



When a man who has neglected his health finally realizes that he is being attacked by serious illness it is no time for half-way measures. Death is an enemy that must be knocked out in the first round, or he is pretty sure to conquer in the end.

A weak stomach, an impaired digestion and a disordered liver mean that a man is fighting the first round with death. Unless he manages to strike the knock-out blow, it means that death will come up in the second round in the guise of some serious malady. When a man's stomach is weak and his digestion is impaired, the life-giving elements of the food he takes are not assimilated into the blood. The blood gets thin and weak, and the body slowly starves. In the meantime the disordered liver and the sluggish bowels have forced into the blood all manner of impurities. The body is hungry and eagerly consumes anything that the blood-stream carries to it. In place of healthy nutriment, it receives for food foul poisons that should have been excreted by the bowels. Continued this system of starvation combined with poisoning, will wreck every organ in the body. Naturally, the weakest organ will give way first. If a man is naturally nervous, he will break down with nervous exhaustion or prostration. If he inherits weak lungs, the consequence will be consumption, bronchitis, asthma, or some disease of the air-passages. If he has a naturally sluggish liver, he will suffer from a serious bilious or malarial attack. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery cures all disorders of the stomach, digestion and liver. It purifies the blood and fills it with the life-giving elements of the food that build new and healthy tissue. It is the great blood-maker and flesh-builder and nerve tonic. It cures 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption. Thousands have testified to their recovery from this dread disease under this great medicine.

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Author of "A Woman's Love," "The Wife's Secret," "A Heartless Woman," "Her Fatal Sin," "A Wife's Peril," "A Desperate Woman."

(Continued.)

CHAPTER XIV.

The count was heavier than the old woman's. A vague presentiment of coming evil fell on her; she clasped her hands, and in another second stood face to face with Count Jura.

The scream died on her lips, her heart was suddenly frozen with fear and hatred of this man.

"Do not shrink from me, fair countess," said Jura, breaking the silence. "I will do you no harm."

"What does it mean?" breathed rather than spoke Alice, drawing back with repulsion.

"What do you want with me?"

"Nothing disagreeable, I hope. I wish to help you."

"To help me now? Was it not through you I came here? Help me! Have you not scoffed enough, Count Jura? What have I done that you should have treated me so shamefully?"

"You use hard words, my Lady Alice," laughed Count Jura quietly, "but they cannot harm me. Used you shamefully? Why, you insult our home and all its luxuries. Come, be friends."

"Do not dare approach me!" gasped Alice, shrinking from his outstretched hand. "I loathe, I detest you! You are a coward to treat a woman as you are treating me! Let me go—the very sight of you is torture!"

"Go? Where to? Back to the Castle—eh?" Count Jura opened a little box, took out a match, and leisurely lit a cigar. "That would be foolish, my belle; you would only exchange very comfortable quarters for an iron cage—in other words you would be imprisoned immediately for robbery."

"Robbery!" repeated the girl, blankly at first, then the truth dawned on her. "Ah, I see—I understand! I know all. That ring spoke plainly."

"What ring?" demanded Count Jura, roughly.

She wore on her finger. I knew it well, yet my memory would not help me. But now, now I see all with hideous clearness. You—you are a thief, a—"

"Hush!" The count's hand closed over her lips. "Another word," he whispered savagely, "and you will repent this! Yes, the Castle has been robbed—robbed of plate, of diamonds, of its countess. Roy Darrell will see none of his treasures back again. It is best you should know how we stand. I have taken you; to my hand you are fed; henceforth you are my slave, to do as I will. No words, no screams, no weakness. Listen, I am flying from here this night, leaving the whole gang—and what for? For love—love of you. We shall start at once for that golden land I sketched for you last night; once there, all will be well. Give me your hand. Be silent I say; my mind is made up. I love you; I will not renounce you. Leave your pleadings to another time; they will not avail. Confound it, do not kneel to me! We are delaying, and delaying is dangerous; it means—"

"Many awkward things," hissed a low, clear voice from the darkness.

