

A Debt of Honor

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—BY—
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It was the last night of my stay in the big house. Conybeare, strictly subdued, gazed, older in speech and manner than his time warranted, was my host—Dickie Conybeare.

How the years had changed him! I had come home again expecting a certain society; for the man had married—money, so they told me—and was, besides, making a name for himself in quite surprising directions. He was our one critic—so people said when I landed, a great teacher, a mixer of Rusk and Fater and various other things. I came home and found critical societies discussing Dickie Conybeare!

Twelve years ago and they would have held the pair of us up as awful examples—he and I! We had been pretty light-headed—breakfasted at noon, a look at the paper, a little exercise, dinner, and then it was work or play as the mood found us. We had lived somehow, partly on my allowance, partly on credit, and Dickie wrote for the papers, and was rewarded with monthly cheques. We were twenty-something then, and London was our playground—not the London of to-day, but a city of delight where the very poltchen smiled encouragement on the sinner. Such were Dickie and I in the old days after we had done with the varsity; neither very good nor very bad, but young, carefree, light of heart and smiling in the face of the infinitudes.

And now, I was not exactly middle-aged, and something not exactly despicable in her Majesty's colonial service; and Dickie was discussed by ethical societies, had a big place in the country, and a wife. So does life shape us—even such rogues as Dickie and I!

Of course I turned to him again, wrote down from the club as soon as I reached London, wondering what he would say to me; for it was six years since we had exchanged a letter. He wired asking me to stay. We met the next forenoon at the big house that he and Mrs. Conybeare occupied. And thus did my Dickie come back to me—prodigious, a personage and county magnate, yet calm in his honors, and only a smile left in the face that was once all laughter.

The week passed quickly enough. We played golf, we walked, we chatted in the drawing room, and ate Mrs. Conybeare's dinners. Dickie put aside his work while I stayed, and did his duty to the utmost. He was like that—the old zest, seemed to have departed from him, and, instead, was this quiet devotion that almost pained me. To endure rather than to share.

They had a couple of children, and with these Dickie seemed at his best, happy even at times. With Mrs. Conybeare he was tender enough; but the joy that was in him, the old, ineradicable joy for which we had loved him in those other days, there was it? Smothered out, faded from him. And the gain? "Our one critic," so people told me; I write with heat of these things; for they hurt at the time, and now they hurt even more—but, at least, I understand.

We were in Dickie's workroom that last evening, a plain, bare room, full of books and the litter of his trade. The children were asleep, and Mrs. Conybeare had kissed Dickie and gone upstairs. I had him to myself, and somehow the night seemed before us. One feels these things at times, especially when, as here, to-morrow means dispersal. We had let the world go by for seven days—no easy matter for busy men. To-morrow, the old matter would claim us. The thought was with Dickie, too; he felt it a time for speech.

"You find me changed," he said, drawing his chair closer; "more changed than I've any right to be? I owe you a great deal; friendship—and other things—too much to let you go away without a word."

"As you like, Dickie," said I. "You know I'm not the sort that cries."

And this is what Dickie told me. The tale is unutterably sad, but not so sad as Dickie's face, or the voice that shaped the story of Mrs. Conybeare.

"You remember the 'varsity,'" he began, "and what young fools we were—but happy, eh? No day was too long?"

"It was good enough for me," I said with a smile.

"I stayed up one vac—how the slang sticks! I had no power special to my thought I'd read a bit with a coach, who lived down the Cherryhillton road. You'd go off to Scotland, and I had the whole place to myself, barring another man—Dowe was his name, who stayed on as well. We two kept together in Jesus Lane, and did a lot of work, and got up to no mischief worth mentioning. Then the Long began, and men came back and Dowe and I had to go into college."

"They gave me one of the best sets in the Britain—Hardie's, who rowed stroke that year, good enough for a silver medal, club, with wine in the sideboard and 'baccy and cigarettes wherever you put your hand down. There was the thwart he'd pulled on, turned into some sort of a cupboard and prettily lettered and emblazoned, in one corner of the keeping room, and his oar, equally resplendent, was slung over the doorway—but you know the outfit. I was quartered in the rooms of our best known blue. There were enough pots and things about the place, furnished like a club, and the walls were hung with groups that most 'varsity men would have given their right hand to be in—the eight, Leander, trial eight, third Trinity, Pitt, and what not. His Vanity Fair portrait and one from the Granta were in the middle. It was like living in Buckingham Palace."

"Now there was no harm in it at all till one day—a perfect summer afternoon it was—Dowe and I went loitering in the Backs. We were going home for some tea in Hardie's china when we met two girls standing in Clare bridge. They had a guide book and one was reading from it."

