

# The Redemption of David Corson

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## CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

The doctor rattled on with an unceasing flow of talk, while the mind of the Quaker plunged into a serious of violent efforts to adjust itself to this new situation. He tried to force himself to be glad that he had been mistaken. He for the first time fully admitted the significance of the qualms which he felt at permitting himself to regard this strolling gypsy with such feelings as had been in his heart.

"But now," he said to himself, "I can go forward with less compunction. I can gratify my desire for excitement and adventure with perfect safety. I will stay with them for a while, and when I am tired can leave them without any entanglements." When the situation had been regarded for a little while from this point of view, he felt happier and more care-free than for weeks. He soaced his disappointment with the reflection that he should still be near Pepeeta, but no longer in any danger.

At this profound reflection of the young moth hovering about the flame, let the satirist dip his pen in acid, and the pessimist in gall! There is enough folly and stupidity in the operations of the human mind to provoke the one to contempt and the other to despair.

## CHAPTER IX.

The spring and summer had passed, autumn had attained the fullness of its golden beauty, and the inevitable had happened. David and Pepeeta had passed swiftly though not unresistingly through all the intervening stages between a chance acquaintance and an impassioned love.

Any other husband than the Quaker would have foreseen this catastrophe; but there is one thing blinder than love, and that is egotism such as his. His colossal vanity had not even suspected that a woman who possessed him for her husband could for a single instant bestow a thought of interest on any other man.

David had abandoned the Quaker idiom for the speech of ordinary men, and discarded his former habiliments for the most conventional and stylish clothes. Contact with the world had sharpened his native wit, and given him a freedom among men and women that was fast descending into abandon. Success had stimulated his self-confidence and made him prize those gifts by which he had once aroused the devotion of adoring worshippers in the Quaker meeting house; he soon found that they could be used to victimize the crowds which gathered around the flare of the torch in the public square.

A transformation had been taking place in Pepeeta. Under the sunshine of David's love, and the dew of those spiritual conceptions which had fallen upon her thiraty spirit, the seeds of a beautiful nature, implanted at her birth, germinated and developed with astonishing rapidity. Walking steadily in such light as fell upon her pathway and ever looking for more, her spiritual vision became clearer and clearer every day; and while this affection for God purified her soul, her love for David expanded and transformed her heart. Her unbounded admiration for him blinded her to that process of deterioration in his character which even the Quaker perceived. To her partial eye a halo still surrounded the head of the young apostate. But while these two new affections wrought this sudden transformation in the gypsy and filled her with a new and exquisite happiness, the circumstances of her life were such that this illumination could not but be attended with pain, for it brought ever new revelations of those ethical inconsistencies in which she discovered herself to be deeply if not hopelessly involved.

David had chosen an old plan to compel Pepeeta to abandon her husband. For its execution he had already made a partial preparation in an engagement to meet the Justice of the peace who had performed her marriage ceremony. The engagement was conditioned upon his failure to persuade the gypsy to accompany him of her own free will.

Immediately after supper he took her to the place appointed for the meeting. This civil officer had been a companion of the Quaker for many years. His natural capacity, which was of the highest order, had secured him one place of honor after another; but he had lost them through the practice of many vices, and had at last sunk to that depth of degradation in which he was willing to barter his honor for almost any price.

The place at which he had agreed to meet David was a log saloon in one of the most disreputable parts of the city, and to this spot the infatuated youth made his way. Now that he was alone with his thoughts, he could not contemplate his purpose without a feeling of dread, and yet he did not pause nor seriously consider its abandonment. His movements, as he eluded his way among the outcasts who infested this degraded region,

were those of a man totally oblivious to his surroundings.

Having reached the door of the saloon, David cast a glance about him, as if ashamed of being observed, and entered. It was a fitting place to hatch an evil deed. The floor was covered with filthy sawdust; the air was rank with the fumes of sour beer and adulterated whisky; the lamps were not yet lighted, and his eyes blinked as he entered the dirty dusk of the interior. The door which he pushed open admitted him to a parlor scarcely less dirty and disgusting than the saloon itself, at the opposite end of which he beheld the object of his search.

