them; his nands onneh thomas. -. su

the mightiness of his effort to con-

"That is easily remedied," he ans-

not go back to Gerald Romaine, the

farmer's son, as you left him-his be-

trothed wife. There is no reason why he should ever hear of this epis-

"But I-I don't love him as I love

though her heart would break.

you, Randolph," she pants, sobbing

"Oh, why don't you believe me?"

"A thing must be probable, or at

least possible, before I can give cre-

dence to it," he answered. "A faith

once broken can never be mended. A

woman who has deceived a man once

for one object, may deceive him a

second time for another. If I were to marry you now," he went on, his

words coming quicker, and his emo-

tion deepening as he proceeded, "al-

though I love you madly, I should

always disbelieve in you. I should

be on the lookout for treachery from

heart to mine without fearing that it

The acknowledgment that he still

loved her madly, brought hope

"If you cared for me, you would

not want me to go back to Gerald

Romaine," she sobbed. "You could

not contemplate so nonchalantly see-

ing me in another man's posses-

"What right have I to covet the

betrothed wife of another?" he cried

Gerald Romaine's promised laids

any more than I could steal without

compunction of conscience his horse

to live through it. I leave this

only the stars see the distortion of

"Are we going to part like this,

Randolph, after all that has pass-

ed?" she falters in a tremulous voice

that might tempt an anchorite, un-

man a hero. "Oh, Randolph, say

that you forgive me for not telling

you all on that-that night that we

stood by the fountain and you asked

"Why should I say that which is

not true?" he asked, turning bit-

terly toward her. "I don't forgive

you, and never shall, either in this

He felt the strain was too great

to last much longer; being but hu-

man, he would break down under

refrance com catching her in his

"My love is co strong that I can-

not give you up darling. If there

were ten thousand Gerald Romaines

between us, and ten thousand treach-

eries, I must be yours, and you must

But his strong will battles down

He is not sure of himself another

instance in her presence; and, with-

out another glance at the face dear-

er to him than all the world beside,

he turns on his heel and walks rap-

idly away-not toward the house, but

toward the entrance-gate that opens

out on the main road, and is soon

Aurelia never knew how long she

All that had just passed seemed to

her like a confused dream, from

which she must awake presently; she

could not realize that all was over

between Randolph Clavering and her-

so near winning had floated like a

bubble out of her reach; she could

not grasp the thought that she had

haughty, dark-eyed, handsome, ador-

ing lover whom other women coveted

real that she had lost him.

sighs as she went along.

The paths

indeed lost the golden prize-the

on, no, no! it could not be

Sitting there, she thought

of the lines she had heard

Miss Erskine reading aloud to Ran-

dolph only that morning, and in-

terlarding each line with sentimental

The words came back to Aurelia

"Where two roads part we sadly

Here turn we each our lonely way-

marked out for us by

with a strange, cold thrill now.

In vain to longer idly wait,

Or hope for further sweet delay,

That your path stretches far away

From mine-that now we separate

Where two roads part.

"With aching heart I humbly pray

That once again our life-paths may,

Each other cross ere 'tis too late,

And Fate be kinder than to-day-

Where two roads part."

Randolph Clavering's?

house, she told herself.

Through mazes strange and intricate

Did her path stretch away from

She could not-would not, believe

Then Aurelia fell to idly wondering

who had told Randolph about Ger-

ald Romaine, and how the calamity

One by one she saw the lights go

out in the upper windows of the

villa; that recalled her scattered

How she crept wearily up

broad path she had so lately danced

It was late she must go into the

I see with sorrow and dismay

self-that the wealth she had been

sat there in the cold, white moon-

lost to sight among the trees.

By a superhuman effort he has

world or the next. Good-bye!"

for him, if this leave-taking

arms and - ent to her:

this yearning for her.

be mine!"

And he turns his head sharply, and

villa to-night. Good-bye."

the anguish of parting from

that is working on his face.

me-to-to marry-you."

"I have no right to steel

sion."

"Of course I am to be married, am or his money. You have ruined my

I not?-and to you, Randolph," she life in coming here and teaching me

said, coyly. "Our engagement is no to love you, but I am man enough

was beating for some one else."

surging back to Aurelia's breast.

I should never press your

ode, this interlude, this farce!"

He laughed harshly.

trol his bitter anger.

wered haughtily.

her to his breast and kisses her fiercely-eyelids, lips and neck-with

a violence that he is himself scarcely

"Randolph," she cries, "you are

He recollected himself instantly

"It is alarming, being kissed-es-

pecially when you are not used to

it," he answers, with a sneer that

cuts through Aurelia's heart like a

She raised her head from his breast

and looked up at him quickly. Was

it the moonlight that gave his face

such a white, wrathful look? How-

fiercely-yes, fiercely-the dark eyes

"What is the matter, Randolph?"

"It does not amount to much,

bitter laugh. "It is only that

fancy," he replied, with a little

have heard a startling bit of news.

all her curiosity aroused at once.

"Only that acquaintance

mine is engaged to be married."

relia, greatly interested.

