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Diamond Cut Diamond

OR,
THE ROUT OF THE ENEMY.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Geoffrey was taking the new horse he had bought for his wife in London for a gallop across the Downs; she intended to ride him for the first time to-morrow, and he was taking advantage of an off-day to give him a trial of speed.

Truth to say, he was not over well pleased with his purchase. There was something he did not altogether like about The Moor, as the horse was named; he did not think, indeed, that had his mind not been so absorbed with other things that day in London, that he would have bought him.

The Moor was undeniably a handsome horse, big boned, with good shoulders, and absolutely sound in wind and limb, a horse up to weight, and yet he had bought him at a comparatively low figure. Sometimes this is only a stroke of good luck, but sometimes again it points to an unknown and hidden defect, which the owner has been clever enough to conceal, and which the buyer only finds out afterwards to his cost.

The Moor might have been taken for a black horse, but for a slight indentation of an inch above the muzzle, nevertheless there was not a single white hair upon him from nose to tail. Now this, the knowing ones tell us, is a sure sign of temper; and it was of temper that Geoffrey suspected him, and to which he could not actually find it out, nor, indeed, could he lay his finger upon any specific blemish. He had now given him a pretty good trial, for upwards of an hour upon the hills. The Moor swung his head from side to side as he galloped, chucking it up occasionally in an uncomfortable fashion, but this might only be a trick. Again, he pulled a little, then he was very fresh—and he also had that sidelong uncertain glance over the corner of his eye, which is reckoned as an untrustworthy sign both in man and beast. More than that Geoffrey found it impossible to accuse him of any of those evil things which more than half expected to discover in his new purchase, that it was not until he was close upon her that, looking suddenly before him, he perceived the solitary figure of a woman in mourning garments, standing with a startled face and hands grasped convulsively together, straight before him, right in his very path.

The sight of her was a shock to him. The blood rushed tumultuously to his brain, he pulled up his animal with a jerk that nearly sent him on to his haunches, and then stood stock-still, looking at her.

It was Rose who came forward and spoke to him.

"Geoffrey!" She spoke his name softly, with a certain tremulous eagerness which she was unable to hide, and she held out her hand to him.

In an instant he had alighted from his horse and was beside her, his hand grasping hers, but he could not speak.

"What in the name of fortune brings you here?" she asked with a smile.

"What are you doing here? and how do you come to be riding on the Downs? Oh, I see, you must be staying at Coddisham with your father?"

"I am living here," she answered, regaining his self-control, and his voice at the sight of her quiet face and at the sound of her tranquil and natural questions.

"You are living here?" she repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes, at Hidden House. Did you not know it? My Uncle bought it, he wished me to live in the country, part of the year. He has restored the house, changed it completely."

"I had not heard it," she said quietly and somewhat gravely. "If I had known—"

"If you had known," he interrupted, rather harshly and bitterly, "you would not perhaps have come so near me?"

"Possibly not, Geoffrey, why do you speak so bitterly? Of course, I am sorry that we have met; such a meeting can do no good, and it might have been better not. But since this accident has happened, at least let us speak to each other as old friends, and say a few sad words as they part again, probably for ever."

He bowed his head, humbly, touched by the gentle sadness of her words.

"You are always right, and I am wrong! Forgive me. But, oh, Rose, it is terrible to me to be with you!"

There was a world of pain in his eyes, she could not bear to meet them.

"Let us walk," she said briefly; she felt that it would be safer than to stand thus face to face in the solitude of the hills. So they walked on slowly side by side, back along the way she had come.

"Tell me about yourself!" she asked, presently.

"What is there to tell?" he replied, wearily.

"I want to know how it is with you, how are you making out your life? Are you—are you happy?" the last word she almost whispered, as if half-fearful of speaking it.

He answered her only with a groan. These were things that he felt that he could never speak about to her; things in her past, but in her presence he only knew once more that she was the love of his life, who had driven him from her presence for ever, and that in that outcast place where she was not there could be no peace for him for ever.