"Well, I see you are here," he said, drawing a chair to the table.

"And waiting," a deep and rich but melancholy voice replied.

"Can't we have a couple of candles? These shadows seem to crawl up my legs and take me by the throat. I feel as if some one were blindfolding and gagging me," said David, looking uneasily about.

The judge ordered the candles, and while they were waiting observed: "You had better accustom yourself to shadows, young man, for you will find plenty of them on the road you are traveling. They deepen with the passing years, along every pathway; but the one which you are about to set your feet leads into the hopeless dark."

"What I want is help."

"And so you have appealed to me? You wish me to go to this woman and tell her that her marriage was a fraud?"

"I do."

"Young man, have you no compunctions about this business?" said the judge, leaning forward and looking earnestly into the blue eyes.

"Compunctions?" said David, in a dry echo of the question. "Oh! some. But for every compunction I have a thousand desperate determinations."

"I will help you. There is no use trying to save you. You are only another moth! You want the fire, and you will have it! You will burn your wings off as millions have done before you, and as millions will do after you. What then? Wings are made to be burned! I burned mine. Probably if I had another pair I would burn them also. It is as useless to moralize to a lover as to a tiger. I am a fool to waste my breath on you. Let us get down to business. You say that she loves you, and that she will be glad to learn that she is free?"

"I do! her heart is on our side. She will believe you, easily!"

"Yes, she will believe me easily! She will believe me too easily! For six thousand years desire has been a synonym for credulity. All men believe what they want to, except myself. I believe everything that I do not want to, and nothing that I do! But no matter. How much am I to get for this job?"

They haggled a while over the price, struck a bargain and shook hands—the same symbol being used among men to seal a compact of love or hate, virtue or vice.

"Be at the Spencer House at 11 o'clock," said David, rising. "You will find us on the balcony. The doctor is to spend the night in a revel with the captain of the Mary Ann, and we shall be uninterrupted. Be an actor. Be a great actor, Judge. You are to deal with a soul which possesses unusual powers of penetration."

"Do not fear! She will be no match for me, for she is innocent—and when was virtue ever a match for vice? She is predestined to her doom! Farewell! Fare-ill, I mean," he muttered under his breath, as David passed from the room.

Having regained his calmness by a long walk, David hurried back and reached the open space along the river front where peddlers, mountebanks and street vendors plied their crafts, just in time to meet the doctor as he drove up with his horses.

## CHAPTER X.

After the doctor had vanished that evening, David and Pepeeta passed down the long corridor and out upon the balcony of the old Spencer House, to the place appointed for the interview of the Judge. The night was bright; a refreshing breeze was blowing up from the river and the frequent intermissions in the gusts of wind that swept over the sleeping city gave the impression that Nature was holding her breath to listen to the tales of love that were being told on city balconies and in country lanes. Under the mysterious influence of the full moon, and of the silence, for the noises of the city had died away, their imaginations were aroused, their emotions quickened, their sensibilities stirred. It seemed impossible that life could be seriously real. Their conceptions of duty and responsibility were sublimated into vague and misty dreams, and the enjoyment of the moment's fleeting pleasure seemed the only reality and end of life.

"Pepeeta, you have long promised to tell me all you know of your early

life; will you do it now?" asked David.

"Of what possible interest can it be to you?" she answered.

"It seems to me," he replied, "that I could linger forever over the slightest detail. It is not enough to know what you are. I wish to know how you came to be what you are."

"You must reconcile yourself to ignorance; the origin of my existence is lost in night. It is too sad! I do not want to think of anything that happened before I met you. My life began from that moment. Before, I had only dreamed."

They ceased to speak, and sat silently gazing into each other's faces, the heart of the woman rent with a conflict between desire and duty, and that of the man by a tempest of evil passions. At that moment, a slow and heavy step was heard in the hallway. They looked toward the door, and in the shadows saw a man who contemplated them silently for a moment and then advanced, David rose to meet him.