"What is it?" she inquired quickly,

"Is it anyone I know?" asked Au-

"I imagine you know her a trifle

better than most people do," he re-

plied, cynically, twisting the curling

ends of his dark moustache

impatiently with his white fingers,

a habit he had when deeply agitat-

"Who is it?" persisted Aurelia

"No! yourself," he responded,

She sprung back from him with a

He reaches forward and grasps her

"I want you to answer me this -

I want it from your own lips, that

I may be sure that the story I have

heard did not deceive my ears-what

was Gerald Romaine, the farmer's

The blow had fallen upon her so

suddenly, so sharply, and without

en instant's warning, that it fairly

staggered her-fairly took her breath

"I repeat," said Randolph Claver-

ing, sternly, "was Gerald Romaine,

the farmer's son, ever anything to

"I was once betrothed to him,"

"How long ago-was it broken

"It was never broken off, but I-I

was intending to write to him this

very night, and tell him it could never

be now," she answers, in a frighten-

ed whisper, adding, incoherently:

"how did-you-know about it -

said, harshly; and as he spoke

the time you accepted me?"

deny it, and she answered:

"We will get to that presently," he

face gathered blackness. "Let me

understand this clearly before I ans-

wer you," he cried. "Were you be-

trothed to this young Romaine at

She was too completely startled to

"You were good enough to over-

look such a trifling obstacle- that

you were another's-when you per-

mitted me to pour into your willing

ear my love for you, were you not?"

"I never thought of him in that

hour," she faltered, and her guilty

But she suddenly lifts her face, and

he sees tears in her lovely eyes; but

the sight of her tears do not soften

flower's head sinks, tortured by

head sunk down on her breast, as a light.

away, rendering her speechless.

she faltered, under her breath.

off?" he asks sternly.

son, to you? I want the truth."

"Not Miss Erskine, surely."

gay little laugh.

news."

white arm.

"Something has

met and held her own.

happened-what is it, dear?"

she asked quickly.

actually crushing me. Don't be so

conscious of.

vehement."

knife.

and released her.

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"Before Gerald saw you-that is, before your return from boardingschool-Gerald Romaine was my love; I was to have been his wife, Aurelia, and the day was set for the wed-

few words. Let me dwell for a few brief moments on that one gleam of sunshine in my life. Let me tell you how happy I was; how sweet were my hopes of a happy home all my own, with Gerald there to love me. I believed in his love, in his loyalty and faith, as I did in Heaven itself. I-I-could have knelt at his feet worshipped him. and blindly My only fault was, that I loved Gerald too well. I sometimes think that this is why Heaven took him from me, for in the great book it is 'Thou shalt have no

other God but me. "Now listen, mark well, Aurelia, the sequel to my pitiful love story. "My life might have been happy enough," continued Margaret, you had not crossed Gerald's path, Aurelia, for, from the first moment he looked upon your face, he loved

you with a love that was his doom and mine. "How can I tell you what happened after-tell you how he knelt at my feet one day and asked me for his freedom, that he might marry any-consider-ation." you, whom he had learned to love,

he said, as he had never loved me, and never could love me? "All in a moment, my idol, like my beautiful dreams, lay in ruins around me. My heart seemed to break then and there with one great, awful throb. I wished that

could fall down dead before him, but death would not come to me. "Only Heaven and the witnessing angels know the bitterness of the moment in which I turned to him

and said: "'God pity me!-I set you free, Gerald, if it must be so!' "I lived through it somehow, forc-

ed as I was to witness from day to day his fond devotion to you. lived and suffered in silence. "Oh, Aurelia, how I would have thanked Heaven for the smallest por-

tion of the love Gerald Romaine has lavished upon you. "Now he lies dying, and I am here pleading with you who has come

between his love and me, to come to him and save the life that I would be willing to give every drop of my heart's blood to prolong. See, Aurelia, I am pleading to you-Gerald's betrothed wife on my knees to come Aurelia had listened to Margaret's

story with open-eyed amazement; but instead of feeling sorry for the fairhaired sister kneeling is such bitter sorrow before her, a thrill of something very like triumph shot through her heart, that she could with a single smile, win the love which Margaret would gladly pay her life for. "You have not told me what is

the matter with Gerald, Margy," she said impatiently. "It is that most heart-rending of

all diseases-smallpox!" A shriek of horror broke from Aurelia's lips.

"Are you mad!" she cried, as soon as she could catch her breath. "You must be to ask me to go near Gerald Romaine with that horrid disease! Why, I wouldn't go within a mile of the house for the whole world-not I! You don't seem to consider, Margy, that if I should go hand-flower and all-and looks into to him and catch it, I should be her face; and then, as if yielding marked for life-my beauty would be to a temptation that he hates, that less in the moonlight, and looks at ruined."

