

TERMS, IN ADVANCE. One year... Six months... Three months...

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THE HAPPY HOME.

By Mrs. A. J. DENWAY. AUTHOR OF "JUDITH REID," "ELEANOR," "AMIE AND HENRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was late in the afternoon of a balmy day in May-time when the little steamer that had, months before, borne to the village of Belltown, Missour...

"How are ye, Mike?" was Isaac Armstrong's tremendous greeting, as he grasped the Hibernian's brawny hand.

"Does the widder still live in the white house on the hill?" queried the old man, not caring to reveal himself when he saw that he was not recognized.

"Yes, the widder lives there yet. And there's a grass-widder there too—they're gettin' plenty in these parts."

"Can ye tell me anything about her?" and the little blue eyes gleamed uneasily, while the ungainly form covered before an apprehension of he knew not what.

"Oh, nothin', be jabers. Only she's just like all the rest of the women. Now she's rid of old Isaac, she's as pert an' chipper as a filly in a clover patch."

"What if the story isn't true?" whispered an unseen monitor, but the angry woman-protector was too indignant to listen to the still, small voice.

"I see a beggar-man! An' he's got good clothes on, an' I'd ess he's sick, too!" exclaimed Fred, calling to his sister, as he paused to mend the gay red-fannel harness with which he had rigged Christy for their sport, and which the child-horse had broken when playing "smash up."

"Mamma!" called Margaret, rushing to the chamber where her step-mother sat, busily embroidering a suit of dainty blue for the infant daisy; "Mamma! look! I believe that's papa coming up the hill."

Mrs. Armstrong turned deathly pale, while a look of mingled terror and aversion stole over her features.

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that he might lose the property he had for years claimed in the person of Sally Armstrong, see Jones?

"Both the young on! What's yer mammy?" he repeated, pushing Margaret away with his trembling arm, and striding on toward the house, not deigning to notice Fred and Christy.

"Hush-sh-h, Freddy! It's father! You musn't speak cross and ugly to poor papa when you haven't seen him for so long," said Margaret reprovingly, but her heart sank within her, despite her oscillatory words; and she hugged the baby to her bosom with a sickening apprehension of dread.

Mrs. Armstrong dropped her work, smoothed back her hair, straightened the folds of her dress, and calmly arranged the ribbon at her throat.

"I always knew the crisis would come some time; and I might just as well meet it now as at any time in the future. I shall not live with that man any more."

"You took the vow upon you for better or for worse?" suggested conscience, speaking softly in her heart.

"And he promised to love, protect and cherish me till death should part us! He has failed in his contract and made mine null and void," was her inaudible reply.

"What's Sally?" was the unceasing reply, as he shook from head to foot.

"I heard it at the wharf. Irish Mike told me all about it."

"Sir!" said the widow hotly, "you insult me, you insult my daughter, you insult my house! If you cannot keep a civil tongue in your head, I command you to take yourself off instantly. It is not yet seven years since you took my daughter away from me a radiant, healthy, promising woman. Six months ago you sent her back broken in health, bereft of her reason and destitute. I took her and your children into my house, and fed, sheltered, clothed and protected them. Sallie has regained her health and spirits. Her children are well and happy, and by God's grace I will protect the whole of them. But you shall not come here to insult and annoy us."

"My daughter has not exchanged words with Mr. Samson since the restoration of her reason. That she made a great mistake that well-nigh cost her her life, as it certainly deprived her of happiness, when she married you for money—which she never got—instead of marrying Mr. Samson for love, which she ought to have done, even you must admit, unless you're a natural idiot; but she has ever been a true wife to you in word and deed; and had you protected, loved and cherished her, as you vowed before God and man that you would, I have no doubt but that she would have ever been true to you in thought also. But you've stinned away your day of grace. Sallie is safe under my roof, and here she shall remain as long as she shall will it."

"Miss Jones, yer a vixen! A regular ole she tiger!"

to honor my mother in my hearing, sir. I fancy that you would object to any overt acts of familiar greeting upon my part."

