hope so, at any rate. I'm afraid I've not much faith in the sudden conversion of superstitious cowards such as he.'

'Oh! Vere, don't be hard, dear. You had more confidence in that Indian woman.'

'Poor soul! She sinned entirely for the love of her child, and she made complete reparation; did she not?'

'Well, didn't he?'

'No more than he was obliged to, my dear child. I think he's probably gone to exploit some of your thousands in Rhodesia—Davidson's informant heard he was going on there. I couldn't press him too heavily—he was cunning enough to know that. I rather fancy he got the best of the bargain.'

'Do you regret my lost money so much, Vere?'

A mild explosion of wrathful words followed this question, and then honeymoon amenities were resumed, and peace and contentment reigned again.

Lady Meredith and Winifred Armitage sat on the balcony of their hotel that evening, watching the electric range-light from the French iron-clad that was lying in the blue waters beyond.

The girl was dilating on the beauties of the little fishing village she had visited that afternoon, to the bride and bridegroom who were standing on the other side of her.

Lady Meredith interposed with an amused smile.

'I'm afraid you'll find English scenery rather disappointing after your glimpse of the Riviera,' she said.

The girl gave her a reproachful look.

'Why, mother, England is my own country. Of course I shall think it the most beautiful in the world.'

Lady Meredith kissed the pretty flower-like face.

She delighted in hearing the word 'mother' from those lips, for when one day the child had naively said that she did not like being different from the three others, and would like to address her as 'mother' she positively forbade her to call her Lady Meredith again.

She was just the daughter the gentle lady desired.

She was fond of Cecily, but the latter was apt to shock her with what she considered her democratic ideas.

Winifred would never take up nursing as a hobby, as Cecily had done in her girlish days.

She loved music, and excelled in the minor accomplishments that had been in vogue in Lady Meredith's youth.

It only her eldest son would learn to love the pretty child! she thought.

But though Alwyn Meredith admired the delicately-tinted oval face, with its frame of dusky silken hair, the large, innocent looking blue eyes could not charm away the haunting memories of those other eyes that had bewitched and enslaved him.

Vere Meredith consoled his mother with a prophecy that she regarded as nothing less than miraculous, in after days.

'You'll have your wish, mother,' he said. 'And though possibly you may at first consider Alwyn not so deeply in love as he ought to be, you'll find that Winifred will be quite satisfied with him, both before marriage and after.'

'Here is one of those sweet, unselfish natures that create their own sunshine, and then use it to dispel the clouds that darken other lives. And perhaps she may meet with her reward.'

I shall never be surprised if, in years to come, Alwyn develops into as adoring a Benedi as you would wish him to be yourself.'

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George Washington, said the father impressively; couldn't tell a lie.

He couldn't! returned the boy scornfully. Huh! he didn't have much of an imagination, did he?