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There were the usual polite regrets;

then Mrs. Clavering inquired when

they were to lose her, and Aurelia

replied that she must start for home

their hearts they would not be very

The hardest task of all for Aurelia

The moment she met the glance

"He will soon return,

was to meet Maud Erskine that day.

they will make up and marry."

the train, and it had moved out

her safely started on her journey,

As they were not expecting Au-

It was dusk when she reached the

had been closely drawn; but she

could see the shadows of dark forms

"Was he worse?" she wondered.

Feeling very much like an intruder,

Some one was seated by the win-

dow-her face resting on the sill -

her form shaking with suppressed

sobs. At the first glance Aurelia

knew who she was, and called her,

quick start, and saw her standing

there; in a moment she was beside

her-her arms flung tightly about

Aurelia," she sobbed,

bnew you would come! I believed

him your message; I could not, and

she added, hopefully,

back from the

him quickly, dear-every moment is

"Who is with Gerald now?" asked

"No; she is in her own room," she

answered. "I begged her to lie down

and rest a little, but she would not;

so, out of sheer pity, the good old

tion to her in her tea. She sleeps

the sleep of exhaustion. The doctor

left some little time since, promising

be unavailing-for nothing more with-

in human power, could be done for

it-sitting by his bedside and hear-

ing him call on you to come to him

-without weeping, and-and I went

from his bedside that he might not

Morgaret pushed open the door

"Enter-alone-it is best so," whis-

softly, and the two girls stood on

pered Margaret, adding: "Call me

the threshold.

"Oh, Aurelia, I could not endure

doctor administered a sleeping

Aurelia, drawing back as they reach-

He is worse; I did not give

be saved; you will draw

The girl lifted her head with

neck-the tear-swollen

it from the very bottom of

he so ill, and calling for you

every fluttering, feeble breath.

ed the door-"his mother?"

Margaret shook her head.

"Margaret! Margaret!"

pressed close to her own.

farm. Already the lamp had been

relia, there was no one at the sta-

tion to meet her.

and entered softly.

took her to her destination.

Of course they expostulated;

Aurelia knew that deep down

ill-pleased when she went.

the following morning.

face Aurelia assumed.

# \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

By Laura Jean Libbey.

\*\*\*\*\*\* that ever beat in a girl's bosom. She knew Randolph Clavering too well to hope that he might change his mind. That night, for first time in her bright, gay, roseleaf life, Aurelia Lancaster knew what it meant to weep herself

that she gave way to her despair. It was late the next morning when she awoke; she hardly knew her own her nearer the hated farm and the face when she looked at it in the mirror. There was no color in the dimpled cheeks, or the daintily curvit that she felt like flinging herself ed lips-and there was great dark bodily from the train. circles under the dark, silken lashes. Dressing herself with cold, tremblength to the breakfast-room. Mrs. | had delivered her message to Ger-Clavering and her husband were lin- ald. which way should she turn? gering late over their chocolate. Aurelia's heart sunk when she saw

them still at the table-she hoped to escape them. It looked suspiciously as though they had waited purposely to see her, she thought, and she wondered thing about what had happened the lighted, and shone with a ruddy night before. She was soon to glow athwart the path that led to

Both glanced up at her furtively as she took her seat, and they exchanged morning greetings, in their usual

"You were not up in time, my dear, to see Randolph off," said Mrs.

Aurelia turned the knob of the door Clavering, sweetly. "He requested me to say 'good-bye,' to you for "He-has-really-gone-then?" fal-

tered the girl, slowly-chokingly. "He left at seven o'clock this morning," replied Mrs. Clavering. "My dear"-she went on in a low was over between you and nim-1 am sorry. My husband was sorry, too," she added, taking a swift glance at her husband, as though mutely appealing to him to corroborate the statement, and taking the cue from her, Mr. Clavering mura few polite, inarticulate

words which Aurelia did not quite There could not have been a more trying situation for the girl; but she was equal to the occasion; she crushed back the burning tears from her eyes, and summoned up all her pride-forcing a smile to ber line

"What you are pleased to term an engagement between Randolph and myself, I have only considered nothing more nor less than a flirtation," she declared, laughing with all the gay, happy abandon of a merry schoolgirl. "Randolph insisted that you would imagine really lovers, but I knew you would never make such a ridiculous mistake."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Clavering look-

ed at Aurelia in amazement. They both knew how much earnest their son had been in intention of braving their anger by marrying this girl. Could it be possible that now, after all-she would not have him? Was this the secret of this sudden leave-taking? This condition of affairs was rath-

a blow to their pride-still, no matter how it came about, they were delighted at the issue-he was free. And the hope beat high their breasts that his heart might in the rebound turn to the object of their selection-Maud Erskine.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

when you want me." Aurelia heard the door close softly Under the existing circumstances, after her, and knew she was Aurelia knew that it would be best standing alone, in the presence of the out delay; and before she left the | man she would have so wantonly debreakfast table she acquainted Mr. stroyed if fate had not taken the and Mrs. Clavering of her intended power from her.

timidly, and with trembling hands drew aside the heavy curtains from it, and the light from the shaded night-lamp fell with a softened glow on the white face on the pillow.

