

PRIZES FOR CAKE-MAKERS. See page
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HORNER'S PENNY STORIES



HER COUNTRY'S FOE *By Bessie Reynolds.*

No. 1114.]

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[January 23rd, 1915,

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THIS WEEK: "FOR HIS FRIEND'S SAKE."

FIRM FRIENDS.

DAVID and Jonathan, Sister Mary, the Red Cross nurse at the large Hospital on the East Coast, had christened them from the first moment when they were brought into the ward, and Ben Huntley insisted, against all orders, in somehow hopping and hobbling to the bedside of his comrade, and giving him an absolutely motherly glance before he allowed himself to be placed in his own bed, where he subsided, looking a little white and shaken, but full of spirit.

"Saved me, 'e did," he explained. "Brought me in under fire when I was wounded—carried me 'isself, and got 'is own wounds doing of it."

An eager eulogy from Jonathan this, which made her turn with interest to his David.

And if Ben Huntley was only slightly wounded, as they counted this in the East Coast hospital—which meant an arm in a sling, and an ankle put into queer, weird-looking ankle-splints—his comrade had received what the boys called "a thicker dose."

The surgeons coming round presently decided that an operation would be necessary; and Mary, reading the colonel's grave face, understood that things were quite likely to go hard with the man who lay so quiet and white, save for the red spot on either worn cheek, that spoke of the fact that he was "running a temperature."

He was conscious, for he groaned softly now and again—very softly, as though a little ashamed of the moan that he could not quite repress. Mary, lifting his head carefully to give him a drink, met the gaze of his pal's eyes fixed eagerly upon her.

Ben waited until the other man had closed his eyes, and was apparently dozing, and then, with a brown, imperative finger, he beckoned Mary to his side.

"What was the doctor saying?" he asked softly. "Something abart a hoperation, I 'eard."

"Yes." Mary answered him in quiet, matter-of-fact tones. "An operation will be necessary, as it has been in many cases. He will go ahead quickly enough after that."

"If 'e gits over it," he whispered. "Look here, Sister, you don't know 'ow I feel abart this. My pal saved me, an' got done in hisself in doing of it—see?"

"He took the risk of his own free choice," Mary told him. "And, I suppose, if the positions had been reversed, you'd have done the same for him?"

"You bet I would!" he said, with emphasis. "But I tell yer—if anythink happens to him—"

He turned in an unoffending moustache, and vented subdued feeling upon it with a savage under jaw.

"Me an' Jim's been pals fur years," he added softly. "Ain't never 'ad a secret from each other, we ain't—'ardly ever."

A queer little flush swept to his cheek in the final hesitation.

"If they let's 'im die——" He growled, and vented unutterable feeling on the long-suffering moustache again.

"I think you may be sure that we are all doing our best for him," Mary said. "You'll be getting a temperature yourself, if you don't keep quiet; and since you've no earthly excuse for such a thing, that will mean that I shall get into trouble over it. I'm sure you don't want to get me a scolding."

But he hardly gave her a smile even for that, though he nodded understanding. It was later, when his chum had awakened from a troublesome sleep, looking clear-

eyed enough, though evidently suffering still, that he heard himself called softly.

"Ben, old chap."

"Yes?" He dragged himself painfully nearer to the edge of his own bed to listen.

"You heard what they said, Ben? They're agoin' to put me under gas, and do somethin' or other."

Ben nodded—determined, and almost painful cheerfulness smiling on his face.

"You'll go ahead after that—that there Sister said so."

"P'r'aps," Jim Benton said doubtfully. "Anyways, if I don't pull through—well, you remember little Minnie Williams?" The feverish colour heightened on his haggard face. With all a man's shame about his most secret emotions, he dropped his eyes just then, and so he did not see the queer little light that shot into the eyes of his pal.

"She—well, she as good as promised me," he said. "Gave me 'er photer—I've got it here—and I thought maybe, if I peg out, you'd give it 'er, and 'er letter, an' just a word, saying as 'ow I thought of 'er at the last——"

"Oh, stow it!" Ben said angrily; but there was a queer, husky note in his voice.

"I never told yer about 'er—thought you might think as there'd be somebody comin' between us. But, arter all these years, there ain't a woman as could really come between us, Ben."

Ben gulped down something that, to judge by the expression of his face, was not particularly easy to swallow, before he answered, but when the words came they had the solemnity of a secret vow.

"No—nobody'll come between us, old chap!"

But when the other man had dropped asleep again, Ben lay almost painfully wide awake. He watched the little quiet panorama of the ward with eyes that in reality saw but little of it.

Nurses came and went, teas and suppers were prepared and partaken of. Down at the far end of the ward, some of the most convalescent men gathered in a group round the fire for a last chat and a smoke before turning in.

Only once did Ben open his lips for a request, and then it was to know if he could not have a smoke also.

It was Sister Mary who brought him a cigarette, and lighted it for him, and he bit on it as though savaging an enemy.

The ward settled down for the night. The day nurses, including the sweet faced Sister, whom he dimly felt would "help a fellow if she could," went off duty, and the night nurse fashioned herself a little oasis of comfort by the distant fire, with a shaded lamp, and a regiment of small odds and ends that she expected would be needed for the night.

Half dreamily Ben Huntley watched her. Sleep felt very far from his eyes just then, and yet he did not want to think, either. Thought, indeed, was something that he wanted to thrust into the background, and yet it came clamouring, insistent, impossible to escape in the stillness of the shadowed ward.

Even an occasional moan from the comrade at his side only drove that insistent thought more firmly into his brain.

In every man's life comes at length the cross-roads and the supreme temptation. To Ben to-day it had come in the few words of his old chum, and the name that was hidden in his own heart also—the name of a girl.

He understood that she must have been playing with one of them—this girl who had given her photograph to each, and something that remotely resembled a promise, "when the war is over."

Yet, in his heart, he felt that it was himself she loved. Her looks, her words, little things that came back to him seemed to tell him that. Yet Jim evidently was just as sure of her.

A burning indignation arose within him against this girl who played fast and loose with men's hearts, and yet, the thought of giving her up to his chum hurt him like a physical agony.

Minnie, with her fair, tumbled curls, her pink and white prettiness, and the slim grace of her—Minnie, with the challenging eyes, and the little alluring smile—the very thought of her was drawing him to the greatest temptation of his life.

It drew him to another thought that he scarcely dared glance at, though somehow he knew that it was at the back of his mind all the time. Jim might die. Hard though the Sister had tried to deceive him, he understood that it was "touch and go" for the poor chap. And then—well, of course, things would be straightforward—

And at that point he, too, gave a groan—of horror at the point to which his thoughts had brought him.

But when next day Jim had been wheeled away on the ever useful stretcher for the operation that meant life or death, the chum who had caught at his hand as he passed drew from beneath his own pillow two little bits of cardboard, and held them side by side.

The same girl, the same pose! She had treated them very impartially as he admitted grimly.

And then, as he lay looking at the two faces, somehow the thing no longer looked so difficult. Instead of the cross-roads, with Jim, the chum who had risked his own life for him, on the one side, and an alluring, girlish face on the other, he saw only the straight, hard path of duty before him.

When they brought Jim back, and he heard him come painfully back to life, as is the way when the merciful anæsthetic has stolen a man's wits for the time, he was glad that he had made his decision first—made it irrevocably without consideration of whether Jim lived or died.

BEN'S PLAN.

YET when, weeks later, Ben Huntley was told that someone wished to see him in the waiting-room downstairs, somehow it had never occurred to him that it might be Minnie herself.

All these weeks, while David had been creeping back slowly from the shadow of death, to his Jonathan had come a quicker return to health. Ben Huntley was able to hobble about now, with the aid of a stick, and he hobbled along beside Jim's bed, with a little laugh.

"Wonder who wants to see me?" he said. "First I've heard of any inquiring relatives—ain't got a soul in the world belonging to me."

"Your gal, perhaps?" Jim said, with a little grin, that was forced and hard. Ben was conscious that his pal's eyes met his with a keen, hard glance—conscious, also, that his own face flushed beneath that gaze, though why he could hardly have told.

But he hobbled out of the ward without another word, and so down the stairs, and into the little waiting-room, where, with a start of surprise, he found himself face to face with Minnie Williams.

An eager, girlish face, two hands outstretched in welcome, eyes that for once held something better than the old gay light.

Yet, strangely enough, the eager welcome left him unmoved; the pink and white prettiness had no power to stir his heart to an extra throb. He was thinking of Jim in the ward overhead—poor old Jim, so deceived and so trusting!—and unconsciously his face grew stern and hard.

The colour faded out of the pretty face.

"Aren't you pleased to see me?" she asked. "You look—Ben, you look as if you don't care at all, and I had such a job to get away! They wouldn't have let me come at all, though I'd saved up for the fare, only a woman I know was coming—and now you're not pleased to see me!"

"No, I don't know as I am," he said slowly; and two big tears gathered in the blue eyes. She lifted those eyes

pathetically to his, as though calling his attention to her grief. Not so many months ago Ben would have kissed the tears away, but now he looked at them with a sort of grim indifference.

"I suppose you know Jim's here—in the same ward with me?" he said inconsequently.

"Yes, I heard that." She flushed awkwardly. "That's why I asked to see you down here if you was well enough. I knew we couldn't talk with him there, not like we could alone."

The little glance she gave him would once have thrilled him with joy, but now it left him unmoved, even—so strangely can the heart of man change—with something of distaste and contempt.

"Thought, too, that it 'ud be a bit awkward, didn't you?" he queried. "Playin' two chaps on a string makes things a bit awkward-like sometimes, don't it?"

"What do you mean?" she demanded; but the flush deepened in her pretty face, and her eyes dropped before his stern, steady gaze.

"I mean," he said, "that my chum Jim up there believes as you love 'im, an' that you've as good as promised yourself to 'im."

"It ain't true," she said shrilly; but the colour was wiped out of her face now, and it was white and a little frightened.

"Well, I reckon it's about true enough. Anyways, Jim's got a photer of yourn same as the one you give me—"

"You're jealous—that's what it is!" Something of her old assurance had come back, but it faded quickly before his steady, unmoved gaze.

"That's just what I'm not!" he told her. "But I'm goin' to see as you act straight by my pal!"

"What—what do you mean?"

She stood looking up at him as he towered above her, supporting himself a little painfully on the stick that had helped him to hobble down the stairs.

"I mean just this. Visitors is allowed, and you're comin' up now to see Jim. You'll just make it clear to 'im, too, that you're ready an' willin' to marry 'im, an' you must trust me right enough never to let on as you was deceivin' 'im."

"But you know, Ben—you do know as it was always you!" There was a sob in her throat now. She caught her breath like a hurt child. "It was only for a bit of fun. I never meant nothing, an' he might have seen it, only he was always so sure—"

"Seems 'e was deceived," Ben said. "But you're going ter make things right."

"Ben"—she stretched out her hands almost wildly—"Ben, you wouldn't be so hard, just for a bit of a lark like that—"

"My best pal, 'e is," he told her. "More than that, I owe my life to 'im. Nearly got killed hisself, 'e did, carryin' me out o' fire. An' 'e ain't goin' to be robbed o' the gal 'e thought 'e'd got, not if I know it."

"And you mean you can give me up! I don't think much of your love, Ben Huntley!"

"Come to that, I don't suppose I do love you," Ben said. "I seemed to lose it when I found out the truth about yer. Anyways, it's Jim you'll have—Jim or neither of us!"

It was rough, almost brutal, and yet it held something solemnly suggestive of sacrifice and finality in every word. Minnie Williams—poor, weak little butterfly that she was—was caught in the solemn purpose of the words and dragged on to progress.

At the back of her flighty little brain, sobered now for a moment, was a sudden realisation of what she had done, of all that she had lost. Because it had always been Ben—strong, sturdy Ben—whom she had cared for deep down in that foolish little organ that served her for a heart; only, butterfly fashion, she could not help fluttering hither and thither in her greed for admiration.

And now her punishment had come—now, when Ben had found her out, when he told her that his love for her was gone, and sent her to keep the half-promise that she had made to his friend.

"Are you going up to see Jim now?" he queried.

"Would it please you, Ben?"

"It's nothin' to do with me!" he persisted. "You go up and see 'im, and play the straight game with 'im, an' I shall think better of you, my gal."

She drew her slim, girlish figure to its full height, and a new light shone in the gay blue eyes.

"I'll do it," she said. "Maybe then you'll forgive me—eh, Ben?"

For answer, he turned and hobbled towards the door, making a slow, limping progress that she followed with dragging steps.

Sister Mary nodded permission for her to be taken down the ward when Ben whispered an explanation that it was "Jim's gal come to see him."

But Jim, watching their slow progress, looked from the girl's face that ever bore a smile, so quickly had she adopted the role that she was called upon to play, to the grim face of his old chum. And a light leapt up into his own eyes and dropped as suddenly, like the dying leap of a flame.

But he stretched out a quietly friendly hand to the girl as she came to his side.

"Hallo!" he said. "This is good of you, Min, to come and see me."

"In course she wanted to see you!" Ben interposed. "First secret you've 'ad from me, ain't it, old man? Well, I wish you joy, you know."

Again that swift flash in the eyes of the other man as he looked into the face of his chum. What he expected to read there contradicting the cheerful words, Jim hardly knew—something, perhaps, of suppressed suffering and strain. But Ben's face was as placidly cheerful as his voice.

"Well, you'll 'ave a good bit to say to each other," he said. "I'll make myself scarce for a bit."

"Ben!"

The man in the bed spoke quickly, but Ben never turned his head as he limped away to the far end of the ward, and joined the group by the fire, where his deep laugh rang out presently.

Man and girl, their glance followed that other figure for a moment with a deepening glow in both pairs of eyes. And then, almost mechanically, Minnie dropped into the chair beside the bed.

There was a moment of strained silence, and then Jim spoke slowly.

"Of course, I know that's all rot," he said. "It's Ben you like best. I've found that out. Ay"—as she looked up with a start, the colour flooding the pretty face—"you can't deny that. And old Ben—well, of course he's just a-doin' his usual way of givin' up—unselfish-like. But it's Ben, ain't it? Any gal 'ud be bound to like Ben best, an' you was just playin' with me."

She took a swift glance at the sturdy figure in the group at the far end of the ward. He was leaning forward, talking eagerly to another man, apparently forgetful of her. But from him her eyes turned swiftly to that other face upon the pillow—white and haggard, and yet stamped with the strength that a man gathers at the gates of death.

"Ben said—he told me—" she began awkwardly; but Jim laughed a little.

"Thought I was going to be heart-broken, or something," he said. "But a chap don't break 'is heart over a girl when 'e finds as she's just been playing with him. I only 'ope as you'll play the game fair with old Ben, though I don't know as you're 'alf good enough for 'im! Anyway, I'll make it right with him—tell 'im we've found out our mistake—which I 'ave, right enough!"

"Not till I've gone!" she said. "You won't say nothing till I'm gone, Jim?"

