

"Bab, darling!" he whispered, "don't

you think I'm just longing to be alone

with you, too? I-I counted the hours

Barbara sat down at the table, her

heart like lead. She felt like a mur-

derer who, about to drop poison into

the cup of a trusting friend, talks and

The vicar's enthusiasm over the mis-

sionary results of this providential

visit to "children of darkness" (having

a double meaning, this phrase was con-

sidered witty in Darbury), broke loose

almost in the same breath wherein he

concluded grace. He was not among

those whose importunity had been

crowned with success where seeing the

"I am so deeply interested in your

"Wandering sheep" was concerned.

work among the natives," he began,

his clear clerical tones arresting every-

body's attention. "I gathered from the

papers that you obtained a wonderful

"Weren't they awful creatures?" put

"I was at first," she owned. "But I

"Capital!" beamed the vicar. "Our

brothers, in spite of difference in color.

Doubtless they responded to your af-

A vision of Alan's affectionate over-

tures with electrified wire, flashing

eyes, and fearful rhetoric, until his

brothers became responsive, brought

the shadow of a smile into her white

face, which old Mr. Rochdale saw and

"I imagine Croft got 'em under more

by bullying than affection; didn't he?"

he laughed. "That wireless stunt was

a brainy notion! I suppose he had to

whip up the lazy beggars pretty hard

"No," she replied, aware of many

"They loved him and obeyed

eyes upon her face at this open allu-

him because"--her voice faltered-

"because he had the personality to

command obedience. He inspired them

to work for their own good. They

learned cleanliness; and we taught

them to talk a little English—"
"Capital!" The vicar beamed

again at her, through his pince-nez.

"Wonderfully quickly," she answered, toisunderstanding. "Some of

hem could talk quite fluently in a very

"But the Word? How did they re-

"Oh! We did not attempt to dis-

The vicar gazed at her, aghast, as

did most of those present. "You

mean-" he begin, "you can't mean that you neglected the first oppor-

"Yes," she said calmly, "If you look

upon It in that light. We thought it

unwise, for many reasons. For one

thing, we had to play upon their super-

stitions to insure our own safety and

obtain any influence at all. It needed

"But surely," he remonstrated pe-dantically, "at the risk of one's life

one should carry on the Gospel? Mis-

reminded him sharply. She looked im-

patiently at his self-complecent, horri-

fled face and short-sighted eyes. "We

tried to encourage them in chanliness,

gentleness, and consideration. Isn't

that all part of the Gospel's real mean-

ing? To have stuffed entirety new

doctrines down their throats would

Quick startled glances were directed

upon her from all directions; the

'Negatives' present flushed uncom-

fortably; Mrs. Stockley tried, ineffec-

"Apparently your success was not

Old Mr. Rochdale hastily smoothed

over possible trouble by inquiring con-

cerning the personal character of the

"They are very simple and real," the

girl replied warmly. "You find the

same fears and jealousies and faults

as everywhere else; but they are not

hidden by any thin veneer of civiliza-

tion. When they love or hate, they do

"I hope," remarked Miss Davies, not

"Most of them were maked," sedd

Everybody rather hurrically went on

much liking her tone, "you made them

Barbara; "some wore a little mat ng."

eating. Hugh hurled himself into the

i nce, thinking to change the sob-

Bab? Did your own last out?"

and wore then."

"What did you do about clothes,"

"Fairly well. I made some breeche B.

tually, to fix her with a stony eye.

very great," she observed tart'y.

"We were not missionaries!" she

tunity of giving then the Truth?"

"How did they receive the Word?"

afterward, to make 'em work?'

fectionate overtures, poor souls?"

in Hugh, with a grimace. "I wonder

you weren't scared stiff. Bab!"

grew very fond of them."

answered.

short time-"

ceive the Gospel?"

great wariness."

sionaries have to risk-"

have been ridiculous!"

so openly."

wear decent clothing?"

turb their own religion."

influence over them?"

until I got back, today !"

smiles upon him the while.

Mrs. Rochdale gave an annual local dinner party before Christmas every year, over which she presided like a good-natured hen-clucking, with her Buff Orpington smile, upon the chickens pecking at the good things provided for them. Everybody who was anybody in the neighborhood received an invitation, so that the parties bore a singular similarity.

III

Fresh interest was aroused this year. owing to the expected presence of Barbara. So far, she had been seen by For a week a severe chill had kept her in bed, invisible to the curl-

ous eyes of those who buzzed around Lake cottage. The more persevering. after her arrival downstairs, spread interesting reports of the extraordinary change wrought in her looks and behavior.

