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waning light enabled neither to distinguish features and expression with that intimate acquaintance which a husband and wife must possess.

She trembled in every limb, for the cold aloofness of those words, "Mrs. Waverton," argued ill for her achievement; but she forced herself to speak.

"Claude," she said again, and her voice was strangely sweet and low, "I have ventured to disobey your wishes because I felt that if you and I could open our hearts freely we might reach an understanding not to be attained by the written word. Forgive me, Claude! I am acting for the best, and, if you will only listen to what I have to say, I promise to obey your final decision, even though you bid me go away, and never try to see or speak to you again."

Waverton raised a hand to his eyes in a gesture of pain that was new to his wife's devouring gaze. "Oh, you should not have done this thing!" he muttered, and his face looked white and drawn; though during these later days he had, in the opinion of Rice and others, seemed to be recovering his strength rapidly.

"I could not help it, Claude," she pleaded. "Some secret impulse more powerful than myself urged me to take the long journey from the coast, and not waste a moment before I sought you out."

She drew a little nearer, and, gaining confidence, looked up at him. How thin and worn he was! How his illness had aged him! What a different man from the bloated, red-faced creature from whom she had fled more than a year ago! Yet suffering had restored that air of distinction, of refinement, which her girlish fancy had found in the bridegroom, only to lose all sense of its existence in the man who had wrung her very heart-strings by his maltreatment.

"Your letter forbade an answer, I know," she went on with growing earnestness; but ever since you saved our dear Kathleen's life I could not bring myself to believe that we were parted forever. Claude, won't you say something? Must I be forced to believe that you really wish to thrust me out of your life forever? Indeed, indeed, I am not here to reproach you! Rather would I vow to you and with you, on our knees if we mingled our pledges with prayers, that the horrid past shall be forgotten, that we shall strive to help each other in that forgetting, that, in sharing the love of our child, we shall strive to blot out memories of all the wrong and misery that have gone before. Oh, Claude, do listen to me! Don't turn away as if your heart was still hardened against me. If my words offend, then give no ear to their unadvised form, but try to realize that they are welling up from the depths of a woman's nature, a woman who is still your wife, and who must ever remain the mother of your child."

"Please, please, Mrs. Waverton—Doris—do calm yourself!" he broke in, and his utterance was husky, as if he was fighting against some overpowering emotion. "I would have made any sacrifice rather than have this happen! You are distressing yourself unduly. I am quite unworthy of such chivalry on your part. You must remember what divided us! I was wholly to blame, and you would be mad to trust yourself again to a man who behaved so despicably, so outrageously. I am sober now; but I shall go back to the swine trough,—it is in my blood,—and then indeed you would have cause to bewail your lot! Yet, as I say, I am perforce in possession of my senses for the hour; so let me apologize for my conduct, and let my regret be the measure of my sincerity in urging you to leave me now and for all time."

THOUGH his wife was strung to a pitch of agitation that was almost unbearable, she caught some new cadence in his voice, some note of deep reverence and unavailing sorrow, that made divinest music in her ears. Never before, even in the blithe days of wooing, had Claude spoken in that way. How he had changed! His manner with women, even at its best, was apt to be truculently jocular; yet now he was addressing her as though she were some fair goddess whom he had transgressed against beyond hope of mercy. What had caused this miracle? Had a soul sprung into being in one who had seemed to be coarsest clay? Her mother's heart went out to him. She longed to take him in her arms, and kiss away the needless fear that for him there was no forgiveness.

But she restrained herself, and was content to put a timid hand on his arm.

"We have at least taken a decisive step when we are ready to discuss our trouble," she said. "Dear, will you walk with me a little way? There is a seat yonder, near the statue of Antinous, where we might sit awhile, and talk over the wreck we have made of our lives. I am not hysterical, as you well know. I was naturally excited at

first; for I could not guess how you would receive me. But now I shall be calm. You need not dread the tears which you hate—as every man does, I suppose. But, candidly, I should like to be seated. I am somewhat tired. It has been a wearing day,—for my nerves, at any rate,—and I am sure you will not drive me away now until I have told you what is in my mind. Come! Let me tell you first how deeply moved I was by the solicitude that breathed through every sentence in your letter. It was your right arm that was injured, was it not? So I can take this arm while we walk, and then I shall be able to speak with more confidence, since you cannot escape, as you did at Narragansett Pier, while I am holding you."

Doris was so sure of her ground now that she actually laughed, with the low, hushed coo of a woman who has won back an errant husband from the slough of sin and despair. But she felt that he was trembling, and her eager thought read in this sign of physical weakness his doubt whether she could really mean what she was saying.

"Don't be so tongue-tied, Dear," she murmured. "I have not come all this long way to annoy and perplex you."

"I was thinking that perhaps you would prefer to go to the house," he said hoarsely. "You must be quite exhausted. If you—had something to eat, and went to your room—we could meet in the morning—and discuss matters—"

She laughed again, little imagining how he was searching his brain for some plausible pretext to dispose of her for the night until he could plan and contrive a way out of the maze in which he was entangled.

"You forget that, although we may still remain husband and wife," even in his dismay he knew that she was blushing, and when he stole a look at her eyes they were shining like twin stars, "we have been parted by the law. No, I didn't mean that to hurt," for a tremor shook him: he was like a nervous horse that flinches under the gentlest touch, "but I shall not stay at the house until—until some later day—soon. Mr. and Mrs. Norton have kindly provided me with a room. In half an hour, or less, I shall bid you goodnight. Perhaps you and Bob will escort me through the wood. I came that way to avoid notice; but it is darker now, and if a rabbit popped up under my feet I might scream—"

A MENACING growl from the dog interfered with her rather breathless explanation. Another growl, louder and fiercer, caused them to turn and seek its cause. Then a man sprang upright near the corner of the boathouse, and they heard his startled cry:

"Call off your dog, Mr. Waverton! Call him off quick! I'll—"

Then Doris did scream, in no mock terror, and Waverton ran back hurriedly, leaving her standing alone on the path, with a whispered injunction not to move.

"Heel, Bob!" he said sternly. "Heel, I say! Now you, you rascal, come out and tell me why you were hiding there!"

Joe Brett, by no means abashed, since it fell in with his desire that he should be discovered, approached warily; for Bob had obeyed orders, but was still ready to engage in mortal combat on the slightest provocation.

"Beg pardon, Mister," he smirked, "but I kind o' happened to be alongside the wall there, by accident, as you might say, an' hearin' Mrs. W. an' you talkin' confidential, I thought it best to lie close, an' not interfere."

"You lying hound, you followed Mrs. Waverton in the first instance! What was your object? Did you mean to rob her? But you shall explain that to the Sheriff. Walk straight to the house in front of me."

"Sheriff! Walk to the house! Not me! I couldn't help listenin'! What else have I done, I'd like to know?"

"You will be told that later. Unless you come quietly I shall tie you to a post, and send my servants to drag you by the scruff of the neck."

Brett edged nearer confidentially, and leered at Waverton.

"Now look here, Boss," he said, "you just listen to reason, will you? At the worst I'm on'y trespassin', and that doesn't cut any ice here. But if you go jawin' about Sheriff's an' such like, and me tellin' every word Mrs. Waverton—"

In a cooler moment Waverton would have acted differently; but he was afire with a turbulent emotion that neither his wife nor this lurking ruffian had any inkling of. So, without further ado, he struck Joe Brett hard and true between the eyes, a straight right-arm blow that stretched the eaves-dropper like a log on the path. Instantly he regretted his action, and turned to reassure the frightened woman.

"There is only one way to argue with

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