

HARRIET and the PIPER

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Nina," he said, tenderly, "is warm-hearted. And a chance allusion to my position, which I thought I had made, has distressed her unnecessarily. I will, truly, be out of the way for me to travel, as we had planned. The unfortunate speculation of my friend—"

"Whose name you withhold," Richard interrupted the musical voice to say, dryly.

"Because of a promise!" Royal blurted promptly. "But," he resumed, turning to Harriet, "I shall be able to appreciate this business, as I assure Mr. Carter, without any assistance from him or his daughter," his lip curled scornfully, "and I do not propose to give her up for any three months—or three weeks!"

Harriet could only look at him fixedly, with an ashen face.

"God help me," she breathed in her heart. "God help me!"

"Well," said Richard with weary patience, "we did not call you down to know you with this! I asked to see you, Harriet, because Mr. Blondin has made the statement to me, just now, that you were heartily in accord with the plans for Nina and that you approved of the affair!"

The prayer in Harriet's heart did not stop as she moved her wretched eyes to Blondin.

"I believed that you and she had seen each other since December," she reminded him. "I lost no chance to advise her against the engagement! I thought it was all over!"

"Well," Richard said, with a breath of relief. He had been watching her closely, now he settled back in his chair and moved his contemptuous scrutiny to Blondin.

"You moment!" Royal Blondin said, gently. But he was also pale. "You believe that I would make Nina a good husband, don't you?" he asked Harriet directly and quietly.

He was not looking at him. Her eyes were on Richard Carter.

"I believe you would ruin her life!" she said, deliberately.

"Thank you," Richard said. "I think that is all, Mr. Blondin. I was aware that you had—misunderstood Mrs. Carter when you made that statement."

"Not quite all," Blondin persisted. "Do believe that Nina would be wiser to marry me?" he asked Harriet.

"To—?" She cleared her throat.

"You know that I think so!" she said. Blondin laughed.

"And now, Mr. Blondin, you will truly leave my house!" said Richard. The other man was watching Harriet, with a menace in his narrowed eyes. White lines had drawn themselves about his tightly closed lips, but he was smiling. He had lost the game, truly, but she knew he would play his last card, just the same. The rivalry, the calm of years fell from him, and his voice deepened into a sort of cold and quiet fury as he said:

"One moment, Mr. Carter. Why don't you ask your wife what makes her think I won't make Nina a good husband? Why don't you ask her if she has been hiding something from you all this time? Why don't you ask her if she herself wasn't madly in love with me—when she was Nina's age, and whether she was married in my studio, to me, ten years ago—!"

He had shot the phrases at her with a distinctness almost violent. Now

ry, with the eyes of the man she loved fixed anxiously upon her. He had trusted, he was beginning to admire her, and like his wife and his daughter and his mother, she had failed him.

"Harriet?" he said in quick uneasiness. She raised her head now, and looked at him with weary eyes devoid of any expression except bewilderment and pain.

"Yes," she said, simply. "That is all—quite true. It sounds—" she hesitated, and groped for words—"it sounds—as if—" she began and stopped again. "But it is all quite true!" she finished, in the troubled tone of a child who is misunderstood.

CHAPTER XIV.

The curtains at the French windows in the library at Crownlands stirred in the breeze of the warm summer night, the pendulum of the big clock behind Richard Carter moved to and fro, but for a long time there was no other sound in the library. Richard had dropped his eyes, was idly staring at the blank sheet of paper before him. Royal Blondin, who had folded his arms, for a moment studied Harriet between half-closed lids, but presently his eyes fell, too, and with a rather troubled expression he studied the pattern of the great oriental rug.

Harriet stood motionless, turned to stone. If there was anything to be said in her behalf, she could not say it now. For the first time the full measure of her responsibility and the full measure of her deceit smote her, and in utter sickness of spirit she could advance no excuse. It was not that she had failed Blondin, or that she had failed Richard, but the extent of her failure toward herself appalled her. She was not the good, brave, cultivated woman she had liked to think herself; she was one more egotist, with Nina, and Isabelle, and Ida, unscrupulously playing her own game for her own ends.

"I'm extremely sorry," Richard said, presently, in a somewhat lifeless tone. "I imagine that if my daughter had known this, she might have been spared some suffering and some humiliation. But we needn't consider that now." He was silent, frowning faintly. He put up a fine hand and adjusted his eyeglasses with a little impatient muscular twitching of his whole face that Harriet knew to be characteristic of his worried moods.

