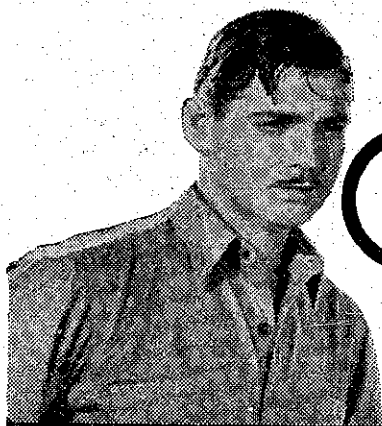




CHAINED

ADAPTED
FROM THE
METRO-GOLDWYN
MAYER PICTURE
by BEATRICE FABER



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Diane Lovering and Mike Bradley discover they are in love with each other. She had struck up an exciting shipboard acquaintance with him on the boat going to Buenos Aires. Richard Field, forty-eight and wealthy, had sent her on the trip so that she might forget the scene that had ensued when his wife discovered he was Diane's lover. Diane, on a visit to Mike's ranch in Buenos Aires has just confessed that Richard Field is the man "who pays her bills."

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Homecoming.

The continuing silence became more and more oppressive. Diane wanted to scream with the pain of it as she watched Mike tensely.

Mike had been genuinely taken aback for a moment; there had even been a second or two when every instinct rebelled at her disclosure and he had wanted, shockingly, to slap her. . . . Then all he felt was compassion—and his love for her spoke out of his eyes, enfolding them both. He took her hand.

"That's the man I said was behind your eyes."

"Yes." It was just a whisper. Then she faced him. "But you don't see him there now, do you?"

Mike held her close. "No, and I've forgotten he was ever there."

"I can't forget—that way—"

"I know," Mike said understandingly.

"He asked his wife for a divorce in front of me, and she refused."

"He'd have to be pretty regular, Dinah, for you to—"

"But I've never, never really known anything until you put your arms around me. You see, I thought I loved him, Mike. He's gentle, honest, dear—and I owe him everything." She smiled sadly. "This trip—I even owe him you—"

Mike spoke decisively. "Well you've got to write him a letter right away."

"No, Mike. I've got to go back and tell him, face to face."

"No. That's only an unnecessary ordeal—"

Diane shook her head firmly. "It wouldn't be fair if I didn't. You see, he didn't run out on me. I couldn't run out on him."

Though contrary to Mike's interests, he could not help but be impressed by her fair dealing.

"If I see him myself, Mike—I can make him understand. We couldn't be happy any other way, could we?"

Mike took her chin and flicked it lightly. "Hurry back," was all he said. Then he kissed her fiercely, as if he would stamp his lips indelibly on hers forever.

A few days later Diane boarded the Amercentral on its trip back to New York. There was both happiness and dread in her heart as the days dragged slowly by. Now, back north, and, anchored off quarantine, the ship rested lazily in the water, while Diane sat on the bed in her stateroom, fully dressed and ready to leave.

Her nerves were taut and frayed, and she was almost at the breaking point, as she wondered how she was to go through the coming ordeal. Her head pounded unmercifully and her throat felt parched and dry.

What was it Uncle Jim used to say? "Always be honest with the other fellow and you'll find you're being true to yourself." Now she wondered about it. Was honesty worth the price of dealing what might be a mortal blow to someone who had never been other than good and kind to her?

There were some persons, she knew, who would not regard Richard as the soul of nobility; who would, rather, look upon him in the guise of villain. But Diane could not, truthfully, deceive herself in this way. She knew that what had happened between herself and Richard was as fine and beautiful a thing as marriage would have been. And now it was over. How shall I tell him? her brain beat at her.

Amy came bustling in. "Darlin', he's comin' outside in the motor-boat. Come now," she said soothingly, "a fine man like Mr. Field'll understand."

Diane smiled with difficulty. "Of course he will."

Walking along the F deck with Amy, she followed the chief steward down the iron stairs toward the kitchen quarters. A loud hail stopped her.

"Diane!" It was Richard. He rushed to meet her and she was swallowed up in his arms. "Darling—"

Diane's voice was tender as she met his kiss lightly. "Hello, Richard." As he started to kiss her again she nervously indicated the staring crew.

"I don't care," Richard said exultantly. "Here, let me look at you. It's almost worth letting you go away—just for this moment."

"But Richard," Diane protested, "getting off this way—what about the Customs—"

Richard made a large gesture. "Amy can attend to all that. Anyhow, you've the courtesy of the port." He turned. "Here, Amy," he said, handing her some bills, "you stay on and get the luggage through." He looked hungrily at Diane again. "So—you've come back." Sweeping her along the companionway, he opened the door to the waiting motorboat.

They were riding up Park Avenue and still Diane had not found her tongue to tell him. Every word of endearment, every caress he bestowed on her was added torture, for she knew that sooner or later she must wound him deeply.

"Did you have a good time?" he was asking.

"Oh, yes, Richard."

"A nice crowd on the boat?"

Diane hesitated for a fraction of a minute. Her colour heightened, but it passed unnoticed by Richard. She nodded.

"Oh, yes—"

"You're tired, aren't you?" he asked solicitously.

"No."

Richard's words were softly intimate. "Maybe a little excited about getting back?"

Diane pulled at her gloves. She breathed a silent, agonised prayer for Richard's forgiveness and understand-