

Wedded and Parted.

BY BERTHA M. CLAY.

Author of "A Woman's Vengeance," "Between Two Loves," "A Fatal Wedding," "Which Loved Him Best," "Her Second Love."

(CONTINUED.)

"Does it pain you now?" he asked.

"Not much," she replied. "Thank you."

But for a minute longer he held her hand, looking at it intently.

"My wife's hand," he said—"the hand that holds my heart, my love, my life—the hand that has never yet lain willingly in mine. May I kiss it, Lanthe, before I let it go?"

"Yes," she replied, her face flushing, "if it pleases you."

He bent down and kissed it with such love, such passion, that the kiss burned, her like flame; then, without another word, he quitted the room.

"What a sad thing it is he is of low birth!" said Lady Lanthe to herself. "There is something really pleasant about him."

All day the memory of that kiss was with her. The hand he had caressed seemed to burn her. More than once she caught herself remembering how his eyes had shone and his lips had trembled—what passion and what pain there had been in his face. She began to reflect deeply. Her life was one round of self-indulgence, of gaiety, flattery and pleasure; while a noble heart lay under her feet—a heart that she crushed at every step.

One morning it seemed to her that something unusual had occurred; the servants looked tired, and some of them were absent. Her maid told her that during the night the Earl had been seized with a sudden fainting fit; they had hastily summoned the Squire, whose first care was that Lady Lanthe should not be disturbed. He had sent off at once for the doctor, and had sat up himself during the whole night. The Earl was better—almost well, in fact; the attack had been but trifling. Yet the Squire had never left him, but had tended him with the love and devotion of a son, his only anxiety being that his wife should be spared all care and trouble.

"Where is Mr. Carré now?" she asked.

They told her he had fallen asleep on the couch in the morning room. She went in quietly. There was a little stand by his side, and on it stood her favorite lemon-plant. She broke off a spray as she stood watching him, and bruised it in her white fingers. How pale and worn he looked! How handsome his face was in its repose—the lips so firm, the rich clustering hair falling over the broad brow. Had he been of her order, she would have called him princely. One arm was thrown above his head, and she stood silently watching him. He did not look like a happy man. There were great lines of pain on his face which told of many weary hours.

Not happy? Her heart smote her as she looked at him. How he loved her! How he had lavished most royal gifts upon her! He had given her his wealth, name, love, everything—had sunk his very identity—and all for love of her. What had he gained? Not a loving look or a kindly word.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured to herself. She bent over him, with more tenderness in her heart than she had ever felt before. She heard him murmur in his sleep:

"Lanthe, my love, my wife—so cold, so cruel!"

A deep sigh that was almost a moan came from his lips. She bent still lower, and the bruised lemon-spray fell from her hands on to his breast.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured again, and with a sudden impulse she touched his hair. It was the first time she had voluntarily gone near him or touched him. Was it Paradise opening to him in his dreams?

Suddenly he stirred in his sleep and she hastened away. Her face burned at the thought that he should wake and find her there. She quitted the room, and he opened his eyes with a confused sense of her presence. He saw the folds of her white dress as she closed the door behind, and he found the lemon spray on his breast.

CHAPTER XII.

A year and more had passed since the Squire and Lady Lanthe had returned home. Everything had fallen into its usual routine, so that it seemed difficult to imagine that any dark trouble had loomed over the Abbey. The only perceptible difference was the presence of the Squire and the great increase in luxury. By this time the whole county had some knowledge of the terms on which the Squire and Lady Lanthe lived. The general decision was that Lady Lanthe had married for money, and the Squire for the sake of the aristocratic union.

When the Squire and his wife went up to London for the season, Lady Lanthe reigned there—the leading

person of the day. Their house was the most popular in the great city; they were the leaders almost everywhere. It was some little comfort to Herman to find that, although she did not love him—did not care for him—she was equally indifferent to every one else. Her proud, serene calm seemed never to be broken.

Then he was returned a member for the county; and it struck him that she was pleased at his success. He flung himself heart and soul into his new duties—he tried to fill his life with them. But there was always the same dreary sense of desolation, the same heartache, and the same longing for love. Then, when the season was ended, they returned to Crombe. He began to abandon hope after that. His wife's well-bred indifference became unbearable.

Everything had fallen into its usual routine. Lady Lanthe spent her time with the Earl, and in receiving and returning hospitality, or amusing herself with books, music, and flowers. She was always kind to her husband in a certain indifferent fashion. She deferred on every occasion to his authority. He was treated by the Earl's wish, as master of the house. His position was a magnificent one, but his heart ached for love, and no love came.

The woman whom he worshipped so passionately would never care for him. She had no heart; she was too proud to love, too haughty to care for anything but her own self-indulgence and her name.

It came to him with a sickening sense of certainty at last. He did not regret what he had done. For her sake he would have done it all over again. But his manhood rose now in hot rebellion against his fate. She could live happily enough without him, but he could live no longer by her side. He had suffered enough. She was welcome.

doubly welcome, to all he had in the world, but he could no longer bear the pain and torment of her presence. His resolve was taken; he must go. They were wedded, it was true, but they must part. He had come to the limit of his patience. If she needed him he would remain; but she did not. His absence could make no possible difference to her life.