Me re ivul The sell r L Pe ialo te (ind mbi

muat is beauty when weighed the balance with a human life! cried Margaret. "Go to him, and by the power of the love he has for you, I feel sure your presence will-

"Then he will die for the want of it," declared Aurelia; "for, coax as hard as you may, I refuse to go The loss of your good looks may be nothing to you, but to me such a catastrophe would mean death in life! We only reign in the hearts of men while our beauty lasts. Rest assured I shall not rush beadlong to ruin mine! And moreover," cried Aurelia, wrathfully, "I never want to see Gerald Romaine again-living or dead! Take that message back to him from me! Here, hand him back this ring. That was our gagement ring, and tell him I done with him forever-that I tired of the bonds that fettered me to him, amd I throw them Break it to him as you like, Margaret; then, perhaps you will have the satisfaction of seeing the lover whom you still adore turn to you for consolation and sympathy. Tell him," "Oh, Aurelia, let me tell you in a Aurelia went on, with an eldritch that resounded weirdly through the rose-arbor, "that have found another lover richer and handsomer. A man who has not his

wealth to earn by his hands or his brains, but who has it already, and who can get everything for me that my heart craves. Tell him I shall be a grand lady and-"

"I can hear no more," cried Margaret; "I will not believe that all you say is true." "You will find that it is all true enough very soon now. I did not to let Gerald or any of the rest of you know about it until was married and away, but you have

forced the truth from my lips." CHAPTER XXVI.

"Then you refuse absolutely come to Gerald?" asked Margaret,

slowly. "Don't you understand plain English when you hear it?" retorted Aurelia, furiously. "I said I wouldn't go under any consideration-under-

"Then my mission here is useless. I will urge you no more," replied Margaret, turning sadly away from

"Are you going back to-night?" asked Aurelia, quickly. "Yes," said Margaret; "I am needed there."

Aurelia breathed freer. She was very glad that none of the Claverings would see Margaret or even know of her visit. For the first time in her gentle Margaret Lancaster parted in

bitter anger from her beautiful sis-Aurelia watched the slim figure flit down the moonlit path and through the ponderous gate-watched her until the distance and the took her in their embrace, and she was lost to sight. Aurelia never

dreamed in that hour under what circumstances she was destined meet Margaret again. "It was as well to tell her whole truth about my intention

giving up Gerald, first as last," she murmured. "And Margaret can break it to him more gently than I could on paper.

"Oh, but I had almost forgotten what brought me out here in the moonlight. Randolph said that he would be out in the grounds and wanted to talk to me.'

She knew where to look for him, and throwing off all thought of the disagreeable scene through which she had just passed, Aurėlia hurried to the other part of the grounds, where she expected to find him pacing up and down impatiently enough, smoking his cigar under the trees, but he was not there.

She sits down on a bench in the moonlight and waits a little. Suddenly she hears a man's quick, firm tread on the graveled walk, hurries forward to meet him, stopping for an instant to break off white rose-bud from one of the tall

"Isn't it lovely, Randolph?" cries, holding it out to him as he approached-"it is for you." Not speaking, he takes the little

His straight brows are drawn together in one dark across his face, and his lips her sister.

strong wind.

his rage.

white and thin under his moustache. "I believe every false woman has a penchant for crossing my path!" he cried grimly. "With your with such bitter envy. treachery, I forswear all faith in the race," and having said this, he turned to leave her. "Randolph," she whispered, you mean that-that-we are

part? You could not mean that? "Your intuition serves you well, "Certainly we he replied grimly. to part. Gerald Romaine's promised bride-is nothing to me!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

For a moment there was deep Randolph Clavering looked at Aurelia out of the corners of his

had hidden her face in her hands, but by the panting breast and the heaving shoulders, so plainly cernible through their covering soft white mull, he saw that was weeping, that a storm of sobs was shaking her slender frame.

"Let me tell you all about Randolph," she faltered. "Thanks, I understand the affair perfectly," he declared, in an icy voice, his eyes flashing with a hard metallic glitter. "You thought a rich man a better investment than a poor one. You threw the other fellow over for me. If another man crossed your path to-morrow richer than myself, he would be the winner and I the loser if he were to sue for nanc. From a woman who could throw a man over with cold-blooded heartlessness you have done, I thank Heaven for escaping. I should like to ask one question," he went on icily; "seeing that you did not break with your other lover yet, according to your story, did you intend to marry both of us?"

Aurelia could not stand this cruel flaunt. "Do you think it manly to stand there and-and-insult me because I have been fool enough to give up a man who loved me as you could never have loved me-for you?"

Randolph Clavering stands motionhe would fain resist, but which mas- her; a spasm passes over his

She looked at the magnificent granite mansion, bathed in the glory of the white moonlight; at the parks that surrounded it, stretching away as far as the eye could reach on all sides, and she sobbed aloud at the thought of losing it all. How could she leave all this grandeur and return to the farm marry Gerald Romaine? she asked

had happened.

herself, wringing her hands hysterically. She couldn't-she couldn't, she declared wildly, below her breath; it would be death in life. She

> poor man. It would break her heart. Aurelia crept up to her room that night with the most missrahls heart "I in A. (To be Continued.)

had too keen an appreciation of

luxury to throw herself away on a

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