

which Senley Tyers was far too ignoble a man to understand.

"I-I will do what you tell me," she said painfully. "Don't-don't you speak to me about it again. I-I could not bear it. I will go away. I will never see him again !"

He rose, struggling with a triumphant smile. "Not till to-morrow," he said. "Re-

member that. You cannot go to-night; he would follow and find you, and bring you back. To-morrow, when I have taken him out for the whole day-Hush !"

He had heard a footstep. She had heard it, too. When did she fail to hear it? With a quick gesture she struck her lips with her hand, as if to stifle a cry, then sprang from the room and up the stairs as the latch was hear to tinkle.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was Vane-Vane, strong and stalwart, the rain-drops glistening on his mountain suit of rought frieze, a happy, careless light in his eyes. His gun was over his shoulder, his bag filled with birds; he had had a "good day," and was coming back to the delight of a quiet evening with Nora, his heart's friend, companion, sister.

He stopped and stared at Senley Tyers, and burst into a hearty laugh of SeSnley Tyers had stood, awaiting surprise, and his hand went out in quick welcome.

"Halloo, Sen! Why, you are a surprise packet! What on earth brings you down here? Why didn't you let us know you were coming? When did you

fire, and a deep pallor on his face. Your traitor has some uncomfortable moments in the course of his villainy. We all know what a bad time of it Judas had; and we more than suspect that that sleek scoundrel, Iago, must have felt cold chills of fear run through him whenever Othello's hand met his or fell on his shoulder in a friendly grip.

Senley Tyers had a very uncanny spasm or two as he stood facing Vane. But he soon recovered himself, and with his usual languid smile put his hand-it was cold and damp-in Vane's

healthy glowing one. "I ran down unexpectedly," he said. and I fancied a little of this keen air

would set me up." "You don't look quite the thing," said Vane. Senley Tyers' sallow face looked even more sallow than usual at that moment. "I am awfully glad you have come. You're right; this air will pull you round, and-and make a man of you in no time. It's splendid !"

"You look well enough," admitted Senley Tyers, looking at him with reluctant envy. No wonder Lady Florence loved this perfect specimen of youth and manliness. At that moment he hated Vane Tempest with even a keener hatred than before.

'Oh, I'm all right," said Vane, with her! The thought whirled through her his short laugh. "I'm out all day, tramping no end of miles with my gun. I've managed to get some shooting, you see. Good birds, aren't they? Rather wild up here, but that makes it all the better fun. And so you've been seedy, poor old man! That fact is, you work too hard. The smell of paint can't be good for anybody;" and he laughed. Senley Tyers nodded and smiled at

"Thank your stars that you are not, like me, a painter and glazier," he said. "And so my advice was worth follow-

on the table and wiping his gun with all the carelessness of a thorough her. She gazed at the boy's sportsman. "Oh, rather! It was the set him up wonderfully.

He spoke quite naturally and without an effort. He had almost grown she go? to believe in Nora's assumed sex by this

"Yes; I have seen him," said Senley 'Ah, yes; I suppose you have. And don't you think him much improved?

Doesn't look a bit fagged and tired now, does he?" He put the question with profound satisfaction. Senley Tyers shook his head. "Not a bit," he said. "I don't think I ever saw a youngster so much im-

proved in so short a time. And now, I suppose you will be coming back to

Vane did not answer for a moment

"Oh, I don't know," he said, as he "Look took off his coat and hung it over a blithely. chair in front of the fire. He had been so happy in this quiet place-Nora had been so happy—that the idea of leaving it for the dangers of London was not a welcome one. "We shall see. Perhaps Ernest would rather take a trip to the south. We might run down to Rome, or Nice, or even Egypt," he add-

Senley Tyers smiled. By every word and tone Vane was displaying his warm regard for the girl. "Well, you might do worse," he said.

"I suppose you will leave it to him to decide?" "Yes," said Vane, absently. "Well, and what is the news from the little

hear that the Cavallers' are clamor the meal, though he now and

ous for his return, and that the Baby mourns for him as for a twin brother.