Perhaps she read his thoughts, in the pathetic reproach of the sad eyes bent upon her, for she answered him

not according to his words, but according to that instinct of absolute comprehension which the strongest and subtlest tie that can bind a man and a woman to each other.

"Life seems very hard, Geoffrey. Do I not know it, too? You have heard perhaps, of my trouble, and my loss? Let, for both, if we only look for it, there is enough left, is there not, to bring to us a fresh spring of purpose and of hope? You have the love of your young wife."

"I have not got it," he said quickly, and a little brokenly. "She does not love me."

"Then teach her to love you, Geoffrey. It will not be a hard lesson, believe me, for her to learn," and she smiled a little pale, wan smile up into his face. "She is your wife, remember! bound to you by the holiest ties, ties that are strengthened by the same interests and hopes and aims, the same life. Believe me, a husband can always win a young wife's heart if he chooses. Think how entirely her life is in your hands, to spoil or to render happy, just as you see fit to teach her to love you, and love her yourself."

"And you—you tell me this!" he said with a strange emotion. "You set me this, task, Rose?"

"Ah, yes, dear friend. Is it not the best thing you can give me, the best thing my love can do for you?"

He stood still suddenly and caught both her hands in his, pressing them with a passionate gesture against his breast, and looking down into her beautiful face with hungry eyes, and pale lips, set into hard lines, that told of his soul's keen suffering.

"You know," he said, hoarsely, "that whilst you are alive, I shall never love another woman."

Her eyes shrank away from his, she could not bear to see the stricken agony in the face she loved so dearly. "Vaguely, almost blindly, they wandered out across the glorious breadth of landscape beneath, across the great sweep of the rolling hills, across the tender grey of the plains beyond, that melted softly in the far distance into the faint line of the sky. Just at the first she saw it all indistinctly and vaguely, but as she gazed on, the pain of the pain at her heart and of the hot burning tears that welled up blotted out all save the knowledge of her great agony; but presently something else awoke in her—her mind's apprehension of the why and the wherefore of life's martyrdoms, a half-numbered sense of the greatness of this beautiful world and of the utter smallness and nothingness of her own life, her own dreams, and as it dawned more and more upon her soul, there came with it, as well, a strange, mysterious presence of something so infinitely greater and greater than the present passing moment, a something that enveloped her in a sudden calm, stillness, as though she had been lifted above this mean material earth into a higher, purer, more spiritual world."

Then she spoke to him again, and her voice was sad, yet very sweet and tender.

"Geoffrey, I think you are right. The best thing I could do now for you is to cease to live."

"Ah, Rose!" it was a cry of pain wrung from his very soul.

She held up her hand with a gesture of deprecation.

"Hush! hear me out. It might be that it would be the best thing, and yet it is not always that we in our ignorance can judge what is the best. Yet, dear Rose, whom I have loved so well, something tells me that never in this world shall you and I stand thus face to face again together. Never shall we speak heart to heart as we are speaking now; never shall we, dear one, in the days that are to come, remember these last words that it has been given me to speak to you."

He bent his head with a murmur of submission to her will.

"Geoffrey! had God willed it otherwise, we might perhaps have been very happy together; we thought it our duty, did we not? shutting our eyes with a willful blindness to the danger-signals that raised their warning arms in our path. Then, at length, the flood of our destiny swept remorselessly between us and divided us forever. Yet, I have lived for a century, I could never regret the poor love that I gave you, for the past sweetness was worth all the present pain! And you, you will never be sorry will you, that you once loved me? It can never do us any harm that we have loved each other truly. In this cruel world men's hearts are so much oftener prone to burn than to freeze, and you, dear one, the pure steady glow of the fire that is, after all, of Divine origin."