"I beg your pardon," he said, feigning embarrassment, "I had an errand with the lady, and hoped I should find her alone."

"You may speak, for the gentleman is the friend of my husband and myself," Pepeeta said.

"I will begin, then," he responded, "by asking if you recognize me?" And at that he stepped out into the moonlight.

Pepeeta gave him a searching glance and exclaimed in surprise, "You are the judge who married me."

He let his head fall upon his breast, with well-assumed humility, remained a moment in silence, looked up mournfully and said, "I would that I had really married you, for then I should not have been bearing this load of guilt that has been crushing me for months."

At these words, Pepeeta sprang from her seat and stood before him with her hands clasped upon her breast.

"Be quick! go on!" she cried, when she had waited in vain for him to proceed.

"Prepare yourself for a revelation of treachery and dishonor. I can conceal my crime no longer. If I hold my peace the very stones in the street will cry out against me."

"Make haste!" Pepeeta exclaimed, imperatively.

"Madam," continued the strange man, "you are not married to your husband. I deceived you as I was bribed to do. I was not a justice. I had no right to perform that ceremony. It was a solemn farce."

These words, spoken slowly, solemnly, and with a stimulation of candor which would have deceived her even if she had not desired to believe them, produced the most profound impression upon the mind of Pepeeta. She approached the judge and cried: "Sir, I beg you not to trifle with me! Is what you have told me true?"

"Alas, too true."

"Oh! sir," she cried, "you cannot understand; but this is the happiest moment of my life!"

"Madam!" he exclaimed, interrogatively and with consummate art.

"It is not necessary for you to know why," she answered; "but I thank you."

"What can it mean? I implore you to tell me," he said.

"Do not ask me!" she replied. "I cannot tell you now! My heart is too full."

"But does this mean that I have nothing to regret and that you have forgiven me?"

"It does. I bless you from the bottom of my heart!"

She gave him her hand. He took it in his own and held it, looking first at her and then at David with an expression of such surprise as to deceive his accomplice scarcely less than his victim. Young, inexperienced, innocent in this sin at least, she stood between them—helpless.

It is one thing for a woman deliberately to renounce her marriage vows, but quite another for a heart so loyal to duty, to be betrayed into crime by an ingenuity worthy of demons.

Child if misfortune that she was victim of a series of untoward and fatal circumstances, she had reason all her life to regret her credulity; but never to reproach herself for wrong intentions. Her heart often betrayed her, but her soul was never corrupted. She ought to have been more careful—alas, yes, she ought—but she meant no sin.

(To be continued.)

## A Sidewalk Conversation.

"How's your garden coming on?"

"Why do you ask that question? demanded the suburbanite suspiciously."

"Just out of politeness."

"Glad to hear that. I thought maybe I had promised you some vegetables."

"Had one of her own."

Rector—I did not see you at our social gathering last week. Lisbeth, why was that?"

"Lisbeth—Well, I had a little gathering of my own last week, sir."

Rector—Dear me! Where was that?"

"Lisbeth—On the back of my neck, sir.—Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday."

## A Great Advantage.

"But this house is twenty-five miles from the railroad."

"Just the Marathon distance, my friend. Think of what exercise you'll get running for the train!"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

## Always Fine.

"Sets a good table, eh? How's the menu?"

"Fine! Chopped steak!"

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

There are blind stenographers and typewriters.

The use of leather shoes of the foreign type is rapidly extending in Japan.

There are in France over 19,000 qualified medical practitioners and over 11,000 pharmacists.

Of the Philippine islands the one which probably has the most productive soil is Mindanao.

The roller skating fad, which became popular in England last winter, promises to continue this season as well.

In reply to an inquiry, Consul Chan M. Caughey of Milan reports that harness racing is becoming more general in Italy, twenty-six meetings having been held in 1908 in twenty-three cities.

With a view to raising the standard of pillow, needle point and Midland lace production by English peasantry the lady mayoress of Midland will hold an exhibition entirely of English hand-made lace at the Mansion house.