"Aurelia," murmured the sufferer, wearily, as he moved his arms restlessly about, "are you never coming, dear? Oh, love, if you knew how patiently I have waited for you." Aurelia took off her hat and sack, and drew her chair close up to the

bedside and sat down. Oh, how changed he was - handsome still, but sadly changed; and, even sitting there, holding his hands clasped in hers, no impulse stirred in her heart to bend over him and kiss the lips that called on her name so

Of course she honed he would reanother-that in that case she would in all probability have to marry him, and a heavy sigh broke from

The sigh awoke him; he opened his her lips. eyes with a start, murmuring her name.

"I am here, Gerald," she murmured He held out his arms to her, with

a passionate cry. "Aurelia - thank God, you have come to me-at last." Gerald raised his dim eyes to the lovely face of the girl he worshiped so madly, and tears filled them; low moan broke from his lips.

He held her hands clasped tightly, looking at her with an expression wistful and appealing - that she never forgot.

"? am dying, dear," he whispered, huskily, "but my soul would not leave its mortal tenement until you came to me-so great is the love I who loved Gerald Romaine best bear you. Bend your sweet face nearer, precious, that I may see you; that he had not died in this illness; I can die content now that you are he would then have died with his with me."

"Oh, Aurelia, how I wish that I could take you across the dark river of death with me. It almost seems that I cannot die and leave you Even at the portals of the tomb

the ruling passion of his life "Oh, Aurelia," he murmured, "you

of Maud's green-blue, triumphant eyes, she realized that she knew will never realize how dearly I have loved you - loved you with all my Even she was puzzled at the bright beart and soul - idolized you. "It is only some lovers' quarrel words I use to express it seem cold. Ah! how I wish they would burn that they have had that has sent Randolph off in a rage," she their way to your very soul!" The very vehemence of his passionand, finding her gone back to her

ate, worshipful adoration startled home he will follow her there, and her-a very flame of love seemed to glow in his face. It was not until Aurelia was on He looked at the beautiful little of sight of those who had come

hands, white as lily leaves, which he down to the depot with her to see "Oh, little hands that hold heart!" he signed. "Do you member how I kissed these hands,

Every mile they traversed brought Aurelia, on the day you promised to be my wife? kissed them with my whole soul in each burning So great was her abhorrence of knowing they were mine-all mine. A guilty shiver shot through her heart; she made an effort to draw She was in doubt, too, as to how hands from his grasp, but he would be received if Margaret held them the tighter. She tried to speak-to stem the torrent of words

that broke from his lips-she might as well have tried to beat back the waves of the mighty ocean. "Oh, my love," he sighed, "listen The son of a neighboring farmer to me: Some men have loves; I love but you. Some men have worshiped many fair I never knew what real love meant until I looked into yours, and worshiped you. In you were centered make a cent out of them." all my hopes, my ambitions, and

The curtains of Gerald's apartment | dreams of a brilliant future!" Alas! that such a wealth of love should have been lavished upon her flitting to and fro across the room.

"Oh, Aurelia," he went on, "will you think of me when I am gone? Will you come to my grave, and, as you kneel there, remember words I am saying to you The heart that beats with a surpassing all others will lie cold and still; but you will remember, my darling, that in life it beat only for you, my own true love-my love who was soon to have been my wife." "Don't, Gerald, don't!" she sob-

bed, "I cannot bear it!" Every word he uttered was like the sharp blade of a dagger in her

The words on her lips were arrestbeart. ed just then by the entrance of the Mrs. Romaine, and Mar-

Dr. Thorpe's surprise and fear were great at seeing a young and beau- and do?" tiful girl sitting by Gerald Romaine's bedside. He hurried forward in the greatest of alarm, but Margaret laid a detaining hand on borders of the other world. Come to

"She is my sister and Gerald's betrothed bride; she knows all about the disease, and does not fear it. Her place is at her bedside," she

Hearing this the doctor offered no remonstrance to Aurelia's presence there; still he looked greatly troubled. But, as he approached bed, and bent over his patient, his face cleared, and a cry of surprise

broke from his lips. "Mrs. Romaine," he said, turning quickly to the weeping mother, "there is a decided change for the to be with us again shortly, but-he better in your son; I think he will

-he-told me that his presence would live." Margaret echoed Mrs. Romaine's great, glad cry, and she flung herself at Aurelia's feet, with her face buried in her hands.