"Sightseers—girl sightseers," said I to Dowe. "Let's pretend we're a couple of those chaps that show people round."

"We didn't look it, but the notion promised a lark, and you know my form in those days. I never missed anything—"

"And now, I've ethical societies," I ventured with a smile.

"Well, I never asked them to—if they will be such asses." Dickie's voice betokened an infinite weariness. "Let's drop the twentieth century," he said, "and go back. Dowe and I stepped out, cap in hand, and proffered our services. The plainer girl hesitated—didn't want to spend her money, so I learnt afterwards, but the one with the guide book caught the twinkle in my eye and asked our charges."

"The regulation fee, you'll find it on Page 7," said I, indicating the guide-book. Then, before they had time to parley, "The building on your left, ladies," I began, guffing Joseph Finch, whose method was very similar, "the building on your left is King's College Chapel; as fine a specimen of perpendicular gothic architecture as any in the country. Further on you will observe the Fitzwicks' building, a palatial of solid form that effectually screens the devoted undergraduate from the vice and misery of the next college. You are allowed neither to walk on the grass nor smoke in the court. The fountain in the middle is a

convenience much in vogue; the basin is admirably adapted for the ducking of ungrateful, older in speech and manner than his time warranted, was my host—Dickie Conybeare.

"At last she came to. I bent over her and something was dead. The childhood had gone from her face, and when she stood up it was a woman that answered me. She showed more more than I had shown her. I had made her love me, she said, in that strained voice of hers, and, whether I was Hardie or no, it was all one. She would go back to her people in the States; she was to have married someone out there—her father had arranged it long ago, and she had agreed—but she could never marry him now.

"Forget me—forget all this," I urged. "You must in time."

"She shook her head. She understood what I had told her, she said, and if it were so it was best we should separate; but she could never forget, she would always remember me—how could she forget!"

"I stood by humbled; and yet my pride—lack of inclination perhaps it was, for suffering never holds us when we're young—kept me firm. I knew that by rights I ought to have held out my arms to her and begged her to stay; instead, I led her back to the farmhouse at Swavesey, where she lived. There were no kisses by the road, not even when we parted.

"She went on alone at last. It was over now. I turned back under the early stars, knowing that I was the biggest blackguard that walked the earth—and yet I had played the part cheerfully a dozen times before. But this was the thirteenth! I learnt some things as I tramped home to Cambridge that evening, and for many days ahead.

"You and the other fellows turned up. I didn't say anything, being too sick with myself. Now I had less time for thinking, and by Christmas I had forgotten the whole business and was raging along in the usual way.

We went down together next year, and then came town with its friendships, but I was happy enough, as you know. I don't think I gave a thought to Cambridge then, or for years after, except in the usual way. There were you and George and Arthur and Gerry Fling and the Atchisons—you remember, you used to chaff me about the girl? I was keen enough, but I never spoke to her except about work and our goings on. She studied me a bit and made me take the writing seriously. I was great on it then, not this critical stuff and rubbish about other people's work that folks praise me for to-day, but something of my own."

"Dolly Atchison was great on it, too, but knew, like I, the time it takes to get a footing and enough coin to go into house-keeping. So we both kept to business and never said anything about what we hoped. You know her—she was gold, that girl—a woman with a man's head. She was about the only one of her kind that I knew—for we weren't very particular in those days, and sometimes, when you chaps wondered what kept me straight, it was she I was thinking of, for I couldn't go to her with dirty hands, although, perhaps, I did now and then.

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"Dolly was pleased with me, and I was going across to her one day, marching down Piccadilly with my feet on rose leaves, when I ran into her—not the slip of a girl I had known at Cambridge, but a woman in furs, who walked as though she had servants. She was paler than she used to be, with the pain half asleep behind her eyes. They caught on to mine; and then we two stood in the lane again, off the Huntington road, the face had near killed opposite, accusing, and I wondered the passersby didn't hold me. I saw it all in a flash.

"'Kid,' I said, as in the old days, 'here's a cab. Jump in!' She obeyed without a word, and we went on to my rooms. I don't think we spoke, but in my brain was nothing but 'Here's your debt; pay it! You've run up this bill, now pay! You've been owing for years and must pay!' The insistent words drummed on; they followed me as I led her up to the sitting room.

"We were alone and facing one another. She tried hard for a moment to be herself, but all these years of waiting were too much. There she was, trembling like a child. I didn't think any more, the struggle was over now. I would pay. Dolly Atchison—everything must go. The ten years of building and planning that had filled the interval were wiped out in as many minutes by this small woman with the accusing face. I drew her to me and she sobbed. The light failed and she gained courage out of the dark.