To the girl, weak in health and tortured in mind, everybody and every-thing seemed unbearable. Perceiving the suspicious curiosity around her, she instinctively cloaked herself with reserve, throwing no intimate sidelights upon the vital point causing so much conjecture. News from De Borceau was all she craved, and she felt fresh anxiety concerning the lack of it. Had Mrs. Stockley's weak mind not been poisoned, making natural talk upon the island life impossible to her, things might have been vastly different for all. As it was, the topic became increasingly difficult of approach; until it assumed the character of something mysteriously tabu. Only the wreck and possible fate of Aunt Dolly were discussed. Croft's name was never even mentioned between them.

Urgent business on Mr. Rochdale's Devonshire property summoned Hugh thither before Barbara came downstairs. Still, therefore, the full explanation she intended to give him hung heavy on her mind, assuming increasing proportions the more she pondered over it. His horizon had been so contentedly bounded by conventional, orthodox views, that it might be difficult to make him understand the true case. She shrank from hurting him, from destroying his faith, as she knew she must do.

Mrs. Field's letter, full of the largebearted, far-seeing sympathy so vital a part of her nature, brought a grain of comfort. Full of genuine grief and affection for her cousin, which she took for granted was shared now by the girl, there was no discreet avoidance of the matter. Being his nearest relative, she was kept informed of all proceedings concerning the recovery of his body: the lack of information from the De Borceaus, with their possible fate, was, she said, causing renewed

anxiety. She urged Barbara to use the

"House on the Moor" and its library,

whenever she wished, as usual.

Mrs. Stockley never encouraged-or believed in-invalidism other than her own. Once downstairs, her daughter was expected to renew her old household duties and seek diligently to recover parochial ones. That she showed no inclination for either increased the sense of strain between them. Her shrinking from company would give rise, her mother dreaded, to further "talk." It was, therefore, strongly condemned. She found it impossible, as things were, to escape the ordeal of Mrs. Rochdale's dinner party without hurting the kind old couple by actual rudeness. Having decided that Hugh must be told the truth before anyone

in one of her old evening frocks and be fetched in the Rochdale's big car. This had been one of her few treats in past years. . . . As she listlessly finished her tolle; the polgnant pain of it all struck her afresh. . . . The reflection of shadowy, sunken eyes and aureole of dark hair mocked at her, in the large drawing room mirrors. . . . The un-

else, she was obliged, though shrinking

in every fiber of her being, to dress

conscious irony of the conversation, the kindliness of Hugh's parents and their delight over her, his own affection, were unbearable torture. He had only returned that day, and

she spoke to him in desperation, as they went in to dinner together. "Hugh!" she whispered, "I must see you alone, to tell you-

"I know!" he broke in eagerly. "I'm dying to hear everything! It was a heastly nulsance having to go away just then; but it couldn't be helped. Afraid we shan't get a chance tonight, though."

"Tomorrow, then? Hugh, I must see you alone tomorrow!" There was a passionate urgency in her voice. a tragic pleading in her eyes-both signs which he entirely misunderstood. flush overspread his face and he

Mrs. Rochdale remarked tactfully: Isn't it all like a novel? If you had been there, Hugh, it would have been really romantic!" Hugh laughed. "I shouldn't be much good on a desert island," he observed

The vicar coughed; Mrs. Stockley efused her favorite game in her em-

"Must have been beastly uncomfortable." "I bet Bab often wished you were

here!" smiled old Mr. Rochdale, in

is genial way. "Only she won't own

Now, Hugh, make her confess!" But Hugh's glance had fallen upon he girl's left hand, and he did not

Ba:bara felt like one undergoing low torture; her nerves seemed lacerited. It was the constant repetition of little drops of water which sent the condemned man mad.

"Bab," asked Hugh, "whatever are you wearing in the shape of a ring? Where is mine?"

Everybody craned forward, and she hastily withdrew her hand. It seemed as if curious hostile eyes were peering at something sacred, the only thing of value to her now in life.

"I-have lost your ring, Hugh. It was left on the island with everything

"And you are wearing that instead? must get another at once. What is it? A key ring?" "Y-yes."

"Once," remarked the vicar, rising from his oblivion, "I had the case of a wedding party forgetting the ring; and I married them with a key ring!"