A form stood behind the count. He loosened his hold on Alice, who staggered to her feet distraught with fear.

"Myra!" muttered the count. "What brings you here?"

"The fiend, perhaps," answered Myra defiantly. "Ah, you thought to play a trick on me, Master George; but you

should have known me better. Coward! You thought to put me into Moses' keeping, while you broke your word with me and carried her off. Give me your hand," she added abruptly to Alice.

"You have failed, George; the game is mine. I have but to whistle, and in an instant Sam and Paul will be on you and find out your treachery. Stand aside, man! You will find me difficult to tackle to-night."

The count took no notice of her threat, but seized Alice in his arms and tried to force Myra aside. With lightning deftness she kept her right hand free, searched in her bosom for a scarf, which she had saturated with a drug, and while he twisted her left wrist, earing her scute agony, she pressed the scarf to his face.

There was a suffocating cry—a sort of sob. Alice felt his arms loosen, and the next instant the man fell heavily to the ground at their feet.

Alice staggered back, as Count Jura fell at her feet.

"Have you killed him?" she said in a whisper of dread.

"Killed him!" repeated Myra, gazing at the fallen man bitterly. "No; only drugged him. See," she held out the scarf. "We are never without chloroform. It is our own best weapon."

Alice recognized the faint odor.

"Ah, I see now," she murmured. "She drugged me with that."

"Kill him!" said Myra moodily; "why do I not strike him dead? He has killed me. Coward—traitor—liar! But come, we must go. You can trust me," she added abruptly.

For answer Alice carried her hand to her lips.

"Have you not saved me?" she murmured.

"We must be as swift as the wind," continued Myra, drawing her cloak close around her. "What is this?" She stooped. "The diamonds. Good; we will take them with us."

"But," said Alice, shrinking back with repugnance, "you would not take them, they are not ours; it would be stealing. No, no; I cannot be a thief."

Myra rose abruptly from her knees. "We need money," she said quickly, "and must take them."

"Then I will not go."

The two girls gazed at one another in silence. Something in the pure, fair truthfulness of Alice's eyes struck the other to the heart.

"Come, then," she said almost harshly; "we will leave them. Tread softly. We shall find the cart waiting round this corner. He had laid his plans well."

Alice shuddered.

"You have saved me," she cried softly. "I can never thank you enough."

"Wait till we are out of danger. We have heaps of difficulties to face you know nothing of."

"I will pray for help," Alice murmured.

Myra made no answer.

Silently, with bated breath, the two girls crept through the long grass. They found the cart, as Myra had predicted. With great dexterity she hoisted Alice in, mounted the seat, and the next minute they were flying swiftly along the deserted lane to Morston, the opposite direction to Nestley, leaving Count Jura stretched still senseless on the ground, with the Darrell jewels beside him.

CHAPTER XV.

Valerie Ross gazed with moody brow after the retreating horsemen. She had played a dangerous game, and was not yet out of the net.

What if Roy should meet Count Jura? Oh if Alice should see Roy, and scream? She grew pale and then laughed. It was absurd; she was growing a coward.

Had not Jura sworn he would start at once for Italy? And was she not free for ever of a sight of the beautiful girl's face of her rival and the dark, sinister one of her brother?

She mounted the staircase and made her way to Lady Darrell's room. Here, she felt, she had one secure friend and ally. Pride would trample all other feelings underfoot.

Lady Darrell received her quietly, yet affectionately. She was prostrated by the blow that had fallen on Darrell Castle, and, though she made no sign to Valerie by the knowledge of the grief her son was suffering. Unlike Valerie had anticipated, she did not judge Alice harshly, but even thought of her kindly, and could not dispel a vague feeling that the poor young wife was in danger somewhere.

Meanwhile, Roy and Frank Meredith rode on quickly; both were silent. Hope was glowing in Roy's breast; the news that Alice had evidently carried away the cards with Frank's address on them was a ray of light in the grim darkness. They seemed to reach the ruins on wings, so swiftly did they ride.

"You know the place well," Roy remarked with half a smile, as Frank

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(To be Continued.)