"And then love is not all I thank God it is not all! It is, after all, but a small portion of that dreary road we call life, along which each of us must wend his way. It blossoms like the flowers by the roadside, but it is not the road itself. We can, if we choose, find out many other good things that are worth living for; duties to others, kindness and charity to those about us; and above all that solemn trust, God's best and highest gift to the creature made after His image, the brain and the intellect which He has given us. Is this sacred charge to be flung aside as naught, just because we are a little unhappy? Is this unspeakably precious thing to be hidden for ever, and buried in a napkin in the earth? Geoffrey, love may be to men the greatest of earth's blessings; if its highest dream is realised it becomes the most precious thing in the universe; but if across its path the sad word 'Never' chance to be ascribed, then let us not waste the residue of a life that is given us for better things in tears and vain regrets, otherwise it will but drag us down and its very memory become a curse. Look!" and like a prophetess, she pointed suddenly across the plain, which her beautiful face lit up and shone with an almost unearthly enthusiasm. "Look! how great and how wonderful is this World of ours in which we, poor pigmies, make our feeble mark. Will the unchanging

course of nature, of winter and of summer, of day and of night, be altered, do you think, for all our cries and prayers? Will the grand sweep of earth and sky, of hill and valley, be changed for our foolish repinings, or will the Potter pay heed to the pots, which in the grand scheme of universal welfare are destined to be crushed in to powder? Learn, Nature's highest lesson from her teachings, Geoffrey! Rise above your destiny, do not sink and grovel beneath it; take your place in the battle of the world and fight the fight of life for the good of others; not for that small contemptible thing that is called happiness and pleasure. Work for others, and not for yourself! Oh! that men would but learn how much greater is sacrifice than indulgence; how infinitely nobler and more blessed it is to die for others than to live for self!"

Her eyes, Heaven-inspired, were raised to the heavens above, and a fitful gleam of winter sunshine breaking suddenly through the clouds illuminated her beautiful face with an almost superhuman brightness. Till the day of his death, Geoffrey Dane never forgot her as she was at that moment, but with the glow of a glorious enthusiasm in her kindling eyes, with the light of the sun-god in a golden flood upon her loveliness—the spirit—within shining through every feature, and the inspiration of her pure soul reflecting itself in the proud beauty that seemed to be above and beyond that of the daughters of men.

It went through his mind at that moment to marvel how such a one as she, that which you desire me to do, a woman as this, for surely the 'cleansing fires' of suffering had purified this great heart into the refiner's most unstilled gold.

Unconsciously brokenly, he spoke to her, with the impetuosity of a deep and fervent adoration, such as men have felt for the Holy Virgin; such as they rarely feel towards an earthly woman. "You are the noblest woman on earth! Always your influence has been with me for good, never for evil! If, indeed, as you say, we are never to see one another again, then to my dying day I will bless the good God for having known and loved you, and for the love you have given to me. All that is good in me comes from you; all the highest sources of my soul have been fed and nourished by your beautiful nature, and by your good and gracious mind. I have obeyed you always, you have never misled me; I will obey you, now, always, to the death. As I swore to you long ago, I will be your 'true knight,' and will do that which you desire me to do. I will try and make myself what you wish. I will so live, that, in that other world—where, perhaps, without sin we may meet and love again—you will not be ashamed to own me and greet me."

And so they parted, all had been spoken between them; just a clasp of loving hands; just a tear-laden look into one another's eyes, and all was over. The man flung himself on to his horse and rode madly away. The woman turned her back and bent her slight figure before the breeze, and with bowed head and tear-blinded eyes was hurrying back across to the grassy upland slopes.

And ever as she went, the same words rang in her ear, over and over again, with a terrible reiteration: "What you are and never! Whilst you are alive, never!"

"Oh, God!" she cried out aloud in her anguish, casting up her desolate face to the heavens above her. "If God be faithful indeed, and prayer indeed be true, then grant me this, only this, that I may die, so that he may live to forget me!"

It was the last and greatest effort of the human sacrifice of self.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room at Hidden House, Dulcie Halliday sat crouched upon the ground at her sister's side, holding both her hands in hers and listening to the story of her mistakes and misadventures.

"Oh, my poor, foolish Angel!" she was saying. "Why could I not believe that I loved Horace Lessiter! Had you no eyes to see that, indeed, I almost grew to hate him for having won your heart, and that the offer of marriage he made me before he went away only annoyed and distressed me unspcakably."

"If I had known it!" sighed Angel, miserably.

