

FOR LOVE'S SAKE ONLY.

CHAPTER XVIII—(Continued). "I must go, darling, if it is only for your sake! And I know my enemies have done this, and will carry it out to the bitter end. There are so many things against me—my being out that night, my going away so early next morning, my quarrel with Lynn, and above all, the advantages I gain by his death. But I am not afraid; I will cover them with confusion yet; I will cover the thought of you to strengthen with tenderness, and beside his head for another kiss. "Good-bye, my dearest and best. It may be our last kiss in this world, but even if it is, know that I love you, and will love you as long as I live. I will never see you again unless I come back to you cleared of this horrible crime. But heaven will help my righteous cause. And now again good-bye."

CHAPTER XIX. Hugh recovers slowly—so slowly that Rosamond sometimes thinks he is mending at all. In the mild spring days he lies by the open window, dreamily gazing out at the flushing woods, or listening to the songs of the happy birds, with an intense sadness in his hollow eyes. He seems to want nerve, elasticity, force, to shake off the languor and weakness yet. He has succeeded to the more dangerous symptoms of his malady. Rosamond cannot rouse him, cannot make him take an interest in anything. Doctor Hazel cannot think what it is that is retarding his recovery. It is not that Doctor Hazel is in any hurry to have him convalescent, for he certainly is not, so far as he himself is concerned. Does he not see the fair Rosamond daily, by reason of his patient at the Parsonage? Has he not sometimes seen her even three and four times daily? And could he be expected to desire a cessation of these delicious meetings? Yet he acts conscientiously by his patient, and is concerned when he finds him apparently standing still, when he has been fairly started on the high-road to recovery.

With a knowledge in her heart which Doctor Hazel does not possess, Rosamond watches her brother. From her chair by the window or by the fire she glances at his face from time to time, when she fancies she is unobserved. And the hopeless look in the sunken eyes, the sad curve of the lips, the hectic flush on the thin cheeks, all her with strange grief and impatience. To see such a wreck made in a few short weeks of what was so lately as fine and stalwart a young fellow as ever pulled an oar or wielded a cricket-bat is sad enough; but to know that it is done through an insane adherence to an absurd whim or theory is more than sad—it is bitter and aggravating to the last degree. That a man in full possession of his senses can willingly sacrifice himself to any such high-flown and sublimated ideas is more than Rosamond's sisterly patience can endure. But she finds herself powerless to deal with this case. She is terribly obstinate and tenacious herself, and she knows that her obstinacy is intensified tenfold in her brother. She knows of only one resource; but she hesitates before trying it, knowing that it is her last chance.

So she watches Hugh furtively; and, as each day finds no change for the better in his condition, but rather for the worse, she grows almost as sad looking as he is, having her own troubles as well as his to weigh down her spirit. One afternoon they are thus together, she sitting on her low chair by the window, he lying on the couch close to the open window. It is a soft April evening, and a sunny brightness lies on the woods, on the uplands, on the nearer garden beds, where narcissus and hyacinths and primroses mingle their fragrance, and clumps of pale wallflower gild the old walls, and the trim box edges look shining and emerald green. Hugh is gazing out dreamily, with one thin hand supporting his head and the other holding a little half-closed book. He has not spoken for more than an hour, and Rosamond, watching him, has surreptitiously removed some tears from her eyelashes. All at once he turns to her. "Why do you look at me so, Rosa mia? You are always doing it," he says, half playfully.

"I don't think I am," she replies hurriedly. "Indeed, but you are," he says. "I feel your eye upon me. What is the matter? Is my hair growing gray, or my face blue, or what is it that excites your curiosity so much?" "Do you feel better to-day?" she enquires, irrelevantly. "Oh, yes! I grow better every day," he answers, a little wearily, turning away his head again. "I don't think you do," she says, getting up and going to him. "Hugh, what is the matter with you?" "The matter?" he repeats, looking up at her with eyes not altogether grave. "Yes. You need not try to deceive me. You know you are not one bit better than you were a week ago, if so well. What is keeping you back?" "How can I tell?" he says. "Want of motive power, I suppose."

