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CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—The scene of the story is in Colorado. Harvey Neil, whose father has met with business reverses in the East, has drifted to the Centennial state in search of his fortune. He finally locates a mining claim, which, after apparently a hopeless venture, develops wonderful riches. Col. Meredith, capitalist owner of a worthless claim adjoining the Blasco (Neil's mine), lays his plans to trap the rich vein. Law suits and injunctions follow.

CHAPTER II—Dorothy Meredith, the colonel's daughter, sets out in a thunderstorm in the mountains, loses her way, horse plunges down a gully, throwing rider. Opportunist discovered by Harvey Neil, who offers to conduct her to an old shaft-house until storm subsides.

CHAPTER III—Breaking into the shaft house, Neil builds fire to dry themselves. Miss Meredith, unaware of his identity as owner of the Blasco, and her father's bitter enemy, learns that she is indebted to him for courtesies extended during the world's fair. A friendship seems imminent, when Neil's sense of chivalry compels him to disclose his true identity. She is angry, and when riding away says they can never be friends.

CHAPTER IV—Dorothy attempts to learn something from her father of the details of the case, but without success. Col. Meredith, however, intimates that he has bought up one Brigham, Neil's principal witness.

CHAPTER V—Neil, learning that Brigham has changed sides, consults his attorney, who advises retaining the bid in order to retain witness, whose testimony would be conclusive for Neil's case. Law-suit expressed as to disinterestedness of the trial judge, having learned that Judge Duval and Meredith had been mixed up in a mining deal in Mexico.

CHAPTER VI—Sitting in parlor of Palace hotel, Dorothy overhears two men outside talking over the forthcoming lawsuit case, and her father's downy behavior in this conversation as to disinterestedness of the trial judge, having learned that Judge Duval and Meredith had been mixed up in a mining deal in Mexico.

CHAPTER VII—Dorothy, going for a walk, is surprised there to find Harvey Neil, greeting him, however, very cordially. They plan for the return next day of his handkerchief with which he had on their former meeting bound her wrist, wrenched by the fall from her horse.

He regarded her inquiringly for an instant, breaking into a laugh as he saw that she was quite in earnest. "You are so considerate!" he exclaimed; "but I should not mind coming in the least, and in fact, I shall be going over to Tomtown to-morrow anyway. If you could be walking here at about half past nine in the morning—would that be too early for you?"

She rose with a slight accession of dignity, an embarrassed flush rising to her face. "Excuse me; I did not say that I would come here to meet you at all. I could not, don't you see? It would look—well, it would look odd, to say the least."

"Are you referring to the impression it might have upon me, may I ask?" "Certainly not; you would understand the circumstances; but other people—"

"And has Mrs. Grundy, perchance, a country seat in this neck of woods?—I should never have supposed it," his glance ranging the rugged heights with masculine contempt for such argument. "However, it must be just as you say, Miss Meredith. And perhaps I should ask if you mind my leading my horse along beside you here?" They had been loitering down the road with the last words.

"Oh, no; only—" her glance straying uncertainly to the turn ahead, beyond which the first cabins of the camp would be in evidence. "Only so far I may go, but no farther. Ah, well, I am generally philosophical enough to believe in the half-loaf theory, even if I am sometimes audacious enough to ask for more. If we are not to meet again, I am sorry; but at least I appreciate my good luck today—you need not think me ungrateful for that. As to the handkerchief—please don't give it another thought; it is not of the slightest consequence."

"But I want you to have it back," she nervously protested; "and do you know, it has occurred to me—I want to ride over to the little hut where we were in the storm the other day; I left my whip there. Why can I not deposit the handkerchief there for you? You would have to go after it, to be sure; but, perhaps—"

"That would not matter," he eagerly rejoined, intently regarding her. Was she possibly relenting in respect to meeting him again, for some reason preferring that other rendezvous? "When will you go?" "To-morrow morning, perhaps." "At what time?" "At just about the time when you will be going to Tomtown—if I go," she rejoined, pointedly, plainly guessing his thought. "I will leave the handkerchief in one of the boxes. I fancy it will be perfectly safe."

"Very well—though I'm sorry to trouble you," he responded, stiffly. They went on a few steps in silence until of a sudden she stopped, with a suggestive glance ahead. They were just at the turn of the road. "I think we would better say good-by here," she deprecatingly observed. "Will you go on ahead, or shall I?" "I think I would rather you did, if you don't mind. I shall see you a moment longer that way," he answered, smiling ruefully. "And if we are never to meet again—"

"Oh, I don't know why you should say never," she hurriedly protested, looking away. "Unless you say it, of course there is not the slightest reason," he rejoined quickly, his face brightening. "But you tell me I must not come to meet you—"

"And what would you think of me if I should tell you that you could?" she cavalierly demanded.