There was no need for any scandal, for any explanation—no need that any human being should know the truth as to why he had gone. He would go to America. He had money invested there, and he could say business called him thither; the best thing for which he could hope and pray was that Heaven in its mercy would let him die there. One morning he sent for Lanthe—he was in his favorite room. She smiled when she saw him there.

"You like this room, Herman," she said.

"I had my first hope of love here," he answered. "Lanthe, I have sent for you here to speak to you—here, where without love, you promised to be my wife, and I, trusting in the might of my own love to win yours, took upon myself a task that was superhuman."

The gravity of his voice and manner awed her. She sat down and looked at him wistfully. Surely everything was going well. What did he want?

"Lanthe," continued the grave, passionate voice, "have I not done all that man could do to win your love?"

"Yes," she replied, "I own that you have."

"Yet you no more love me now than you did on the day that I first spoke to you here."

"There can be no question of love between you and me," she observed, haughtily. "Why are you not content to live as hitherto?"

"Why am I not content?" he cried passionately. "Because I am not made of marble or ice—because I have a living human heart that longs for love, a soul that cries out against my cruel life, my cruel solitude—because I can bear my life no longer!"

"Why, what is wrong?" she asked, startled by the passion in his voice.

"Ask me rather, what is right? I love you so entirely, so devotedly, that I must win your love in return, or I must go from you. Can you place your hand in mine, and say, 'I will try to love you, Herman?' Even that will content me."

Her beautiful face had grown strangely pale. She drew back—
(to be continued.)

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	Assets.	Surplus.
1893	\$6,453,309.56	\$229,292.86
1894	6,597,336.30	359,783.12
1895	6,797,391.05	435,113.55
1896	7,039,323.43	507,348.19
1897	7,236,555.75	548,321.09
1898	7,544,227.02	574,224.75
1899	7,991,042.63	576,807.50
1900	8,482,038.00	586,040.24
1901	9,013,082.63	607,932.00
	Premium Income.	Total Income.
1893	\$ 964,201.08	\$1,261,930.51
1894	989,552.73	1,296,145.86
1895	1,040,240.77	1,353,713.38
1896	1,107,779.43	1,421,686.70
1897	1,182,965.15	1,525,630.16
1898	1,278,649.25	1,665,430.85
1899	1,444,862.27	1,833,919.16
1900	1,575,176.25	1,959,882.01
1901	1,735,036.06	2,165,141.94

Notices of Death. Amount of Insurance in Force.

1893	\$456,000	\$35,914,417
1894	452,628	36,312,041
1895	498,969	36,932,148
1896	418,436	38,086,849
1897	604,811	39,943,575
1898	571,316	42,222,364
1899	600,206	46,054,820
1900	594,110	50,191,853
1901	685,472	52,945,044

From the foregoing tables it will be observed that more than two and one-half million dollars have been added to the Assets during the period outlined, that the Premium Income has increased seven hundred seventy thousand dollars, that the surplus to policy holders has increased nearly three-fold and that over seventeen million dollars more insurance is now in force than at the beginning of the term designated.

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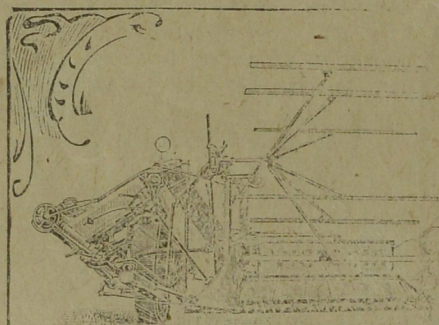
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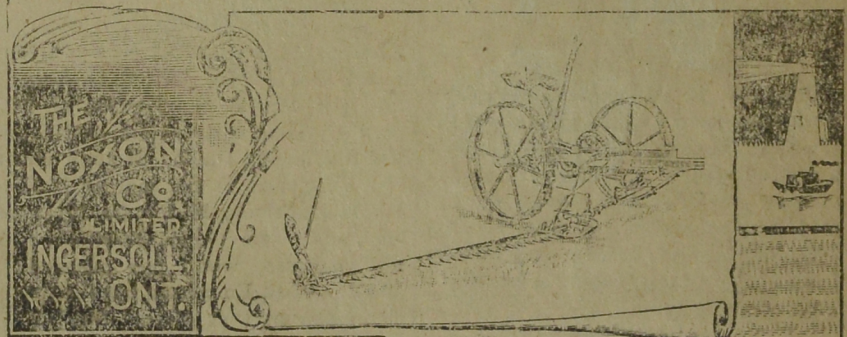
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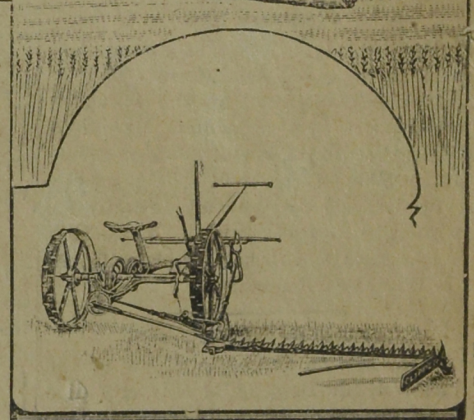
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