

ed her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud, whilst the Doctor said never a word, knowing that nature demanded her own way, and that tears alone would ease the pain and the shame from which the outraged girl was suffering.

When at last she became calmer, he brought her a glass of sherry, which he quietly begged her to drink, and then, feeling stronger, she went on with her sad story.

"I don't know how long I lay there, but when I came to my senses I found that daylight was fading. In terror lest he should return, I seized my hat and cloak, and with my last few shillings in my purse, I hurried from the house, not caring where I went, so long as he could not follow me. I walked about all that night, and in the early morning I came to a railway station, and the thought occurred to me to go by train somewhere — anywhere — I cared not where. There was a train waiting at the platform, and I got into it, and seeing the name Middleville on the carriage, I asked a porter to get me a ticket for that place. The ticket took all the money, with the exception of one sixpence, which I gave to the man for his trouble. When I reached here it was getting dark, and I walked about thinking that I should come across some place where I could sit down and wait and rest until the daylight, but—

At that moment the house echoed with a violent ring at the bell, and with a scream of terror the girl rose to her feet, exclaiming:

"It is he. Oh, my God! He has found me!"

She would have rushed from the room, but the Doctor seized her arm, and firmly placed her in her chair, and he assured her it was merely someone coming to fetch him to see a patient, the door was pushed open, and a man strode into the room.

Doctor Craig knew, instinctively, as he looked at the man that he was the villain who had so terribly ill-used the poor girl who clung in piteous terror to his side.

The two men measured each other with their eyes for some seconds, and then the intruder, cowed by the cool gaze of the man before him, burst out:

"At last, madam, I have found you! May I ask you to explain your strange and truly unladylike behaviour?"

The girl shivered, and drew her hand from the Doctor's arm.

"May I ask if you are this lady's husband?" inquired Dr. Craig.

"I have that honour," sneered the man. "I need hardly ask you are: a lover is never to be mistaken: we husbands are less fortunate."

The Doctor controlled himself with a mighty effort and replied:

"I have just heard this lady's story, so your present behaviour is hardly a surprise to me."

"Her story, indeed," blustered the man. "She's pretty good at story telling: she got me to marry her through one of her yams, curse her for a fool!"

"The insult served to strengthen the girl, drawing herself to her full height, she faced the man proudly.

"Cease to further insult me and this gentleman, whose name you are not fit to mention, and tell me why you have followed me," she demanded. "If you still hope to obtain money from me through my father, I assure you you are mistaken. I will die before I will own you as my husband, or return to my father's house to beg for you."

"Thank you! I do not think we will trouble the gentleman you honour by claiming as your father," sneered the man. "As I told you I must have five hundred pounds, but as you have so very obligingly led me to your lover, I think I will trouble him for that small sum, and then I'll no longer intrude upon you."

He did not finish his sentence, for at that moment Doctor Craig seized him by the throat, and fairly lifted him out of the room, through the unopened door, into the midst of the wondering servants, who, hearing the unaccustomed noise following the abrupt entrance of the stranger, had collected in a silent and awe-stricken group in the hall.

"Morris, fetch a policeman," ordered the doctor, still retaining a firm hold upon the throat of his captive, who, by this time was in a state of utter collapse.

Morris quickly opened the street door, and almost fell into the arms of a police officer, who was at the moment about to ring the bell.

The officer entered the hall, and taking in the situation at a glance, walked up to the half-suffocated Merton, and touching his cap to Doctor Craig, produced a

paper from his pocket and arrested Charles Merton on a charge of embezzling five hundred pounds belonging to his wife, Jane Merton, on the 4th day of May, 1900.

Doctor Craig passed the prisoner over to the officer, who at once handcuffed the man, and was preparing to take him off the premises, when he found his arm seized by an excited girl, who gasped out:

"You said his wife, Jane Merton. Who is she? Oh, don't tell me she is dead! Oh! answer me, answer me!"