"Shall I tell you, honestly, Miss Meredith?"

"It does not in the least matter what you would think," she captiously declared. "I have told you that I could not think of such a thing."

"And, of course, that settles it." "But we may meet by chance—the usual way; who knows?" she murmured, laughing shyly, hardly conscious of the import of the words in the nervous embarrassment that was growing upon her. "But I cannot stand here prophesying—I must go."

"Must you?" he reluctantly returned, his eyes smiling down into hers. "Well, then, until we meet by chance—good-by, Miss Meredith, and thank you so much—for the prophecy."

CHAPTER VIII

The years that he had passed in Colorado had been so given to unremitting toil that Harvey Neil believed he had had no time to think of women. In reality there had been no particular woman for him to think about. The rough life of ranches, the social stratum to which his work in the smelter had brought him, and the isolation of the mine, had alike been barren to such type of womanhood as alone could appeal to a taste fastidious by nature and further refined by all the training and tradition of his home life. Like any normally minded man, to love and be loved was a paramount need of his being, a need fully realized in his heart; but to

"You did not go to Tomtown," she faltered, recklessly reining her horse out into the quaking asp as though to ride by him.

"I did—last evening," he returned, promptly turning about to bring himself beside her. "I got another horse and went right back after meeting you. It was after 11 o'clock when I rode through the gulch on my way home. I came the long way round on account of the bad road by night. There was a light in your window as I came by the hotel."

"How did you know which was my window?" she asked, her cheeks grown a little pinker. Her horse had taken the cue from the other, and they were riding along side by side.

"I saw your shadow on the curtain—you were sitting in a rocking-chair. I wondered what you were thinking about. If I had had the gift of telepathy I would have been sure; you should have had a passing thought of me."

"Are you so sure that the thought would have been flattering?" retorted the girl, with an assumption of airy nonchalance, although the rose tint on her cheeks deepened.

"Oh, as to that, I believe I would almost rather have you think unkindly than not to think of me at all," he lightly answered. "But I said that if I had the gift of telepathy I could have been sure of the thought; in that case I should not have let it be unkind."

They rode a little way in silence, Dorothy, as it seemed, rather nervously avoiding his glance. "I suppose I ought to apologize for coming this morning," he finally observed, but with little of contrition in the tone. "The fact of it is, though, I could not bear to think of your riding over here all alone. It seemed hardly safe, really."

An irrepressible little laugh burst from the girl's lips. "Indeed, well, perhaps I ought to thank you for your solicitude, but to tell the truth, I don't think that I was in any very imminent danger."

"Another of the bridge poles might have broken; or you might have met a tramp." "That is so likely, in this wilderness," laughing again. "Nobody comes here but you." "And I am apologizing for coming." "But you are not saying that you are sorry?" "I hope you are not?" "I think you are assuming a good deal in expressing such a hope," she retorted. "But perhaps it is as well that you came. I can give you the handkerchief now and save you the trouble of riding on to the hut for it." There was a twinkle of mischief in her eyes as she produced the small parcel from the saddle pocket.

"Ah, thanks; but I am going on, just the same, if you don't mind," he imperturbably returned. "I want to put the new padlock on the door in place of the one I so unceremoniously smashed the other day. You don't mind, really, do you?" "Would it make any difference if I did?" she rather tartly retorted. "All the difference in the world," promptly checking his horse, with a keen glance for the effect of the movement.

"I should be sorry to thwart your good intentions in respect to the door," she said, with a demure smile, after a slight pause.

"Thank you," he returned, gratefully; and the ride was resumed. "I am sorry that I may have returned the handkerchief in such a wrinkled condition," Dorothy remarked, hesitatingly, after awhile; "I should have had it done up; but to send it to the laundry with that monogram—"

"Oh, don't speak of it. It is not of the slightest consequence."

"Do you mean the monogram?" she flashed back, mischievously. "It would seem to be of the very greatest consequence. I have never seen more beautiful work of the sort."