She heaved a sigh of relief at his promise. She had a dread of meeting Ben's accusing eyes when he found that she had not carried out her part of the programme according to his plan. But if there was a chance of things being put right between her and Ben—

She walked down the ward—for a wonder never even seeing the little glances of admiration that followed her—which showed a degree of absorption or humility that was a new thing for Minnie Williams, to whom admiration was as the breath of life.

MINNIE ATONES.

JIM had no opportunity of quiet talk for the rest of that afternoon, and what he wanted was a quiet time with Ben in which to explain. If the old chap thought that he was likely to break his heart over the girl, he'd find that he was mistaken.

But there was much chatter in the ward. Late news told of a brilliant naval victory that set the ward alight with excitement, and we had also nibbled away another few yards out in France. Altogether, it was enough to set everyone talking who was not too weak to join in,



BEN WENT DOWN ON HIS KNEES BESIDE THE WHITE FACE OF THE GIRL HE HAD ONCE LOVED—AND MINNIE ACTUALLY SMILED.

and there was no one who could not raise a little interest over this.

Jim, indeed, dragged himself up on one elbow, and gave his views at great length, until Sister Mary pushed him gently down upon his pillow, and threatened to put the screen round his bed unless he kept quiet.

But it was Sister Mary who, with a look on her face that somehow seemed to speak of tragedy, on her guard though she was, drew Ben Huntley out of the ward with the information that he was wanted.

Down in the corridor she explained.

"The girl who called here this afternoon—am I right in understanding that she is engaged, or something of the kind, to your friend, Private Benton?"

"Yes." Ben nodded emphatically. "That's just about the ticket. "My sister—"

"She has met with an accident," Mary explained quickly. "The excursion train by which she—and, I think, a woman friend—was returning to London has been in collision with another train. I'm afraid she is badly injured, and—well, she has asked to see you."

Her eyes spoke the words that her lips did not utter. If it were the other man she loved, why had she asked

for Ben? Unless she remembered that Jim could not possibly come to her.

"There is a closed car waiting outside. Someone who was helping in the rescue of the injured drove over here with her message to fetch you. I believe you ought to go at once, if you are to be in time."

Ben limped away, feeling dazed. Poor little Minnie, with her gay flirtations and her fun! Somehow he could hardly believe it was true that she was dying.

Out there in the trenches, death seemed natural. At times, almost inevitable. And a man lifted his head, and looked death in the face without flinching. But here—and Minnie!

Sister Mary caught his arm with a firm hand.

"Wait here," she said, "and I'll bring your coat and cap."

She was as good as her word, returning in a few minutes, and helping him into his overcoat, of the inevitable khaki.

He hardly noticed that she had her own bonnet and cloak on until she followed him into the car when she had helped him up the step in her deft fashion. And then he turned, with a little start and a half exclamation.

"Yes, I'm coming with you," she said, as the car began to throb its way down into the darkness of the drive. "I have permission, and I may be able to be of use. We're not so busy now."

But to herself she was adding, though he did not know that, that the man, shaken and still weak as he was, needed looking after in such a scene as this.

Truth to tell, he was rather glad of her presence when he stood looking down upon Minnie.

Such a changed Minnie, with the pretty colour washed out of her face and replaced by the grey shadow of death!

She lay upon some carriage cushions in the little waiting-room that had been hastily filled with those of the injured who were not able to be moved any farther, and there were several others beside the girl.

But Ben was not noticing the others, and he went swiftly down upon his knees beside the white face of the girl he had once loved—or thought that he had loved. And Minnie actually smiled.

"There was a parson talking to me just now," she said, "and he said God sent His Son—and He loves us all, and—and He forgives—even when you've deceived. And—"

Ben fairly choked at that. The tears were running down his face, and Minnie smiled as she saw them.

"Looks like—you cared—after all," she said. "Only you couldn't forget and forgive. So—perhaps this is best. You needn't cry, Ben dear. I—there isn't any pain."

"It—it ain't true," he said.

But all the time in his heart he knew it was quite true that Minnie was dying—that, most marvellous fact, she was not even afraid.

"Perhaps," she said wistfully, ignoring those miserable protesting words of his as though she had not even heard them—and, indeed, she had not—"perhaps you can forgive now. And, Ben—"

It was Mary who read the unspoken appeal in the dying eyes, and whispered to the man who knelt there, dazed and broken. And Ben leaned over and kissed the pretty mouth, that was white now, and the brow where the dews of death were gathering fast.

"If—if there's ought to forgive," he said brokenly, "my gal, I've forgot it. And so will Jim."

"And—you'll think sometimes—"

"Ay, I'll think," he said, and took in his own the weak hand that tried to flutter out to him.

She died with a smile on her lips. After all, it had always, in the depths of her heart, been Ben, and the little, shallow butterfly had a heart beneath that gay, inconsequent manner.

And Ben had been with her at the last. Ben had forgiven her and kissed her. Human affection counts for so much, even in the shadow of death.

He broke the truth gently to Jim next day, half expecting that the news would "break the poor old chap up," as he phrased it to himself. But Jim stood the shock well. Horror he had for the awful end of the girl

he had once loved, sorrow over the little butterfly, broken so early on life's wheel. But he looked up steadily at his chum, though there were tears in his eyes—tears of pity for the sadness of it all.

"Poor gal!" he said. "She'd made a pretty muddle of things, and you wasn't doin' any better, though you did try to put things right. Of the two of us, it was you she liked, and you was trying to make out that there wasn't nothin' between you."

"How do you know? You ain't got no call to think—"

Ben began.

But from beneath his pillow the other man pulled out a little packet, and unrolled a photograph.

"You made a bit of a mistake when you give my photoer back, and you give me the wrong one!" he said.

He turned it over, and there, on the back, scrawled in Minnie's careless, unformed hand, were the words: "To darling Ben, from his little girl."

"You'd best have it back, an' I'll have mine," he said. "I did think of makin' away with it, but I reckon now we'll keep 'em—eh, Ben?—in memory of the little gal what's dead. She—she didn't mean no 'arm, poor lass! It were just 'er way of 'avin' fun. And—well, she never come between us, after all, old pal!"

David and Jonathan shook hands in silence, like men ratifying a vow. Perhaps to both of them, since their friendship had come so near what might have been the breaking-point, it was rather good to know that they were David and Jonathan still.

THE END.

Next week's complete story of MARY—THE RED CROSS SISTER, is entitled "THE COWARD." Do not miss it.

OUR COMPETITION RESULT.

Names of readers who have gained prizes in our 12th Soldier's Letter Contest.

Twelve readers succeeded in sending a correct solution of this puzzle letter, and we are therefore dividing the total prize money of £5 10s. amongst them. They will each, therefore, receive the sum of 9s. 2d. The names and addresses of these fortunate readers are: Mrs. R. Weighell, West End, Osmotherley; Mrs. A. Robinson, 10, Mount Pleasant, Sacristan, Durham; F. Bosworth, 22, New Town Street Luton, Beds; J. Stone, 240, Blythe Road, W.; Miss B. Goode, 57, Warner Road, Camberwell Green, S.E.; Mrs. T. B. Burditt, 49, Holywell Road, Old Aylestone, Leicester; Miss E. Heard, 27, Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, Leicester; Florrie Mason, 87, Alexandra Road, Grantham, Lincs.; Mrs. Robb, 3, Durdham Street, Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne; E. Chappell, Broughton Road, Bracebridge Lincoln; Miss M. Thompson, 17, Connaught Terrace, Victoria Street, Bracebridge, Lincoln; Mrs. Etheridge, 27, West Street, New Town, Crawley, Sussex.

The correct solution of the puzzle letter was as follows:

Dear Mildred,—The last day or two have been very exciting. The Germans brought a big gun, which was to wipe us off the face of the earth, but the shells they fired at us only buried themselves in the ground without injuring us. But we kept lying still, letting the enemy think we were bowled over, and after waiting a bit they decided to advance and take our trenches. They came quite near, and then we gave it them hot. By the time we had finished there was only a handful of them left, and we had won the day.—Your affectionate, MAURICE.

ANOTHER GREAT GIFT FOR LADIES!

The Editor of our sister paper,

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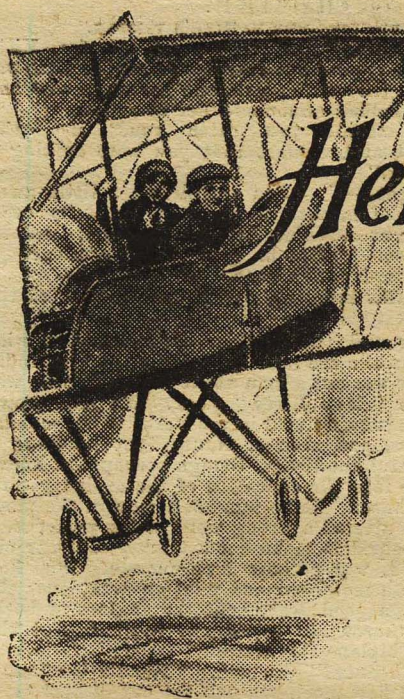
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Her Country's Joe

A *Stirring Complete Romance*,
BY
BESSIE REYNOLDS.

CHAPTER I.

KITTY COMES HOME.

"**N**ANNY, what is the matter with father?" Kitty Harmington perched herself upon the edge of the table in the old nursery, with a swift half-boyish movement that was instinct with grace, and scarcely deserved the half disapproving shake of the head that Nanny bestowed.

"Now, Miss Kitty, my dear, you should be giving up your tomboy ways—you that's been finished—"

"Darling Nanny, what an expression! To have been finished sounds as though one had been made an end of somehow. As for my ways, you know that nothing would make me the ordinary prim young woman—and I don't believe in your heart that you'd have me changed a bit if you could."

Nanny smiled, as a pair of pretty rounded arms were flung about her neck, and she was kissed vigorously. Perhaps it was true that she would not have had her nursing changed, and that it was good to see her return from her foreign boarding school unspoiled.

And if Kitty at eighteen was still the boyish creature that she had always been no one could deny her beauty and charm. Nanny gave her a little admiring glance over the top of the glasses that were perched far down over her nose, to focus her sight upon the darning in her hand.

Nanny, by the way, was an institution in the Harmington household. She had taken the tiny baby from its dying mother, and had brought her up, at first by herself, afterwards sharing the responsibility with a governess, until the last year, when Kitty had been sent abroad for the final touch which her father had considered necessary.

And now she was home again, more beautiful than ever as it seemed to Nanny, and as full of love for the woman who had given her the love that no money could pay for.

"It seems like old times to be back in the nursery again," she said, "and you look, Nanny darling, as though you have been sitting in the same chair at your everlasting darning every day since I went away. But that is no answer to my question—what is the matter with father?"

"And I'm sure, my dear, it's a question that I don't know how to answer. You noticed it, then?"

"Of course. How could one help it? He looks as though he'd all the cares of the world on his shoulders. He might have lost all his money."

"It isn't that," Nanny interpolated. "I've had no

orders to cut down the housekeeping, and there's the same staff of servants and no hint that there was any need of alteration."

"Then we can dismiss that. But he looks ill and haggard, except when he is laughing. I suppose he is busy?"

From the window she could catch a glimpse of the works, and beside them the hangars for the new air-craft, while beyond, as she knew, lay the flying-grounds.

For John Harmington was the head of one of the largest air-craft factories, subsidised by the British Government, and employed just now largely upon Government work.

"It seemed to start when that new gentleman came and took the Towers, and the master got friendly with him," Nanny said. "A bad man he is if looks is anything to go by, but he and the master have struck up a friendship. He comes to dinner here two or three times a week, and they play cards, old Peters says, and he believes the master loses. Not that Peters would spy upon him, my dear."

"Of course not!" Kitty dismissed the idea with an impatient movement of her dark head—old Peters had been butler in the Harmington household so long that Kitty seemed to remember him as well as she remembered Nanny, from her baby days.

"Perhaps you'll do the master good," old Nanny went on. "You might be able to influence him, my dear."

Kitty gave a laugh that held very little mirth. Her father had been too absorbed in his own interests ever to take much notice of her. He was proud of her good looks—she realised that—and he saw that she wanted for nothing that money could buy, from education to clothes; but there had never been any sympathy between them. To Kitty it seemed that all the heart that her father had ever possessed—and sometimes she thought that that was not a great deal—had been buried years ago with the young wife to whose memory he had at least yielded faithfully.

And then she jumped down from the table and ran forward as there came a knock at the nursery door, and a fair head came suddenly round it, as it opened.

"Jim!" she cried, and held out her hands with a frank gesture, that somehow grew a little uncertain, even as the colour rose in the lovely face before the light in his grey eyes.

"I thought I'd find you here," he said. "I should have come to the station to meet you, but I had orders to take out the new biplane for a trial run."

"And she went—"

"Beautifully," he answered, but his voice was indifferent; he had no thoughts to spare for biplanes just then as he looked into the lovely flushed face of his old playmate.

She had come home more lovely than ever; and in the year that had passed since he had seen her she had grown from a girl into a woman. Even her little tomboy ways could not disguise that fact.

Yet she had come back unspoiled, with frank hands outstretched, and glad welcome in the blue eyes that had always been such a delightful contrast to her dark hair, and the dark-pencilled brows above them.

"We'll have tea up here, Nanny, just as we used to do. You will have tea with us, won't you, Jim—if you can spare the time?"

"Oh, I—I don't suppose the boss will mind," he said. He could not know that his was not the only heart that was beating unevenly just now, or that Kitty was talking so quickly just to hide a strange, unaccountable shyness that had suddenly swept over her.

It was so ridiculous, of course! She to be shy with Jim, who had lived in the house all his life, since her father was his guardian, and he had been taught the secret of the great works.

Yet when Nanny toddled off with her placid, waddling gait, the two young people who were left behind felt themselves so keenly the change as to be tongue-tied and awkward. Somehow the old comradeship had gone, and in its place had come a new emotion that neither of them quite understood.

It brought a flush to both young faces when their hands accidentally touched, and there was a light in Jim's eyes that somehow made Kitty drop her own.

But over the nursery tea—with their favourite strawberry-jam, upon which Kitty had insisted for old time's sake—something of the old free-and-easy talk began, and that first queer tumultuous shyness wore off.

Jim was telling a funny story about a new apprentice at the works, and Kitty was laughing over it in her old boyish fashion, when the door opened.

It was Nanny who first saw her master standing there, with a cloud on his face, and who rose with a curtsy—Nanny was old-fashioned enough to have no stint of respect for those who employed her.

But Kitty, looking up at the sudden silence that fell upon the room, met the gaze of a pair of eyes that were somehow even then sinister.

She understood at once that this man who stood looking over her father's shoulder with such an impulsive face was the man of whom Nanny had spoken, and she shared Nanny's presentiment in that moment.

Even when her father called her forward, she was telling herself that Nanny was right—this man's face was the face of a bad man. The mouth, not quite hidden by the small fair moustache, that curled upward at the ends in true military fashion, was cruel and hard and secretive, and when he smiled it was but a showing of the teeth, and not a frank smile, and his eyes never lost their steady intentness.