"No, Miss, she ain't dead, that I can swear," answered the astonished policeman, "she's been after him this last week, and only yesterday she found him in London, and it's owing to a wire from her that I tracked the prisoner here this blessed evening, after he'd given them chaps in London the slip."

The girl turned as though to walk back into the room from which she had darted like a being demented, upon hearing the charge upon which her tormentor had been arrested, but the relief proved more than her overtaxed strength could bear, and with a murmured "Thank God," she would have fallen to the ground, had not the Doctor caught her in his arms, and carried her, for the second time in that eventful evening, into the cosy library where he again placed her upon the sofa, and with the help of the good Mrs. Holmes, once more restored her to consciousness.

The miserable Merton was at once taken to the police station, and after Mrs. Holmes had managed to restore the excited domestics to a reasonable state of order, she took the poor young guest to her own comfortable room, nor did she leave her until the tired eyes closed in the sleep her weary body so much needed. Surely her guardian angel had watched well her wandering steps that awful day, or it had been well for her that she had never been born.

Doctor Craig, after having given strict orders to his housekeeper not to permit the strange visitor, on any account, to leave the house until his return, departed by train for London, to call upon Mr. Holt, in Queen Anne's Gate.

It was a glorious afternoon in August, and Mr. Holt was sitting reading his newspaper in the dining-room of Carey Hall. He was a tall, finely-built man, with a face that would have been handsome had it not been marred by an expression of utter ill-temper and moroseness. People who knew Mr. Holt were much shocked, but by no means surprised, when, some months before, it was rumoured that his daughter Beatrice had left her home secretly, owing to a rupture she had had with her father, concerning a marriage he had tried to force upon her. What did surprise Mr. Holt's acquaintances, for friends he had none, was Beatrice's return to her father's home in London, and her subsequent visit to the Continent with him.

Had those people known Dr. Craig, and his uncommon personality, and had they been present at a certain interview which took place between Mr. Holt and himself the preceding March, they might have ceased to wonder, and have taken Beatrice's return more as a matter of course.

Mr. Holt put down his paper, took out his watch, noted the time, then rang the bell.

When the footman entered the room, his master asked where Dr. Craig and Miss Beatrice were.

"They have taken a boat, and gone for a row on the river, sir," answered the man.

Something very nearly akin to a smile passed over Mr. Holt's countenance, and motioning to the man to leave the room, he resumed his paper. The servant closed the door behind him noiselessly, and hurried down to the servants' hall, and informed the various domestics that he found there that "the old man" wanted to know where Miss Beatrice and the Doctor were. "And I'm blessed," said the man, "if he didn't try to squeeze a smile out of his old head-piece when I told him as how they were out on the river together."

"Thank Heavens for that," ejaculated one of the maid servants; "if only Miss Beatrice will fall in love with the Doctor she may be happy yet. For anyone can see he fair worships her."

"If Miss Beatrice will fall in love with the Doctor," reiterates Sally, the young parlour maid, with an emphasis on the "if," "I'd like to see any girl, were she twenty times Miss Beatrice Holt, of Carey Hall, refusing to marry Dr. Craig if he chose to ask her. If you ask me, I think she is as much in love with the

Doctor as he is with her. And I think I know something of these matters," she added with a coquettish smile at handsome James, the footman, who promptly tried to steal a kiss on the strength of such encouragement, and was rewarded for his temerity by a sound box on the ears.

On the river the subjects of this conversation were lazily drifting with the current, the day being too hot for any needless exertion, and as they did not wish to journey anywhere in particular, but merely to be together, why row! Why, indeed?