"You mean, that you would not have married Geoffrey? Well, Angel, I am glad that you did not know it, and that things are as they are. Geoffrey, at least, is a good man—Captain Lessiter is nothing but a weathercock, and an evilly inclined weathercock, too."

Then Angel began to cry softly.

"Oh, Dulcie! think of the shame and horror of it, that a man who has passed a girl by, as long as she was free and cared for him, should insult her by an offer of love, as soon as she is the wife of another man and beyond his reach!"

Dulcie smiled grimly.

"That, my dear, is no uncommon thing in man. It seems to me, that 'thou shalt not covet' should have been addressed to the male sex only. They always want what they haven't got, and despise that which is their own property."

Angel, who was used to her sister's cynical remarks, and was never very quick at a retort, took no notice of this axiom, but sat nursing her knees, with the tears running down her cheeks, a very picture of wretchedness. Dulcie flung her arms about her, all the old maternal instinct awaking again within her.

"Oh, my darling! what is it that troubles you? Surely you can afford to forget this wretch, this vile commonplace creature—he will never trouble you again. Did you not say he had gone away?—it is not over now—then why not tell Geoffrey and get it off your mind?"

"Tell Geoffrey! Oh, Dulcie, I dare not!" and she fell to weeping again. "If Geoffrey loved me, he would be different, but he does not love me, there is that other woman—his own sister told me so—that marriage of his, he has always loved! What chance have I?"

But Dulcie only laughed.

(To Be Continued.)

WHAT SIZE DID HE CARRY?

De Tanguy—You can put a couple of hip pockets in the trousers just like my old ones.

Taylor—Yes, sir. By the way, were the old ones square or pinto?

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2. Any person who takes a paper from the post office, whether directed to his name or another, or whether he has subscribed or not is responsible for the paper.

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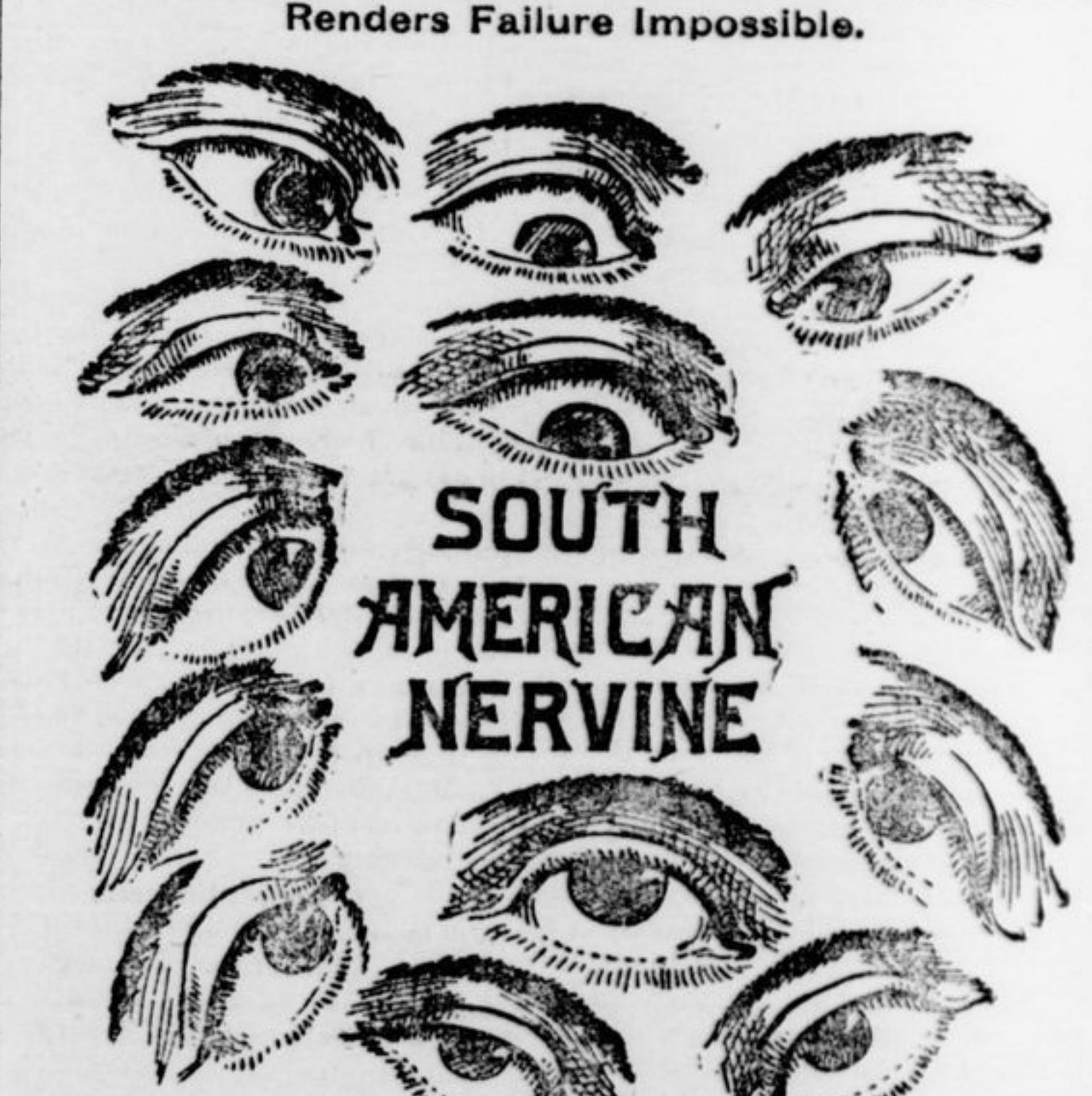
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Diamond