"Really!" asked Miss Davies. suppose it is quite legal?" "Quite! Provided, of course, that everything else is in order and

priest performs the ceremony." Barbara's right hand closed convulsively upon her left, under the table.

IV

To Barbara, that evening seemed never-ending, her false position intolerable. She craved yet drended, the when she could talk with

Once by themselves, the women's tongues buzzed over their coffee cups concerning the latest local scandal. Mrs. Rochdale proceeded with a garrulous account of a housemaid treasure, possessing all the virtues. in whose room four empty whisky bottles had been found, during her absence on holiday! As she had been a frequenter of temperance meetings and had taken the pledge, this was in itself a terrible sin, even though she had never been seen drunk. Whether to allow her to return, or to write and denounce her forthwith, exercised her mistress' simple mind to the exclusion of sleep. After much discussion, it was decided to ask the vicar.

The girl shrank into her chair, sick at heart, old talks with Alan in her mind. What key, she wondered, did these people use in substitution for



A craving for freedom from stone walls, for vigorous action, had seized her. The cold air stinging her face. the wind buffeting her skirts, dulled momentarily the agony within. The lake glistened in the sunshine; here and there sprigs of ling still showed purple amid the russet of dead heather frost.

ing smile upon his lips; remembered his teasing words and her own annoyance, after speaking of her heart's de-She understood, as she

turned hurriedly away, how, from the first, those keen eyes had read into her heart, penetrating to what she was but vaguely conscious of herself. Her heart's desire? Ah, how changed

Since treading last these familiar, heathery paths, a lifetime seemed to have elapsed. She looked back with dimly yearning after an intangible something beyond the daily hori-

away, up to Mrs. Field's little den. Its

Then Hugh Came Up and Chatted.

and bracken upon the common; the white sandy paths were crisp with At the corner where the lane joined the main road, she paused. Here, she and that other had first met. With exquisite pain, memories of those faroff first encounters seethed into her mind. She saw again the half-mock-

it all was now-how changed. wonder upon the inexperienced girl

Presently she turned her steps to the house where so many happy hours had been spent. The garden looked deserted now, the tennis court frostbound and dreary. But the housekeeper welcomed her warmly; and the few school teachers installed there for Christmas holidays looked at her with ill-concealed curiosity. She hurrled

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laughter in his voice as he made some

tensing remark. The ringing of a bell brought her sharply back to reality, the sudden cruel contrast cutting her like a whip. With a low moan she sank upon a couch, throwing herself face downward among the cushions, her fips pressed to the unresponsive portrait. Despair again clutched her in its remorseless claws. . She lay inert in her blind tearless abandonment,

oblivious to all things. The opening door and quick footsteps crossing the room did not disturb her. At the touch of an arm about her shoulders she started violently and raised a drawn face. Hugh stood beside her, consternation in his

"Bab!" he exclaimed, shocked by her expression. "My dearest! what ever

is the matter?" She sat slowly upright, the portrait still clasped with both arms, regarding

him dumbly "I managed to get away this morning-Martha said you were here-" he stammered. "What is it, Bab? I-I thought something was wrong-

It occurred to ber that anybody less stupicly dense and unimaginative would have guessed the truth long ago. Then, swiftly chasing the thought, came the knowledge that it was his genuine simple trust in her and all his fellow-creatures which blinded him. Suspicion was as foreign to his honest nature as subtle changes were beyond his ken. She recognized, with a warm rush of sympathy, that her affection for this old companion remained unchanged; she alone was to blame for mistaking it for anything more, with the inevitable suffering she was about to cause. She stretched out her hand; and he took it in both of his.

"Hughle! Everything is-wrong." "Tell me all about it," he urged, sitting beside her. "We can probably put things right between us."

She shook her head, with a catch of her breath; then drew her hand gently

free again.

"I'm—I've got to hurt you—horribly. Oh! my dear! I can't bear doing it." Rising impulsively, she walked to the window and back, her face working with emotion. "Can't you-guess Hugh? Can't you realize that-thateverything is different, now?' she cried, looking straight into his bewildered

Apprehension was spreading over his features. His brown eyes, with their dawning sense of trouble, resembled that of a faithful dog not understanding the meaning of some unexpected chastisement. The girl could not bear to see it. She looked involuntarily down at what was still clasped to her breast. His glance followed hers, and the apprehension deepened.

"Gues - what?" he muttered. "What's that, Bab? A photograph?" She nodded. He suddenly stepped toward her. "Whose? What-I-oh, lord! Tell me straight!"