Yet there was admiration in those eyes as they were turned upon the girl's sweet face. Jim saw it and resented it, himself unnoticed in the background. How dare the fellow look at her like that! The very tumult of fierce indignation that swept suddenly through his own heart told him its secret. As, in a flash, standing there in the background, he realised that he loved Kitty, not with the old brotherly love and comradeship, but with the love that a man only gives in its fullness once in his lifetime.

"I believe they want you at the works," Mr. Harrington said curtly, turning suddenly upon him, and Jim flushed a little at the unmistakable dismissal. He would have turned away without another word, but Kitty, with whom the other man was talking, turned quickly. Her sharp ears had caught the quick words, and she came forward, with outstretched hand.

"Good-bye, Jim," she said. "But I shall see you at dinner this evening, of course."

"Jim has rooms near the hangars," Mr. Harrington said. "He has not lived here for some time, my dear."

"Oh, then"—Kitty's voice was a great deal more careless than her eyes, which had flashed indignant wonder—"we'll meet to-morrow. I'll come for a trip in the new biplane, any time you like."

Jim told himself, as he stumbled rather heavily down the stairs, that she would not be allowed to do that. He knew perfectly well that Mr. Harrington intended to keep them apart—he had read that in the man's face just now, though he had made no further remark. But, of course, he thought that a penniless lad, just out of his apprenticeship, would be no fit mate for his heiress.

Only Kitty did not think that, bless her. She was not a bit spoiled, and if her father intended to encourage that other man—Jim clenched his fists as he thought of that cruel, hard mouth. Somehow, he would save Kitty from him. Even if he had not loved her he would have wanted to save her from such a fate as that. The man's character was written upon his face. Was Mr. Harrington blind—or was it true that he was somehow in the power of this man?

"If, so, Kitty's danger might be greater than he had at first thought, and to save her would be a harder task than he had expected."

CHAPTER II.

KITTY DISLIKES HER FATHER'S VISITOR.

BUT next morning, to Jim's great surprise, Kitty made her appearance outside the hangar that was sacred to the new biplane, and her warm coat and woollen helmet announced her intention.

"Thought I should just catch you," she said. "Father let out at breakfast that you were making a trip this morning."

"But I thought—" Jim had drawn a little away from the group of mechanics who were carefully overhauling the great machine before the start, and he lowered his voice. "Did he give his permission? I didn't think yesterday, you know—"

"But this is this morning, and I want to look at the new 'bus."

She walked round the machine, examining it with interested eyes, while the mechanics smiled at her kindly greeting. There was not a man about the works who was not glad to see "Miss Kitty" back. She had grown up among them, running wild in the works to the scandal of her governess, and even of Nanny, but imbibing a great deal of useful knowledge, though perhaps not knowledge that came into the education of the ordinary girl, and getting no harm. There was not a man in the place who would have uttered a wrong word in her presence.

That it had helped to make her a tomboy, as poor old Nanny bemoaned, was perhaps true enough. She had learned to drive a motor-car and pilot an aeroplane; she understood, too, a good deal about the engines of both, and it was a thoroughly intelligent interest that she took in the new biplane this morning.

"Isn't she a beauty?" she said. "What's the horse-power, Jim, and how much can you get out of her?"

"Secrets," Jim said. "At least, the speed is a secret; but she can go, I can tell you. You are really coming?"

"Of course I am coming," Kitty said, and climbed into her place behind the pilot's seat.

A moment later Jim had also climbed into his place, and the men were pushing them off. The great machine rose like a bird, and went up into the clear air, leaving the factory and the long rows of hangers behind them in a minute, as it seemed.

"Like it?" Jim asked laconically, and Kitty answered with a note of excitement in her voice.

"But, Jim, the engines are silent, or almost silent. I can hear you talking quite plainly. What does it mean?"

"It means that it's one of the finest inventions we've tried." Jim turned to fling the words over his shoulder to her. "It's a silencer that's absolutely a success—the finest success that anybody has ever got with it. Great, isn't it? The Germans will tear their hair if they hear of it."

They had got into a nasty current of air, and Jim planed down to a lower level, and at the same time came into sight of a big house that he recognised. Some impulse made him slow down. They passed over the house slowly, and so low down that he could see distinctly a man on the flat roof behind the battlements with a glass aimed at the biplane.

"Did you see that?" he asked. "That's your father's friend; and he's a great deal too interested in flying, I think. It's queer how he came here—how your father picked him up. I wonder he isn't suspicious."

And then they were in a pocket of air again, and the machine took up all his attention for a moment; but Kitty, looking back with the coolness of long practice, saw that the tiny figure was still on the roof.

She would have liked to ask Jim more questions about the other man, but some queer little unexplained instinct sealed her lips. Moreover, just now, with the clear, exhilarating air all about her, and the intoxicating sensation of being altogether cut off from the earth, the suspicious behaviour of her father's friend seemed one of the things that did not matter at all.

She could not even seem to picture to herself his sinister, hard face; she and Jim were away in a world of their own.

But when he brought her back at last, and they planed down with wonderful exactness before the hangars again, it was her father who came forward to help her down from her seat—her father, with a look on his face of such anger as she never remembered having seen before.

"Understand"—he turned to Jim, and had apparently

forgotten the presence of the mechanics who had come running up to help berth the biplane—"understand that if you take my daughter up for a flight again you are dismissed from the works. I will not have her taken—"

"It was my fault," Kitty turned to face him with her dark head held high. She had seen that Jim sat there silently, making no attempt to defend himself. He was willing to take the blame. "I insisted upon coming, though Jim told me that you would not like it."

Mr. Harmington's face flushed suddenly a dull, ugly red. Was it with shame before those two young things?

"You had better go to the house," was all he said. And when Kitty, very much on her dignity now, with her pretty head held high, went off without another word, he followed her at once. Jim bit his lips, but he was his usual cheerful self as he sprang down and lent the men a hand.

"Mr. Rullen is dining here this evening," her father told Kitty as they reached the house. "Put on your prettiest frock, child, and try and be entertaining."

"Why?" They had nearly reached the house, but the girl turned sharply. "Father, I don't like him; somehow I don't think he is a good man."

"I am the best judge of that," he said. "You are forgetting yourself, Katharine." Her father was the only one who ever gave her her full name, and it sounded very hard as it fell from his lips. Kitty's lips quivered as she turned away. Of course, her father never had cared for her, and now she seemed but a pawn in his game of life.

But there was no sign either of resentment or hurt feeling about her as she came into the drawing-room that evening. She had put on a frock of white lace, and there was a crimson rose tucked into the bosom of her gown, and above it the wavy drapery of her dark hair shone rich by contrast.

Mr. Rullen came forward to meet her. He had been standing talking to his host, but at sight of the slender, graceful figure at the opened door he turned away quickly.

There was a new light in his cold, hard eyes, and somehow the girl shrank instinctively before it—it was as though all her pure sweetness and innocence was quite suddenly up in arms.

"You are going to make home charming for your father," he said, and he took her unwilling hand in his and held it for a moment more than was necessary. "Home is not complete without a charming woman at the head."

What she answered Kitty hardly knew. She felt shy, and school-girlish and awkward, and her one desire was to escape from this man as soon as possible.

But that was not so easily accomplished. There was dinner to sit through first, and a long evening afterwards in the drawing-room, where she had to play and sing while the visitor hung over the piano and turned her music, and fixed those hard eyes upon her with a look in their depths that she instinctively hated.

She was thankful when at last her father dismissed her, in his careless fashion, with an abrupt intimation that it was her bedtime. He had seemed more self-absorbed and preoccupied than usual all the evening, and there was an air of suppressed excitement about him that even Kitty noticed.

Upstairs old Nanny was waiting for her—waiting to help her undress and to fuss over her in the old loving way. But Kitty somehow did not feel ready for bed to-night; perhaps something of that strange excitement of her father's had communicated itself to her.

"I hate that man!" she said. "Nanny, sometimes I believe that father is afraid of him, and something seemed to tell me that he is evil."

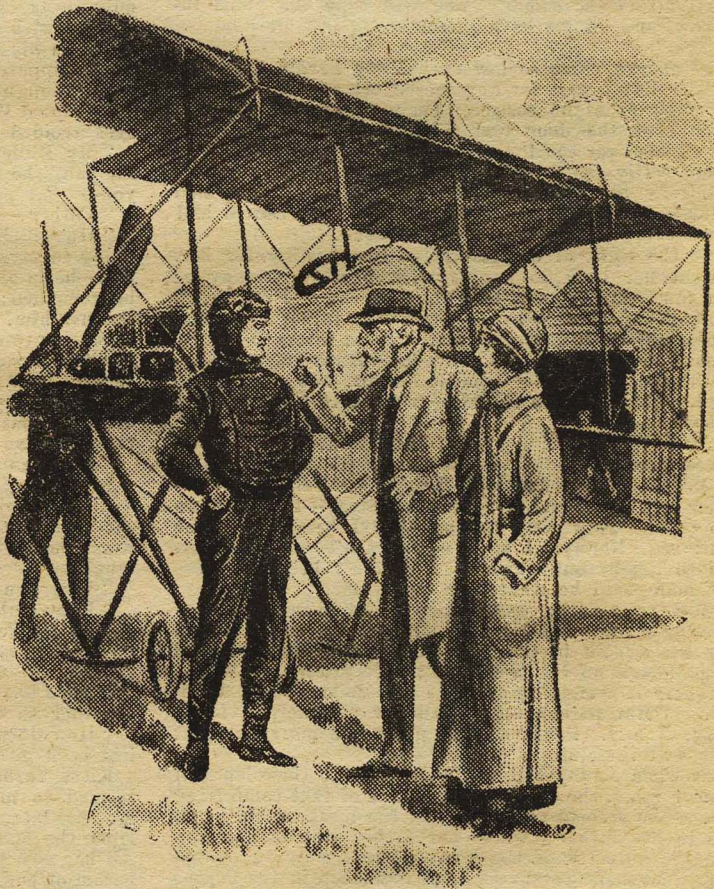
"But there's nothing we can do, my dearie, except, maybe, pray for your father. God brings the counsels of the wicked to nought, as we know."

"But sometimes not for a long while. No"—as the old woman would have unfastened her dress—"I'm not going to bed yet, Nanny; I don't feel as though I shall ever grow sleepy again. I think I'll get the book I was reading in the library this afternoon. I can slip past the drawing-room without being heard."

And, indeed, her footsteps made no sound on the rugs in the hall. The servants were apparently downstairs, and the big hall was deserted. She had slipped past the door of the drawing-room, and opened the library door before she discovered that the two men were in the room that she was about to enter.

She stopped short, her first instinct to escape quickly. Then she remembered that the big screen just inside the room had saved the movement of the door from being seen, and it had opened so softly that there had been no sound to denote her presence.

She was turning away hurriedly when she heard her



"UNDERSTAND"—KITTY'S FATHER TURNED TO JIM, A LOOK OF ANGER ON HIS FACE. "UNDERSTAND THAT IF YOU TAKE MY DAUGHTER UP FOR A FLIGHT AGAIN, YOU ARE DISMISSED FROM MY WORKS!" HE SAID.

own name uttered in the careful, slightly foreign tones of the visitor, the man she disliked. Somehow then she forgot that she was listening to a conversation not intended for her ears. Some instinct seemed to hold her there spell-bound outside the door, and what she heard in the next moment drove the last vestige of colour from her face.

CHAPTER III.

A SCRAP OF PAPER.

"YOU will have to bring pressure to bear upon the girl," he said. "Kitty, you called her—eh? Kitty of the wonderful blue eyes, and the little dark head. She is going to be a beauty one day, that girl of yours, Harmington—she's a little beauty now. I fell in love with her—isn't that how you call it—the first moment I saw her."

"I can't force her to marry you." Mr. Harmington spoke fretfully, as he always did when he was worried. "You can't do that sort of thing in this country, you know."

"But there are ways."

The other man's voice was almost silky in its suave tones—yet to the listening girl it held a hard steel-like quality. Somehow, with this man, she had thought always of the iron hand behind the silken glove.

"Tell her how you stand—that you are in my power, that I can ruin you if I choose. It's true enough, isn't it?"

"Yes." The elder man spoke heavily, hopelessly, as it seemed to Kitty. "It's true enough."

"And those plans—the design for the new silencer. Don't keep me waiting for them."

"You make pretty heavy conditions all round," Mr. Harmington said, and Kitty clenched her hands as she heard the other man's low laugh of triumph.

"That's the victor's right," he said grimly. "You have played your cards badly, my friend—or perhaps the cards were against you—eh? Say it was just bad luck, the result is the same. You will copy the plans to-morrow, and let me have them?"

"Yes."

The answer came so low that Kitty hardly heard it, but she didn't wait for any more. At any moment the conversation might cease. They might look up and notice that the door was slightly open—it would be just visible over the top of the tall leather screen.

Very softly she drew it close again, and slipped away upstairs. She had forgotten the book that she had meant to fetch, the conversation she had overheard had driven everything else out of her head.

But the sight of old Nanny sitting waiting for her, brought her back to herself with a start. Nanny at least must not know of the plot that she had overheard—this thing that reflected upon her father's honour, that meant disgrace for him if it were discovered.

Somehow that thought had even thrust away the remembrance of the plot against herself, but she remembered it with a little shudder as she met Nanny's kind old eyes.

"You couldn't find your book, dearie?" the old woman asked.

"No, I couldn't find it," the girl said slowly. "I—father and his friend were in the library—I almost ran into them. They were talking—and I heard my name mentioned, Nanny. I suppose it wasn't quite honourable to listen, but somehow I couldn't help it. He—that man—said he wanted to marry me."

"But your father—your father, my dearie—"

Nanny's voice drifted into silence, but she also had very little faith in the man who should have guarded the happiness of his child before everything.

"There is something that I can't understand," Kitty said. "But perhaps—I shall know presently. Don't worry, Nanny. People cannot make one marry against one's will these days."

But when Nanny had finally left her to the silence of her own room, she did not feel so sure of that comforting idea. She seemed to hear again the meek, subservient note in her father's voice—her father who had always been the autocrat of the home. That, more than anything, had made her understand how deep in the depths he must be.

But when next morning her father sent for her to his study, somehow she understood that her fight was not going to be an easy one. There was even a little pity in her heart. To her clear young eyes it was plain that he was a broken man.

He sat at the table with the plans spread out before him—plans over which he had evidently been working busily, and from which he looked up quickly as his young daughter entered the room.

"You sent for me, father?" she said, and her eyes went quickly to the papers spread out before him. At another time she would hardly have noticed them—plans were always about on her father's table—always he had seemed to live surrounded by them.

But now the conversation that she had overheard on the previous night came back to her like a flash. The plans that he was to copy—the plans of the new biplane—the silencer that meant so much!

The lovely girlish face had grown pale, but her father

hardly noticed it. He gathered up the papers, and went to the big safe in the corner.

And the girl waited in silence while he set the combination that should open the safe again, and, picking up a slip of paper, wrote it down rapidly as though afraid of forgetting it.

There came a tap at the door then, and Mr. Harmington turned with a start. His nerves seemed all on edge this morning—he did not even notice that, as he turned to the door, the little paper had slipped from his hand.

