

the man for whom her feeling was daily growing warmer...

Two instincts—strong in women of her type—rose within her. One demanded revenge and the other protection of her pride.

Mercedes, who liked gossip, had heard the story of Jerry Barclay's complication with Mrs. Newbury...

His first feeling toward her was an unbounded admiration for her physical perfection, to which was added a complacent vanity at her obvious predilection for him.

While he still thought himself a trifle in the outer court of sentiment, he was already under her dominion.

During the early part of the summer June was in ignorance of the manner in which she was to be the recipient of the cards of her destiny.

Though June was one of those women who obstinately adhere to the bright side, she felt, during the summer, premonitions of ill fortune.

But the moods of apprehension and gloom began to be augmented by ripples from the pool of life which she had heard that Jerry was often in San Mateo than ever before.

At the end of September they returned to town. They had been back a few weeks when one afternoon she met Jerry on the street and they stopped for a few moments' conversation.

It was an overcast autumn that year, with much gray weather and early fogs. The city had never looked to June so cheerless.

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life, and to whom life's gifts come as a surprise.

That such a man as the young Britton should prefer her to her sister, whose superior charm she had always acknowledged and been proud of, was to her astonishing.

One gray afternoon, Rosamund having left the desk in the park with Harrower, June, after wandering about the empty house for a drab hour, resolved that she, too, would go out for a stroll.

Walking slowly toward her were Jerry and Mercedes Gracey. They were together, and their hands were clasped in a familiar and friendly way.

For the first moment June was too stricken to move. She stood spellbound, in mid-flight, hungrily staring at them.

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while the little wheel inside flew with an equal speed. It seemed as if the fever of life around them was communicating itself to them, making their blood flow quicker, their pulses throb harder, lifting them up to planes where the air was charged with dynamic forces, and electric vibrations hummed along the serene currents of life.

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his fault. He affected to have forgotten the remarks. Even in thinking to himself he assumed the air of one who finds it too trivial a matter for remembrance.

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brightly. "But I must go now. Take good care of yourself. Try and be more cheerful and get out more. Fresh air's the thing for you."

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the sight of his grief. With assurances that he would be up in the morning to inquire, Jerry escaped from the house and fled into the night, now dark and full of the chill of fog.

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CHAPTER XVII

A Man and His Price

The ball given by Mrs. Davenport to introduce to San Francisco society the fiancée of her son Stanley, was long remembered as one of the most brilliant entertainments ever given in California.

The exhilaration of prosperity was in the air. Stocks were mounting, everybody was making money. More new dresses were ordered for Mrs. Davenport's ball than ever before for any one function.

T. Rosamund's surprise June announced her intention of going to the ball. She had gone out little lately; since the death of Mrs. Newbury, now six weeks past, not at all. Every evening she had sat in the parlor in a listless state, waiting.

They were holding a consultation in there—his sunken eyes dwelt on the young man's and he shook his head, and shook his head, and shook his head.

"What—what—is it?" stammered Jerry, horror-stricken. "What's happened to her?"

"A paralytic stroke. She had it early in the evening. Pancha found her lying on the sofa like a person resting, but she was paralyzed and couldn't speak."

"I think so and so does Pancha. The doctors don't. She can't speak or move, and her eyes look full of life and intelligence, and once or twice she's tried to smile."

"A soft footfall on the stairs above caught their ears and they looked up. The Mexican woman was descending. He was shocked enough already without having to suffer seeing Lupe in this unfamiliar state."

They followed Pancha up the softly carpeted stairs and along the passage. The woman passed through a doorway, making a gesture for them to wait, then put her head out and beckoned them in.

The darkness of evening had fallen and the large room was well lighted. By the bed two gas jets, burning under ground-glass globes, threw a brilliant light over the sick woman. She was lying straight and stark on her back, her bedclothes smooth over the undulations of her body and raised into points by her feet.

The colonel escorted his charges to the end of the drawing-room, where Stanley Davenport's fiancée stood beside the hostess receiving guests and congratulations. Their few sentences of greeting accomplished, they moved aside toward the wide doorway of entrance from this vantage point their eyes were instantly attracted by the figure of Mercedes Gracey surrounded by a little group of admirers.

In the full panoply of dress the young woman was truly magnificent. Black Dan's last gift was a fitting crown for such a head. She was profusely bejeweled, exceedingly bare as to neck and shoulders, and robed in a sparkling splendor of lace traced out and weighted with silver which looked and weighed like a symbolic incarnation of the riches she represented.

She was about to mention this to Mrs. June, when the various young men who had detached themselves from the Misses Allen, bore down upon them, fluttering programmes. A wall of black coats formed about the girls, and the colonel, seeing the Mexican lady inaugurating a programme of comparing fairly inaugurated, backed away from them and leaned against the door frame, idly surveying the scene.

A hand on his shoulder made him start and turn, and then break into the broad smile of the old friendship reserved for just a few people.

"Rion, old son!" he exclaimed grasping the hand of his friend, "what brings you here, floundering round among all these trains and trills?"

The other laughed. He had not been in San Francisco for nearly a year. He was a little leaner, harder and tougher than he had been on his last visit, when the colonel had only seen him once or twice and he had refused an

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