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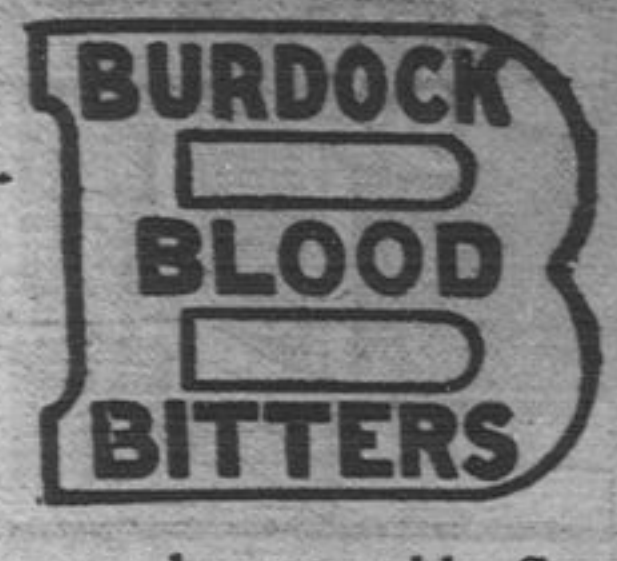
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A GOLDEN HEART. Continued from Page 4. memory would never have been cleared.

It was a day full of emotion for Lady Allanmore. It became known, although they tried hard to keep it secret, that she had returned, and old friends flocked to see her.

She had an eager desire to see it, but Gertrude said she must not. It would hurt her in her dreams for evermore. The whole place was to undergo alteration.

Why should you add even one more dismal recollection to the sad memories of your life? Gertrude asked, and Dolores gave up the wish.

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straight to Lord Fielden. "My lord," he said, "it is there."

"What is there?" asked Harry, hardly able to control his emotion.

"The skeleton, my lord, of what was once Sir Karl Allanmore."

A solemn hush fell on them all. Found at last—he who had been lost and believed guilty all these years!

"I will go down with you," said Lord Fielden; and, in spite of all remonstrance, he carried out his resolution.

It was a terrible place, but not so horrible as he had imagined. The pit was very deep, and dark as night; but, to all appearance, there was nothing living in it—no rats, no creeping reptiles. The walls were dry and hard, if ever there had been water, it had long since dried up.

The three men standing by looked at each other in horror. Who was to be the first to touch what remained of the tarant? It lay a few inches from the spot, immediately under the opening.

"He must have been dead, I should think, when he reached the ground," remarked Lord Fielden.

With reverent hands he examined what had once been the body of one of the handsomest and kindest of men. There was nothing repulsive about it. It was but a white and perfect skeleton. The clothes Sir Karl had worn were unruined, and fell to pieces at a touch, the gold watch and chain were not broken, and one of the men noticed that the former had stopped at twenty minutes past nine.

"That must have been the time at which he met with the accident," said Lord Fielden.

CHAPTER XXXIX. It was noon of the day following when Gertrude asked her mother if she would go down stairs. Dolores, worn out with her sorrows, had slept the sound sleep of exhaustion; but Gertrude, lying by her side, had heard the solemn tramp of the burden bearers, and knew what had been brought home.

"They have found him, mamma," he said, gently, "just where he fell; and Harry says he must have died before he reached the ground, so that he could not have suffered much. It was only the intense agony of one moment, and then all was over."

"What is that?" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "What is it, Gertrude?"

Through the open window came the peal of muffled bells—clear, distinct. "It is for papa," replied the girl. "All these years they have believed him g-d, and now they are endeavoring to outvie each other in doing him honor. All the church bells are rung for him; but, ah, mamma, no Christian in those churches stood up and said, 'Think twice before you pronounce judgment on an absent man!'"

And she did not. It was a terrible sight that Lady Allanmore kept by her husband's coffin; for, though there were times when she felt fainting by it, she would not leave it until it was borne away.

His kindly face would never bend over her again, his arms would never more be folded over her, his lips never be pressed to hers; she would never rest again with her head on his breast, feeling that her sure refuge was there; but she would rather have knelt by his coffin than have sat by another on a throne.

Nearly the whole country had been to do him homage, women and children, and people had waded up to the fair-haired wife beside the coffin as they had wept for him who lay within it.

"My dearest Dolores," asked Lady Fielden gently, "will you come away? I have not asked you before. I have felt that if you liked to spend these hours with your father's dead, you had a right when he is to be laid to rest at last, and you must come away."

Dolores raised her white, worn face to that of her old friend. "Where will they lay him?" she asked.

"By Gertrude's desire he will be buried at Scarsdale. There is an open space of ground in the park, and she says that it will be your wish to have a mausoleum erected there near to you, where you can go every day and strew some flowers on his grave, will be like some little atonement for letting him lie all those years unburied."