But Kitty's quick eyes saw it, and as quick as thought she had stooped and picked it up, and thrust it down the neck of the little soft muslin blouse that she wore; cut away loosely to show her pretty rounded throat.

When, after a moment's conversation at the door, her father turned back, she rallied all her courage to meet him with steady eyes.

Would he miss the paper he had dropped? Would he question her about it; ask if she had seen it?

As yet she had not got as far as the thought of helping her country. She had hardly realised that those two were conspiring to rob the Government. She could only think of her father's honour—her father who was trusted with so much of secret knowledge, and who had failed in his trust.

But apparently he had forgotten about the paper—other thoughts had crowded it out.

He closed the door and came forward, and his haggard eyes avoided his daughter's face.

"Mr Rullen has done you the honour of asking me for you," he said. "He has asked my permission to win you—"

"Father—"

"Hush!" he said heavily. "I know all that you are going to say. You have had no opportunity of knowing him—he is almost a stranger. That is a fault that can be remedied; but it seemed that you were prejudiced against him, and I want you to at least make yourself agreeable to a man who has it in his power to ruin me."

Kitty stood very still. Almost unconsciously one slender hand went up to the breast of her blouse where the little paper was hidden. She was telling herself drearily that he had ruined her father already, that there was no help, no help anywhere.

"Do you understand?" he went on.

Involuntarily his own face softened a little before the white, set misery on that girlish face. Before his eyes she seemed to have slipped suddenly from girlhood to womanhood, the lips that had seemed made only for laughter were set in hard lines of endurance and resolve.

"Will you explain, please?" she said.

"I can't altogether. You'll have to take my word for it that the fellow has me in a cleft stick; that he could put the screw on at any time."

"You mean that you owe him money, I suppose—that you have lost heavily to him when you have played cards together so often?"

"How do you know that we have played cards? Who has been gossiping about me—that old Nanny?"

Kitty turned towards the door. His anger hardly seemed to matter; even the appeal that followed a moment later, and that was so poor an exhibition, coming from the man who was her father, she hardly noticed. All her own thoughts were with the slip of paper in the bosom of her blouse, and as yet she hardly knew in what way it would help—what she might be able to do.

"I must have time to think, father," she said.

"But you will think of it, my dear?" He put a hand upon her shoulder with a sudden show of affection, but she slipped away a pace and his hand slid heavily by his side. "It means so much to me. You can save me if you will!"

"By sacrificing myself!"

The words seemed to slip from her almost of themselves, but the eyes that met his seemed to hold a condemning light, and he shrank from them.

The next moment she had slipped out of the room without a backward glance, and was escaping to her own room, where she locked the door and took out the precious piece of paper, and read it.

It held only one word, and to her it seemed significant—"Help!"

Yes, somehow she would bring help. Not perhaps the help that her father wanted, or thought that he wanted, but something that should save his honour.

'And first she must obtain possession of those papers—the plans that he was about to betray.

It was then that she thought of Jim—Jim, who would surely help her at whatever cost; Jim, who alone could be trusted with this secret. She locked the little paper carefully away, and went downstairs. The morning was getting on. Soon it would be almost lunch time, and the men would come pouring out from the works, and then she would be able to catch Jim for a moment.

He would understand in a few words; Jim had always been one of those understanding folk who never wanted explanations. And he was always so full of resource; he would be able to think of some way of hiding the papers until the danger was past.

That the exploit might mean ruin for Jim's prospects was something that as yet she had not realised.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

KITTY stood half shaded from the view of the men that poured out of the works, and waited until the stream had gone by. The clerks and their superiors usually came out last, as she knew, and then would be her opportunity of catching Jim, who—working his way through the whole of the business—was now in the draughtsmen's-room.

There was plenty of time for a talk with him, for luncheon at the big house was not until two.

But in the meantime there was no sign of Jim, and there was nothing for it at last but to walk boldly up to the office and interview the chief clerk, lingering there and putting his papers in order before he, too, went home for his midday meal.

"I wanted to see Mr. Meldon?" she said, and was angry with herself because she felt the colour rushing into her face. What more natural than that she should ask for Jim—Jim, who had been her playmate all her life?

The old man looked up over his glasses.

"He's away for a couple of days—in charge of the new biplane," he said, and he little dreamed of the despair in the heart of the girl who smiled so quietly as she went away.

But to Kitty this seemed the last worst blow. Jim was away, and there was no one to help. Jim would have been such a tower of strength. Somehow she felt that he would have known just what to do.

It meant that alone and unaided she must save her father's honour.

That was the task that she set herself as she walked back to the house. Nanny she knew would be helpless in this—indeed, Nanny's whole thought would have been that Kitty must not go into danger; and the girl realised that there very possibly would be danger for her before it was over.

It was strange that her father did not seem to have missed the slip of paper upon which he had scrawled the combination of the safe. All day she waited to be questioned about it, but night came and the long dreary evening after dinner wore away to bed-time, and there was not a word about it.

And when the house sank to silence, Kitty knew that the time for her own attempt had come. She stood a long time at the window, looking out into the moonlight that made the outer world almost as bright as day. In the silver light the rows of hangars in the distance stood out clearly, the tall factory was a great black blot upon the landscape.

The house was very close to the works—so close that they seemed to overshadow the garden with their ugliness. But Kitty had been so used to it as a child that she had never even noticed it.

One by one the lights went out in the other windows until the house was in darkness, and then it seemed to Kitty that the moment had come. She seemed to have been waiting an eternity by the moonlit window. She picked up a box of matches in case she needed them, though that was scarcely necessary, for the moonlight was pouring in through the great staircase window just as it had flooded through her bed-room window—and in any case, she could have walked about the old house blindfold. Did she not know every nook and corner of her old home!

She crept stealthily down the stairs, and a moment

later a touch on the switch had flooded her father's study with the electric light.

Over in the far corner stood the safe in which she had seen the plans deposited that morning. For a moment Kitty hesitated—a slim, lonely figure in the silence of the deserted room, wearing still the pretty light frock that she had put on for dinner.

It seemed so like stealing, and yet it was the only way to save her father—to hide the plans from this enemy who was tempting him to dishonour.

Afterwards, when they were wanted, she would produce them. And then her father would thank her—surely he would thank her for having saved him.

She knelt beside the safe. No need to look at the scrap of paper to remember. The word seemed to be engraven upon her heart. With hurried, eager fingers she worked the combination, and a moment later the door of the safe was yawning open before her.

The next moment the papers were in her hand—a little roll of tracing-paper, just as her father had thrust it hurriedly in that morning. She shut the safe quickly and stood up. And then some instinct drew her eyes to the window, left uncurtained. She had forgotten until that moment that the bright light would stream out upon the darkness of the gardens, and that in that bright light her every movement would be visible to anyone out there!

Now, with a start of horror, she saw a face pressed against the window and, with despair in her heart, recognised the man who held her father in his power—the man who, in the guise of friendship, had been his worst enemy.

For a moment her startled eyes met his, and read the menace in them. The next moment she had stepped hastily towards the switch and plunged the room into darkness.

Intense darkness, for the moon seemed to have disappeared behind the clouds. Kitty's mind worked busily. She could just see that the face had disappeared from the window, and her frightened heart asked the question—where was he going?

What did he intend to do?

Thought comes like a flash in moments of danger. Kitty knew that he had seen the papers in her hands, that he would at least guess much of the meaning of her presence here, and some instinct warned her not to carry the papers outside the room with her.

And then, like a flash, came the thought of the old anthracite stove!

It stood well out from the fireplace, and had an attachment for boiling a kettle. Quick as thought, Kitty opened the mica door, and, screwing up the papers with absolute indifference to their future appearance, she thrust them into the stove, and closed the door again.

The next moment she had opened the door of the room, and slipped swiftly away up to her own quiet room, where she locked the door, and, with her heart beating so that it threatened to suffocate her, she crept to the window and, herself screened by the curtains, looked out into the moonlight.

The fickle moon was shining now as brightly as ever, but she had been a friend in that tense moment in the study. In the silver light, Kitty saw a dark figure standing there beneath her window, and she guessed well enough who it was, and guessed, too, that she had made an enemy to-night.

Unless—Her father had said that this man had fallen in love with her. Would his love be strong enough to make him say nothing about what he had seen, or was his desire for the plans strongest? What did

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they mean to him? Why was he so anxious to obtain them?

All questions to which she could find no answer. But she somehow felt that her own prospect of escaping from this man was less after this night's work.

Yet at the end of the dark path that she trod loomed still the salvation of her father's honour.

CHAPTER V.

KITTY'S MOTOR RIDE.

"KITTY! Where is Kitty?"

Mr. Harmington's voice came impatiently up the stairs, and the girl curled up in the old schoolroom, in a miserable attempt at reading a book, sprang up with a white face.

Surely it had come at last—the discovery that she had been expecting through the long hours! All the morning she had spent in the house, waiting for the summons to her father's study, but it never came. And now she pulled herself together with an effort, and ran down the stairs.

But the questioning, accusing glance that she expected was not there. Instead, her father's face was a little furtive.

"Mr. Rullen has called to take you for a motor drive," he said. "My dear—"

The girl went slowly forward. Behind her father stood the figure of the man she hated and feared, the man who had watched her in the study last night, the man who must know the truth. But he came forward, smiling, and drawing off his warm glove to shake hands.

Almost mechanically Kitty found herself putting out her own hand.

"You will come, Miss Harmington?" His eyes seemed to flash a steel-like challenge into her own. "It is a new car. I think you will approve of it."

The girl hesitated, but the challenging eyes held her, and she knew that if she turned coward now all that she had done would be of no avail. Somehow she understood—it was as though those challenging eyes told her—that this man had something to say to her alone, that the drive was but an excuse. Whatever it was, she must hear it.

He had had it in his power to tell her father what he had seen, and so far he had not done so. There must, of course, be some reason for that.

For a moment she stood there, white and silent, and then she nodded her dark head.

"I will get ready at once," she said, and turned, with quiet courage, to mount the stairs.

Nanny exclaimed at her white face; but the girl put her sympathy aside almost abruptly. It hurt her with its helpless kindness. If only Jim were back! If only she could have seen him, asked his help!

She had not been in the study since the previous night, and she wondered whether the plans were still reposing inside the stove, where she had placed them so hurriedly.

It still seemed to her the safest place for them. Her father, if he missed them, would never dream of looking for them there. What she was going to do if the other man told him that he had seen her in the study, and her father demanded the papers, as yet she did not know. She was living from hour to hour, with no further plans until Jim came back.

A few minutes later she was downstairs again, a dainty figure in her long fur coat and little, golden-brown suede motor-bonnet, and a little flash of admiration stirred in the cold eyes of the younger of the two men as he watched her.

But it was almost in silence that her father watched her into the big, handsome car, where she was wrapped carefully in a big fur rug by the owner of the car himself. He dismissed the chauffeur then curtly enough.

"I shall not want you. You can wait," he said, and Kitty felt her face blanching.

Her instinct had been true enough, then. He wanted to talk to her. He had something to say to her, and that was why he was taking her away alone.

Yet once more her native courage came to her aid. She seemed to have travelled very far in these last few days from the schoolgirl who had come home so gaily. It seemed that that afternoon in the schoolroom, when she and Jim had taken tea with Nanny in the old, gay fashion, was an eternity away.

It was a woman who bowed calm thanks as he turned

away, and, climbing into his place by her side, took the wheel; and then, with a swift impulse of pity for the broken man standing behind them on the steps, she turned and waved him a farewell.

He was ready to sacrifice her to the man by her side, and he had never shown her a father's love; but he was a broken, almost ruined man, and somehow her anger against him had died away.

The car ran out down the private road of the works, skirting the long rows of hangars where the complete aeroplanes were housed while their trials were in progress, and so into the quiet road beyond.

For a few moments Rullen let the car go, and the quiet hedges flew past. Kitty was gathering up her courage, waiting, and when the car slowed down to a ridiculously slow pace, she knew that the moment had come.

"Of course," he said, speaking in his slow, careful way that had a suggestion of a foreign accent about it, careful though it was—"of course you quite understand that I saw you in your father's study last night. I think you saw my face at the window. You switched the light off hurriedly."

"Yes." Now that the moment had come, somehow, strange to say, Kitty was not frightened at all. There was even a little contempt in her heart for this man, who could stoop to try and frighten a girl with vague threatening hints. "You had chosen a late hour for prowling round the house," she told him quietly.

A little gleam shone in his hard eyes. Something in the girl's courage, perhaps, appealed to him, but he went on ruthlessly enough:

"You had the safe open when I first saw you, and the paper you took out—am I wrong in thinking that they looked like plans? Your father has not missed those plans yet. I discovered, in the few minutes that he was talking with me just now, that he has been too busy to work on them to-day. But presently they will be missed, and there will be a hue-and-cry. What will he say if I tell him what I saw? What did you want with those plans, Miss Harmington?"

He was watching the white, half-averted face, and there was a slight, amused smile curving the hard mouth beneath the fair moustache. Even then he could stop to think how lovely she was.

Kitty turned her gaze deliberately upon him.

"What did you want with them?" she asked quietly.

"I?" He gave a little start, and the car swerved towards the side of the road, as though for a moment his hand was not quite steady.

"My dear Miss Harmington," he smiled, "what sort of story have you heard? What are those plans to do with me?"

"That I don't know," the girl told him steadily, "but I know that my father was to give you a copy of those plans in exchange for—"

"He told you that?" There was suppressed fury in his face.

Kitty shook her head.

"I happened to overhear your conversation," she said.

"Ah!" It seemed that a great many things were becoming clear to him.

This, then, was the reason why the girl had stolen down in the dead of the night, and abstracted the plans from the safe.

"You know, then, that I could ruin your father if I like," he said slowly. "But ask me to refrain for your sake, and hand me those plans."

"I have not got them," Kitty said.

"They are destroyed?" His eyes seemed almost to flash murder in that moment. "But no! You have not done that," he added, reading truth in her face. "You would hardly dare to do that, I expect. My dear child, you are making much out of nothing! Your father was merely going to give me a tracing—you see, I am quite frank with you—of the plans, more particularly of the new silencer on the biplane. Who is to even know that the plans have been copied?"

"To sell his country—to rob Britain, you mean!" Kitty cried passionately. "Father is trusted, and you want to make him betray his trust. And I am going to save him!"

"Are you? You forget that you are in my power."

(Continued on page 15.)



NATIONAL MELODIES for the HOME

ROCK OF AGES, CLEFT FOR ME.

A FAVOURITE HYMN OF COMFORT.

Key D.

| d :d | r :m | f :-f | m :- | d :d | r :m | r :r | d :- |

mf 1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee;

| d :m | s :s | l :l | s :- | d :m | s :s | l :-l | s :- |

Let the wa - ter and the blood, From Thy ri - ven side which flowed,

| d :d | r :m | f :-f | m :- | d :r | m :r | d :t, | d :- |

cr Be of sin the dou - ble cure,— Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

2. *p* Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
cr All for sin could not atone;
f Thou must save, and Thou alone.