"But you don't try to get well," she exclaims. "Perhaps I don't want to get well, Rosa mia!" he returns, with a curious smile. "That is just it," she says sorrowfully. "Oh, Hugh, do shake off this melancholy which is destroying you! If you don't—" "What will happen?" he asks quietly, with the same strange smile. "She does not answer, but a great passion of tears takes possession of her, and she cries as if her heart would break. "Don't!" Hugh whispers gently, taking her hands from her face. "If I would rather die than not, child, is it not better to let me die?" "Oh, no—no!" she cries. "Why should you wish to die? You are so young—you can do so much good by living—why should you wish for a terrible death?" she sobs, refusing to be comforted.

"Death is not terrible to me, Rosamond—not half so terrible as life. I am not wicked enough to pray for death, much as I may long for it; but, if it comes, I will be at welcome with my whole soul. "But it is unnatural to wish to die," Rosamond says passionately. "It is unnatural and wicked and wrong. It is because you are weak and ill that you wish it. If you were strong and like yourself, such a thing would never enter your head. "I think it would," Hugh answers quietly. "When one is weak, but a great passion of the next thought naturally is to wish to die. The moment life grows wearisome, then death begins to have strange charms for the human heart. It will at least put an end to strife. "Rosamond weeps on unconsoled. Her brother's words do not allay her sorrow, rather do they add to it. His answers have been so deliberate—has taken such deep root in his mind—that she fears it is past receding now. But still she has her own resource, and she determines to use it now. "Hugh, do you know that you are breaking Frances Lynn's heart, and the hectic flush on his cheeks deepens a little. "Breaking her heart?" he says, uneasily. "Yes," she replies, "and you may have a right to destroy your own happiness, but I do not think you have a right to destroy hers. "Heaven knows I did not do it will-

ingly!" he murmurs, but in an uncertain voice. "Can you honestly say that you never tried to make her care for you?" asks his sister. "I can!" he exclaims, vehemently. "I can, and I am thankful to be able to say it. But I am not free from blame. I fear—I know that I have more than once let her see how much I cared for her."

"You have!" Rosamond echoes, with a condemnation in her tone which she assumes for her own purposes. "I must have done so because I could not hide it," he says. "I struggled hard—you may know how hard by the wreck it has made of me—but I am sure she knew my secret; and for that I blame myself bitterly; for I could have borne any suffering myself, if only she were happy."

"But she is not happy," Rosamond says, drying her eyes. "She is just as unhappy as you are, and she has not even the satisfaction of knowing that she has caused it herself, as you have. I think your conduct is dastardly towards Frances, and so I tell you. Is it her fault that she has money? Tell me that!" Hugh is silent now. "I don't know why she should be forced into unhappiness all her life," continues Rosamond, "while you should meekly lie down and die, just because Frances Lynn happens to have a few thousands. Why can't you let the money lie in the bank, or wherever it is, and be as proud as ever in this uncomfortable little hole? I dare say Frances Lynn is quite fool enough to agree to any such crazy arrangement."

Hugh is silent now, but whether convinced or not Rosamond cannot tell. She can only sow the seed, and she plants it deeply with a vengeance. But she can see that he looks a shade less desponding even while she speaks; and, though she would not for worlds let him see any triumph in her eyes, it is in her heart all the same.

CHAPTER XX. It is the month of April and Rosamond Carlisle is not happy. Her lover is gone—perhaps never to come back—gone with a cloud over him which he may not be able to dispel. She hears many unpleasant rumors, which seem to gather force from the fact of his leaving the country just now. Some of these she has heard before; others—condemnation speeches, just too veiled to be openly taken hold of—she finds no difficulty in tracing back to Mr. Jayne. She understands his enmity now, and knows that he will do all in his power, be it much or little, to do (Gyle Despard) and, she only hopes that Gyle may be able to prove his innocence, to the confusion of his foes; but meanwhile she passes many gloomy days of watching and waiting for the news that does not come.

Sometimes she wishes she were back in London, where so many things would help to occupy her during these weary weeks. But then she cannot leave Hugh, and, even if she could, she would scarcely go away. Everything near the parsonage reminds her of Despard—of her meetings under the larches in the frosty twilight, of their partings at the little churchyard stile, of his passionate dark eyes and their pleading looks, and of her own wild happiness when she first knew that this grave lonely man loved her and that she loved him.

