



BURNED AGAIN OR THE WIDOW'S REVENGE

She sank into a chair and her lips moved. "Not—take—place! Our marriage!" "Yes," he said, his eyes on the ground, for he could not endure the look of fear and pain in hers. "Florence, before—before I asked you to be my wife I had met and loved—"

seemed strangely "Jerry" and pre-occupied, and they eyed him curiously now and again. But they made the allowance which is due to the unfortunate mortal who is cast for the part of bridegroom, and ascribed his manner to his sense of the nearness of his doom. "A man going to be married always looks like that," said a young girl, as Vane, having been told that the dog-cart was waiting, nodded to them and strode down the hall. "He feels as if he were going to be hanged, you know."

It was an awful ride through the darkness. Florence had decided! He had lost Nora forever. Her face danced before him all the way, her voice rang in his ears. Yes, Florence had decided! He reached the inn and told the groom to wait. But when he got to his room he knew that he could not go back that night. He went down-stairs and sent the groom back with a message. "Tell her ladyship that I will be over in good time to-morrow," he said. On his way back to his room the landlord intercepted him. "The gentleman hasn't come yet, your honor," he said.

"What gentleman?" asked Vane, absently. "Mr. Harold Tempest, the best man, sir." "Oh, yes. No matter. He will be here presently," said Vane, mechanically; and he went upstairs. He paced up and down the room half stupefied. At five o'clock the landlord knocked, and asked if his honor would have some dinner. Vane said no; he would have some whiskey and water. The landlord brought up a bottle, and Vane drank two or three such draughts, but they had no effect upon him. Intense mental anguish, like intense physical pain, declines to be denuded by alcohol. He paced the room, or sat with his head upon his arm, throughout the live-long night. Toward morning he fell asleep. The sound of bells awoke him. He started and looked round him with a bewildered air; then his face lighted up with joy. Of course. It was his wedding-morning; he was going to be married to Nora—to Nora. Then the truth broke in upon the delusion, and he let his head fall again and groaned.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. "Fire away," said Vane, coldly, recklessly. "What had news, what news or a worse calamity could this young fellow bring than had already befallen him? He had found Nora to be lost; he had lost this time indeed forever, and most hopelessly; for was he not going to marry Florence Heathcote? The young fellow looked at him with increased surprise mingled with his solemnity. No doubt he thought Vane looked a miserable kind of bridegroom though. "I—I thought you might have heard," he said, slowly. "News travels so jolly fast, nowadays; the telegraph and all that, don't you know?" "I've heard nothing. Have only just got out of bed," said Vane, impatiently. "How the deuce you have managed to get here at this uncaring hour in the morning I can't conceive. What of your news keep till I've had some breakfast? You look seedy enough."

CHAPTER XXXIX. As Lord Warlock spoke, Lady Florence entered. She was fully dressed, and looked like a queen in her nuptial splendor. It is said that a beautiful bride is an anomaly; and that a woman never looks to worse advantage than when she stands at the altar in her spotless satin and costly lace; but if it be so, then Lady Florence was the exception which proves the rule. "Harold Tempest started," she thought; "he had never seen a more lovely woman. She was pale—as becomes a bride—and she looked at Vane questioningly, as if she were uncertain how he would receive her after the scene of last night; and when he came forward she grasped his hand with one of hers and covered it with the other. She took no notice whatever of Harold Tempest; it seemed as if, for her, there were only one man in the world. "Vane," she said, "what is it papa is saying? What does he mean by saying that the wedding must be put off?" "You shall judge," said Vane. Harold Tempest, considering himself de trop, stole out of the room. "Florence," said Vane, "and his son

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