It was the cry of one upon the bor derland of tragic discovery. Feeling like an old-time executioner who let the ax fall spon the quivering neck of his victim, ending the hopes and affections of a lifetime, she silently handed him the photograph, and again turned to the window.

Looking with unseeing eyes at the frosty landscape, her thoughts reverted to a curiously similar scene in the past, wherein the situation was reversed. Hugh's portrait had played its part in that little drama. Alan, she remembered, had, with characteristic vehemence, torn it into shreds.

then claimed her for his own, by the BARBER only bonds which constitute real possession of a woman. There may be other lawful ties, honorably recognized and adhered to; but, whether near in physical presence, or sundered by

countless miles of sea and land, even by death itself, only the man to whom a woman's heart belongs holds her in true possession. None other can turn the key which unlocks the real fountains of her soul.

Hugh did not tear the cardboard to fragments. After a few moments' regnant silence, he laid it upon a table and followed the girl to the window. His face was pale, and his voice toneless. "You mean, Bab that-"

"I-I can never marry you." He caught at a chair, but said noth-

'L-care for you-as much as ever," she went on hurriedly, seeing the look on his face. "But-it was never love! I have learned that, Hugh. I know

"You mean-" he asked again huskily, as her voice faltered. "Croft?" She nodded. The color ebbed still more from his cheeks, and he laid a "But-my poor hand on her arm. Bab! he is-dead-"

"Oh, I know! I know!" She clasped her hands in anguish. "But-you shall hear all the truth, Hugh-it is your

due. He-I-he was my husband." Hugh started violently and dropped his band. She stood motionless before him. For several long moments the ticking of a little clock and the crackling of the fire were the only audible sounds. In his slow fashion, the man was trying, gropingly, to adjust facts. understand! You were only together

a few weeks before the wreck. Where did you get-married? Why didn't somebody write? I don't understand.

(Continued on page 4)

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the true one given to the world and lost again? "Charity suffereth long and is kind," they read glibly; or "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." What did haif the righteous souls, judging everybody In their own smug conception of Christianity, know of temptation, sin, the meaning of the word love with all its manifold sub-keys: consideration, understanding, sympathy.

"My dear," broke in old Mr. Rochdale's voice, as he seated himself beside her, "we must bring back the roses into your cheeks!" He took her hand and patted it. "You mustn't brood over the past. It was a terrible experience-terrible! But it's all over

dream, and cheer up again." The words were, to the girl, like blades of steel thrust into sore bleeding wounds. "Over. . . . Forget!" They seemed to reverberate in her mind, and her very soul turned sick and faint as, gripping the arms of her

chair, she heard her mother's voice: "Her time will soon be full again until her wedding, with all her old duties-"

Then Hugh came up and chatted, in his usual cheery way, and semebody played and sang. . . . But all the time those two words beat upon her brain. God! was it true? Was this net once more to capture her? Was this nightmare to become the reality. and the splendid real-all the very essence of life-to fade into the dream?

The morning was cold and bright. After a pretense at breakfast, she put on her coat, Hugh not being expected before lunch, and her mother not yet

rivals ever had the charm of unexpectedness, the room had a cheerful fire and was fragrant with hothouse flowers. As Barbara looked round at the buff walls and deep-blue velvet curtains the soft chairs built for comfort. and shelves stacked with books, other memories of confidential chats and cozy teas caused her again to realize the gulf yawning between herself and

walked restlessly back to the fire. . . All at once she caught, with a little cry, at the back of a chair, as her glance fell upon the writing table.

etrating look. . . . sne ran forward and picked up the photograph. He wore the uniform of an air force officer, and his face was set in the lines of dogged stubbornness when unpleasant business was afoot, which she knew . The vivid likeness was

black figures at play on the sand. .

met her own, with the old straight pennow. Forget it, Barbara, like a bad

veloped her: the comfortable English room faded. . . Once more, in a far-away hut, she prepared strange food for her mate, ever and anon running to look for his return, seeing little

the girl of long ago.

She turned to the book shelves, then For the eyes she loved and had lost

"It's a d-d nuisance-get it done!" She could almost hear the thought she Then. as she gazed upon the familiar fea-

And presently he came striding down the sunny slope, fresh from a dip in

his burden. . . Again she felt the warm touch of his lips, heard the

read behind the grim lips. . . tures, all the past rose up and en-

the river, laden with fruit, his dear eyes searching for her. . . . She burried to meet him, taking some of