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Chronicle & Gazette AND KINGSTON COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER.

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THE HEARTLESS, OR, THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER II. Concluded from our last.

One day Lord Arthur surprised her weeping. "What is the meaning of all this, Alice?" he exclaimed.

"Al, Arthur," said she, and threw her arms around him, "if the days could again return—those days of bliss and love which we passed so lately; if we might again be all in all to each other..."

"Did you really suppose, Alice, that the fond foolish days of our honeymoon were to make the history of our lives? We are not responsible for the endurance of intense affections..."

"Who has herself endured the loss of a husband's love? she has heard the accents that once caressed her fondly grow strange and cold; she has seen the charm that she was wont to inspire exchanged for indifference..."

"She sought her room, and locking herself within it, she threw herself upon her couch and gave vent unrestrained to the extremity of her grief."

"At length she heard a tapping at the door; it was her maid, who came to say that his lordship had sent word that he should not dine at home, nor probably return till late."

"Very well, Jenkins," she said, without admitting the maid; "I am not myself well, and I shall not dine to-day. Let some slight refreshment be placed in my adjoining dressing room."

law that the faint hope, which she would not yet abandon, of retrieving in any degree her husband's love, was to appear before him cheerful—not alone to yield him all that a wife could render of love and duty, but still to appear as attractive as possible in his eyes; she saw that grief, remorse, and saddened looks, would but widen the breach, and having taken her resolution, one more difficult to execute than some detached act of mighty heroism, she strove her nerves and braced her courage for the effort.

The next morning at breakfast Alice wore an air which, if it did not amount quite to cheerfulness, was at least tranquil and removed from melancholy.

"But, my dear Arthur, I am full of fears. My sister has passed through these circumstances and she will cheer me. My dear Charlotte will expect no other attention than my love will show her."

"The neglected wife and motherless daughter met her hour alone, richly attended, as far as money could purchase attendance, but with none to whisper in her ear the words of love and cheer."

"Alone and unattended, she did not exercise her usual self-control; she took his hand convulsively, and bursting into tears, exclaimed—"

"Annoyed at the display in presence of doctor attendants, he yet felt a touch of self-reproach; he saw also that something was necessary to his wife's safety, so, subduing indignation, he said—"

"His wife to her chamber, however, few and far between. When he came and spoke to her some words of kindness, her heart was touched and her hope was raised; and then when he staid long away, her state of restlessness and anxiety, and disappointment, though she endeavored to conceal it from those around her and to calm and check it, yet gained upon her weakened nerves and induced fever."

"I am grieved, Lady —, to have shocked you, but the story is too true, and there are other stories also against his earlier life; if they have not reached your ear nor come into general circulation, it is only because he has been more careful than his neighbors, and it is only to preserve favor at court and to conceal the scandal that he is now gone to Paris."

"The doctor thanked his lordship for the permission and retired, felicitating himself that he should now save his case, Lord Arthur was summoned to the sick chamber within an hour. He was gentle and kind. He kept the house for the next few days, and often visited the sick room, until the doctor pronounced the case out of danger."

"There was no return to the felicity which had preceded and followed their union, but at least there was a decrease of that heartless indifference which had fixed a rankling arrow in Alice's soul."

"Breathless and sick at heart, Alice had feared and suspected that she herself formed the subject for the sympathy and pity of her domestics. Her face burst with blushes; shame to appear before them to acknowledge that she had heard their words, perhaps the craving at despair to know more, held her to the spot."

"It would indeed," returned the housekeeper; "and I cannot help hoping, Mrs. Jenkins, that your friend Whitaker may have told you more than truth."

"I could not but come to tell you, Lady —, how heartily I grieve for your sorrows."

"Alice started, looked shocked, surprised, and puzzled. "Your ladyship is aware of course—ahem! I would not for worlds be the first to tell you—ahem!"

"I would not for the world have been the person to broach to your ladyship the unfortunate intelligence. I supposed of course, you knew it; but since it is not so, and you drive me to the point, it is no other than Lord Arthur is gone off to Paris with another lady."

"This is a false and cruel story; not a whisper has ever been breathed against the propriety of my husband's conduct. I know not why you have poured this poison in my ears. I beseech you to leave me; you will do charity now, having thus stung me, to leave me to repose."

"The noise of the fall drew the women hastily to her side. Panic-stricken, they glanced at each other, then raised her,

"My dear, dear father, do not say so," she replied, much affected; "I am certainly ill, and it would, perhaps, be better to flatter you with the idea that I shall recover; but my illness is sent by heaven, and might have occurred though I had been still under your fostering care; it seems to me that the happiness of the months which preceded and followed my marriage were worth a common life—"

"You and I will enjoy the babe together, father," said she, as fondling him she returned him to the nurse.

"The best doctor that the neighborhood could supply was employed to attend Alice, and her own physician came down from London once in ten or twelve days to see her. Both told the rector that there was no glimmering hope that her life might be preserved. It was a question only of time. And, in fact, the father saw her fade from day to day."

"Now they were to meet again, the day after her arrival at the rectory as called there. It was an affecting interview to both. A glance of his eye instantly revealed to her all the secret of his love now his looks expressed, not indeed passion, but unabated interest, respect, pity, friendship, and regret."

"The maid wept and promised. Alice was too weak to travel for a day or two. When she arrived at her father's door she was so languid and exhausted that he almost lifted her from the carriage, and then, as he supported her into the old room and placed her in the easy-chair, and taking his seat before her, looked upon her faded face and glassy eye, and then contrasted it with the gay, sunny countenance, so beaming with happiness and goodness, which had shone upon him but eight months before, the big drops rolled from his manly eyes."

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