

REVELATIONS OF A WIFE

The Story of a Honeymoon

A Wonderful Romance of Married Life Wonderfully Told by ADELE GARRISON

CHAPTER IV

HOW DR. PETTIT CONVINCED MADGE IN A STRANGE WAY OF THE INTENSITY OF HIS PURPOSE, AT LEAST.

I stared at Dr. Pettit in terrified amazement as he imprisoned my hands across the table at which we had lunched. He had responded to my appeal to watch over my father in South America, to which he was going in a few days, with the declaration that the one thing he desired to do on earth was to serve me, and then, as if making up his mind to something, had seized my hands and was gazing into my eyes.

I felt it was time to put an end to the situation. I had lunched with Dr. Pettit because of my father and the danger in which he stood, and a

misunderstanding of the physician's telephone luncheon order by the head waiter was responsible for our being served in an unobtrusive alcove at the end of the main dining room, something utterly foreign to my ideas of propriety. Everything had passed off decorously till now. I snatched my hands away, pushed back from the table, adjusted my hat and stood up.

"If you please, Dr. Pettit," I said, and tried to make my voice casual.

"I think I must go."

"What's that?" his voice was brusque, his utterance staccato. Then as the realization of what I had said came to him, he frowned a quick negation.

"Not yet," he said firmly. "You must not go yet."

There was a note of command in his voice which I resented.

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"Must not?" I interrogated proudly. "I must have misunderstood you, Dr. Pettit."

"No, you did not," he said, leaning toward me, and I had a queer sort of impression that the man had changed in a moment from flesh and blood to a bundle of steel wires. "I said must not and I mean it. Sit down."

The command rang out like that of a military officer. I don't know yet why I obeyed it. Perhaps because I hoped that our distance from the nearest diners made it impossible for them to hear the words, and because there was something more than stern command in the eyes that looked into mine. His face was that of a Crusader, of a zealot who finishes the task he has set himself regardless of the consequences to himself.

"Tell me," he said. "I must know. What would you do if you saw a man drowning, or being killed in any other way, and you had the ability to save him?"

I looked up at him in terror. I thought the man must have gone mad. I think he saw the muscles in my face quiver, for his eyes suddenly softened, as I sat down.

"Of course!"

"No, I haven't suddenly gone crazy, dear child," he said, "but it is vital to me, and I think to you that I learn your answer to this hypothetical question. More depends on them than you think."

His voice, his manner were compelling. I answered his question quietly, although I had no conception of what he meant by it.

"I would save the man in danger, of course."

"But suppose it were his wife who had thrown him into the water?"

"What difference would that make?" I returned tartly. If the physician were not insane, he surely was getting extremely tiresome.

"You would still save him?" he persisted.

"Of course!"

"But suppose bystanders said you had no right to do it, and you were ostracized and abused for the attempt?"

"Dr. Pettit," I said steadily. "I will answer no more riddles. I don't like them. If you wish me to listen to you patiently you must explain your meaning."

"You poor child."

"That was my very last one," he pleaded, "and it is the most important of all. Please answer it, and I will explain my meaning to you."

"There can be but one answer," I returned. "If one sees an imperative duty confronting him, surely neither ostracism or abuse ought to stand in one's path. But your whole premises are absurd."

"Thank you," he said gravely. "You have made the decision for me. I shall hesitate no longer on account of false scruples."

His face held a look of sorrow. His eyes were mournful as they met and held mine. I felt a little shiver pass over me, a premonition of something coming to me which would sadden my life.

"You poor child," the physician's voice was caressing in its tenderness. "It is you who are drowning—it is your husband who has pushed you there—it is I who will rescue you, and will take care of you always, so help me!"

(To be continued)

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