3. *p* Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:
cr Foul, I to the fountain fly;
f Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

4. *mf* While I draw this fleeting breath,
pp When mine eyes shall close in death,
cr When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne,
pp Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
pp Let me hide myself in Thee.

AFTER THE BATTLE!

A SONG OF PATHOS.

Key F. *With much expression.*

m :- *f* | *s* : *m* : *r* . *d* | *f* :- | *l* :- | *s* :- *m* | *l* . *s* : *m* . *d* | *r* :- | :- | *m* :- *f* | *s* : *m* : *r* . *d* |

1. Still *mp* - on the field of bat - tle I am ly-ing, mother dear, With my wounded comrades

| *f* :- | *l* :- | *s* :- *m* | *l* . *s* : *f* . *t* , | *d* :- | :- | *r* :- *m* | *f* . *l* : *s* . *f* |

wait - ing Till the wel-come morn is here. Ma - ny sleep who ne'er did

m :- | *s* :- | *C.t.* *rs* :- | *l* | *t* . *d* ! : *r* ! . *m* ! | *f.F.* *d* ! ' *s* :- | :- | *f* | *m* :- *f* | *s* : *m* : *r* . *d* | *f* :- | *l* :- |

wa - ver In this world of strife and death ; And ma - ny more are faint-ly call - ing

s :- *m* | *l* . *s* : *f* . *t* , | *d* :- | :- | *C.t.* *s* :- *r* | *r* . *m* : *f* . *l* | *s* :- | *m* :- | *rs* :- | *l* | *t* . *d* ! : *r* ! . *m* ! |

With their fee-ble, fail-ing breath. Mo-ther dear, your boy is wound-ed ; Night is near, and I'm in

f.F. *d* ! ' *s* :- | :- | *f* | *m* :- *f* | *s* : *m* : *r* . *d* | *f* :- | *l* :- | *s* :- *m* | *l* . *s* : *f* . *t* , | *d* :- | :- |

pain ; But still I feel that I shall see you And our dear old home a - gain.

2. Oh, the first great charge was fearful,
And a thousand brave men fell ;
Still, amid the dreadful carnage,
I was safe from shot and shell.
So, amid the fatal shower,
I had nearly passed the day,
When here the dreadful missile struck me,
And I sank amid the fray.
Mother dear, etc.

3. Oh, the glorious cheer of triumph
When the foemen turned and fled !
Leaving us the field of battle,
Strewn with dying and the dead.
Oh, the torture and the anguish
When I could not follow on !
But here amid my fallen comrades,
I must wait till morning's dawn.
Mother dear, etc.

HEARTS AND HOMES.

A HAPPY SONG FOR ALL.

Key G.

mf

1. Hearts and Homes! sweet words of plea-sure, Mu-sic breath-ing as ye fall; Ma-king
 2. Hearts and Homes! sweet words, re-veal-ing All most good and fair to see; Fit-ting

D.t.

each the o-ther's trea-sure, Once di-vi-ded, los-ing all! Homes, ye may be high or
 shrines for pu-rest feel-ing, Tem-ple meet to bend the knee. In-fant hands bright garlands

l : (l) : l l

low-ly, Hearts a-lone can make you ho-ly; Be the dwell-ing e'er so small, Hav-ing
 wreath-ing, Hap-py voi-ces in-cense breath-ing— Emblems fair of realms a-bove, For love is

f *G.* CHORUS.

love, it boasteth all! } Hearts and Homes! sweet words of plea-sure, Mu-sic breath-ing as ye fall; Ma-king
 Heav'n, and Heav'n is love. }

mp *p*

each the o-ther's trea-sure, Once di-vi-ded, los-ing all! Hearts and Homes! Hearts and Homes!

THE MINSTREL BOY.

THE GREAT WAR HAS MADE THIS SONG VERY POPULAR.

Key F. *With spirit.*

:s₁ | d₁ :- r | f m : r d | m : s | d' : t d' | l :- s | m f : s m | r :- | d : s₁ |

1. The Min - strel Boy to the war is gone, In the ranks of death you'll find him; His

| d :- r | f m : r d | m : s | d' : t d' | l :- s | m f : s m | r :- | d :

fa - ther's sword he has gird - ed on, And his wild harp slung be - hind him.

| d' : t | l : . t d' | t : l | s : . se | l :- m | m : se | l :- t | d' : d' |

"Land of Song," said the war - rior bard, "Tho' all the world be - trays thee, One

| d :- r | f m : r d | m : s | d' : t d' | l :- s | m f : s m | r :- | d ||

sword at least thy rights shall guard, One faith - ful harp shall praise thee!"

2. The Minstrel fell: but the foeman's chain
 Could not bring his proud soul under;
 The harp he loved ne'er spoke again,
 For he tore its chords asunder;
 And said, "No chains shall sully thee,
 Thou soul of love and bravery!
 Thy songs were made for the proud and free—
 They shall never sound in slavery!"

HER COUNTRY'S FOE.
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10.)

What's to prevent me from carrying you off somewhere now that I have you in the car and taking you prisoner?"

"That wouldn't give you back the plans," Kitty said.

"I'm not so sure of that! I think I could make you glad to give them up. Now, my dear girl, be sensible, and—"

The car, after a few preliminary jerks and snorts, stopped dead at that moment, and he had to get out and see what was the matter. Kitty watched with interested eyes. She had been brought up so long among engines of all kinds that she could have given a shrewd guess at the trouble; but she said nothing, and the man, who was more accustomed to being waited upon than doing things for himself, fumbled about for some minutes, muttering angrily to himself.

Kitty in the first moment had thought of jumping from the car and running away. His hint of a threat had a great deal of reality in it, as she had seen at once. She was in his power, practically a prisoner on this deserted road. But she realised the next moment that those long legs of his would overtake her before she had gone many yards, and the attempt at escape would only anger the man she regarded as her enemy still more.

And then, in a flash, she understood what she must do. He had finished his task now. He stood up, wiping the oil from his fastidious hands with his handkerchief.

"That'll do!" he said, and started the engine.


In that moment the girlish, slim figure had slipped into his place at the wheel, and with hand and foot she started the car. It came towards him like a veritable engine of destruction, and he had to step aside, or be struck down by his own car. He chose to spring aside quickly, with a shouted, angry curse, as the great car swung down the road, leaving him standing foolishly there.

And then across Kitty's triumphant progress came the spectacle of a heavy farm wagon crossing the road in the distance. There was no time to escape it, though she put on the brake quick and hard.

The next moment there came a crash, and she seemed to be flying through space, and then she knew no more.

CHAPTER VI.

RULEN'S PRISONER.

UT of the long darkness she came slowly back to life and consciousness once more. They were carrying her somewhere, carrying her with hands that touched her very gently and tenderly. Somehow she was too tired, and her head was throbbing too badly, for her to even trouble to think where they were taking her.

Thought, indeed, was impossible just then. She could not even remember, in those first waking moments, how she had drifted into the darkness, or what had happened.

And then she realised that she was being carried upstairs and laid upon a sofa, where she sank with a sigh. But it was the face of the man she hated and feared bending over her for a moment that brought her back to full remembrance.

Looking into those hard blue eyes, a little softened now by anxiety, even a little pitiful for her, her brain leaped to remembrance in a flash of horror.

The car, the big wagon that had barred its progress, the catastrophe that had followed, and to which she had lost consciousness! One by one the details came back, while she lay where they had placed her, and kept her eyes resolutely closed while she tried to think out what it all meant.

Somehow the man she hated had found her and brought her here—to his own house, as she guessed. Her unconsciousness had given him full opportunity to make her prisoner.

For that she was a prisoner she understood very well, and just now she felt too stunned and shaken even to care.

A hand came beneath her head, and the voice that she was beginning to feel that she hated above everything on earth sounded in her ear:

"Drink this! It will make you feel better."

She drank obediently some sort of restorative that he held to her lips, and, as he had said, it made her feel better. The mists seemed to be clearing from her brain. She sat up resolutely.

"I think you had better lie down," her host said. "You had a nasty fall, and I believe you struck your head. Fortunately, you fell into the hedge, or you might have paid with your life for your foolish action. What did you purpose doing after you had run away with my car? What was the next item on your programme? You are a plucky girl—a very plucky girl! I don't think there is another girl who would have done what you did. And so you can drive a car—eh?"

Kitty shrank, with a little shudder that she could not repress, from his look of eager admiration. Better hatred, anger, than the loathsome glance that seemed to gloat upon her face.

She pushed the heavy, dark hair back from her aching brow with a hand that was trembling a little.

"Why have you brought me here?" she asked. "I am in your house, of course!"

She looked round the long, low room, with its books and writing-table, its muddle of scientific instruments. The faint scent of tobacco—sign of its masculine occupation—hung about the room.

"Yes, you are in my place," he admitted. "It was fairly near to the scene of the accident. That alone would be a good enough reason for bringing you here, since your own home was much too far away. But that, as you have guessed, was not the only reason why I brought you here."

He paused as though awaiting another question, but Kitty sat very straight and still, and waited for what further he had to say, her slim hands clasped tightly in her lap. Her face was white with fear as well as with the shock and jar of the accident, but her eyes met his steadily and without flinching.

"Such a daring young woman is a bold bird who must be caged, so I am going to keep you prisoner quietly here until you make up your mind to tell me where you have hidden those plans. And then—well, a girl who has been living in my house days—weeks, perhaps—will be glad to marry me to save her good name, I think."

The brutal words seemed to send all the blood back upon her heart, but the next moment her face flushed heavily—a painful flush that scorched her from throat to brow.

"You could not be so cruel!" she cried.

"The remedy is in your own hands." He shrugged his shoulders with a movement of indifference, but his eyes were watching keenly the flushed, lovely face.

"My father will not allow this," she said. "He may be ready to do a great deal that is wrong, but he will protect me. He will fetch me away."

"Your father can do nothing, if he would. I think you understand that with a word I can ruin him. You are here, and you cannot escape. You cannot return the plans that you have hidden if you would. What if there came an anonymous letter to the Government authorities, asking what has become of the plans entrusted to him? A sudden visit from them—questions—your father can produce no plans! You see?"

She did see—saw it all only too plainly, with despairing eyes. She and her father alike were at the mercy of this man.

"I will leave you to think it over," he said. "You will see that there are occasions when surrender is no disgrace—in the face of an overwhelming force, for instance. But first let me explain. I have brought you to this room—which is my own study, or what you like to call it—because it is at the top of the house, and shut away from the staircase by baize doors, an arrangement that ensured quiet for me, and will prevent your voice from being heard if you have any idea of screaming for help.

"In any case, that would be useless. This house is isolated in the midst of its own grounds, and my servants are absolutely faithful to me. No bribes would have any effect. You will think it over. Ah! is it not so? If you decide to surrender, I shall be pleased, when the plans have been recovered, to take you back to your father's house.

"Now, the servants shall bring you a bed into this room, and you will regard it as your prison, and in that case I shall not trespass upon your prison. You will be

treated with every courtesy and consideration—I can promise you that—but you will not be able to escape.

"The servants have orders to bring you some dinner, and afterwards I will wait upon you, to learn your decision. Then, if you decide upon honourable surrender, I will drive over for the plans, and tell your father that you are here. He will no doubt be anxious."

He made her a stiff, military, jerky bow, turned smartly on his heel, and was gone, and for a moment the girl sat where he had left her, huddled a little upon the broad, comfortable sofa.

Her head was throbbing still from her fall, and perhaps it was the fall that had taken all the courage out of her, for black despair seemed to fall upon her when the door had closed.

It was as he had said. She and her father alike were utterly at his mercy, and there was no possible way of escape.

A woman came up presently with a dainty little dinner-tray, but when Kitty spoke to her she shook her head, and muttered a few words that the girl recognised.

"German," she said—"you are German."

But even her own language failed to extract any response from the woman, who had evidently received strict orders about conversation.

From the food, dainty though it was, Kitty turned with disgust. She felt sick still from the blow on her head, and the very sight of food was hateful. But the coffee was delightful, though she hesitated to drink it at first.

But the words of her captor came back to her. He had boasted that she was hopelessly, helplessly his prisoner, that there was no way in which she could escape. So there was surely no inducement for him to drug the coffee. She drank it thankfully, and it seemed to make her head better.

Presently Rullen was coming for her answer, but she would not think of that, because there was only one answer that she could give. For her father's honour, for her country's sake, she would not give up the plans.

The woman's German words had set her thinking. She roamed about the room, picking up a book here and there, and examining them with interest that grew as the moments passed. Books of science, books on military tactics, all in the German language—Nietzsche, Bernhardi. She read the authors' names, but they told her nothing. And then she peeped inside one, and on the fly-leaf, in a stiff German hand, was written the name—Fritz von Ruhlen.

Von Ruhlen and Rullen! So that was what his name had grown into! Did her father know this, she wondered—know that this man was in reality a German? And was he deliberately giving him information for another country?

The thought hurt her like a physical pain. Girl though she was, she understood now enough to know that this man was a spy—a spy in the service of the German Government—an officer, most probably. She remembered his military stiffness of movement, the soldierlike ways of the chauffeur, the military salute that had seemed to come so naturally to him.

And then quite suddenly her eyes fell upon a writing-table at one end of the room, and at sight of the apparatus there she gave a great start. How was it that she had never noticed it before—this thing that might mean help and safety!

She went towards it quickly—the wireless apparatus that was another strange hobby for this man, who had come into the quiet countryside with such evil plans seething in that cool, calculating brain of his.

Well for her that Jim had long ago taught her to work the wireless in the factory! She fitted the band upon her head with hands that trembled. She had wasted so much time, and her captor might be back at any moment.

There was feverish haste in her movements as her finger tapped out the call that means so much: "S. O. S."

Again and again she sent it out, eagerly, despairingly, before the answer came. And when at length came the faint question, she gave her message eagerly:

"I am a prisoner in the tower at Harnborough. Yes, I am Mr. Harming-ton's daughter. Send help please—quickly! I am afraid—"

The words broke off suddenly. At the other end it must have seemed a touch of tragedy that called for haste. Kitty, absorbed in her task, her whole thoughts centred on the eager message that she was sending, had not heard the sound of the opening door, and she started with a little cry as a hand came heavily upon her shoulder and swung her round.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESCUE.

FACE to face with a man who was furious in that moment with a white fury of baffled purpose that frightened her. There was something in those evil eyes of his that might have been murder.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "Do you think to escape me like that? So to your other accomplishments—your driving of a car and running away with it—you also add a knowledge of wireless! And I was fool enough to leave you alone here. But who would have guessed that a girl could have signalled—"

He clutched her shoulder again, and shook her slight form in a sort of fury of exasperation.

"You don't know what you have done, girl," he said. "You don't know the harm that your silly action—"

Kitty drew herself up straight and slim, and looked into his evil face with brave, steady eyes.

"I hope," she said, "that I have done my country some service."

He gave her a scowling glance. His admiration for her seemed to have been swallowed up in the thought of his personal safety, and for that Kitty was thankful. Better that hatred than his hateful admiration, his attempts to make love to her.

