

The dressing-room door was tried — was shaken.

"I shall not open the door till morning." Before the words were fairly out, a great noise burst upon the quiet. That noise came between her and what was to be, the solid door, shattered and cried out. A sound of crashing and splintering followed. There came a great shrieking noise as if the very foundations of the house were being broken up, and as by some explosion, sentered to the winds of heaven. With that last harsh splintering, the second of the lower part of the wall, which had stood and was coming in, head lowered like a bull, red-eyed, maddened. He did not advance upon her, but upon the other door, still locked, bolted, chained, and now his eyes were making circuit of the room.

"What are you looking for?" she said. He came close. She fell back before his advance, until arrested by his words, for the words were like a cry for help. "Don't ever do it again. Say what you like to me — but don't ever look me out. It makes me see red."

Her bellious strength was suddenly gone. She sank into the chair under the light. As her upturned eyes rested on his tortured face, something strange in experience, something altogether new seized her. Her eyes, and in her face, which had hardened, was suddenly like molten wax — for looking in his face was like looking in an open wound. While her wide eyes filled, the form before her that had seemed to her form and granite made man — slightly it swayed.

"Garth!" She held up her hand. A ragged, stifled cry came out of his lips, and he was on his knees, his face hidden in her lap. No snger of his had ever seemed to her so terrible as that torn and tortured cry. It was like some convulsion of inanimate Nature, dwarfing the narrow human experience, beguaring her of words, leaving her trembling and dumb. That cry of his still sounded in the silent room. It lived on, long after it had left his lips. It cried again from the corner. It echoed from window to door. She held her clasped hands shaking to her breast, looking about wildly, as if to find him help. Then as her eyes fell upon the figure crouching at her feet, and she realised that kneeling there like a little child, she began to sob softly above his hidden face. So often she had said in her heart, "If only you really loved me," she never knew that, bending over him now, she said the words aloud, until she heard him answering, "It is because of that. You can say anything you like. Don't lock me out."

"I never will again," she answered, laying her cheek on his hair.

"Garth, I was at Little Malley when you came tonight. I heard you asking —" "Still no sign. "Blanche lied because she thought — she knew, I was afraid."

He repeated: "You were afraid?" "Oh, yes, I was afraid. I was afraid now, but I have to tell you. It was because I was afraid I came by the old coach road in a motor-car — Lord Falconbridge brought me home."

"How could you know?" "I rode through the wood. I saw you pass."

She waited, knowing that she and the man at her side had skirted disaster close that night.

"Please tell me, have you been jealous, Garth?"

"You haven't thought much about me of late," he said in dogged self-defence — "the nearest you came to that, was to think of the child."

But although it was so untrue, the saying shed a light.

"And through it all" — she framed his face between her hands — "do you mean that you loved me through it all?"

"It's not to be helped that I love you." She laughed upon the edge of tears.

"Oh, Garth, Garth, there's nobody in all the world, but would think it a disaster to be you or me — unless, how do they, those people who have lived calm, unshaken lives, how can they be sure of each other, as you and I are sure?"

But he had no more words to-night than common.

"If any power but death," she ended softly, "could have parted you and me, we should not be together now."

"No," he said.

"What about the future? when the black moods come again?" She clung closer to him.

"They won't — so long as you make me feel I am near to you. And that no one else is," he added fervently.

Ah, she was to see the face of the Future.

Involuntarily she said, "And the Past?"

That term for him seemed strangely contracted, for like one confidently calling up a witness on his side, "Do you forget," he said, "the months here before the baby was born?"

"If I have, I never will again," she answered. "The Past" for her, too, should mean that tender, happy time.

After all those months of waiting for him to speak, after being so sure that her love would inevitably win to him the story of those other years — who and where, and how and all the rest — now, waking beside him in the dawn, it suddenly came over her that she should never know these things. He would love her, yet of this she was assured — and he was steadfast unto stubbornness. But she would never get him to lift the veil. And for a moment the thought chilled her. But the late realisation of the truth was at last accepted. He had done what the artist had refused pleasure in concealing himself in pain. His way was to damn the circumstance, and then do all he could to forget it. Even if he remembered, memory would never get so far as speech. If he had foreseen the present need, he would have none at all for the past. All those weeks in London, she had felt the barrier of the unknown years rise between

her and him high, impassable, impregnable — and for a while the barrier had shut out joy. But only for a while. She saw by the light of the new morning that what she had deplored as a law in the faith that she hoped to establish between them was no flaw of his making. It was a thing essential, inevitable — part of the human lot. She had thought that other husbands, close to their wives in sympathy and devotion, told them their past. But did they? Not one had told, or could tell everything. To any but the least sensitive, even the vaguest reminder of these things set the nerves jarring. And yet the source of pain lay behind every marriage made late enough to be founded on the rock of proved fitness. Her good fortune it was that Garth would never make those old days live again, by any word of his. They seemed the more securely dead. They were as if they had never been.