Dr. Craig had been staying at Carey Hall for the past week, and was now no longer in doubt as to the curious sensation which he experienced on that eventful evening when Beatrice told him that she had married Charles Merton. He realised that he loves this girl with all the strength of his matured manhood, and he is only waiting until he thinks that she returns his love before asking her to be his wife. He feels conscious that the knowledge of that terrible night comes between them like a cloud, and he is trying to wait patiently until time shall have softened the recollection, and she shall have learned to love him, so that he shall become the man she cares for, and shall cease to be merely a friend upon whom she lavishes her gratitude for the part he played in the most awful incident of her young life. Any ordinary man would have accepted that gratitude as love, and been content, but Dr. Craig, being very far above the ordinary man, is not contented, and is, therefore, the last man on earth to imagine a girl in love with him, and he is too thoroughly in love himself to be satisfied with anything less than love in exchange for that which he has to give.

Beatrice was looking very beautiful as she rested in the stern of the boat, her slim, graceful figure, in her dainty white dress, clearly outlined against the crimson of the boat cushions, and her dainty young face shaded by her parasol.

The man opposite to her would give worlds to take her hand, which is resting on the side of the boat, in his, and tell her of his great love, but with a mighty effort he controls himself, and talks to her of the beauties which Nature has so lavishly spared around them.

Oh! the pity of it! For whilst he talks of vivid blues, and greens which sparkle in the glorious sunshine, the girl is longing for him to tell her all that she knows is seething in his heart, and to breathe out to him, in the shelter of his strong arms, the words he longs to hear. Surely no girl was ever more sorely tried.

She knew that this man loved her, and she knew that she loved him, she realised too, the way he mistook her love for gratitude, and try as she might, and did, to tell him of her love, her efforts only seemed to further muddle the situation.

She ceased to reply to his polite conversation, in fact she failed to hear what he was saying. She was busy thinking, thinking if there was any way out of the tangled skein. He, seeing her gazing absently at the water, as if unconscious of his presence, asked her if she were tired of the boat, and would like to land, and walk back to the Hall by the riverside.

"Oh, yes," she answered almost crossly. "I am very tired of this stupid boat. Let us walk home, by all means."

They landed and walked along the pretty winding path slowly and silently. At last he broke the silence, saying gravely:

"May I hope to see you in the morning, before I leave?"

"Before you leave?" she repeated. "I—I did not know that you were going so soon."

"Why! I have been here a week! I feared you were growing tired of my presence, as my poor patients are of my absence," he replied, watching the half-bowed head, so near his shoulder, with a very tender smile.

She looked up quickly, ready to deny his imputation, and caught the look upon his face. Throwing all reserve to the winds, she impulsively held out her two hands to him, exclaiming in a voice, trembling with the love it failed to hide:

"Oh! my dear! How can you say such things to me." And then the shame of her confession rushed upon her, and with a startled exclamation, she turned to run from him, but she was too late. He has seen the look in her eyes, he has heard the note in her voice, and with one spring he caught her in his arms,

and holding her so that their eyes may be demanded almost roughly:

"Beatrice! Don't fool with me. Tell me! Is it true? Is it true?"

"She tried to free herself, but his arms did not loosen their hold, and his eyes still sought hers, as if they were a glass wherein he would read her inmost soul.

"Is what true?" she whispered.

"You are playing with me," he said, letting go of her, and half pushing her from him, and then she realised that she must tell him of her love or he would never ask for it again; so she turned gently to him, and looking gravely into his face, she said quietly,

"Yes! it is true."

"She was in his arms once more. And thus they stood tasting the sweetest moments of their lives.

The river murmured at their feet, and the birds twittered happily in the trees above their heads, but they heeded neither the one nor the other. They were alone together, nothing else in the wide world mattered.

That evening, as they sat alone in the drawing-room, after duly receiving Mr. Holt's sanction to their engagement, they talked of their strange and awful first meeting, and he begged her to forget the whole terrible circumstance, but she silenced all his fears on the subject by gently remarking,

"My dearest! Do not ask me to forget my life's lesson, rather let us ever remember it, so that whatever trials may befall us in the years that are to come, we may remember that what seemed to us, in our ignorance, to be great calamities; may, in reality be the road by which it shall please God to lead us, as in this case, to the greatest happiness our lives can ever know."

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