"'You are still the same!' I had said.

"'I gave you all, and never a word had nothing to go on with—it wasn't much, for I'm not clever—only love, and you took all I had.'

"'What could I answer? 'Kid, you have come back—you will never leave me again.' The words were sad enough, but I owed them, and somehow I seemed a better man after they were spoken. It grew late and she had to go back to her friends. She was staving with me, and then one day I saw about half of what I had done. This little girl loved me; not in the shallow way of her class, but utterly and beyond reason, whilst I was merely playing the fool—making a pastime of passion and better things—as so many of us did in those days; and, God help them, it was more often the women's fault than ours."

Dickie cleared his throat before beginning anew.

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"All this was true enough, and most girls would have cried and put up with it. But she wasn't used to our ways. I shall never forget her face as I hurried out the brutal truth. We were in a by-road off the Via Devana; I had fetched her up against a gateway and was talking what I called 'common sense.' I was without money or position—we were not really in love—we were merely— But you know the tale. She didn't say anything, but just stood there with her white face, and then, when I dropped like a log in the middle of it, she dropped like a log in the middle of it, and I was alone on my knees, feeling like a fool as anyone looking up and down the lane to see if anyone was coming. I remember how blue and quiet the sky was and how green and peaceful the fields seemed. Why couldn't we be like that, I thought? Why were

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"You and the other fellows turned up. I didn't say anything, being too sick with myself. Now I had less time for thinking, and by Christmas I had forgotten the whole business and was raging along in the usual way.

We went down together next year, and then came town with its friendships, but I was happy enough, as you know. I don't think I gave a thought to Cambridge then, or for years after, except in the usual way. There were you and George and Arthur and Gerry Fling and the Atchisons—you remember, you used to chaff me about the girl? I was keen enough, but I never spoke to her except about work and our goings on. She studied me a bit and made me take the writing seriously. I was great on it then, not this critical stuff and rubbish about other people's work that folks praise me for to-day, but something of my own."

"Dolly Atchison was great on it, too, but knew, like I, the time it takes to get a footing and enough coin to go into house-keeping. So we both kept to business and never said anything about what we hoped. You know her—she was gold, that girl—a woman with a man's head. She was about the only one of her kind that I knew—for we weren't very particular in those days, and sometimes, when you chaps wondered what kept me straight, it was she I was thinking of, for I couldn't go to her with dirty hands, although, perhaps, I did now and then.

"Well, you left us; got that step that took you to Jamaica. I sobered a bit after you'd gone, began my novel—not a short thing, like the two others, but something decent—something good enough for Dolly. Perhaps it might have given her to me; made a bit of a hit. I think it would have done, for I was rising then, and people were offering me more work than I could do. I was close on that, had a good enough little hat in Craven street, and was making near four hundred a year, and we'd agreed on five—not directly, but both of us understood."

"Dolly was pleased with me, and I was going across to her one day, marching down Piccadilly with my feet on rose leaves, when I ran into her—not the slip of a girl I had known at Cambridge, but a woman in furs, who walked as though she had servants. She was paler than she used to be, with the pain half asleep behind her eyes. They caught on to mine; and then we two stood in the lane again, off the Huntington road, the face had near killed opposite, accusing, and I wondered the passersby didn't hold me. I saw it all in a flash.

"'Kid,' I said, as in the old days, 'here's a cab. Jump in!' She obeyed without a word, and we went on to my rooms. I don't think we spoke, but in my brain was nothing but 'Here's your debt; pay it! You've run up this bill, now pay! You've been owing for years and must pay!' The insistent words drummed on; they followed me as I led her up to the sitting room.

"We were alone and facing one another. She tried hard for a moment to be herself, but all these years of waiting were too much. There she was, trembling like a child. I didn't think any more, the struggle was over now. I would pay. Dolly Atchison—everything must go. The ten years of building and planning that had filled the interval were wiped out in as many minutes by this small woman with the accusing face. I drew her to me and she sobbed. The light failed and she gained courage out of the dark.

"'You are still the same!' I had said.

"'I gave you all, and never a word had nothing to go on with—it wasn't much, for I'm not clever—only love, and you took all I had.'

"'What could I answer? 'Kid, you have come back—you will never leave me again.' The words were sad enough, but I owed them, and somehow I seemed a better man after they were spoken. It grew late and she had to go back to her friends. She was staving with me, and then one day I saw about half of what I had done. This little girl loved me; not in the shallow way of her class, but utterly and beyond reason, whilst I was merely playing the fool—making a pastime of passion and better things—as so many of us did in those days; and, God help them, it was more often the women's fault than ours."