"Mr. Blondin," he said, wearily and politely, "I have had a great deal on my mind, lately, and have perhaps been hasty in my condemnation of you. However, this does not particularly help your cause with my daughter. There are a great many aspects to the matter, and I—I must take time to consider them. Nina must be my first consideration, poor child! Her mother failed her—we have all failed her! She has a right to know of this conversation—"

Harriet stirred, and his eyes moved to her. Without a word, and with a stricken look in her beautiful, ashen face, she turned, and went slowly toward the door. When she reached it, she steadied herself a second by pressing one fine hand against the dark wood, then she opened it and was gone.

"I'm very sorry—" Blondin said hesitatingly, when the men were alone.

"Mrs. Carter," Richard said, getting to his feet, and very definitely indicating an end to the conversation, "before she consented to the arrangement into which we entered, of course took me into her confidence in this matter!"

"She—she did?" Royal stammered.

"Certainly she did," Richard said, harshly. And looking at him the other man saw that his face looked haggard and colorless. "She did not mention your name, I presume out of a sense of generosity to you. I could have wished," he added, "that you had been similarly generous, and had seen fit to leave her, and leave my daughter alone. I think I must ask you to excuse me," said Richard at the door. His tone was one of absolute suffocation. "I can see no object in your frankness tonight, unless to distress and humiliate Mrs. Carter. My daughter, and not myself, is the one entitled to your confidence, and you are well aware of my feeling where she is concerned! I would to God," said Richard, with bitterness, "that I had never seen your face! Mrs. Carter has been a useful—and indispensable—member of this family for many years; if there was in her past some unpleasant and painful event, that is her own affair!"

the blue eyes were so honestly frightened and ashamed. And she had been that bouncer's wife—in his arms! Divorced! Harriet Field? Poor girl, cornered by this unscrupulous scoundrel, this bully, with all the ugly past dragged up like the muddy bottom of a river, staining and clouding the clear waters. And what a look she had given him, there under the lamp!

"It's a funny code," he mused. "Barbarians, that's what we are, when it comes to women. Nina, Ida, Isabelle, Harriet—all of them pay for the man-made rule! I shouldn't have forced her hand in this business marriage; it was taking an advantage of her. No woman wants to marry for anything but love, and if she had married for love, she would have made a clean breast of this old affair, of course. I didn't expect that. We've made a nice mess of it, all around!"

"I mustn't let her work herself into a fever over all this!" he found himself thinking.

But Nina must be the first consideration. He must plan for Nina. He brought his thoughts back resolutely—his daughter must break her engagement now, there was that much gained. And for the journey to Rio—

"But why didn't she tell me!" he interrupted himself, suddenly. The reference was not to Nina. Again he saw the superb white shoulders in the soft flood of lamplight, and the flash of the blue eyes that turned toward Blondin.

"She could have killed him!" Richard said. "My God! how she will love when she does love!"

Meanwhile, to Harriet had come the bitterest hour of her life. She had reached a crossroads, and with steady fingers and an anguished heart she prepared for the only step that to her whirling brain and shamed soul seemed possible. She must disappear. There was no alternative.

She had harmed them all, they could only think of her now as an unscrupulous and mischievous woman who had by chance entered their lives when they were all in desperate need of wisdom and guidance, who had played her own contemptible game, and added one more hurt to the hurt reputation of the house of Carter.

Harriet got out of her evening gown and into a loose wrapper. She went about somewhat aimlessly, yet the suitcases, spread open on the bed, were gradually filled, and her personal possessions gradually disappeared from tables and walls. Now and then she stopped short, heart sick and trembling; once her lips quivered and her eyes filled, but for the most part she did not pause.

Nina, at about eleven, had come to the door between their rooms, and opened it. The girl was undressed, and for a few moments she watched Harriet scowlingly, with narrowed eyes.

"Are you going away?" she said, presently. Harriet brought heavy eyes to meet hers, and stood considering a minute, as if bringing her thoughts back a long distance.

"I—going away? Yes," she said, slowly. "Yes, I may."

Nina stood watching, which seemed vaguely to trouble Harriet, who gave her a restless glance now and then as she went to and fro. Presently she spoke to Nina again.

"Good-night, Nina!"

"Good-night!" snapped Nina, and the door slammed.

Harriet continued to move about for perhaps half an hour before Nina's odd manner recurred to her, on a wave of memory, and she seemed to hear again Nina's ungracious tone.

"He told her!" she said, suddenly. "She saw Royal, and he told her! Poor child—"

And she went to Nina's room, with a vague idea that she would sit beside the weeping girl for awhile, one heavy heart close to the other, even if no words could pass between them.

But Nina lay sleeping peacefully, and Harriet, after watching her for a few minutes, went back to her own room. She went to the open window, and stood staring absently out at the dark summer night, the great branches of the trees moving in the restless wind, and the oblong of dull light that still fell from the library window.