Vane smiled, and Tyers went on:

'You will be glad to learn that the great Bendoza is still 'booming.' I shouldn't be surprised if that investment of yours makes you a tolerably rich man, my dear Vane. As for thine houmble servant, he means to start a hnumble servant, he means to start a

carriage and pair directly." Vane laughed, but carelessly. A love of money was not one of his numerous

"I'm glad of that," he said, simply. "Let's hope it will go on booming; but to tell you the truth, I'm thinking too much of dinner to care much whether the big Bendoza swells or bursts. I'm as hungry as a hunter. I suppose you never feel like that? By George! if you'll stop down here and tramp around with me for a week, you'll learn to count the hours to grub-time as anxi-

ously as I do." "Perhaps. By the way, you don't ask after Lady Florence ?" without looking up from his cartridgecase. "Slaying right and left without mercy, as usual, I suppose ?"

"Quite as usual," assented Senley Tyers. "She has asked me as to your whereabouts several times-I have had the pleasure of dining twice at Carlton Terrace while you have been awaybut I always replied that I was not Vane Tempest's keeper."

"I'm glad you didn't tell her," he said. You were quite right. If you want her lips parted. perfect quiet and peace of mind when rou're away, don't leave your address

behind you.' He went to the door and called to to speak, from Senley Tyers. Mrs. Burns, and that good woman

"How do you do, Mrs. Burns?" said, languidly. "An unexpected visiyou out."

"Oh! it all right." Vane made haste to say. "I'll get you a room in the keeper's cottage, and I know Mrs. Burns has got a good dinner for us. She always has. Come up to my room, Sen, and have a wash. Hurry up the dinner, Mrs. Burns, for we are all famish-

He led the way, humming a tune. He was in the best of spirits, and very glad to see his friend. As he passed Nora's door, he knock-

ed at it and sang out: "Don't be long, Ernest!" But no response came. At that mom-

ent Nora was kneeling on the floor, with her face buried in the bed-clothes. An agony of shame burned in her veins like molten fire. Every word Senley Tyers had spoken repeated itself-kept repeating itself-in her anguished mind. The veil was indeed torn from her innocence, and she saw herself the nameless, shameful thing the world would consider her if it ever learned her true

And he, Vane-her hero, her godwhat must he think of her? He, too, must regard her as without shame. That Senley Tyers had stood, awaiting was the reflection which caused her e, with his back to the the greatest misery and anguish. She recalled the expression of his face, the tone of his voice, that night of her arrival, when in the small room at St. James's street she had made herself known to him. Their meaning had not struck her then; but now, in the light of Senley Tyers' words, she under-

stood their significance. Yes, in his kindness and pity, he had hidden his true feelings; but all the time, from the first moment, he must have felt nothing but contempt-a kindly contempt-for her.

Yes, Senley Tyers was right. She must go. She must leave him forever. At the thought she shook from head "The fact is, I have been rather seedy, to foot, and a low moan escaped her. If Senley Tyers had told her that the best thing she could do would be to kill herself-to quit the world altogether-it would have seemed less hard than to leave Vane Tempest and to go

on living without him. He was everything to her-father. mother, brother. There was absolutely no one else in the world. And she perhaps-indeed, most likely-marry must leave him! What had this man said? That if she stayed, Vane would, her. Marry her! She could scarcely realize the idea. He, Vane Tempestas far above her as the stars are above the puddle on which they shine marry

brain and confused her. The minutes slipped by, each carrying a load of anguish almost intolerable. If she could only die there, that moment! He would forgive her all the trouble she had caused him-would forgive and pity her, and perhaps go on thinking kindly of her. Oh, if she could

only die! When Vane knocked she tried to speak, but could not find her voice; but his voice roused her from the profound apathy, the overpowering weakness of intense suffering, and she rose, steadying herself by the aid of the bed. "Yes," assented Vane, laying the birds | As she did so she caught sight of herclothes with a loathing, a horror bevery best thing we could have done. | yound all words. It was a garb of Ernest is quite another man, and is shame. She hid her face in her hands quite brown and hard-looking. It has to shut out the sight of herself, which Senley Tyers had made hideous to her. What should she do? Where should

She felt as if she could not go down to them-not even to Vane, if he had been alone—though her life depended on her doing so. She would have left the house and fled at once, but she knew that flight at that time of night

would be futile Vane would track her in half an hour. She must wait until the dawn; but the thought of following Senley Tyers' directions, of accepting his assistance, filled her with repugnance. While she stood gazing vacantly round the room like a wild animal caught in the tolls, she heard the two men coming along the passage.