Dickie cleared his throat before beginning anew.

"We've most of us been there, and time has put things right again," I said quietly enough, by way of filling up the interval.

"Yes, I know, but nobody warns us—nobody says it's life and death you're playing with."

My sophistry seemed small enough before, now—all I could do was to lay a hand on his and sit silent. My touch may have soothed him, for he was calmer when he resumed.

"I had a few notions that I was pleased to call honor, and thought that these were sufficient to meet the difficulty. So I spoke out as gently as I could, told her that she was taking a thing seriously that had begun as a joke and was never intended to go beyond a few meetings and walks; that I had thought she was of my mind; that I wasn't Hardie, but merely an ordinary undergraduate who had been placed in his rooms. I was paternal and a skunk by turns. We were to say good-bye; I was fond of her and all that, but it was absurd at my age and with my uncertain prospects to let matters go any further."

"All this was true enough, and most girls would have cried and put up with it. But she wasn't used to our ways. I shall never forget her face as I hurried out the brutal truth. We were in a by-road off the Via Devana; I had fetched her up against a gateway and was talking what I called 'common sense.' I was without money or position—we were not really in love—we were merely— But you know the tale. She didn't say anything, but just stood there with her white face, and then, when I dropped like a log in the middle of it, she dropped like a log in the middle of it, and I was alone on my knees, feeling like a fool as anyone looking up and down the lane to see if anyone was coming. I remember how blue and quiet the sky was and how green and peaceful the fields seemed. Why couldn't we be like that, I thought? Why were

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situated in small towns and will stimulate business in sections where banks were scarce before.

The first Christian Scientist Church was organized in 1871, and the second four years later. To-day in New York city there are eight incorporated churches. In the United States there are six hundred, and the area of the dangerous height and well-ventilated field. Mountains appeared before the Lord to yield; Stars in their heavenly courses seemed to light to put the hearts of Sion to flight; The waters of the river swept away; The fallen foe in that triumphant day. The strength of armies, vanquished prince and crown. Thou my victorious soul hast trodden down!

The angel's curse most surely rests on those Who came not up against their nation's foes; Who neither lifted up the spear or sword In the great conflict, battling for the Lord. (See all women blessed be their name!) To her be double honor, lasting fame. Her service to her country she foresaw In the unyielding Sion.

So may thy battles ever Lord be won Let all who love Thee be as in the sun When in his splendor he goes forth in might, All places making glorious with light."

Liberty, Ind. —Eliza L. Brown.

How He Surrendered.

He had met her here and there; And he thought her passing fair; All that any man could wish for in a bride, If he would but be content With a parlor ornament. Nor cast a wife to keep his house beside.

As he chanced upon a day As he passed along by her name; Through an open kitchen window glancing in. He beheld this dainty maid In a cotton frock arrayed. With a cooking apron tied beneath her chin. And she mixed and measured out With a skill beyond a doubt, And a ready ear that fairly turned his head: At his coming she forgot her name! And surrendered on the spot As he watched the belle and beauty making bread!

—Blanche Tremor Heath.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

Some historians say that the manufacture of silk was introduced into Spain by the Moors.

The lowest tides, where any exist at all, are at Panama, where two feet is the average rise and fall.

Gas is the only British trade which in 1899 employed no women. There were seven at work in electrical works.

In 1891 there were only 200,000 persons in the limits of the United States who spoke German as a mother tongue.

The Salvation Army is at work in forty-seven countries, and has fifty-five periodicals, British in twenty-one languages.

The British government spends about \$5,000,000 a year in presents to females who marry after having been in the postal or telegraph service.

The Great Eastern has faded into the era of small things. Her tonnage was 10,300 below that of the Celtic, just launched at Belfast.

Nearly 14 per cent. of the total number of wage earners in Minnesota are women, according to the report of the state labor department.

The heaviest precious stone is the sifron, which is 4 1/2 times heavier than an equal quantity of water; the lightest is the opal, only twice as heavy as water.

The orange came to Europe from Africa in the eleventh century. Sir Walter Raleigh brought it to England in the sixteenth century. It was first planted in Australia in 1788.

The first potatoes were cultivated in the Andes, somewhere between San Diego, Chile, and Lima. Potatoes still grow wild in the mountain districts of South America.

Buffalo, a village until 1832, and at the date of its incorporation as a city having a population of only 8,000, is now the second city of New York. Its population, now 328,000, was only \$3,000 in 1850.

During the year ended March 31, 1901, no less than sixty-five national banks, representing over \$2,000,000 in capital stock, began business in Texas. Most of them are

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