"Well, Sally, I've always heered it said that what that was so much smoke there must be some fire."

"Isaac Armstrong, look at me! I loathe, detest, I scorn you. Years ago, guided by the false assurances with which you dazzled me—I was a very child in years and knowledge then—I did violence to my own better judgment and became your wife. You promised to love, protect and cherish me till death should part us. How well you fulfilled that vow, let your own conscience answer. How well I tried to fulfill mine, let your older children judge."

"A few more months of wifely submission and unpaid servitude in your bare, bleak home, and the grave would have closed over me, as it once did over another who fell by the wayside to her endeavor to drag you up the life-long steep of matrimony."

"I am now well, though, thanks to your beautiful system of conjugal protection, I never shall be strong. If I should go back to the old life, I should go back to the old misery. Isaac Armstrong, I will do it. You have decided to insult to injury, by coming here to-day and making wicked accusations against the mother of your children. I shall seek no divorce. I cannot bear such a disgraceful proceeding. But I shall live quietly with my mother and little ones, and shall take good care of Margaret if you will allow me to keep her. She is a dear, good girl, and loves me devotedly."

Isaac Armstrong rose to his feet in an overwhelming rage. Seizing his wife roughly by the arm, as she trembled with passion, he shook her violently and exclaimed in a loud voice, "Women! do ye know what yer doin'?"

"We've had enough of this," said the mother-in-law, setting him by the disengaged hand. "Leave the house at once, or I shall have you arrested for assault."

Then the old man fell upon his knees and wept and entreated piteously. "I know I've not always been as kind as I ought, Sally, but I'll promise to do better! Won't ye come and live with me?"

"Would you, sir, stultify your manhood by living with a woman in whose wifely integrity you have no confidence?" and Mrs. Armstrong bit her lips in scorn.

"I'll never 'cuse ye no more, Sally. You my word! An' I'll build a nice little house in Belltown, an' I'll treat ye like a lady."

"That promise sounds strangely familiar," was the caustic rejoinder. "Indeed, I distinctly remember that something like it was made in this parlor nearly seven years ago. I believed you then. I know you better, now."

"Oh, Sally! Sally! I can't live without ye!" he piteously pleaded.

not so smart as ye thought ye was! Luckily that's all to punish rebellious wives! Ah! Miss Armstrong!" and the head of the family chuckled audibly to himself, as he fumbled in his pockets for pipe and tobacco, and began to prepare leisurely for a smoke.

"Oh, Mr. Armstrong! You couldn't be so cruel!" pleaded the wife. "Remember, I gave the best years of my life to the care of your first motherless brood. Remember that I have gone down to the very jaws of death for you time and again. Remember that I went to your home a healthy, willing, ambitious girl-wife. I came away from it with your consent only because I was no longer physically or mentally equal to the tasks which you imposed upon me, in lieu of the love and protection you promised, and for which I staked my all and lost."

"By the memory of the dead mother of your first dozen children, a mother who went the way that I, as her successor, hopelessly tread for years, I entreat you, spare to me my children!"

"If ye'll do yer duty like an obedient wife, and submit to yer husband accordin' to Scripser, ye shall have yer young uns. If not, Miss Armstrong, I propose to test what virtue that is in ye."

Margaret, who had been cruelly wounded by her father's rude repulse when she had sprung to meet him so joyfully upon the lawn with Daisy in her arms, had remained out of doors with the little ones during this whole stormy scene, and now gathered courage to enter the parlor, still clasping the baby wail to her bosom.

"See here, Peg!" said her father exultantly, for Mrs. Armstrong's mood of passionate entreaty pleased him vastly. "Yer mammy here has got some hifalutin' notions in her head, and wants to be a grass-widder. Thinks it's a washin' to be a grass-widder. I'll learn her a trick with two o' that when I send the constable to replevy them young uns. Like Armstrong may be a fool about some things, but he's up to the law about a husband's rights."

"You slander mamma, and I will not hear it!" exclaimed Margaret, and the old man started, as he traced her striking resemblance to her sister Mattie in the child's flashing eyes.