Garth Vincent is an uncommon but not an impossible type of character, autocratic, thoroughly truthful, and single minded. Understanding little, and sympathising less with the subtleties of the feminine mind, which is at once their charm and their repulsion — for man — he may be said to be more interesting to read about than easy to live with. But someone has said, "Give me a man," and to that someone may be given Sir Garth. "Put not your trust in princes," is a saying as old as the hills. Prince Anton Waldenstein is a thoroughly despicable character, without a single redeeming feature. To liken him to Machiavelli would be to do Machiavelli injustice, since Machiavelli stooped to duplicity for love of country. Lord Peterborough is a good type of the English aristocrat. His nobility is shown by his refusal to have Katharine made aware that he was about to die, for fear of retarding her recovery. Katharine is a wonderfully strong character of the type that is made perfect through weakness, and in spite of her sufferings one could not wish her different. Brought up amongst people whose highest aim was to kill time, and whose moral code was of the flimsiest, she formed her own ideals and lived up to them as far as was humanly possible, and at last won as great a measure of happiness as is permitted to mortals. Lady Peterborough had all the faults of her class, but redeemed them in part by her loyalty to Katharine when her honour was menaced. The book is so excellently written that one cannot but reiterate the regret that so good a writer should prostitute her talent to the rendering of that veil of reserve, and the vivisection of everything her sex holds sacred. DELTA.

THE SIN OF LABAN ROUTH. — Adeline Sergeant. Digby, Long and Co., London.

In these days of complex plot and doubtful moral, it is refreshing to come across this delightfully simple story of sin committed and mercifully condoned. Laban Routh has come into possession of the land he farms by the disinheriting of his elder brother. This brother dies, leaving one girl (Esther), to whom Laban Routh, a hard, dour man, grudgingly gives a home. His two sons, Stephen and Hilary, are both in love with Esther, but it is not until they are grown to manhood that anything like serious rivalry takes place between them. But the winning of an artistic honour by Stephen, which Hilary thinks he has more right to than Stephen, brings matters to a crisis, and ends in a terrible quarrel between the two. This quarrel takes place on the side of a cliff, and in the struggle which ensues Hilary falls over the cliff into the river below. Search is made for his body, but it cannot be found, and Stephen, in his first grief, thinks himself his brother's murderer. Peter Preston, a lawyer's clerk, who is the evil genius of the Routh family, and a suitor for Esther's hand, witnesses the quarrel, and attempts to extort blackmail from Stephen for silence. But Stephen, who is thoroughly upright, refuses when he hears that a part of the price to be paid is Esther's hand. Stephen goes home and confesses his share in Hilary's death to his father, who is stricken down with the illness which shortly after causes his death. He, in his turn, confesses that Preston has been for some time in receipt of blackmail from him for hiding the fact that another and later will had been found by Preston which would have the effect of making Esther sole heiress. Routh sends for Esther, confesses how he was tempted by Preston, and how he fell, and begs her to show her forgiveness by marrying Stephen. Esther, who loves Stephen with all her heart, and who is unaware

of the part Stephen has had in Hilary's death, readily consents. In the meantime Preston, who has been dangerously ill, leaves his bed, anxious to learn how things are progressing at the farm. As he nears the house he sees that something unusual is in progress, and is told that Stephen and Esther have been that day married. He sees Esther, and tells her of the part Stephen has played in Hilary's death, and seeing that Esther is ignorant of it, persuades her that Stephen has wilfully deceived her. Stephen, in his turn, had been under the impression that Laban Routh had told her everything. Esther leaves Stephen on

their wedding day, and going up to London, consults a friend, who knows both she and Stephen. This friend absolutely refuses to believe any evil of Stephen, and Esther returns home full of remorse for having doubted him. As she nears home she meets Stephen. Explanations and reconciliation follow, and also happiness, as it turns out that Hilary, after all, was not drowned, but had hidden away until he could meet his brother, who he at heart really loved, calmly. Hilary emigrates, Preston dies, and the married lovers are left in undisputed possession, and marital felicity. DELTA.

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