

MY DEAR MRS. DESMOND:—Most certainly I remember having had the pleasure of officiating at your wedding, just four years ago, on the 6th inst. Enclosed is a duly certified copy of the entry made in the church register on that momentous occasion, with names of witnesses, etc., which will, I hope, comfort you for the loss of the certificate you so much regret.

Most respectfully yours to command,

ALFRED C. BELL,
Rector St. — Church,
Fredericksburg, Canada West.

"You have lost your original certificate?" said Doctor Kirke, interrogatively, as he returned the documents to her.

"It has—disappeared," she replied, hesitatingly.

"Of course," thought he, "a scoundrel who could desert his wife on her death bed, as he believed, would be capable of stealing her marriage certificate."

After that, the weeks glided uneventfully into months, and there came nothing more to disturb the serenity of Doctor Kirke's household. Leonie Desmond seemed simply to fall resistlessly into the place assigned her in the hearts and home life of the doctor and his sister. When the summer months had come and gone, and she found her veins pulsating with renewed life and strength, she made a brave effort to throw off the blight of sorrow, the fatal inertia that had so long held her captive, and kept at bay every budding incentive to work or hope. In this effort she was warmly seconded by Allan Kirke; and when, one day, she expressed to him a desire for some steady employment, his heart leaped with sudden hope for her, for he was too thorough a physician not to know that, for a mind diseased, there is no specific like healthful employment for the brain and hands.

To his inquiry as to the kind of employment she would prefer, she replied that she was fitted for a teacher of the English branches of study in any school, but that she was especially qualified to teach drawing, as her talent lay in that direction, and she had studied with a view to making it a means of livelihood.

"My parents died when I was very young," she said, referring, for the first time, to her girlhood's history, "and a wealthy aunt, living in Toronto, reared and educated me, but cast me off forever on the day that saw me Arthur Desmond's wife. She never liked or trusted him."

"Sensible, far-seeing woman," was her listener's mental comment, though aloud he only said: "I think I know of a vacancy in one of our most select schools that will be just the thing for you. If you can give me a specimen of your work and methods, I will see about it at once."

In less than a week Doctor Kirke had the satisfaction of seeing his young protege safely installed in

the said vacancy, and of watching the light of interest and enthusiasm grow brighter and deeper in her beautiful eyes with each passing day.

"If she can only forget—only learn in time to forget," was his thought, and his veins tingled with the first wild thrill of a passion that was destined to sway his manhood's strength as the prairie gale rends the tossing verdure in its path.

The fire of a holy love, when once set alight in the souls of such men as Allan Kirke, is a deathless flame. Though it be deluged with the cold waters of indifference, or smothered in the gray ashes of misfortune and despair, it smoulders on, a living brand, oftentimes to burst aglow in the very portals of eternity, when, no longer a thing of earth, its blazing pinions light the disembodied soul across the Stygian river.

Infinite patience and unselfishness, and a god-like power to endure and wait, are the materials from which nature moulds such men, and the ingredients being rarer than black diamonds is the reason, my reader, why men of that calibre are not as plentiful as milestones along life's pathway.

Allan Kirke could never tell—nor did he ever try—the exact moment when the tinder of his love for Leonie Desmond first felt the flame of the inceptive match. He simply came to know, as time went on, that she was dearer to him than all else in life, except it be honor. But ever close in the wake of that sweet knowledge crept the death's head of hopelessness. "She is not for me, not for me," was the daily lesson he taught himself to con, as the months rolled into years, and the years in turn stole silently away. Yet, Tantalus-like, his eyes kept ever turning to the forbidden waters of the might-have-been; and at times a vagrant hope, borne of the perpetual wish, would spring up and dance, mirage-like, before him, until, in some maddening moment, it would fade into thin air before a quiet glance from her eyes, or a saddened undertone in her voice.

There were times when it taxed his self-control to the utmost to prevent his eyes bearing messages to hers that would have betrayed him. He could close his lips resolutely on the words that he dare not utter to another man's wife; he could lock his fingers together in a clasp of iron to check their impulse to close over the little hand that rested confidingly on his arm; but his eyes he could not always dominate. They were the most striking feature of a wholly striking face, and they had a way of playing fast and loose with his thoughts sometimes that made him tremble. Not for all his hopes of the here and the hereafter, would he have risked wounding her with a revelation of his feeling. Her every word and act seemed to imply that she regarded herself as much a wife as