She has mused about him so often, leaning over the fire in the little Parsonage sitting-room, that the place has grown dear to her from the very association. She would feel far more separated from him anywhere else, where nothing would remind her of him. Walking down the plantation path, she has but to look straight ahead, and she can fancy he is by her side. Leaning on the stile—now partly overgrown by a great rampant bramble with rough prickly leaves—she can imagine that by turning her head a little she will meet his loving eyes. So he is never utterly absent from her at Lynn; she knows his thoughts are with her there, in the places she knows so well; and for this very reason it is that she could leave Hugh.

One day she was standing in the garden, looking down at the thick border of violets she has planted about the centre beds. She has a bunch of the fragrant purple blossoms in her hand; but, while she gathered them, her thoughts scattered, and now she stands bareheaded in the sunshine, with a world of tenderness in her dreamy eyes—a pretty study for a painter, were one here but to paint—it is his own.

The green door opens softly while she muses, and Frances Lynn comes into the garden. Miss Lynn looks pale and worn. Perhaps such deep mourning as she still wears is unbecoming to her—perhaps over-anxiety for Lady Katharine has brought those shadows under her keen dark eyes, those sad lines about her broken mouth. She looks older by five years than she did in the autumn. She has not the glorious knowledge which makes Rosamond's trouble almost sweet.

"How absorbed you look!" Frances exclaims, coming close to her before she is aware. "Do you know what a pretty picture you make in your dark-blue dress, with those dark-blue violets in your hand? You look like a violet yourself. If I could paint you now, I would call the picture, 'Violets.' But what were you thinking of, Rosamond? I am quite curious to know."

"Then I shall not gratify your curiosity, Frances," comes close to her before she is aware. "Do you know what a pretty picture you make in your dark-blue dress, with those dark-blue violets in your hand? You look like a violet yourself. If I could paint you now, I would call the picture, 'Violets.' But what were you thinking of, Rosamond? I am quite curious to know."

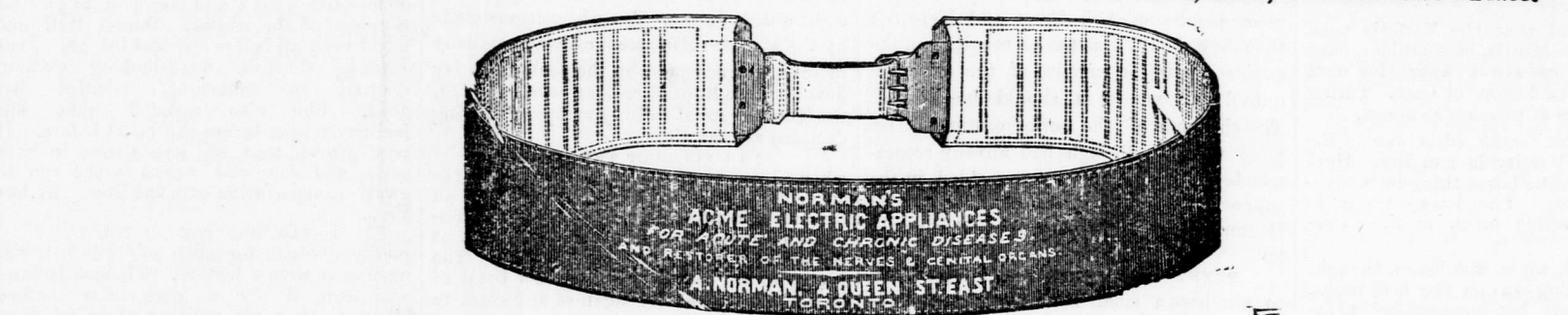
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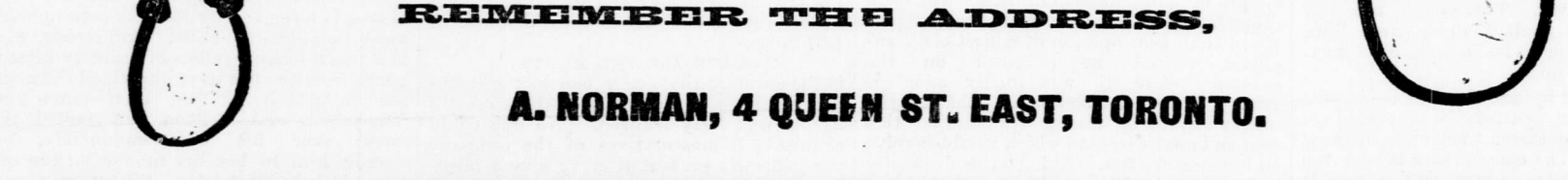
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