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gh Mail to N. Y. and other
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e R R. to Crisfield, Md..... 9.00 "
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and West,..... 12.15, P.M.
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Mail from Crisfield, Md.,
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We have already sold over 100,-
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at it has ever harmed any body.
the reduction of obese persons from
pounds, leaving them healthy and
is considered a misfortune. Furt-
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injurious ingredients. We also offer
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a person becomes so fat that he can-
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THE

Clayton Secret;

OR,

A REMARKABLE TRIAL!

A STORY FOUNDED ON ACTUAL OCCURRENCES,

BY

JULIAN G. NOE,

AUTHOR OF "DESTINY," "PRAIRIE FLOWER," "BLACKMAIL," ETC.

"Mr. Newton, I desire to say that there need be no needless formality between us," said Cecil, kindly. "I trust you implicitly. Miss Coles and myself are your friends, and we know that you are ours. Our mutual friend, Mr. Black, is odd recommendation; yet his position of detective brings him knowledge which we could not comprehend. He is certain of your trustworthiness, or he would not have sent you here. Please, as a favor, take charge of my accounts, and, if you do not mind, go to the expressman's, and order the baggage sent for."

"Miss Clayton, this kindness is undeserved," replied George, humbly. "But I can appreciate it. I know not what your troubles are, but you have a clear conscience—I have guilt upon mine, and when too late see the evils I have fallen into—when too late to be anything in this world."

"Don't think that! Let your motto be, 'Nil desperandum!' I myself am sorely disappointed because I have failed in a great undertaking, yet I will not give up hope till the last. Be cheerful!"

"Your case cannot come within the limits of mine," returned George. "I have lost fortune, friends, character—all!"

When he had gone, Cecil turned to Clara, who was gazing thoughtfully at the carpet.

"Clara, why are you so suddenly dumb?"

"I was thinking how love acts on different natures," replied the girl. "While some mourn over the loss of the dear one, others are indifferent. The love I entertained for my parents did not hinder me from feeling glad when they were dead."

"Glad!" exclaimed Cecil, shocked by the seeming lack of humanity.

"Yes, glad, for death came as a pleasant relief from suffering. Had I reason to regret their taking off?"

"*I* had rather have my parents with me," said Cecil, sadly.

"Selfishness, dear. I could live happier, knowing those I loved were out of pain and trouble."

Cecil could not account for this melancholy humor.

"Why, Clara, how low-spirited you are! What ails you?"

"No, not low-spirited but more thoughtful than usual. Your friend Mr. Newton helped to awake long latent memories; that is all."

"Not of love, I hope!"

"Not love for one of the opposite sex, if that is what you mean. I have not yet found the man to whom I care to trust my life's happiness. The majority of men—I sincerely wish I may be wrong in my estimate—are not suitable companions for woman."

Now rose the spectre of Philip Eversleigh before Cecil Clayton.

That it was which caused her to reply:

"You are right, Clara. Entrusting love to them, they trample it under foot. Well and truly does the poet sing:

'Love is of man's life a thing apart;
'Tis woman's whole existence.'

When man thinks he loves, he makes a great ado—a new face attracts him—'off with the old, on with the new.' The idol of his heart is forsaken for another, to be as soon neglected for the next fair one encountered. Our happiness is as well in our own hands as in the hands of the opposite sex—far better. If we keep it so, we need not go to our graves with shattered affections. Oh, the folly of confiding the heart to hypocrites!"

"How bitter!" exclaimed Clara. "Are there not more false women than men? Woman is more to be censured than man for broken troths, plighted in good faith. Coquettishness and hasty temper are more frequently the cause of separation than anything else—with the lady on the wrong side. Many misunderstandings would be rectified were women to listen to the voice of reason."

"Heigh-ho!" said Cecil, suddenly, "here we are talking girlish philosophy, totally unprepared to receive the company coming up the stoop!"

The Venetian blinds were partly closed, but through them she had seen the shadow of a woman's dress.

Clara was set in a flutter.

"And I in my dressing-gown!"

"It's too late to change now," carelessly laughed Cecil. "I'm in the same plight. We can't keep them waiting an hour."

The mistress, instead of calling a servant, went herself to admit the lady, who was accompanied by a gentleman.

Cecil Clayton's face changed as Philip Eversleigh and Mrs. Weeks entered.

"Is Miss Clayton disengaged?"

"Yes," she answered formally, coming forward, and extending her hand to the questioner. "You are looking well, Mr. Eversleigh."

"Thank you! My friend, Mrs. Weeks, who comes with me on business."

"Which will not take long," said the widow, gracefully returning Cecil's courtesy. "I am in search of position as lady's companion. Being acquainted with the loss you have met with—pardon me for mentioning it—I fancied you might need the services of some such person."

"And I came to ask that on my recommendation you will fully consider the lady's ability," said Philip, and retired to the reception-room.

"Mr. Eversleigh is highly eulogistic, Miss Clayton," demurred Mrs. Weeks. "He insists that I am just the person whom you would select. I said an old woman would be far from acceptable. Still he insisted. However, though not so young as yourself I am, I think, companionable."