"I knew it, dear," she murmured, brokenly, "you have drawn Gerald back from the dark valley of the shadow of death by your presence -back to life and the world from

which he was slipping." "After a good deep sleep he will awaken refreshed," said the doctor. "For the first time during his illness his mind seems to be perfectly at rest; see, he has dropped into peaceful slumber, with a smile on

Mrs. Romaine could not find words to thank God for His mercy, her heart was so full of gratitude. Who is it that says, "a prayer

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The time was coming when those would say it was the greatest pity mother's hope of Heaven infolding

CHAPTER XXIX.

Gerald Romaine improved so rapidly that he was able to leave room in three weeks' time, and in six to join the family at the table. To the great relief of the doctor. and thanks to his great precautions, the ravages of the dread disease that hovered over the farm, commenced and ended with Gerald.

"It was fate, certainly, that spared me and my beauty," Aurelia would often remark crossly enough to her sister.

But Margaret would answer thankfully that it was Heaven's mercy. Owing to the excellent nursing Gerald had received, the doctor's prophecy from the first came true; that he would not be marked for life; and only a few faint scars over the temple, which promised in time to wear away, were visible on his

pale, handsome face. His great delight was sitting under the trees in the old orchard, with Aurelia near him.

"I shall soon be strong enough to commence work on my latents again," he declared one day. feel impatient doing nothing all the live long day. Being an idler the hardest work an ambitious man can find to do. Even in my illness, dear, when my thoughts were not on you, they were busily working on

those patents---' "I am tired and sick of hearing of them," declared Aurelia, abrupt-"I don't believe you will ever

"Aurelia!" he said gravely, laying a heavy hand on her shoulder. She shook off his hand, and turned away from the startled gaze of the pained blue eyes regarding her so intently.

"Aurelia," he continued, catching his breath quickly, "you are greatly the changed. You are not the same to me as before you went away. This thought has been forcing itself upon me, and I-oh, I could not -I would not give credence. Tell me that it is only my fancy, dear." He waited eagerly for her to re-

ply, but the girl did not speak. A great sickening fear whitened his face, but he contained himself, and said quickly:

"Look up into my face, Aurelia. Don't turn from me. Tell me that you care as much for me as you did when you went away." "What if it should not be true. Gerald?" she asked, with a hysteri-

"What would you say cal laugh. Don't you?" he pant-"My God!

For once in her life she had grace to speak the truth. It most seemed to her that those horrified blue eyes compelled her to speak truthfully, and she answered huskily:

"Not quite." "Has some one come between us?" he asked. "Tell me-I must know

-your silence is killing me." "Do you remember," she shyly, "telling me that I must not fall in love with Randolph Clavering when I went to Clavering villa? Do you remember our conversation the subject, and-and all that

was said, Gerald?" Gerald Romaine leans heavily back against the trunk of a tree; intuitively he knows what she is going to say next, but he cannot speak he gives no sign. It is in silence that the bravest men listen to their death warrants. She sees the mortal agony he

struggling through reflected in his face, and shuddering turns her head "You have learned to love Randolph Clavering?" he asks, in a

hoarse whisper that is more like a "I could not help it, Gerald," she

burst out. "He was everything that was grand, and handsome as a prince, and had such wealth at his command. If I had never seen him I am quite sure I could always have been true to you." "Will you tell me all about

little one?" She had expected bitter reproachanything but this; she looked up into his face hesitatingly. "Tell me all about it, Aurelia," he

said, "keep nothing back. Were you very fond of him?" "Yes," she answered drearily. "I never thought I was capable of loving any one so much. I did not you care absolutely nothing. I rethink it would come to that when I first saw him, for he was so cold and proud. I meant to flirt him a little to draw him to

side. because they told me he

have a little fun with him. But he was different to all other men in the world, Gerald. I saw there was no playing fast and loose with himhe would love me or he would hate me, and somehow I could not bear the thought of Randolph Clavering hating me. We were together day after day, and almost before I knew it I watched for his coming step, and found my greatest pleasure in being near him, where I could look into his face and hear him speak." "I can understand, dear," said

Gerald, and the misery in his voice alarmed her. "Oh, I ought not to tell you!" she "Why do you make me?" "Because it is best for both of us that I should know all," he said

"There is not much to tell," she brokenly. sobbed, flinging herself face downward in the clover-scented grass. "He-he-asked me to-to-marry him, knowing nothing about you, and telling him nothing about you, I-I consented." Another long silence.