"If ye've come to visit us peacefully, and tell us all about Stonehenge and the folks at home, I'm glad to see you," she continued. "But if ye've come to raise a row, I wish you stayed at home, that's all!"

The father, suddenly infuriated, gave the child a blow upon the side of the face that sent her sprawling to the floor, striking the baby's head violently against the corner of a chair.

Mrs. Armstrong fainted from excessive fright.

"Monster!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones frantically, "you've killed the baby! Leave the house this instant, and never again dare to darken my door, or I'll have you arrested for murder!"

Dear reader, if this were a story written merely to arouse and then assuage your sympathies, we might here record—and you would be well to heed it—

and all, if you don't stay away from her!" and the child wiped the tears from her eyes and began applying restoratives to her unconscious stepmother's mouth and nostrils.

"Ye'll hear from me, Miss Jones!" said Isaac Armstrong emphatically. "Ye've been interferin' between the holy relations of husband and wife. A mother-in-law always was a nuisance."

"If it hadn't been for Mrs. Jones' wife and children would have died of destitution last winter," said Margaret defiantly. "You didn't help us any."

"Maybe ye'd like another barn, ye grass-widder!" replied the head of the family.

"Not another word, Mr. Armstrong!" interrupted Mrs. Jones. "I've already disrupted Dinah for a magistrate. If there's any law to protect a woman from her husband's violence, I propose to test it."

"Miss Jones, ye can't prove as I ever struck Sally a blow in my life! But I can prove that her name's been bruited about Belltown in a way that ain't respectable, an' that she ain't fit to be trusted to bring up a family!" said the lord of the manor.

"Oh, Mr. Armstrong!" pleaded his unhappy wife, now fully conscious of what was transpiring. "You certainly wouldn't try to tarnish the good name of the mother of your children!"

"That's a splendid joke! Didn't I hear ye said of on the wharf when I first landed at Belltown? You're a purty woman to talk about yer good name! Refuse to obey yer own lawful husband! Tremble now with mingled exultation and rage, hurried away from the house, went aboard the ferry boat and crossed to the Illinois shore, where lived a brother of his, to whom he unfolded a doleful story of his wife's unfaithfulness."

It is time a different view was being taken in this matter. It is time that men, and women too, should know that "sexual sin" is just as criminal in men as in women—yes, even more so, as man is the aggressive party. It is time that society held him responsible instead of her, or at least equally with her; and we are glad that so many noble men and women have become aroused to the enormity of the injustice that has so long been meted out to woman, and are striving with tongue and pen and noble deeds to emancipate her from the social thralldom in which she has so long been held. We said so, and society should hold men responsible, instead of women, for the evils of society, but how can this be done while men control the sentiment and voice of society? Public opinion is made and controlled by the ruling power, and men, holding as they do the political power of the nation in their own hands, are thus enabled also to hold the legislative and judiciary power, and through these to control the industrial, domestic and social relations of all classes of the people.

Until woman is placed on an equality with man politically, she can never be on an equality with him in any other relation in life. Men know this. They know that should woman once become politically free, that social, industrial and domestic freedom would soon follow, and that she would come up by the side of man, his peer in every respect, and that public opinion, in regard to "free license" on the part of men, would change, and they be held to as strict a moral and virtuous life as are women.

The fear that women will degenerate should they be allowed political privilege, is a libel upon our sex, and is only set up as a scare-crow to frighten the timid. It is just like the miscegenation cry of the slaveholders, when the emancipation of the negro race was advocated, they forgetting that the rapid increase of mulatto children among their slaves was a standing evidence of the concupiscent and licentiousness of themselves and slaves, and a proof of the helplessness of enslaved women. The social evil has grown to such vast proportions, and the men have made such a vigorous onslaught on the women, in order, Adam-like, to screen and excuse themselves, by throwing the sin and blame on them, that the women have been forced to depend on themselves; and in so doing have discovered where the root of the evil lies. 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