Vane hammered at the door again. "Look sharp, Ernest!" he shouted,

She forced herself to answer him, though her lips were dry, and her voice seemed to have gone forever.
"Don't wait," she said; "I've a headache. I-I will be down presently."

eadache?" he said. "Oh, I'm sorry. Don't hurry. I'll send some tea or something up by Mrs. Burns." "No-no!" she grasped as steadily as she could. "I don't want anything. Go I will come down presently.

They went down.

"Ernest isn't up to the mark." said

Vane as they seated themselves at the
table. "Headache. he says. Caught,
cold, I expect. I'll send him up some
tea if he doesn't come down. Now,
then, old man, prime Scotch beef and
grouse. There's no claret—nothing but
tea and whisky. You've got to rough

It was know."

again stopped and listened, as if his thoughts were straying to the room up-stairs, and when the table was being "I think I'll run and see how Ernest

is getting on."
"Do," said Senley Tyers, throwing himself back in a chair with a rather too elaborate air of being quite as his ase. He had been rather silent all through the dinner, but had nodded and

miled responsively enough.

Vane had poured out a cup of tea, and with it in his hand he walked toward the door; but before he could reach it, it opened, and the figure of a girl in a print dress entered. He did not recognize her for a moment—he was standing between her and the light; then, when he saw who it was, the cup fell from his hand.

"Nora!" he exclaimed, thrown completely off his guard. She stood, white as a sheet, with purple rings under her lovely eyes, which

vere fixed on him with an expression "She's all right, I hope," said Vane, of sad pleading for forgiveness—of anguished self-reproach. "Nora!" he cried again.

For the moment he thought she had gone mad. Senley Tyers looked round, and sprang to his feet with an exclamation. His voice roused Vane to the sense of

the situation-to its peril. "What-what are you doing ?" he asked her in a quick, anxious whisper. She looked beyond him at the motionless figure and sallow face, and

"He knews," she breathed, in despairing accents. Vane sprang round, shielding her, so

"He knows?" he echoed, dully. came to take the birds and lay the "What do you mean? How should he cloth. She started slightly at sight of know?" Then he paused, reading the Senley Tyers, and dropped him a court truth in Senley Tyers' eyes, which watched them both with a mixture of fear and alertness. "You do know!" His voice grew stern-almost fierce. tor I'm afraid; but don't let me put "How did you discover it? When? Why don't you speak, man ?" Senley Tyers made a deprecatory ges-

ture with his white hand. "Yes; I know," he said in a low "I discovered her secret-your voice. secret-some time ago, in London. Why, are you engry with me ?" Vane stood looking from one to the

other. Perhaps, until that moment-as Nora stood in her proper garb-he had not fully realized all the significancethe danger of her position. "And-and you told her that you knew when you came this evening ?" he ask-

Senley Tyers inclined his head. "Miss Trevanion"-the Miss Trevanion" made Vane start-"discovered the truth-discovered my knowledge-by a chance word of mine," he said, lifting his eyes to Nora's face to see if she would contradict the lie.

She did not speak, and he drew an inaudible breath of relief. Vane stretched out his hand and took ers, hanging limply beside her. "Well," he said, with a deep sigh and his short laugh, "It doesn't matter. No one else but you knows, I suppose, Sen?

Senley Tyers shook his head. "No," he said, gravely; "not yet." "Not yet? What the devil do you won't go back to London. Look here, Sen"-he broke off; he was confused, overwhelmed by this blow that had been dealt them; but through the haze of his feelings his desire to shield and protect her shone clearly enough-"look here, Sen, whatever you may know or think, I want you to believe this. I know you will believe it when I tell you -his words came more slowly, and his voice grew sterner-"no blame what--whatever, do you hear ?-attaches to Miss Trevanion. It was all my fault

-all, you understand?" Senley Tyers bowed his head. 'I quite understand," he said. "Just so," said Vane, drawing a long "I knew you would. You are a gentleman, Sen, and no gentleman

who knew Miss Trevanion, who had once looked upon her face and heard her speak, would-would-" Would doubt her innocence, would cease to regard her with the deepest respect," finished Senley Tyers, with a bowed head, as if he were in the pres-

ence of royalty. "Exactly," said Vane, still sternly, "If I thought you-or any other mandared to think otherwise, I would"-his glance fell upon the gun-"I'd send him to kingdom to come !"

