

in a great state of excitement in order to make the necessary preparations. As a rule, she let all these things take their course and follow their usual routine.

Notwithstanding the many reasons alleged by her aged relation against such a proceeding, Lily gave orders that her pony carriage should be every day at the station, awaiting the possible arrival of the wished-for guest, and for all her other arrangements the one note was always: "Perhaps my cousin Curt may come"; a *visa voce* calculation unusual in one so silent as Lily.

Cousin Curt! Ay! How had he fared since that day when his mother's message had robbed him of every belief in love and in truth, and had killed that part of his life with one deadly blow?

He could hardly recall what he had felt when he had first held that crumpled playbill in his hand—that playbill upon which Nora's name—*forsooth!*—was printed. It was a whirl, a storm of feeling which threatened to deprive him of his reason. There was the name so cruelly printed in large undeniable letters—and the sight of it thus, precipitated him from the greatest height of bliss to the lowest depth of misery. All that a man can feel of anger, of contempt, and of wounded pride, had fallen upon him and oppressed him in that moment. Had it been possible for him to *doubt*, he would have been saved from mental desolation. But how could he doubt with these letters staring at him so clearly, so distinctly, that when he was alone he cried out aloud in his wild despair. With a giant's strength, he had concealed all in his own heart, away from every stranger's eye, so that none should know of the pain or who had caused it.

As soon as his friend had left him he had sought to give himself a clear idea of what had happened—his mother's letter had confirmed and explained everything. His first thought was to destroy all the proofs of the shame and of the deception which had fallen upon him. No one should have the remotest idea of this dreadful disenchantment for which he thought himself deserving the sarcasm of the whole world. He found Nora's letter among the rest, and being seized with a fit of uncontrollable rage, he was on the point of destroying it also; but, on second thoughts, he considered it would be a greater revenge if he sent it back unopened, unread.

It was the last act he was conscious of. When the doctor came he found him stretched in a swoon upon the floor, and during weeks and months, as we have already said, the state of mental torpor continued. Of course, his illness was attributed to an over-excitement of nerves, caused by the climate. But his organisation was built upon feeling, and a fatal blow had been dealt to his love and to his faith in all that was good and noble. As the fever abated, he was still unable to move, his limbs being as if paralysed. During these long hours of forced and painful immobility, the remembrance of what had happened gradually returned to him. It often seemed as if the whole had been a horrible nightmare, a mere trick of an over-worked imagination, a hideous offspring of fever. But no question upon the subject

passed his lips. In his inward self he discussed the *pros* and *cons*, and felt a longing for an explanation; and yet he was so sure that all his doubts would only be confirmed by it, that he immediately put aside every missive from home. Whatever interest he had once been capable of gave way before the inward restlessness which seemed to consume all his vital forces. Not one word, however, not one look, betrayed him.

A few months after these events, his friend had tried to divert him by an illustrated newspaper. He brought him one of those English periodicals which so faithfully represent all that may interest or amuse the world. Occasionally a faint smile had passed across Curt's lips on looking at some of the illustrations; and now the vicomte brought a particular number which contained a portrait of the great celebrity of the day: a lady following a somewhat adventurous career—Miss Nora Karsten, the beautiful and enchanted horsebreaker.

The Frenchman rejoiced when Curt held out his hand and asked for the paper; the doctors had strictly forbidden his reading anything exciting; and surely this could not possibly excite him at all. Curt looked fixedly at the portrait for some time, as if he wished to impress it upon his memory, then suddenly his face was convulsed, his head fell back, and he threw the paper away from him as if it were some venomous reptile, whilst his eyes bore that fixed expression which his friend had seen there once before. "A little over-tired," gasped Curt, as an explanation of this sudden attack; but during the same night he had a relapse, the cause of which puzzled the doctors extremely. Once more, however, youth won the day, as far as his physical strength was concerned, but his mental capacity seemed to have deserted him completely. He had no longer any doubt, he had no longer any wish for an explanation—everything in the past was dead, buried and forgotten. She whom he had loved, and for whom he had been ready to sacrifice all, had dragged herself in the dust; she was dead to him, and his mind was empty and desolate as a land might be after devastation by fire and sword. The doctors, who were helpless before such complete giving way of all mental activity, advised change of air and of scene. Of course, he could not blame his mother for anything, but yet he could not forget that she had been the one to send him this message of death. Moreover, he instinctively felt that she must be satisfied at all having happened as she had prophesied, and there is no doubt that Cassandras are no popular characters, especially when their forebodings of evil come right. Curt left Constantinople, and visited all the places he had been advised to visit in order to regain his health. A coarser nature than his would have given itself up to wild pleasures, and, indeed, had he been in good health, he would probably have fallen into the common mistake of trying to fill the void in his heart by the turmoil of the world. As it was, one feeling had constituted the centre of his existence, and the memory of the child he had loved, of the girl he had worshipped, filled his soul with bitterness, for she had proved herself

false, and now he cared for nothing, and nothing charmed him.

There is only one thing which saves us in such moments, and that is the necessity of having to earn our livelihood, and to fight with the daily difficulties a similar necessity brings with it, and Curt had not this resource.

At last he gave way to his mother's entreaties, and was returning home, after a lapse of more than three years.

It was evening—a train was just going to leave a station on the frontier of Western Germany. It was one of those trains which fly across the Continent, and only stay any time at great capitals, as if smaller towns were scarcely worthy of notice. This train came from the French metropolis, and was hurrying on to the Austrian one, so that but a short stoppage was allowed. A young man, however, stepped leisurely across the platform, as one too accustomed to travel to be fussy about time, and asked for a first class *coupé*. Notwithstanding the golden argument which he pressed into the guard's hand, the latter shrugged his shoulders and declared that it was impossible to procure him anything of the kind. The young man gave way to fate, and entered a carriage in which two ladies were already seated. The one opposite to him was an old woman with remarkably cut features, whose simple attire showed her to be a maid; her large head with her brown and wrinkled face were almost buried in a pillow, and she snored loudly. He could not catch a glimpse of the other traveller's face, for she was in the furthest corner from him, and the twilight had already set in. He could only see that she was dressed like a lady, as now and then the small head with its covering of lace bent forward to look at the view.

The young man was tired and somewhat *blasé*; yet he could not help glancing occasionally at the lady in the further corner of the carriage.

The shrill whistle announcing that it was time to start had been heard. The engine puffed and panted, screamed and shrieked, and the train moved on, the smoke forming successive ghostly figures in the tepid air of the summer night. Away, away, by thicket and wood, village and town; over dale, down hill, through rocks and across bridges, it went fuming along. Away, away, so rapidly that it left neither time for noticing the beauty of the present, nor for remembering the charms of the past; nor, indeed, for thought of any kind.

At length it slackened its pace, the engine's loud cry once more trembled through the air, and seemed to be heaving an unconscious sigh of relief at being freed from the curse of eternal locomotion. "Bonn Station!" called out the guard, putting his head in at the window of the carriage, and announcing a few minutes' stoppage. Bonn is a university town on the Rhine. The old woman slept on, but the two other passengers, as if moved by the same thought, started out of their dreamy rest. Unconsciously they both arose, and found themselves standing next to each other in the

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