Here was a dilemma. Cecil felt impressed by her manner, and found herself wondering why one in fair circumstances, at least, judging by her appearance, should desire so generally unenviable a position; yet she had never desired to engage any one, and saw no reason for making an arrangement at this late day. How pleasant she was—and evidently a perfectly cultured lady! How delightful to have her to take charge in place of Mrs. Benton, who was altogether antediluvian. Yet how needless to take in a stranger, that must eventually learn something of her history. These were the conflicting thoughts which rushed through her mind.

Then came the thought that she might relieve the dull, monotonous life at her desolated home.

"Madam, I really can't say that I have considered the proposition you have named, as I have had no reason to do so before," she said. "It is sad to be placed as I am, but here I have the best of friends in Miss Coles, who is to me what Damon was to Pythias. I am to be deprived of her companionship to-day, having decided on returning home. What say you, Clara?" she asked.

Clara was delighted.

"In fact, you would be very unwise were you to go without an elderly female companion, my dear Cecil. I have been silly; I should have urged you to send for one of your Connecticut friends. Mrs. Weeks will more than fill the position, I feel confident; I've a notion to retain her myself."

"We'll call it settled!" cried Cecil; "you can't have her! There is my hand to bind the friendship, not bargain, Mrs. Weeks, for as Clara says, you will fill the place of any friend I have at home—we shall be always together—almost like mother and daughter."

The lady pressed the beautiful little hand warmly, and carried it to her lips.

"Yes, like mother and daughter," she said slowly and tenderly, and drew her toward her and imprinted a kiss upon her brow.

Miss Coles at the moment remarked the similarity between them, and was amazed.

Cecil smiled up into the lady's face, and murmured:

"I love you already!"

"I am glad of that!" was the gentle reply.

"Ah, if my *mother* is like her!" thought the orphan girl.

CHAPTER XX.

A WHIRLWIND OF PASSION—WRONGFULLY ACCUSED—"I LOATHE, I ABHOR YOU!"

"Now, my dear," said Clara, after this pretty tableau, "let me show Mrs. Weeks about the house while you entertain the gentleman who is the promoter of your good fortune, and whom I suppose you wish to see."

That destroyed Cecil's momentary thrill of happiness, bringing before her a courtesy which she would much rather have shirked.

See Philip Eversleigh alone she did not care to. His neglect was not to be overlooked; he had taken his rejection too coolly—much too coolly to suit her—so unlike poor George Newton! In her trouble, he came not to condole. She had shown that her heart was his—he could never have thought otherwise without thinking her a coquette. He claimed to understand, and at the same time flung in her face the love she freely gave.

Despite these rankling thoughts, she did not wish to retaliate; still, mistaken as she was, she felt that she owed herself justice, and must teach him that she was no puppet for his amusement. She tried to believe that his treatment had killed her affection, but how plainly did she prove that it had not by her unwillingness to give him pain.

She could not offer excuse, for that would appear ill-mannered.

Clara Coles, passing her on her way out, whispered, mischievously:

"No love scenes, dear—he's handsome!"

Philip Eversleigh had re-entered the drawing-room, and stood beside the piano, fumbling a sheet of music.

"It gives me pleasure to know that you think well of my friend's proposition," he remarked, thoughtfully, as the ladies withdrew.

"She is an angelic woman, no doubt. Mr. Eversleigh. I acknowledge your kindness in recommending her. It is odd that she should desire a position often made so unpleasant, unless her poverty suggests it as the least menial."

"You will find that she comes not for money, Miss Clayton, but for companionship only. She needs sympathy. Hers is a dreary life, and she has been enabled to bear the trials which beset her by relying on Divine guidance alone; she tells me she could not, had she been a woman of the world, have struggled sucessfully through them. She will be a wise counselor and a warm friend."

"I do not doubt but she will, Mr. Eversleigh. As to her age, if it were not for the few flecks of gray mixed with her hair, the title old which she bestows on herself would be a misnomer."

"She is scarcely forty."

"Ah, you know her age!"

Philip did not notice the sarcasm in her tone.

"Yes; as I have said, we are great friends."

"I'm afraid you have designs on the lady's heart!" was the insulting reply—"it will be somewhat of an unequal match."

"Oh, no," said Philip, wonderingly; "ours is more the friendship of mother and son than of lovers."

This pleasant answer disconcerted, angered her.

"Indeed! Then you really have some of that article termed love—it is doubtless different from the genuine."

Had he been like the generality of mankind, the impending storm would have been hastened, but the unwarrantable thrust was passed by.

"We were as mother and son," he said, gently—"quite confidential—that is, I was. And when Mrs. Weeks broached the subject of going as lady's companion I suggested, as she had already taken an interest in you, that she apply here at once."

Cecil flushed.

"You have revealed to a stranger the secret of our unfortunate, idle love!"

"I cannot see any harm in that!"

"There are none so blind as those who will not see! You have become imbecile already, or are patterning after the child of tender years—even your most sacred thoughts become public property. One would suppose pride powerful enough to keep the rejected suitor from laying bare the fact!"

To this tirade, he made no answer.

Her biting sarcasm and bitterness cut deep. As the harp-string, swept by rude hands, clashes in discord, so were the tendrils of his heart jarred by her unnatural, blighting passion.

Nor could he hide the pang it gave him.

She noticed his look, but her imagined wrongs held her captive, and her suspicions were having fuel added to them.

"People are very unlike, I suppose," she said, "and Mrs. Weeks is a charming woman—your foolishness is almost pardonable."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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