Senley Tyers repeated the deprecating gesture. "There is no occasion to threaten me my dear Vane," he said. "I tell you I quite understand. Miss Trevanion is free from all blame in my mind. All I have to do is to efface myself as quick-

He looked round for his cap and

ly as possible."

ulster. "Stop! Wait!" said Vane, putting his hand to his forehead. "There is no need for you to go. You must stop and-and help me. Don't tremble, Nora His hand pressed hers; his glance rested on her downcast face with tenderest concern. "It is all right-Sen is my closest friend. We can trust in him. He will help us out of this scrape.

She put out her free hand and clasped the back of a chair. His words, the tender glance, shook her to the core She could have been strong to suffer

For God's sake, don't tremble so, dear

"You do me but justice," said Senle; Tyers. He was calm, cool, calculating now. For him a critical time had arived; a false step would ruin his chance of success. His hand wondered unconsciously to the pocket in which Lady Florence's promise lay. "I will help you, if I can. You say, and I be eve myself, that I am the only one who knows the-the truth; but ong shall I be the only one? What will ou do when others discover it ?" Nora shrunk, and tried to draw her

hand from Vane's grasp. 'Let me go!" she breathed. He held her in the grip of a vise. "Hush, dear," he said; and who shall describe the tender compassion in his

deep voice? Her head sank lower. "How long do you think you can de ceive the rest of the world?" on Senley Tyers. Then he stopped and looked toward the door. "By Heaven! he exclaimed quickly and in a warning tone, "some one-the woman-is con

Vane sprang toward the door; Nor shrunk back against the wall, her hand pressed against her heaving bosom, he cace white and full of dread. Vane held the handle of the door and ed from her to Senley Tyers, his

"What shall I do?" he whisper out," he said in a corresponding whis-ner. "Let her come in: You—you must

Vane stood for a second, as acceptern and dark; then he released the handle of the door and caught at Nora's Are you frightened, dearest?" he asked, for he could feel her form trembling in his embrace. "It's awfully sudden and startling, I know, but you're too

The door opened, and Mrs. Burns enbrave and plucky to be upset; you're my brave little Nora, my little witch ! "Will you have some hot water now, sir?" she began, then stopped at sight of Nora, and uttered the usual cry of

Look up, dear, look up and"-his voice "Bless us and save us all !" she exlaimed, "Who-who's this ?" Vane's hands slid down Nora's arm him, an inscrutable expression in her

to her hand, and gripped it. "You are surprised at-at this lady's learned afterward to understand it. resence, at-at-her dress, Mrs. Burns?" said, smiling, but eyeing her sternly, as if he dared her to show the least sign of disrespect; "but you recognize her, I have no doubt." The woman stared at the white, love-

ly face. "Why-why, if it isn't Mr. Ernest, and in my girl's dress !" she said, with a flickering laugh. A shrill, excited "Oh!" came from

the daughter outside of the door. Nora covered her eyes with her hand. "It is Mr. Ernest, as you have learned to assure himself that his love is reto call this lady," he said. "She is a turned. lady, do you understand, Mrs. Burns? She is my wife !"

Mrs. Burns uttered a cry of amazefierce assertion. "She is my wife. You are, are you not, Nora, dear?" In a quick, stern low, tremulous voice that had a tone

She looked up with the wild look of a stag driven to bay, her hand closed on his spasmodically, her lips trembled, and the word he demanded—the "Yes" -fell from them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

after Nora's momentous "Yes." Mrs. the novels;" and he passed his hand A solemn silence fell upon the group Burns stood with uplifted hands, the girl at the door opened her eyes and her mouth still wider—if that were possible—and Senley Tyers, sallow and I've felt wild at your cutting it off—and thoughtful, looked from Nora's down- and be the Nora of old, the wild little cast face to Vane's stern one with a

curious expression. He was the first to recover from the stupor which seemed to have fallen on them all. Taking up his hat, he mo- feeling of elation, joy, still, possessed tioned to Mrs. Burns to leave the room, and softly followed her, closing the door