"You can get your hat and coat on again," he said. "You have only yourself to thank if I have to take you some distance to-night. You shall suffer for this, and your father also."

He went out, presumably to see about ordering another car out, and the girl was left for a moment alone again, and for a moment did not attempt to get on hat and coat, as he had ordered.

Her eyes turned a last despairing glance upon the wireless that she had hoped meant rescue. But to attempt to signal again would only be to still more infuriate Von Ruhlen, and do no good. She had been heard and answered. It was only a question of whether help would come in time.

That, she told herself, was impossible now, as the man once more came back to the room.

"Your hat and coat, quick—quick!" he said. "I told you to be ready. The car will be round in five minutes. Of course"—he clutched her arm with that hard, cruel grasp again—"of course, you got a reply?"

But for answer Kitty turned deliberately, and picked up the little motor bonnet and the warm coat that someone had removed from her and placed on a distant chair.

But there was despair on her white face as she went deliberately down the stairs. All the house seemed in a bustle. Servants were running to and fro, apparently packing hurriedly. It seemed that the whole household was prepared for a sudden departure.

Outside stood two cars, their great lamps staring with eyes of glaring yellow light that stabbed the darkness in a long line; two of the servants were piling the second car with luggage, but it was to the first that Von Ruhlen led Kitty.

"The other car will meet us later," he said. "We can't wait for it now."

Kitty looked around, but there was no sign of the help that she had summoned. There was nothing for it but to quietly get into the car—the back of the car this time. No doubt her captor remembered her quick move to the wheel before. This time the soldierly chauffeur was driving, and his master sat behind guarding his prisoner.

A terrified prisoner now, out of whom the courage seemed to be oozing rapidly. Where was he taking her? What might be the revenge that he had vowed to take?

A cold hand seemed to clutch at her heart as the car began to move, swinging steadily, with increasing speed, down the drive and out into the dark road beyond. There was no hope now.

And even as that thought came to her, there was a strange confusion. A couple of sharp reports cut with staccato notes into the silence, the car swerved so wildly that Kitty thought it was to be her lot to be in two

motor accidents on this one eventful day. And then they were at a standstill, and Von Ruhlen's furious eyes seemed to blaze into her own in the lighted car, his hand gripped hers, and something cold pressed her brow.

"You did this," he muttered hoarsely in her ear. "It is to you—"

As though from a long distance Kitty was vaguely conscience of what followed—of a struggle at her side, of kind hands that dragged her away, of Jim's voice.

And then, for the second time that day, she fainted, and Jim, catching her hastily in his arms, and bending an agonised face over the sweet, girlish one that was so ghastly white in the light of the great lamps, thought for the moment that she was dead.

But she revived quickly enough this time, with his voice in her ear, his arms around her—awoke to find that the tables had been turned with a vengeance.

It was Von Ruhlen who was a prisoner now, with a soldierly guard on either side; but Kitty shrank before the evil hatred in his eyes.

It seemed that he considered her the cause of the failure in his plans, as no doubt she was. Whatever of love, or what he dignified by that name, he had felt for her, had disappeared in that moment before the rage that possessed him.

"Some day perhaps I shall make you pay—and your father," he said. "As for the old man—why don't some of you fellows go at once and see where the plans are, the plans for the new biplane, the plans that the Government trusted him with?"

Strong hands dragged him away from where the girl stood, white and trembling, and Jim unceremoniously put one arm about her waist and drew her in the other direction.

"I've got a car here," he said. "Never mind the how or the why now. I want to get you home."

"Yes, home to father quickly—quickly!" she cried. "Perhaps even now I may be in time—before they search, before they guess—"

She almost sprang into the little car at his side. Away to the left a little squad of soldiers was marching a prisoner down the darkened road, and the regular tramp, tramp of their footsteps came to those two in the moment of silence before Jim leaned forward and started the car.

And by the side of the road the great handsome car on which Von Ruhlen had intended to bear off a terrorised prisoner lay helpless with two tyres punctured by shots.

The path of the wicked does not always lead to success.

But quickly though the car went, to Kitty's impatient heart it seemed a long time before they reached home. The sight of the factory cut black and grim against a starlit, moonlight sky, brought a great throb of relief to her heart.

The words that Von Ruhlen uttered before they took him away had seemed to follow her along the darkness of the road. What if it had aroused the suspicions of those men, what if they should send to search?

The thought and necessity for action drove all thought of self away. Her face was pale still, but a new energy seemed to animate the slight figure, and her eyes blazed with steadfast purpose. She jumped out of the car before Jim could help her, and ran up the steps to the door that was flung open in welcome as though someone had been listening for the sound of it.

For a second Jim had hesitated, and then, white and stern and very purposeful, with a grim, determined set of his kindly mouth, he followed that slight figure up the steps.

Mr. Harmington might question his presence here now if he chose; Jim cared little for that. They had not looked after his little girl so well that he was going to turn away now and leave her to them.

In the light of the big yellow lamps of the car her

sweet eyes had looked love into his; she had turned to him with the trust of perfect love. Henceforward, she belonged to him, and no man should take her from him. But Mr. Harmington felt no resentment now.

What he had suffered in the hours when he knew Kitty to be in Von Ruhlen's power only his own heart knew, and perhaps the most bitter drop in his cup of suffering was the thought that she owed the danger to him.

But for the foolish weakness which had put him into this man's power, but for his own wrong-doing, it need never have happened.

Now he kissed her remorsefully. In that moment he was a broken, helpless old man, his own haughty pride shattered.

"My dear," he said—"my dear!" and stood aside as though feeling that he had no right to her, while old Nanny came and caught her in her arms, and crooned over her as though she were her baby still.

But Kitty put the loving old arms firmly aside. "I'll come upstairs to you presently, Nanny darling," she said. "There is something I must say to father first."



IT WAS VON RUHLEN WHO WAS A PRISONER NOW, WITH A SOLDIERLY GUARD ON EITHER SIDE; BUT KITTY SHRANK BEFORE THE EVIL HATRED IN HIS EYES.

Something in the girlish face, so white and set, made him understand that what she had to say was important. Through the little group of servants they both passed, and it was only Kitty who noticed that Jim had followed them, and that when he had closed the door after the three of them he put his back against it with the air of a man who means to see the thing through.

Mr. Harmington looked round then at the movement, but he made no remark. Perhaps he felt that he had forfeited the right to say anything in this matter.

But Kitty, without a word, went to the old stove, and, lifting the top, drew out a rather crushed-looking bundle of papers.

She caught her father's exclamation at her side. The quick indrawing of his breath sounded almost like a sob in the stillness of the room. There was relief in the sound—relief and remorse.

"I—I hid them," she said, a little brokenly. She spread the papers out upon the table with little hands that trembled. If she could have known how Jim was

longing to take her in his arms again in that moment!

"You did it to save me," Mr. Harmington said. "My dear, how can I ever thank you! I believe I've been mad—mad and wicked enough, God knows! And even now the fellow has me at his mercy, you know."

"He will do no more harm here," Jim said, suddenly interposing. "He has been arrested as a spy of the German Government, and there's evidence enough about him, I believe, without dragging you into it, sir."

"You mean——"
A significant look passed between the two men, and Jim nodded.

"The news will be public to-morrow," he said. "Great Britain is declaring war upon Germany."

Kitty stood looking from one to the other of the two men. As yet she had not realised what it all meant. She only understood that Jim had said that Von Ruhlen was safely out of the way, that he would not cross their path again—and Jim was always right.

She gave a little shiver of relief. The other man's vindictive threats had seemed to haunt her.

"But you owe it to Jim," she said. "Somehow, when I found the wireless and sent out the call for help, Jim came to save me. But for Jim I couldn't have got home in time, and you wouldn't have had the plans back. And——"

Mr. Harmington raised his bowed head.

"You think Jim deserves his reward," he said. "Well, perhaps you are right, my dear." And he gave her hand to Jim's outstretched one.

And as her lover's arms drew her closer, closer to the resting-place of his shoulder, as to the home where she belonged of right, the elder man slipped away.

And, as is the manner of lovers, they never missed him—never gave him a single thought in those first blissful moments.

It was afterwards, when they found time to come down to earth again, that Kitty learned the significance of the war news that Jim had brought.

"I must volunteer, of course," he said. "They'll want all the men they can get for the flying corps. Kitty, my dear little love, you won't make it hard for me to do what I feel is my duty? You've been so brave already. You, too, have helped your country." He pointed to the plans that had been left forgotten upon the table by Mr. Harmington as he went out of the room. "But for your courage, those plans would be on their way to the hands of the enemy by this time. And you won't stop me from doing my share for Britain's sake?"

Kitty lifted her head, and dashed the tears from the blue eyes. No, she would not fail him.

"That's right," he said. "That's my brave darling. And some day, when this war is over—and please God it won't be as long as they fear—our happiness will be all the sweeter because we did our duty first."

"And if——" Her voice faltered. They both knew what she meant, and Jim bent and kissed solemnly the trembling lips.

"That is in God's hands," he said. "We are in His hands, dear heart—and they're kind and loving hands, too. And if we should be parted here—why, we'll meet in His Hereafter!"

THE END.

Next week: *HER STRANGE INHERITANCE*, by L. C. DAVIDSON. Give your newsagent an order for this number.

CAN YOU READ THIS SOLDIER'S PUZZLE LETTER?

1st PRIZE, £2. 2nd PRIZE, £1.
Ten 3rd Prizes of 5s. each.

Here is another of our soldiers' puzzle letters "from the front." Each week's contest is complete in itself.

All you have to do is to solve the puzzle letter, write your solution out clearly on a piece of paper, then cut out the puzzle picture, pin it to your solution, and forward it to the Editor.

You should keep by you, for reference, an exact copy of your solution.

Show your friends the puzzle, and ask them to help you. They will be very much interested in it. Remember a picture may represent a phrase of one, two, or three words, but not more than three.

Our handsome prizes will be awarded as follows :

The First Prize of £2 will be awarded to the reader whose solution is correct, or most nearly correct, in accordance with the original in the possession of the Editor. The Second Prize of £1 will be awarded to the reader who comes next in order of merit, and the same rule will apply in the case of the Ten Third Prizes of 5s. each. The Editor's decision is final.

The Editor reserves the right to add any or all of the prizes together should the number of readers qualifying render this course advisable. No reader can receive more than one prize.

This contest is being conducted by HORNER'S PENNY STORIES, "Horner's Weekly," "Sunday Circle," and "Golden Hours," and all readers of these journals may take part. All members of families may compete, but each must send in a separate solution. Readers can send in as many complete solutions as they like, but each solution must be accompanied by a puzzle picture taken from either of the journals named above.

Remember each week's contest is complete in itself. When you have solved this week's picture puzzle, do not wait until next week, but send your solution at once to: Puzzle Letter No. 18, HORNER'S PENNY STORIES Office, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. All solutions for this week's contest must reach us not later than Friday, January 29th. The result of this contest cannot appear in this journal for five weeks.

You will find the result of our 12th Contest on page 4.

Cut this out and send it with your Solution, as directed. Competitors should keep a copy of their solutions for reference.

CAN YOU MAKE A CAKE ?



OF COURSE YOU CAN ! THEN HELP US TO PRESENT CAKE TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND TO MOTHERS' MEETINGS, ETC. AT THE SAME TIME YOU MAY GAIN FOR YOURSELF A HANDSOME PRIZE.

This Week's Competition is Class No. 3—Sponge Cakes.

If you compete this week, you may send in either Victoria, Sandwich, Swiss Roll, or Plain Sponge.

This contest is entirely complete in itself.

The Prizes will be awarded as follows:

1st Prize: £2 2s. in cash.

This will be presented to the reader who is adjudged to be the maker of the best sponge cake in this week's competition.

Second Prizes: 150 Ladies' Handbags

will be awarded to the readers who are adjudged to be the makers of the 150 next best Sponge cakes, and

Third Prizes: Three hundred Dainty Silk Handkerchiefs

will be awarded to the 300 readers whose Sponge cakes come next in order of merit.

We hope to publish the result of our first cake-making contest in our issue published Monday, February 8th.

Be sure you try for a Prize.

Now a word about ingredients:

The cost of the ingredients for the entire cake must in no case exceed one shilling, and with each piece of cake must be forwarded the recipe from which the cake was made, together with the cost of the ingredients.

Remember, you may send in a slice or piece of your cake if you wish, or you may send a whole cake. Either will count equally for prizes. But if you send a whole cake there will be more for us to distribute.

Now, set to work to make your cake. Then fill in the coupon below, and forward Cake and Coupon together, to "Sponge Cake Competition," HORNER'S PENNY STORIES Office, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.

All entries for this week's competition must reach this office on either Tuesday, January 26th, or Wednesday, January 27th. In order to make sure of their parcels arriving on the right days, readers should make inquiries at their local post-office concerning postal arrangements.

January is tea-meeting time. All over our country Sunday-schools, Mothers' Meetings, and similar organisations, are now holding their annual treats. In many cases the expense entailed is a great strain on the funds, and we are, therefore, now inviting our readers to help to bear the burden by supplying the necessary cake for countless tea-meetings throughout the British Isles.

We think this idea a most happy one, and we firmly believe that our readers will take it up with enthusiasm, and make the scheme a huge success.

To further add to the widespread interest there is sure to be in this great tea-meeting idea, we are offering the following splendid prizes.

FIRST PRIZE - - £2 2s. in cash.

SECOND PRIZES - - 150 Ladies' Handbags.

THIRD PRIZES - - 300 Beautiful Silk Handkerchiefs.

Perhaps, however, you would like to send a cake, but do not wish to compete for a prize. Then forward the cake, please, with a note to that effect. **WE WANT ALL THE CAKE WE CAN GET!**

The rules of this competition are very simple. All you have to do is to make one of your favourite cakes, and forward a slice or piece of it to the Editor. Of course, you may send the whole cake if you like. All the better! It will help to swell the grand collection, and will, in due course, be sent to some Sunday-school, Mothers' Meeting, or similar organisation.

Read the following rules carefully:

This is the third of our cake-making contests, and is for sponge-cakes. These great contests are being organised by the four following papers: "Horner's Penny Stories," "Sunday Circle," "Horner's Weekly," and "Golden Hours." All readers of these four papers may compete.

SPONGE CAKE COMPETITION—ENTRANCE COUPON.

(Fill in this form.)

I enter this Sponge Cake Competition, and agree to accept the judges' decision as final.

Cost of Cake.....

Name.....

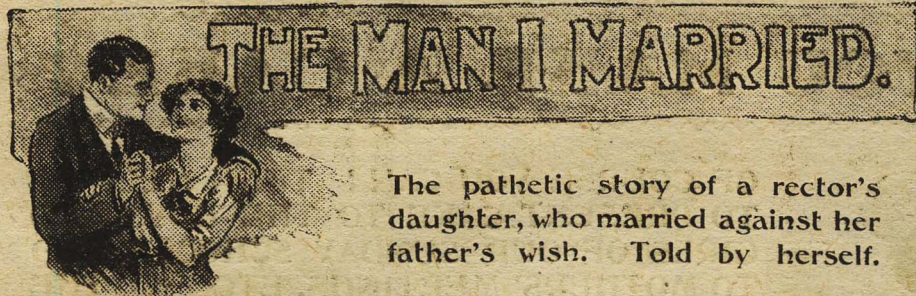
Address.....