She could not see the horror as Richard saw it; she could not see herself as only a mistaken woman, a woman with youth, beauty, and intel-

ligence pleading for her, one problem more in his life, it is true, but only one among many, and not the greatest. She did not see him as he saw himself, his family as the somewhat troublesome, and yet quite understandable, group of selfish human beings in whose perplexities he had always played the part of arbiter.

To Harriet the thing loomed momentous, unforgiving, incalculable. It assumed to her the proportions of a murder. Richard, in her estimation, was not what he thought himself, a somewhat ordinary man in the forties whose life had already held poverty and disillusionment and wholesome disappointment, whose nature had been tempered to humor and generos-



"Where Have You Been?" Said Richard, Sharply, Then, "You Look Ill!"

ty and philosophy; to Harriet, he was the richest, the finest, the most deserving of men, and she the adventuress who had brought his name down to shame and dishonor.

Until two o'clock she was wretchedly busy in soul and body. When the last of her personal possessions was packed, and when she was aching from head to foot, she took a hot bath, and crept into bed.

But not to sleep. The feverish agonies of shame and reproach held her. She was pleading with Richard, she was talking to Nina—she was making little of it—making much of it—she was saying a reluctant "yes—yes—yes!" to their questioning.

At four o'clock she dressed herself again, half-mad with headache and fatigue, and went out into a world that was just beginning to brighten into faint shapes and colors.

A steamer moved majestically up the river, the smoothly widening wake spread from shore to shore; pink light shined at one cabin window; and into Harriet's somber thoughts came unbidden the picture of a yawning cook, stumbling about amid his soot-blackened pots and pans.

With the morning, the peace of a conquered spirit fell upon her. She had thought it all to an ending at last. It seemed to Harriet that never in her life had she thought so clearly, so truly, so bravely. Her duty to Richard, to his children, to Linda; she had faced them without fear and without deception, tasting the humiliating truth to its bitter dregs, planning the few short interviews that must precede her leaving them all forever.

For Harriet emerged from the furnace the mistress of her own soul. She had been wrong; she had been weak; she had been contemptible, but not so wrong or weak or contemptible as they would think her. She would go on her way now, the braver for the lesson and the shame. And what they thought of her must never shake again her own knowledge of her own innocence.

Go on her way to what? She did not know. But she neither feared what the future might hold nor doubted it. She could make her own way from a new beginning. "But before I go," said Harriet, resolutely, "I must tell him that I'm sorry. And I must ask Nina to forgive me."

She turned, and buried her face in

the thick, soft sleeve of her coat. But she did not cry long, and when Jensen, the boatman, came out on the dock at seven, the lady he knew to be his new mistress was sitting composedly enough on her bench, studying the now glittering and sparkling river with quiet eyes.

Harriet nodded to him, and rose somewhat stiffly, to go up to the house. She mounted the brick steps with a thoughtfully dropped head—the straight shafts of the sunlight were making it impossible to face the house, in any case—and so was within three feet of Richard Carter before she saw him.

He looked fresh, hard, even young. In his white flannels, they stood looking at each other for a moment without speaking.

"Where have you been?" said Richard, sharply, then, "You look ill!"

Tears, despite her desperate resolution, suddenly stung Harriet's eyes. And yet her heart leaped with hope.

"I wanted to see you, Mr. Carter," she faltered. "I couldn't sleep very well. I've been down at the shore. But later—any time will do!"

"You couldn't sleep?" he exclaimed with quick sympathy. He looked from her about him, as if for a shelter for her emotion. "Here," he said, "come down the steps a bit. I was going down to the court for a little tennis; Ward may follow me, but he won't be dressed for half an hour yet. Sit down here; we can talk."

They had come to the marble bench on the terrace, where Isabelle and Anthony Pope, sheltered by some same towering trees and low brick walls, had had their talk a year ago. Harriet, to her own consternation, felt that she was in danger of tears.

"I—I hardly know how to say it," she began. "But—but you know how ashamed I am!"

"I know—I know how you feel!" Richard said with a sort of brief sympathy. "I'm sorry! But you know you mustn't take this all too hard. I didn't—I was thinking of this last night; I didn't ask you for—well, any more than you gave me, in this marriage of ours. Your divorce was your own affair—"

The girl's tired eyes flashed.

"There was no divorce!" she said, quickly.

"No divorce?" he echoed with a puzzled frown.

"I want to tell you about it!" she said. But the tears would come again. "I'm tired!" Harriet said, childishly, trying to smile. "I've been up—walking. I couldn't sleep!"