Vane took Nora's hands and drew her toward him. His face was pale with excitement, and his smile flickered and

"Well, Nora-well, little one?" whispered. She did not raise her head, but stood

passive, silent, motionless. His eyes dwelt upon her with a mixture of tenderness and admiration. In her womanly garb, in the plain print dress, she looked so differet to the boy Ernest, so like the Nora of the Witches' Caldron, that the period during which she had been masquerading seemed like that of a dream, and as if it had never existed. Even in that moment of intense excitement and bewilderment he how exquisitely graceful the slim, girl-

"She is my wife," echoed in his heart, joined with her softly, timidly whis- he noticed it. pered "Yes;" and the two sentences really were his wife?

The question sent the blood tingling warmly in his veins, made his heart beat as, assuredly, it had never beat Beautiful! Lovely! Why, yes! he had

known that-he had recognized that fact the moment he had seen her out there on the wild west coast; but not until this moment did he realize how lovable-and, believe me, that is far better than being lovely-she was! She had been his constant companion for weeks, and they had never had a cross word. Never in all his life had he been so happy, so much at peace with himself and all the world, so content with life, as he had been with "Ernest Morti-

"Well, Nora," he said again in a lov voice, "what do you say to it all?" Then, as she still remained silent, he went on: "Are you angry with me? Are you sorry for what I have done? It-it was the only course. You-you don't quite understand, perhaps, but indeed it was the only thing to do." Did she not understand ? Ah! if he had known how well, how far too well,

she understood, he would have spoken very differently, and the game of crosspurposes would have come to an end there and then. "You see"-he stammered out, manlike, misinterpreting her silence-"if-1 hadn't done this, made a grand coup of it, these people, this Mrs. Burns and her daughter, would have cackled and jaw- der-hearted, unselfish child of the wild

ed their heads off, and made no end of a fuss. You see that, don't you, Nora? Come, say you are not angry with With her face still hidden from him,

she murmured: "I-am not angry." He was only half satisfied, it seem

asked, tenderly. "Sorry !" she repeated, almost inaudibly. "No. It does not matter."

"Does not matter?" he echoed, look ing puzzled; then he put his arm round and drew her closer "Does not matter! mean, Nora? You-you didn't think it was only play-acting; that I didn't mean what I said; that I only said it to get us out of this scrape and quiet these people?" His voice was grave, almost stern, notwithstanding

She raised her eyes slowly, painfully to his face, as if she hoped to read his heart at a glance, then her eyes fell "You didn't think that ?" he said. Why, Nora, I meant it, for now and

"Meant that I- ?" she faltered. He pressed her hand in a tight grip, and pressed her face close to his

"I meant that you should be my wife," he said, "if you will—if you will, "Your wife!" The roar of the sea seemed to be surging in her ears; the room spun round with her. "Your

"Why, yes!" he whispered. "What else could I mean? and—listen, Nora dear-the thought, the mere idea of t, sends me half mad with delight! Yes, to morrow, if we can manage it— I must ask Sen; he knows everything we will be married in the proper and

"Married!" she echoed, faintly.

He laughed at what he took to be er consternation at the suddenness of

through his heart; he pressed her to him and kissed her lips, her eyes, her "My dear little one, my witch!" he There was silence for a moment, then he said : "Are you happy, Nora? Tell me;" and he took her face in his hands and examined it with all a man's anxiety

pped to a caressing whisper—"and e me just one kiss to sign the bond;

She raised her head and looked at

dark eyes : inscrutable then, but he

Slowly she put her lips to his and kissed

The blood ran still more warmly

ust one, Nora."