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Why, Angel, I really a lucky girl! To think all the trump cards in my hand, such a grand grand fortune you! Chance, indeed young and pretty, and him?—as good as gold as Hawthorn blossom! any man could resist you to work to try and win would not sit and cry I would try with all my main to see if I could get that 'other woman' yourself, defy the spiteful, spiteful sister-in-law, that it was a wicked you! I begin this very day!"

"Do you think I could be so sure of it, Angel?—a grand advantage in a man's wife. Oh, enough, you will succeed!"

Then Angel had her sister's shoulder.

"Dulcie," she whispered secret to tell you—do I have made a wonder I always thought, you loved Horace Lessiter?—and therefore I could never love him, he was married, I said to would be a good deal that I could be nothing—since I think the dreadful man arranged I tried to say, dispraise Geoffrey—something had to me. Perhaps was felt, the disgust at his eyes, was as if Geoffrey had hurt me, and I was which is eating away my know how or why it is covered all at once that with him! Oh, but don't fully to love you, and for 'Oh, Angel! Angel!' erred the blushing face, unfeigned delight. 'I have love as well to be your little!'"

For some minutes she spoke; she remained seated in each other's arms. Then very seriously Dulcie face and looked anxiously at her sister.

"Dulcie," she said, "I don't think me a— but don't you know Geoffrey is a very handsome man, with a good flavouring of a Cupid's arrow. And then she jumped lowly position and jumped heartily."

But all this time she a word about her love. Truth to say, Dulcie she knew that she was an explosive machine. A bosom of her family, a little but afraid of her fusion she was certain herself. Should Dulcie be sensible, should she be herself away in a reckless fashion upon a man without her father's consent? would certainly be unbecoming and cheese was of it somewhat galling. She felt, too, that real special reason of course, if she were to do it, it would certainly be unbecoming and cheese was of it somewhat galling. She felt, too, that real special reason of course, if she were to do it, it would certainly be unbecoming and cheese was of it somewhat galling.

"I do verily believe in his size!" Dulcie was a useful disgust to her. They were of course, a standard of excellence, is not a doubt of it, I may say Indian!"

"You mean, that you would not have married Geoffrey? Well, Angel, I am glad that you did not know it, and that things are as they are. Geoffrey, at least, is a good man—Captain Lessiter is nothing but a weathercock, and an evilly inclined weathercock, too."

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