Again Dolores bent her head over the velvet pall; and Lady Fielden heard her murmur, "I did not know, my darling, I did not know!"

"You will like that, will you not, Dolores?" said Lady Fielden. "And she answered meekly, 'Yes.'"

"You will come with me, my dear?" continued her friend, and persuade your mother to come and see the white, worn face from which all light had gone, and the quiet lips were piteous to see. Lady Allanmore kissed the velvet pall.

"If I must go," she said, "good-by, dear love, good-by."

As she bent over the coffin, she saw the ring for the first time; a low cry came from her lips. "Who brought this here, Gertrude?" she cried, clinging to her daughter.

"We found it on his finger," said Lord Fielden, "and, thinking you might like it, I laid it here."

Gertrude took the ring from the coffin and kissed it. Dolores looked at it with weeping eyes.

"The last time I saw it," she said, "it was shining on my husband's finger, and it sparkled in the sunlight just as he was leaving me. I kissed it then, Gertrude, I shall wear it until I die."

CHAPTER XL. Gertrude had just been singing, and the words puzzled her. Quite unconsciously something had become a

matter of life and death with her. She had grown so accustomed to Lord Fielden's homage and love that she did not appreciate either until he was away from her; then quite suddenly her life grew cold and dim. Harry had learned some wisdom from his mother.

"My dear boy," she had said to him, "you have been too lavish of your love; believe me, there is nothing like a little wholesome neglect. For the last two years you thought only of Gertrude, and devoted yourself to her. She accepts your homage as a matter of course. Now take my advice and leave her for a short time."

Sixteen months had passed since the funeral of Sir Karl Allanmore, and the old wrong had been righted. Lady Allanmore, with her two daughters, had gone back to Scarsdale, and something like a gleam of happiness had come to Dolores.

As much happiness as could fall to her lot was Lady Allanmore's now cleared; he had always loved her; he had never deserted her. It had been she who had sinned against him, not he against her. He had been true to her in life and death; he was waiting for her in heaven. She longed in a calm, gentle fashion for death, that she might see his beloved face again.

She was living surrounded by her old friends, and her children were all that a mother's heart could desire. She had regained her health and her beauty; she had never dreamed of being so happy again.

The family had spent some few weeks at Deerhurst Manor, and Lady Allanmore would have been willing to allow Kathleen Rhyworth to live there, but she preferred to be with her mother and Gertrude. During the last month of her life, and something like old times had come again to Scarsdale.

The first thing that startled them from their settled ways was the arrival of the Neapolitan Prince, Colonna, who had seemed so devoted to Kathleen when they had been living in Florence. The daughter had been a great blow to him, but he was determined to find them. They had gone away hurriedly, and had left no address; but, after a time, he had heard the story about Sir Karl, and had understood.

He had come to London first; and from there he wrote to ask if he had permission to visit Lady Allanmore at Scarsdale. Of course the answer was "Yes," and the end it was not difficult to forecast, Kathleen loved him, and promised to marry him.

With something like despair in his heart, Harry watched the more fortunate lover; but he comforted himself with the idea that Gertrude was worth a thousand Kathleen's, and consequently worth so much trouble to win.

Kathleen was very happy. It was agreed that the Prince and Princess Colonna should pass six months of the year at the prince's palace in Naples, and the other six in Kathleen's home, the beautiful old Manor of Deerhurst.

The news of Kathleen's engagement in the country; people said that they did not see the marriage of a prince every day.

"If it be not love, what can it be?" sung Gertrude to herself, on this bright morning in autumn. On this seemed to be a certain magic in her words. Just as they died upon her lips Lord Fielden came in. She rose quickly; of late Miss Gertrude had avoided meeting him alone.

If not love, what was it? She rose and in a half embarrassed manner said, "Mamma is at home, and she wants to see you."

"Nay, Gertrude, but I want to see you," he replied; and there was that in his face which told her that the time had come when she must listen. "I want to see you, and you avoid me," he went on. "Why do you avoid me? You must know that I love you with all the strength of my heart. I do not think that since the world began any man has ever loved a woman so well as I love you."

She, who was so quick of speech and ready of wit, had no answer for him.

"I must remind you of one thing, Gertrude," he said, "after a few moments—the person who was the first to bring you information concerning that unfortunate woman, Lola de Ferras. Do you remember?"

"Yes," she said. "You have never paid it; but I have not forgotten it. Do you give me that I think you ought to give me, Gertrude? You ought to give me five hundred kisses."

"Oh, Harry, how wrong of you!" she cried, her beautiful face flushing. "How can you say such a thing?"

"You made another promise, which also you appear to have forgotten. Gertrude, it was this—that, if the Gertrude who brought you certain and reliable news about your father was in any way eligible, you would marry him, if he asked you, as his reward. Now be fair, be just to me, Gertrude. I am the medium through which such news was obtained—I am an eligible man. Give me my reward. Marry me!"