The Chinese thrash rice by hand, beating a bunch against a frame suspended over a basket. For a fanning mill the usual way is for them to put the unhulled grains into a receptacle and tread on them with bare feet until the breeze has blown away the chaff.

Fifteen hundred "six-penny cabs," hansom and four-wheelers have just been placed in the streets of London, and they are said already to have scored a great success. Each cab bears a little flag with the announcement: "Sixpence (12 cents) not exceeding one mile."

The financial possibilities of cinematograph theaters have dawned slowly on the British mind, long after they were extensively exploited in the United States and on the continent, but provincial theaters are now beginning to feel the effects of their competition seriously. There are one thousand of these shows in the United Kingdom already, and the number is increasing monthly. The price of admission ranges from a penny to a shilling.

The electric treatment for skin diseases, first introduced by Professor Leduc of Paris, in 1903, has now emerged from the experimental stages and is extensively used at Bartholomew's hospital, London. The treatment consists of passing an electric current through the diseased part, one of the electrodes being a covered pad soaked with a solution containing a drug or chemical. The electricity breaks up the solution into ions, which penetrate the tissue cells with the current.

Up-to-date stenographers use the typewriter automatically, pretty much as pianists play in the dark. This not only relieves the eyes, but gives greater freedom to thought and movement of the body, and puts a large part of the work upon the centers of the automatic nervous system in the tip-top of the spinal cord, which act more or less independently and without concentration and fatigue of the higher brain cells. Some can type a rapid dictation in the dark with only seeming playful effort, and a few can use their fingers, chew gum, talk, laugh and work all at the same time.—New York Press.

In microscopic form Molassan, the French chemist, produced absolute diamonds, which are but crystallized carbon. The largest artificial diamond yet produced measures less than one millimeter (.03937 of an inch) in diameter. In Molassan's laboratory they believe that if they could deal with forty or fifty pounds of iron as easily as with four or five ounces their diamonds would be larger. They also believe that the process of their laboratory is the process of mother earth, though down in her secret laboratories the earth has temperatures and pressures they can not command and seems of time to perfect her work.

Sir David Gill, who, says the Westminster Gazette, is to make a report to the International Geodetic Conference on the progress made with the African survey from the cape to Cairo along the both meridians east, commenced that great task many years ago while astronomer royal at the cape. He pointed out to the colonial government that a proper survey was essential to any system of land tenure, and showed that big tracts of land had been lost to the government by the wilful shifting of beacon marks, made possible by hurried and inadequate surveying. Mr. Cecil Rhodes early saw the value of this advice, and not only acted on it in Rhodesia, but provided in his will for a grant of some \$50,000 from the funds of the British South Africa Company toward the expenses of carrying the meridional arc northward toward Lake Tanganyika. The survey has now been carried seventy-two miles north of the equator.

# Insomnia

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Opportunity.

The two sat on the park bench, looking at the moonbeams dancing over the lake.

"Just one, Doris!" he pleaded.

"Sh!" she whispered. "I feel as if some other man were watching us!"

Just then the moon accommodatingly went behind a cloud—and the man 'a it disappeared.

Hard to Please Himself.

"Engaged to that beautiful girl, and yet not happy?"

"Well, she's gone in by turns for rowing and tennis and horses and golf and dogs."

"Say on."

"Sometimes I wonder if I am a sweetheart or merely a fad."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Too Hush.

"Wretched man! You took advantage of my hospitality to steal my husband."

"Pardon me, but is it exactly stealing where a guest, wishing a souvenir of an agreeable visit, carries away with her some trifling thing which her hostess gives every token of caring little for!"—New York Life.

A Continuous Performance.

Anxious Wife—John, I will have to have some new clothes this fall.

Economical Husband—Good heavens, Eliza, how long is this thing to go on? That's just what you said last fall.—Baltimore American.

Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria twice a week holds an audience, when he is accessible to the richest and poorest of his subjects.

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