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this competition.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR CHURCH WORKERS.

Are you holding your Sunday School treat, or Mothers' Meeting tea (or any similar gathering) this month or early in February? And would you like a supply of cake free? If so, send a letter to the Editor at once, stating when and where the tea will be held, and how many you expect to be present.

We cannot guarantee to help you, but we will do our best. First come, first served! So please write to the Editor to-day. Letters should be addressed to "New Year Treat," Horner's Penny Stories, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.



The pathetic story of a rector's daughter, who married against her father's wish. Told by herself.

HOW I MET MY HUSBAND.

MY father, who was the rector of Great Burgrave, gave most of his meagre salary to his parishioners, so we led a very quiet life.

My dislike for my humdrum existence was lessened when I met Sir Howard Burgrave, and fell in love with him. My father forbade me to see him, on account of some foolish act which Howard was said to have committed about seven years before, when he was living at Burgrave Hall. Sir Howard proposed, and then one night we stole away to London, where we were married.

After the honeymoon we went back for a few days to stay with my father and sisters, who had forgiven me.

Soon after our return to London I came home from a reception and found Howard in his room, raving like a madman. He had had a slight accident, and Peggy, my sister, who was staying with us, had given him brandy, which the doctor said had brought on this state, but I could see he wasn't telling the whole truth.

Howard was well on the road to recovery, when a coarse-looking man, who had been several times before, called to see him. Accidentally I overheard them talking.

"You've got to come. She's been asking for you."

I was passionately jealous, and this widened the breach between us. Then I met Hartley Rashwell at a reception, and we drifted into a kind of intimacy. Howard remonstrated.

And we had a violent quarrel. I was to blame, as I was too proud to tell Howard that I had forbidden Rashwell to see me again, on account of his making love to me. Howard and I parted in anger. Oh, that I could have recalled all the harsh words I said to my husband!

A RASH RESOLUTION.

A STRANGE, settled feeling of bitterness followed my tears. He cared nothing for me, I told myself; he did not love me any more, if ever he had loved me at all. He had spoken so coldly and calmly of the impossible life that lay before us—we, man and wife, to act as mere strangers to one another, to live under the same roof and yet never see one another!

It might be possible for him; for me it was utterly impossible. The life would kill me, and I would not live it—would not! I would disregard his orders, his commands. I was young; I had my life before me. If he did not want me I would go.

I had dried my tears now. There would be an end to tears for a long time to come, I resolved. Yes, I would go. I would only wait till I was certain he had gone out of the house, till I was sure he had gone, then I would make my arrangements.

I sat in my own room and made plans, or tried to make plans—tried to arrange a future that at present was entirely dim to me.

I rose, and went to my glass. I looked at myself. I studied my own face carefully, not with vanity, but in, perhaps, the same spirit as a miser counts his hoard of gold. My face was my fortune. I laughed at the homely thought. I even hummed the words over to myself: "My face is my fortune, sir," she said—"sir," she said. Then I laughed again.

Perhaps there were some shops where they would be glad to have a girl with a pretty face. My thoughts ran in the direction of the shops. I felt sure I could be a good saleswoman. What I should have liked to have done above all other things was to have become a nurse; but that was impossible. I was without training; I was ignorant, and I knew that I should have to spend a long time as a probationer. So I dismissed the nurse idea.

Then, of course, there was a domestic position—governess or nursery-governess, or even as nurse to little

children. I was fitted and capable for that work, because I loved children.

I saw him go at last. I watched him from my window. The cab that was to take him to the station stood at the door. He never turned his head; he never glanced up at the windows to see if I were watching.

I felt a sudden bitter resentment against him for that. He might have looked, I said to myself; he might have looked.

But he was gone, gone now, and I was free. I laughed suddenly. I thought of what he had told me about the money he had put into the bank on my behalf. I was supposed to go to the bank and sign my name in the manager's book. But the bank would never see me. I would never touch the money. It should lie there for ever, for me! I had a little money left—a little of my own. My dear, dear old father had pressed a ten-pound note into my hand when I had parted from him last. I knew what it must have cost him—a fabulous sum for him. I knew that for him it meant months of scraping and saving. Yet I had taken it, because I knew it would break his heart if I refused. I still had it intact. I had meant never to spend it, but to keep it always as a memento of his love for me.

Besides this I had a few pounds in gold. I counted my little hoard. I was rich to the extent of fifteen pounds seven shillings and ninepence.

A year ago this would have seemed like a fortune to me. Of late, however, I had come to consider the value of money less. Why, the very gown I was wearing at this moment had cost more than that! My latest evening-gown had cost twice, and more than twice this sum.

Howard was gone, and I began to make my preparations. I packed a bag. I took all the things that I considered necessary. The bag was a capacious one; I found that I could put into it another dress. The one I was wearing was almost new, and it was of dark, serviceable material. I would keep that one on. I went through my collection of dresses, and selected another one, a plain black dress that I had had the fancy to buy about a month ago. I had only worn it once, and Howard had not liked it, because it was black and funereal-looking, so it had been lain aside. Now I folded it and packed it carefully.

I selected such underlinen as I knew I should need, and a pair of stout boots. I was wearing a good, useful pair of shoes at the moment, and would keep them on.

I almost wondered at myself as I set about my task so methodically. I kept repeating to myself: "I am going away. I am leaving Howard for ever. I shall never return. This is the end of my married life. My romance is dead; Howard does not love me!"

Once I thought I was going to cry. There was a queer, burning feeling in my eyes; but I forced the tears back. Why should I cry? He did not love me; perhaps in his heart, in spite of his orders, he would be glad to realise that I had gone for ever.

I had almost finished my packing when there came a knock on the door. I had thoughtfully locked the door. Now I thrust the bag and its contents under the bed, and turned to the door and opened it. It was Hortense, my French maid.

"Oh, madame—milady—it is Monsieur Rasvell. He demand most urgently zat you see him."

"I shall not see him," I said bitterly. "I told you, Hortense, that I would never see that man. Tell him I refuse to see him, and order him to go."

"Oh, milady, 'e—'e look so—so—so—vat you call it?—so—"

"I won't see him," I said, "understand that!"

"Yes, milady. My 'eart bleed for 'im; 'e look so bad, so upset, so terrible, so—so tragic—"

"Go away!" I said harshly. "Go and tell him I will not see him."

Of course, he had given her money to plead his cause,

(Continued on page 22.)

A Genuine Rupture Cure Sent on trial to Prove It

Don't Wear a Truss Any Longer.

After Thirty Years' Experience We Have Produced an Appliance for Men, Women, and Children That Actually Cures Rupture.

If you have tried almost everything else come to us. Where others fail is where we have our greatest success. Send attached coupon to-day, and we will send you free our illustrated book on Rupture and its cure, showing the Appliance, and giving you prices and names of many people who have tried it, and are extremely grateful. It is instant relief when all others fail. Remember we use no salves, no harness, no lies.

We send on trial to prove what we say is true. You are the judge, and, having once seen our illustrated book and read it, you will be as enthusiastic as hundreds of patients whose letters you can also read. Fill in the free coupon below and post to-day. It is well worth your time, whether you try our Appliance or not.

A Cheap and Infalible Remedy.

69, Oxford Road, Macclesfield.

C. E. Brooks.

Dear Sir,—After a year's wearing of your famous Rupture Appliance, I can find no words to express my admiration of such an excellent invention, and the benefit I have derived from its use. All you claim for it in your book, and all that your clients have said in its favour in their printed testimonials, I can fully bear out and confirm from personal experience. I am sure that hundreds of your Appliancees would be instantly ordered if the unfortunate sufferers only knew of its existence. For my part, I feel that you deserve the universal gratitude of mankind for inventing such a cheap and infalible remedy for so widespread a complaint, and you are perfectly free to make what use you please of what I say in this letter.

Yours faithfully, ELLEN JARRETT.

Perfectly Cured at 74.

Jubilee Homes, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks. To Mr. Brooks.

Dear Sir,—I, Henry Salter, have much pleasure in saying that I am perfectly satisfied with the Rupture Appliance. You are welcome to use my name where the British flag flies, and all other nations on the face of the globe. Dear sir, I cannot thank you enough for relieving my suffering. I shall recommend you to any of my friends. I am pleased to say it is a permanent cure.

I remain, yours obediently,
HENRY SALTER.

P.S.—My age is 74 years, perfectly cured.

Doctor Said It Was Extraordinary.

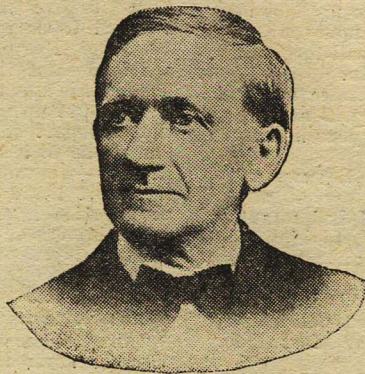
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs.
I am pleased to say that Appliance requires no renewal or alteration, for it has done its work, and has been put away in hope that it may not be required again. I went to see my doctor last night, and he would not believe it until he had seen it, and he said it was extraordinary. This cure has been in spite of a chronic cough, which always seemed to be right on the bowel, and made a cure seem impossible. You may use my testimonial, but only under non-de-plume.

A MIDLAND PARSON.

(Name given on application.)

Worth A Thousand Trusses.

Chesham, Bucks.
I am very pleased with the Appliance which I purchased at your office some time ago.



From a photograph of Mr. C. E. Brooks, inventor of the Appliance, who cured himself, and whose experience has since benefitted thousands. If ruptured, write to-day.

I must say it is worth a thousand trusses, and shall be very pleased to recommend it to anyone whenever the opportunity occurs.—J. H.

People Say a Miracle Has Taken Place.

15, Brook Street, Hay, Hereford.

Mr. Brooks.

Dear Sir,—I am more than thankful to tell you that during the five weeks my sister has been wearing the Appliance she has had no pain whatever, and she is now able to go for walks. On Good Friday she walked out to the cemetery, which is out of the town, where she had not been for twelve years. She also sleeps and eats well, and is altogether a different person. People say a miracle has taken place. We both feel we cannot find words to express our thanks to you for your Appliance. Please use this letter if you wish. I shall do all I can to recommend your Appliance wherever possible, as it gives the greatest ease and comfort.

I am, yours very truly,
(Signed) Nurse M. PARMEE.

Trusses Were No Earthly Uss.

High Street, Seal, near Sevenoaks, Kent.
I should like to say that I find great comfort in wearing your Appliance. I never thought I should have been able to take up my occupation as blacksmith again. Trusses were no earthly use to me, and caused me great pain; but now I can go to my work with ease, and feel quite safe. I shall always take great pleasure in recommending your wonderful Appliance to those I come in contact with suffering from hernia.

THOS. COLLISON.

8-Weeks-Old-Baby Perfectly Cured.

27, New Street, Littleshill, Staffs.
I now take great pleasure in thanking you for the Appliance, as it has been a perfect cure for my little boy. He was only eight weeks old when I tried the Appliance, and is now perfectly cured at six months. I shall certainly recommend your Appliance as being a perfect cure. Thanking you greatly for what you have done for me.

Mrs. SMITH.

Ten Reasons Why

You Should Send for the Brooks Rupture Appliance.

1. It is absolutely the only Appliance of the kind on the market to-day, and in it are embodied the principles that inventors have sought after for years.
2. The appliance for retaining the rupture cannot be thrown out of position.
3. Being an air-cushion of soft rubber, it clings closely to the body, yet never blisters or causes irritation.
4. Unlike the ordinary so-called pads, used in common trusses, it is not cumbersome or ungainly.
5. It is small, soft, and pliable, and positively cannot be detected through the clothing.
6. The soft, pliable bands holding the Appliance do not give one the unpleasant sensation of wearing a harness.
7. There is nothing about it to get foul, and when it becomes soiled it can be washed without injuring it in the least.
8. There are no metal springs in the Appliances to torture one by cutting and bruising the flesh.
9. All the material of which the Appliances are made is of the very best that money can buy, making it a durable and safe Appliance to wear.
10. Our reputation for honesty and fair dealing is so thoroughly established by an experience of over thirty years of dealing with the public, and the prices are so reasonable, the terms so fair, that there certainly should be no hesitancy in sending the free coupon to-day.

REMEMBER.

We send the Appliance on trial, to prove that what we say is true. You are to be the judge. Fill in the free coupon below and post to-day.

If in London, call at our consulting-rooms. Experienced and capable fitters for ladies and gentlemen.

FREE INFORMATION COUPON.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.,
820, BANK BUILDINGS, KINGSWAY,
(Corner of Portugal Street),
LONDON, W.C.

Please send me by post, in plain wrapper, illustrated book and full information about the Brooks Appliance for the Cure of Rupture.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

(Please write plainly).

I thought; but in that I did Hortense an injustice. She went, but in ten minutes she was back again.

"Well?" I asked sharply.

She held out a note to me.

"Milady, 'e beg you will read dis."

"I will not!" I said, "Hortense, I wonder at you! I have told you this man has insulted me. I shall not see him."

"Oh, milady, be a little merciful to 'im. 'E look so bad, so terrible! 'E only beg you will read dis."

I snatched the note from her angrily. Yes, I would read it; then tear it into fragments and return it to him in that state.

But I did not.

"Joyce, I have offended you, I know, past all forgiveness. I realise that I was wrong, and I humbly beg your pardon on my knees. Forgive me the past, and, for Heaven's sake, help me now! I am a very desperate man. I have counted my friends, and they have all failed me—all—not one of them will hold out a hand to a man who is sinking. Joyce, you are my last hope in life. Perhaps you cannot help me. I know your good, gentle heart. I know that you can and will forgive me. I shall never in this life trouble you again.

"See me, only for a few minutes. Believe me, it is the prayer of a dying man! Joyce, you will not refuse that, will you? You will remember it all your life if you do.

"HARTLEY RASHWELL."

I stood with the letter in my hand. I had meant to tear it into fragments and send it back to him. But how could I? The prayer of a dying man! What did he mean?

Hortense was watching me with eager black eyes.

"Milady, 'e look so terrible, so ill, so pale! Your 'eart would bleed. Oh, you will see 'im? I shall say so—yes?"

"I will see him," I said. "Show him into the drawing-room."

For some time after she had gone I stood with the letter in my hand, wondering. I did not want to see Hartley Rashwell again. I realised now that I had never even liked him. There was something mean, poor, under-handed about the man. In the ordinary way I would never even have made a friend of him, but I had done so partly—mainly, I think—out of opposition to Howard's wishes.

Well, I must see him, I supposed. I thrust his letter into the pocket of my dress, and went down the stairs, locking the door of my room after me, so that Hortense should not go prying about and find my packed bag under the bed.