"What a way in which to ask me, Harry! What can you expect me to say? You have not mentioned the word 'love.'"

"Yes, I have," said Harry. "I have been thinking of nothing else since I saw you on that day in the Pitti Palace—it is you who will not let me. I have been your faithful friend, your devoted slave, your true lover, all these years; now I ask you, let me have you as my wife. Does it ever occur to you how completely I have given to you the last three years of my life?"

"You have been very good to me," she faltered.

"Good to you! That is a weak expression. I have worshiped you—simply worshiped you. Ah, my darling, do not be coy with me—do be kind to me! I love you, my Gertrude, with all my heart; you will not send me away?"

"No," she said gently, "you know that I will not."

Then his arms were suddenly clasped round her, and her fair face was hidden upon his breast; so that it was love after all.

The two weddings took place on the same day, amid the rejoicings of the whole county. Kathleen Rhyworth became Princess Colonna, such perfect content, such complete happiness as these young people enjoyed, is rarely known. Gertrude always liked to remember her mother's farewell. She had held her tightly clasped in her arms.

"I owe the entire happiness of my life to you," she whispered. "Good-by, my golden heart!"

CHAPTER XL. Five years had elapsed since the marriage of Dolores' fair daughters; and to her they had been years of perfect peace.

THE END.

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Lady Allanmore had made one stipulation with her daughters. "Call your children what you will," she said; "but promise me that you will never name one of them after me. Dolores means 'burden of sorrow,' and I have had to carry mine."

But Gertrude would call her eldest son Carlos after her father, not Karl, lest that should make her mother sad every time she heard it, but Carlos; and he, because of the name he bore, was always her best-loved child. Then Harry came and little Blythe. They were three beautiful children, and Gertrude was one of the happiest of wives. There was no London season for her. Once after her marriage, she made her bow before Her Majesty; after that she had no time for London. Her husband, her children, her mother, her household, her friends, the poor on her estate, completely occupied her time. If she went away for a few days, it seemed as if the whole county had lost its light.

Lady Allanmore continued to live at Scarsdale, but she was seldom without one or other of her grandchildren, and in their youth, she seemed to grow young herself.

One fine summer evening, Lord Fielden, who was visiting at Scarsdale, lighted a cigar and went out with some newspapers; a nurse followed with little Blythe, without whom the party would have appeared incomplete. They chose a shady avenue, where they seated themselves not far from the large, white monument which had already grown to be a landmark amongst them. Lord Fielden was soon engrossed in some Eastern news, Lady Fielden in her novels; the boys played at their will.

Blythe, quietly in her nurse's arms, the boys, finding themselves more completely at liberty, began to run races. They were so long absent on one occasion that Gertrude looked up from her book. Presently the elder, Carlos, came up slowly to his mother, and looked at her with great, wondering eyes.

"What is the matter, Carlos?" she asked.

"Mamma," he said, "there is a woman lying there by the white marble."

"A woman, darling! Are you sure?" cried Gertrude.

"Yes, a woman. She did not speak to me, though I pulled her dress."

"Harry," cried Gertrude, "do you hear what Carlos says—there is a woman lying by the monument!"

"Nonsense!" cried Harry, engrossed in his paper. "That boy loves to make a sensation. It is only the nurse."

With an air of injured dignity, Carlos returned— "Nurse is there—look, papa—and the woman lying by the marble does not speak."

It was the terror of the boy's face that attracted Gertrude. Lord Fielden did not see it.

"Go, Harry, and see what it is," he said.

Lord Fielden rose somewhat unwillingly.

"If you have been drawing on your imagination, Carlos," he said, "we will have a private interview."

"Mamma," said the little fellow, "indeed she is there, lying quite still, and she did not speak!"

The boy's terror was so evident that Gertrude rose hastily and followed her husband. As they drew near the monument they saw that he was right. There lay something which they could not distinguish at first; afterward, they saw that it was the body of a woman.

"Keep away, Gertrude!" cried Lord Fielden.

But it was too late, she had rushed on before him and raised the fallen head. One look was enough. It was Lola de Ferras, and she was quite dead. How long she had been there of course no one knew; but, in the hour of her extremity and desolation, she had gone to the grave of the man she had loved so dearly, to the man she had pitied for, with its lips closed forever, and the long, dark hair, streaked with gray. How gently they raised her! And Gertrude loved her own mother none the less because she kissed the poor wanderer's face in loving pity.

They never told any one where they had found her, for Dolores' sake; and they concealed her identity with some difficulty and buried her in the pretty churchyard at Deeping. There her grave is distinct from all others, because it is generally surrounded by rich, red roses; and there the passionate, guilty, loving heart is at last at rest.

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