The consciousness that he had been able to forget the whole tangle, and sleep soundly, gave Richard's voice a little compunction as he said:

"You don't have to tell me now. We'll find a way out of it that is easy for every one—"

"No, but let me talk!" Harriet, in her eagerness, laid her fingers on his wrist, and he was shocked to feel that they were icy cold. "I want to tell you the whole thing—I want you to understand!" she said, eagerly. Richard looked at her in some anxiety; there was no acting here. The rich hair was pushed carelessly from the troubled forehead. She was huddled in the enveloping coat, a different figure indeed from his memory of the superb and angry girl of last night in the library lamplight.

"Mr. Carter, I never knew my mother—" she began. But he interrupted her.

"My dear," he said, in a tone he might have used to Nina. He laid his warm, fine hand on hers, and patted it soothingly. "My dear girl, if you feel that you would like to go to that motherly sister of yours—if you feel that it would be wiser—"

"Oh, I am going to Linda at once!" Harriet said, feverishly, hurt to the soul. "I had planned that! But—but won't you let me tell you?" she pleaded. She had framed the sentences a hundred times in the long night; they fell her utterly now, and she groped for words. "I was only three years old when my mother died," she said. "Of course I don't remember her—I only remember Linda. I was shy, my father was a professor, we were too poor to have very much social life. I lived in books, lived in my father's shabby little study really; I never had an intimate girl friend! Linda was always good—angelically good—talking of the Armenian sufferers, and of the outrages in the Congo, and of the poor in New York's lower East side; she never cared that we were poor, and that we hadn't clothes!"

"I know—I know!" Richard's eyes were smiling, as if he knew the picture, and liked it.

"Well, Linda married when I was ten, and Josephine came, and then Julia came. I still lived for books and babies. But, unlike Linda, I cared." Harriet's whole face glowed; she looked off into space, and her voice had a longing note. "I cared for clothes and good times!" she said. "I adored the children, but I dreamed of carriages—maids—glory—dreadful! I knew that other women did it—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Animals Have Sixth Sense. Animals have a weird sixth sense which few human beings possess. Ants, for illustration, will desert their hills, taking their babies and eggs with them, 24 hours before the outbreak of a forest fire, while rabbits will leave burrows made in low-lying land long before a flood occurs. They have some weird premonition which forces them to seek higher ground before the danger is upon them.

The sun, if it were a hollow sphere, would hold 1,000,000 globes as large as the earth.

Therefore Avoid Mean Actions. One great trouble in doing a mean action is that you are compelled to associate with yourself afterward. If you could only have nothing to do with a man who was guilty of such meanness, it would be a relief.

A Barnum of Finance. "They tell me that every minute there is a fool born into the world," said the old financier. "And," he added plausibly, "thank God, some of 'em live."—Town Topics (London).



"Ask Her—She'll Tell You! Ask Her!"

his dry voice stopped, but his swift, nervous look went from the silent woman at the desk to the silent woman who stood before him. Before either could speak he spoke again.

"Ask her—she'll tell you! Ask her!" "Be quiet!" Richard said. "I don't believe one word of it!" And then as the girl neither raised her eyes nor attempted to speak, he asked her, encouragingly and quickly: "Harriet, will you tell him that not one word of that is true?"

Harriet had risen, and was standing at the back of the carved black chair with both her hands resting upon it. She had looked quietly at Blondin, when he began to speak, and the beautiful white breast that her black evening gown left bare had risen once or twice, on a swift impulse to interrupt at her latest fingers, with something and her bright head and lowered lashes. It had had its times of seeming to her, this secret, in the past year. But now it seemed so horrible and so shameful as now, in the silent libra-

"Not when she marries a man who is unaware of it," Blondin suggested, in his pleasant, soft tones.

"That is mine!" Richard said, sternly. And he opened the library door. "Good evening!" he said.

"Good evening!" Blondin, with his light, loitering step, crossed the threshold, and Richard closed the door. He took his chair again and reached toward the bell that would have brought Bottomley to summon Nina. But halfway to the bell his resolution wavered, disappeared. Instead, he rested his elbows on the table, and his head in his hands, and there sounded from his chest a great sigh that was almost a groan.

Oh, he was tired—he was tired—he was tired! It was all a mess—the boy, the girl, their mother, his own arrangements for their protection and safety. All a mess.

She had been beautiful, that girl, with her golden hair in the lamplight, and her white arms a little raised to rest her locked hands on the chair. Like some superb actress of tragedy, some splendid and sullen prisoner at the bar. The slender figure in the dull wrapping of satin, and the white bosom, had looked so young, so virginal,

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 - No. 5—"They are selfish, superficial and conceited," is the opinion of this bachelor, who is an advertising salesman, well able to support a wife.
 - No. 6—This one accuses the flapper, and even her older sister, of "insatiable romanticism," and walls that a man to meet her demands must possess every virtue.
 - No. 7—He is thirty and has kept from the marriage altar because "there is something a little ridiculous about any woman."

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