Hartley was in the drawing-room. He was pacing up and down. What Hortense had said was true; his face was ghastly. He looked horribly ill; he looked like a man with a terrible fear, an awful dread, in his heart.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

He came towards me, hesitated, half held out his hand, then let it fall to his side. He saw that I did not wish to shake hands with him.

"You—you had my letter?"

I nodded.

"Or I should not be here now. I did not mean to see you again, after your insult to me."

His face flushed for a moment.

"Joyce, for Heaven's sake forget and forgive!" he said. "I come to you because—because I am desperate. I'm half out of my mind. I tell you"—he paused; he licked his lips—"there's prison before me!"

"Prison!" I said. I started. He nodded.

"I've been a fool—a mad fool! I've spent money like water. I wanted to see you. Oh, it's no excuse, I know. I had to spend money to get and keep in the set, where I should find you. A man without money isn't wanted there. I've lost hundreds to the Robertshaws at bridge. But it isn't that."

"Why don't you go to her—she is your cousin?"

"Her!" He laughed. "Go to her—Essie?" He laughed again, hollowly. "I went—of course I went to her first, and she laughed at me—told me she had nothing for me—turned me down as she would turn a beggar from her door."

"What do you want, then?" I cried.

"Money," he said. "Oh, you can look at me, Joyce! I expect I know what you think of me—think of a man who—who told you he loved you, then comes to beg money from you. I'm pretty low down, aren't I? I don't think a man can be much lower. But—but it isn't all for myself, quite—" He paused. "It would kill my old mother if she knew I had been sent to prison. She—she was foolish enough to be proud of me—"

"Explain what you mean exactly," I said.

"I've been a mad fool," he said huskily. "I had to get money somehow. I thought I saw a chance. I forged the name of a man I know. I got hold of his cheque-book by accident—he dropped it, one day. Heaven knows what possessed me! I tore out a cheque, before I gave it to him back. It's Wilderfoot—you don't know him. He's a brute, the hardest man I know—a man without mercy or pity. I chose the wrong man, didn't I? Well, I forged his name. I did it pretty well; but he found out. He's given me twenty-four hours to refund the money and clear out of the country. That's his bargain—I am to refund the money and clear out of the country, or he'll give information against me and have me arrested to-morrow morning!"

"Joyce, I've been to every friend—who I thought was a friend—and they've turned me down, every one of 'em. Essie was the first. She said I was a fool, and I'd have to put up with the results of my folly—yet she had the best part of the money I stole. She's got it now. She sticks to it like a leech—hoards it, and gloats over it. She—she wouldn't save her own father from hanging, if it cost her a guinea!" He paused. He wiped the perspiration from his face, then went on in a low voice: "I've been to them all—to those who I believed were my friends—it was the same everywhere. I didn't tell them all that I've told you—only you and Essie know the truth. I told them I was in a plight for money, that I must have it somehow.

"One told me he was short himself, another told me that he never lent money on principle. They all had something to say. But none of them helped me, so—so I came to you, last of all, Joyce. You're my last hope in this world, because"—he paused—"if I don't get the money to settle with Wilderfoot, I shall blow out my brains to-night!"

I did not realise what a poor, cowardly suggestion it was. I believed him at that moment. I think then that he believed himself. He meant that he would do what he said; yet, when the time came, as I reflected afterwards, I knew that Hartley Rashwell would be the last man on earth to do himself an injury.

I felt sorry for him—terribly, terribly sorry! In my heart I forgave him the insult he had put on me the other night. I would have helped him if I could; but how could I?

"I have no money," I said. "Only fifteen pounds and a few shillings."

He stood staring at me with black, lack-lustre eyes.

"No money, Joyce! Then—then you—you can't help me!" he said. "It's no good—eh?" He tried to laugh. "I'm sorry I worried you. I—I shall never worry you again, Joyce. Forgive me for coming!" he turned to the door. Suddenly I remembered.

"How—how much is it? How much do you want?" I asked.

He paused.

"What's the use, if you can't help me?" he said. "It was for two hundred and fifty that I filled in the cheque. That's what I have to pay Wilderfoot. Then he makes it part of the bargain that I shall clear out of the country at once. I can't go without a penny in my pocket."

"You—you could manage with three hundred pounds?" I whispered.

"Three hundred pounds would save my life now," he said quietly.

"I can let you have it. I had forgotten. I remember now I have the money," I said. I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece—it was nearly four. At four, I knew the banks closed.

He was babbling something—his thanks, his gratitude, and it was real enough; but I did not listen to him. I knew that I must get to the bank at four. He had come in a taxi, it was at the door, waiting for him.

"Wait!" I said. I flew upstairs, and put on my hat. I came down in a few moments.

Together we entered the cab, and the man drove me

to the bank. I was there just a few moments before four. I saw the manager, who had been expecting me. I wrote my signature in his book, and he gave me a cheque-book.

"Sir Howard has placed three hundred pounds to your credit, Lady Burgrave," he said. "Any cheque of yours up to that amount will be honoured."

I nodded my head and thanked him. The bank was already closed when I came out.

Hartley was waiting in the cab, white-faced and wild-eyed. He tried to speak, but failed. It was his eyes that questioned me. I felt terribly sorry for him; then I forgot all his faults. I only saw how greatly he was suffering.

"Everything is all right," I said. "You must come home with me again, Mr. Rashwell. I will give you a cheque. You will be able to get it cashed at that bank after ten o'clock in the morning."

He seized my hand and kissed it, he mumbled something that I could not hear.

Once more he and I were back again; the cab stopped before my door. He followed me into the house. I saw Edwards, our footman, stare at him. Edwards had, perhaps, received Howard's orders that this man was not to be admitted. But how could he prevent him when he came in with me?

In the dining-room I took pen and ink, and for the first time in my life filled in a cheque and signed it. I made the cheque payable to Hartley Rashwell. At his wish I did not cross it—I did not understand what crossing a cheque meant. He stood by my shoulder as I wrote. Perhaps he understood that I had never written a cheque before. The cheque had the word "Order" on it—"Pay to So-and-so, or Order—"

He made me scratch out the word "Order," and substitute the word "Bearer," and write my initials under it.

When I filled in the amount "three hundred pounds," I turned to look at him. His eyes were glistening, he was clenching his hands tightly.

He took it from me—the fluttering piece of paper—and his hand touched mine. Then suddenly he broke down. For the first—and the last, I hope—time in my life I saw a man cry, and it filled me with horror. All my old aversion for him came back a hundred-fold. He looked so unutterably mean—such a poor, wretched, whimpering creature. Ugh! I shudder now when I think of him.

And Howard had thought—had actually thought that I could even care for this man! I thought of Howard, and my face grew hard, just for a moment, then softened again. I was thinking—I was remembering I had seen tears in a man's eyes before. Yes, how well I remembered it now. No, it was not for the first time I had seen a man weep. Once before I had seen tears in Howard's eyes. But how different that was then! It was tears of pity—pity for a poor, frail little cripple child, who had been knocked down and injured by a passing car.

But this—this creature was weeping for himself. In maudlin self-pity, in relief, perhaps in gratitude.

He tried to take my hand, but I repulsed him.

"I understand, Joyce," he said—"I understand! I know how I must appear in your eyes—I know!"

"Remember, you can cash that to-morrow at the bank," I said.

"Yes," he said. He had opened the door.

"To-morrow!" I repeated—"to-morrow morning—"

"I am not likely to forget that, Joyce," he said.

Edwards was waiting outside. He must have heard. But what did it matter? How could he know anything?

He opened the door for Hartley, and I saw, or fancied I saw, a look of dislike on Edwards' face.

THE FLIGHT.

I SAT in my own room, thinking. I was biting the end of the pen, in my usual fashion, when I wanted to write and was in doubt what words to put down on the paper.

I wanted to write to Howard. I wanted to tell him before I left him for ever, that I still loved him, but realised that his love for me was quite dead. I wanted him to understand that it was, even more for his sake than for my own, that I was going. I wanted to tell him that I would never wear his name in the future. I would not forget that he had entrusted it and its honour to my care.

(Continued on the next page.)

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There were many other things that I wanted to tell him, but I could not find words. I had destroyed four or five sheets. I went to the fireplace now and burned them carefully, so that only the black ashes remained.

I wanted to tell him, too, that I had used the money he had given me, in charity. I would not tell him for what charity—still, I wanted him to know that I had not taken it for my own use.

I made one more futile attempt to write, and then I gave it up in despair—the words would not come. I have always been a bad hand at letter-writing.

I burned the last sheet as I had burned the others, then gave up my task. After all, what did it matter? Howard would know that I had gone. He would understand that I had gone for good—nothing else mattered.

It was very late now—past midnight. I had made up my mind now to go to bed. I knew that the servants rose about seven in the morning. I had made up my mind to wait till six, then, in the first grey gleam of the new day, steal down the stairs, and out of the house with my bag.

And now, suddenly, there came the sound of gentle tapping on the door.

In the tensioned state of my nerves I almost screamed aloud. The door opened, and old Jane came in. I had time, barely time, to throw my dressing-gown over the bag which was lying on the bed. I fancy she looked at it, but I was not sure.

"Not gone to bed, my dearie?" she said. "I thought I heard you moving about in your room."

"No; I—I am not tired," I said.

She looked at me with a strange eagerness in her eyes. I did not understand then. How should I? I did not understand that Edwards had carried to her the story of my ride with Hartley Rashwell. Yes, Edwards had told her that Rashwell had been, that I had gone out with him and returned with him; that we had been closeted together in the dining-room for some time; that when we came out there was a look of strange excitement on my face and on his, and that at parting my last word had been "To-morrow," and his had been: "I am not likely to forget that." How was I to know then that all this Edwards had faithfully repeated to Jane?

"Master Howard has gone away for a few days," she said. "I—I didn't see him before he went, my dearie."

"No?" I said. I wondered why she had come. I wished she would go.

"My—my dearie!" she whispered. She came to me suddenly, and put her shaking old hands on my shoulder. "My dear, dear little mistress!"

"Well?" I said sharply. "Well, what—what is it? What do you mean, Jane?"

"I mean, dearie, there is time yet. Think, think, think of the misery and the shame—"

"You—you don't know! You don't understand what you are talking about. What shame? What misery? Oh, yes, there's misery enough, I grant you, but it is not of my making."

"My dearie, tell me; what—what are you going to do?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Dearie, you're not going to—"

"Don't question me," I said. "What right have you to question me?"

"The right my love for him and for you gives me," she said in a strong voice. "The right to save you while there is time. Oh, my little lass, give up the thought of it. Give it up! Stay here—stay with the man who loves you as he loves his soul!"

"You—you don't know what you say," I cried. "He! You mean Howard? He love me!" I laughed sharply, bitterly. "You are mad, Jane. I thought the same once. I know better now. He—he hates me, and I—I hate him!"

It was not true; it was a lie, and it seemed to scorch my throat. I did not hate him; I loved him—Heaven only knows how much. But I saw her start and recoil from me.

"Go!" I said. "Go away—leave me alone! Don't spy on me! I won't stand that from anyone!"

Slowly she turned to the door.

"I was not spying," she said sadly. "My lady, I

did not mean to spy." She had never called me "my lady" before, and the very words seemed to hurt and sting me. "I came hoping that I might help," she said. "Help you both. I came while there was yet time. For—for Heaven's sake, for honour and mercy's sake, remember he has a good name—a brave, fine name. Nothing must ever touch that—no dishonour—"

"How dare you?" I said; and my eyes blazed. "You—you accuse me of dishonouring his name?"

"I do not. I ask you to pause in time, before you may do such a thing. Oh—" She came to me with outstretched arm, all her old face alight with eagerness; but I recoiled from her.

"Go!" I said. "Go—go, and leave me in peace. I am sick of it all—sick of life, sick of everything! Go, and leave me in peace."

She went, with one last, mournful look at me. Her lips were moving, I think, in prayer, but she went, and I was alone again.

Oh, that slow night—those leaden hours! One—two—three—four. Four o'clock! The next hour seemed an eternity. Five o'clock! I rose, then sat down again. No, I would keep to my plans. I had planned six. I waited that last hour. My head felt heavy as lead. I wondered if it would ever pass. At last I heard the clock in the hall strike six.

The hour had come! I rose. I had slipped off my shoes; I took them up now, and carried them in my hand. I was wearing my hat and outdoor coat. I took my bag up. It was heavy; it taxed all my strength. I thought of lightening it by taking out some of the things, but there was no time.

Then in the faint, grey light of the early morning I crept like a thief down the stairs of the house that had been my home. I was going; this was the end of it all.

I paused for a moment on the half-landing, and pushed open the door of his dear, shabby little room. I saw it all again—the torn carpet, the shabby old furniture, the little table where he and I had so often had a happy meal together in those early days, the days of our young marriage.

I pictured it all to myself—the little table laden with supper-things, he in the big armchair, I perched on the arm of it, one arm of mine around his neck, the excuse being that I wished to keep my balance; old Jane standing here, just where I was standing now, beaming on us both from the door.

Oh, those days, gone for ever! No, never, never, never to come back. This was the end of it, the end of love, the end of living, for me. I wished I could have crept in here and died in the grey light of this early dawn.

I dragged myself away. I was weak and foolish, romantic, a stupid, foolish girl, I told myself. But the tears were in my eyes as I crept down the last of the stairs.

I stole across the hall. The familiar things there looked less familiar in this cold, eerie grey light. The tall old grandfather clock, to whose voice I had been listening the night through, threw a great black shadow that might have hidden a man. I shivered with foolish fears. I stumbled, then stood listening, in case I had been heard. I felt as a thief feels, ashamed and afraid.

But I reached the door at last. My nerveless hands fumbled in ungainly fashion with the numerous fastenings. I had to put down my bag. I had managed it at last, drawn the three separate bolts, and unfastened the old-fashioned chain. There was only the latch to draw back now.

I stopped, and put on my shoes. Then I drew the latch, and the cold morning air came to me. I shivered; I took up my bag, and went out. I did not close the door after me. I dared not; they would surely hear the sound. I drew it to as closely as I could. The servants would be down soon. And then I went, staggering a little under my load.

A little way, and I turned to look back; but the thin, grey, cold mist that lay over London had shut my home out from my sight.

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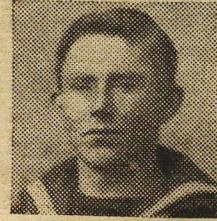
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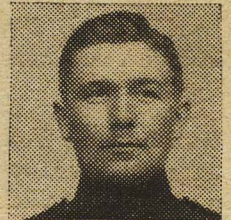
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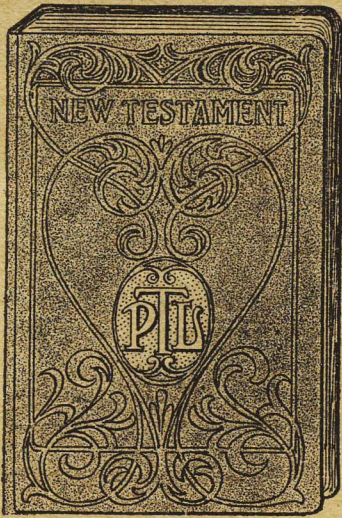
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