"Why don't you tell me you hate me for it, Gerald?" she cries. cannot bear your stern silence." He comes forward and kneels beside the prostrate figure in the long grass and lays his trembling hand on the tumbled dark curls. "Hate you!" he whispers, and his

tender, soothing voice is husky in spite of his efforts to speak calm, and the meekness of a great heroism ennobling his face-"you poor little soul, why should I hate you !- because you have found another man who is better and more lovable than i, and because you have eyes to see

Aurelia sprung up from the grass, put her tumbled curls back from her flushed, tear-stained face, and the eyes he speaks of turn upon him, wide and startled, in astonished disbelief of his great generosity. "You don't understand," she "I was engaged to marry

him, but somehow, I don't know how, he found out about you, and then in bitter wrath, because I had kept that from him, he tauntingly bade me return to you, and he left me, vowing he would never look upon my face again in this world or the next, and if he ever came to Heaven and found me there, he would leave it, if it plunged him down to the very depths of hades. You must hate me for what I have done. Gerald," she ends, vehemently. "Don't pretend that you don't."

"I could never hate you," he answered sorrowfully. "I don't even hate him"-pausing a moment to thrust down and trample under foot one more spasm of that intolerable burning jealousy-"at least, I try not. I was mad to think I could win and hold the love of a being so bright and beautiful as yourself, dear; I, who had nothing to offer you but the plain love of an honest man. I thought love was all that I had to strive for. I quite forgot your ambition for wealth. I wish to God I had had wealth to lay at vour feet, then I might have won you; but no, I have forgotten. You learned to love Clavering, despite

his wealth." "Gerald," she whispered despairingly, "I am sorry it ever happened; but try and forget it, for I am going to keep my promise to you. I am going to marry you after all."

He did not turn to her and clasp her in his arms as she had expected he would do. There was no sudden rush of joy to his face.

"Child!" he cried, "you are very generous, but do you think I would see you sacrifice yourself so?" he shook his head sadly. "You don't know what you are saying," he went on, taking her hand gently in his as he spoke, and holding it "You don't know what marriage is. If there is a hell TEXT corth it is in the bear -those who are wedded, but who do not love each other. There must be a union of hearts as well as a union of hands, to make married life happy, or even endurable. Chilling indifference soon withers the bond of friendship between husband and wife. I would sooner die than stand at the altar with a woman whom I did not love, and whose every heartthrob was not for me. No, little one, I could never do that."

She looked up at him with dilated eyes swimming in tears. A new and sudden terror seized

"Oh, Gerald," she sobbed, "if you throw me off too, what will become of me? I have no one else to go to-I have no other home than this. I must marry you, don't you see?" At the sight of her tears, and the trembl ng of the hands imprisoned in his, the mad impulse to take her at her word came to him-to clasp her in his arms and kiss her tears

His heart pulsed frantically fast; but the paroxysm was short; it was put down-held down strongly. No, would not have a wife whose another's. He would give her up, though it tore his heart out by the roots.

Sitting there battling with great agony, for the first time there came to him the bitter knowledge of what Margaret-Margaret, the faithand true-must have suffered when the knowledge was forced upon her that he whom she had loved cared for another.

Now he realized what she must have endured, and lived through, and he asked himself: "Was this God's vengeance him, for breaking Margaret's heart?"

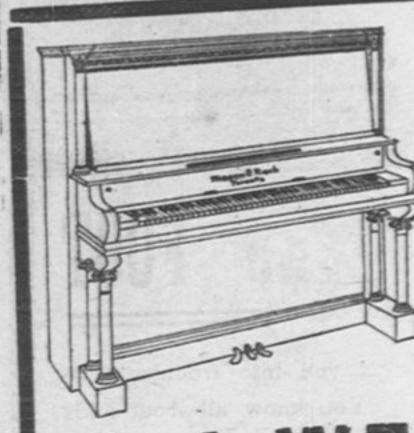
CHAPTER XXX.

In all the years of Gerald maine's after-life-years filled bitter experiences and pain-he never forgot that moment in which stood face to face with the greatest sorrow he had ever known. "I repeat," said Aurelia, taking

up the thread of conversation where they had dropped it a few moments before, "that I will marry you if you still wish me to do so, Gerald, now that you know all. Indeed"she went on pathetically-"I suppose I shall have to." He looked at her sorrowfully. "No, Aurelia," he said, "you shall

not sacrifice your life by joining it with the destiny of a man for whom lease you from your betrothal. Thank God the truth has all come with out before marriage. No; 1 will 





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