"Oh, that—yes; she does that sort of thing very well, I believe," he returned, absently. "And the best of it is, she is never weary of well-doing. She is

teasantry of purpose; and no sooner had he fairly diagnosed the sweet bewitchery that possessed him than it had become unalterably fixed in his mind that Dorothy must be his. At first thought the difficulties to be encountered in carrying out this purpose seemed but to inflame his eagerness. He exulted in the thought of combating the opposition which was to be expected from Col. Meredith, of getting the better of that gentleman in winning away his pretty daughter from under his very nose; it was only when his thoughts dwelt upon Dorothy herself that he grew anxious and troubled. Marriage rather more than any other bargain demands the consenting attitude of no less than two; and, predisposed against him through loyalty to her father's cause, as he assumed that she was, he could not but foresee grave obstacles in the way of his wooing developed from her sense of duty. Given opportunity, he had all a lover's confidence that he could so storm her heart, so compass her about with sweet observations, that he scarce could fall in winning love for love; but when it came to practical consideration of ways and means he was forced to own himself nonplussed. To retreat, passion said, was now impossible; but to advance at the impetuous pace his fancy would choose he had to acknowledge was most equally out of the question.

But he did not forget that he had one chance of seeing her again. To be sure, she had expressly refused to meet him; but that should not prevent him from seeing her if it were possible. Far rather would he face her displeasure, trusting to clever pleading to win him pardon, than miss any smallest opportunity to further his suit.

But there was no anger, and only the lamest assumption of surprise, when he met her up the Old Silver trail next morning, and his heart grew light with the guess that she had half expected him.

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always sending me more." "Indeed," a hint of cold surprise in the tone. The truth was that with impulsive argument quite feminine in its tenor, it had become settled in Dorothy's mind that the exquisite stitchery on that handkerchief betrayed a sweet-heart's gift. She would not like to confess even to herself how often she had smoothed out the crumpled silk upon her lap, studying the interlaced letters with dreamy questioning in her eyes. Who was she, this other woman whose fingers had wrought so patiently and well? Surely she must have loved him; and he—had he loved her?—a cavilling sense of resentment growing in her mind toward him, who had been so ready to sacrifice his lady's token to the service of another. And now to hear him thus refer to her devotion, with that air of offhand indifference, filled the girl's soul with vicarious wrath. "I suppose she enjoys it," she tartly observed.

"Oh, yes; she gives her life to me," he said with happy complacency, quite deaf to the sarcasm in the tone. The girl stared at him almost aghast. What manner of man could he be, to talk thus to her, almost a stranger? While with more feeling in his voice he added: "I almost bring a swelling in my throat when I think of all she does for me—of

doubtfully; "but is it orthodox?" "Do you find heterodoxy unpardonable?" "I did not mean to imply that. And such heterodoxy as yours—" She looked at him thoughtfully, leaving the sentence unfinished. "But is it satisfying, do you think, to let things go forever unaided?" (TO BE CONTINUED.)

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"You do not forget I am somebody whom you have been hating."

all her love—the dear little mother!" "Your mother?" Dorothy repeated, surprised. "I did not know—I thought, perhaps—" she stopped short, her face crimsoning painfully.

Neil laughed, exquisitely flattered that she had evidently given thought to possibilities of tender significance in the token; but his face grew grave, almost sad, as he said: "In all my life, Miss Meredith, there has never been any woman who would do as much as that for me except my mother. I am almost afraid there never will be."

"And your mother—she is in the east, I suppose," the girl hurriedly observed. Neil smiled, by no means dull to the little ruse to change the subject, but he perceived the wisdom of following her tactful lead. And so he talked of his mother, his boyhood days and the old home; passing thence to general topics, which, although he scarce knew it, really showed him at his best; for not only could he talk well on most subjects when he tried, but he had that better gift of the conversationalist, a sympathetic intuition to draw out the other's thoughts, so that Dorothy, wholly at ease, was presently chatting as if an old friend.

Only once did he venture upon any betrayal of his deeper feeling, and that was when their mission to the old hut had been accomplished and they had almost reached the main road on their way back, when Dorothy drew rein, hesitatingly suggesting that they would better part.

"I have been expecting you to say that," he good humoredly rejoined; "and of course it is all right. But before you leave me, stop while I pick you some of these merriposa lilies; they are the bluest I have ever seen."

"They are beautiful; thanks," she said delightedly, as she took them from his hand, almost apologetically adding: "I am so fond of our Colorado flowers, of everything that blossoms, in fact. I would almost like to see a thanksgiving for the flowers inserted in the church service."

"Would you?" he answered, dreamily, lingering close beside her upon pretense of admiring the lilies. "I dare say we do take too much for granted in respect to the pleasant things of earth. But don't you think there is a certain thanksgiving in every thought of appreciation? I like to think we do not need to put everything into words. Friends who love each other need not always be talking to be understood; and it would seem that the all-embracing spirit of nature that we call our God might be in such close communion with the faltering, tongue-tied soul as to understand and even better than the human friend all that we leave unsaid."

"Yes, perhaps," Dorothy murmured, with somewhat of surprise in her glance.

"You do not agree with me quite." "It is a beautiful thought," she said.

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