For an instant, an instant only, she allowed the passion that filled her heart to flash from her eyes, then she cast Senley Tyers started slightly. them down. It is just possible that, Vane looked from one to the other with man-like, he missed that glance. A woman would not have done so. "Yes, I am happy," she said in a

whisper he breathed in her ear, "Say of sadness in it, for all her avowal, "And so you shall be !" he exclaimed "Look here, Nora, you've made an awfully bad bargain, but I'll make it as good as I can for you. I'll do my best to keep you happy, little one. We'll go away somewhere and live to ourselves, just as we have been doing down here in this jolly little Scotch place. We'll just live for each other, as they do in caressingly over her short curls. "And

Caldron. Do you remember, Nora?" He laughed; his face was glowing with happiness and content. The strange him fully. He did not notice that her face was still white, that she kept her eyes out of the sight of his. Men are selfish, the best of them and at the best of times, and his own happiness

absorbed him, "Oh, yes! we'll have a good time of it, little one," he went on. "We'll go abroad for a bit, as I proposed to Sen. By the way, how did he manage to hit upon the truth—to learn our secret ?" She was silent, and he laughed care-

"It doesn't matter. Come to think of it, it is wonderful that he didn't discover it at first; Sen is such a sharp clever fellow. It's lucky that it was he and not some one else who found us out, isn't it? Because, you see, Sen can be trusted. He'll keep as silent as the grave. You'll see, he won't even realized how lovely the pale face was, speak of it to me, he'll just behave as if there never had been such a person as

Ernest Mortimer." She shivered slightly, and, of course,

made a strangely sweet music in his ed, quietly. "You are not afraid thatears. How would it be with him if she that the truth will ever get out? How should it? When we come back to London, your hair"-he kissed it-"will have grown again, and you'll be dressed woman :--how well the Burns girl's dress suits you !-and no one will ever dream of connecting you with 'Ernest Mortimer.

He drew her to a chair-she was trembling still-and she sank down at his feet, and resting her arms on his knee, hid her face on them.

They remained thus almost in silence for a time. To Vane the realization of the truth-that he loved this girl as passionaely as ever woman was leved by man-was coming home slowly but surely—more surely—every moment. He looked forward to the morrow with impatient eagerness, to the future with depatient eagerness, to the future with de-Was there in all the world any girl so beautiful, so lovable, as this girlman whom he had discovered-yes. he had discovered her !--in the western wilds? Was there any girl so pure, so innocent? Why, the very escapade which might have ruined her had been the result of her innocence and ignorance of even the existence of evil. Yes, he would make her happy. The rest of his life should be devoted to keeping her purity unstained, untroubled. A kind of solemnity fell upon him-the sort of feeling one is conscious of in some great cathedral. Compare her with the women of the world-the women he knew! How soulless, how ignoble they seemed beside this pure-minded, ten-

sea-coast! He bent and kissed her reverently. "My dearest! my wife!" he murmur-

ed. The kiss, the embrace, seemed to rouse her. A shiver ran through her, as if she were awaking from some blissful dream to the cruel reality of the world. She rose and stood with clasped hands, looking at him, her lips parted as if she were trying to speak; but no words would come, and he took her hands and

"You are tired, Nora?" he said, understanding to some small extent how the scene must have tried her. "You would like to go upstairs and rest ? You would rather not see Sen again tonight?" He made this suggestion with a sense of saying the right thing, and odded with loving, considerate encouragement. "Very well; you shall no "Good-night, Nora! good-night, my-

She let him hold her for a moment or two, then she slowly drew herself away and left him.

Outside, Senley Tyers leaned against the cottage and smoked his cigarette. They say the devil looks after his own. If that be so, most certainly Senley Tyers' master had come to his assist-ance in a most efficient manner that ening. As he lounged there, listenin to the murmur of Vane's voice, he was led with amazement at his own luck, If he had arranged the denouement all its details it could not have been more satisfactory, from his point of view. And now, if only the girl.could be persuaded to act like the idiots most girls are—these were his thoughts, not mine—all would go swimmingly.

He heard the room door open, and turning quickly, beckoned to Nora. She hesitated a moment, then moved out toward him. He put his hand on her arm and glanced toward the window with a warning gesture. "I was right, you see," he said in a whisper. "He will marry you. And ow, I suppose, you are satisfied?" She raised her eyes and met his mocking, half-amused, half-contemptuous

"On! I don't blame you," he went on as if she had spoken. "Ninety-nine girls

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