

Right at Last

Joan was silent; what was the covert meaning in the question?

"Well, now, I suppose you wonder why I don't come to my important business?"

Joan did not assent in words, but her eyes did.

"Well, I'm coming to it—"

"Perhaps I am de trop," said Mordant Royce. "I'll go and smoke a cigar with Mr. Harwood," and he moved towards the door.

"No, don't leave us, please, Mr. Royce," said Miss Mazurka, pleasantly. "Miss Trevelyan, who is to be your wife to-morrow, can have no business in which you are not concerned."

Royce shrugged his shoulders and resumed his lounging attitude against the mantelpiece.

Joan motioned Miss Mazurka to a chair; she had been standing up till now, between the fire and the door.

"I shall be glad to assist you in any way," she said, gently.

"Will you answer me a few questions," said Miss Mazurka. "And when I ask that I want to say that it is for your good that I put them."

"My good?" said Joan, with surprise.

Miss Mazurka nodded.

"Yes, you can scarcely credit that, but you will presently. Don't think my first question a rude one, but if you do, try and believe that I have a reason for putting it to you."

"I am sure that you would not ask it otherwise," said Joan, coldly.

"Thanks," said Miss Mazurka. "Now, then, Miss Trevelyan, most of us actresses have a stage name and a real name; have you?"

Joan hesitated and looked at the questioner curiously. She saw a strange expression of admiration and interest, and it almost seemed pity, on Miss Mazurka's face.

"Yes, I have a real name and a stage one," she said, quietly.

"And have you told Mr. Royce your real one?"

"No," said Joan, in a low voice.

Miss Mazurka turned to Mordant Royce smilingly.

"And you don't know it?"

He shook his head.

"You amuse me, Miss Mazurka, you are so extremely like a counsel cross-examining a witness."

"Aren't I?" said Miss Mazurka, laughing; "never mind, but just fancy it's a whim of mine, and answer me."

"No, I don't know Miss Trevelyan's real name," she said, gravely.

Miss Mazurka nodded.

"You know Mr. Royce? Since you became an actress?"

"Yes," answered Joan.

"And have you told him anything of your life before then?"

Joan crimsoned.

"Why?"

"Ah, answer me," pleaded Miss Mazurka, with genuine earnestness. "Please be patient. You will understand everything directly and forgive me then for putting you now."

"No, I have told him nothing," said Joan, wonderingly.

"And you know nothing," said Miss Mazurka, turning to Mordant Royce.

"No, I know nothing," said Miss Mazurka.

"Oh, I know what you are going to say, but if Miss Trevelyan chooses to answer my questions, you needn't mind what I say, you know."

"But—"

Miss Mazurka turned away from him to Joan.

"Now, Miss Trevelyan, will you answer this. Is it your wish to marry Mr. Royce to-morrow? Answer this truly, and if you say 'yes' then—well, my important business will keep until after your return."

"My dearest," murmured Royce, as Joan, pale and trembling, looked from one to the other.

"You need not answer," said Miss Mazurka. "Your silence is quite enough for me."

Royce crossed over to her.

"Miss Mazurka, your presence here is an intrusion. You distress and annoy Miss Trevelyan beyond my endurance. I must ask you to leave me."

"I'm going directly, Mr. Royce," said Miss Mazurka. "You are not master here. This is Mr. Harwood's house and I shall remain, with Miss Trevelyan's permission."

"I will go," said Joan, rising.

Miss Mazurka put out her hand pleadingly.

"No, no, don't. Listen to me for a little while. For your own sake. If you know what I know—"

Then she arose and pointed her finger at Mordant Royce. "Do you know what that man is, the man you are going to marry to-morrow morning?"

Joan, pale and trembling, looked from her to Mordant Royce, whose face, set and calm, smiled sardonically at the accusing finger.

"Well, I will tell you. He's a swindler and a card sharper!"

Joan shrank back and caught at the back of a chair, overcome for a moment.

Mordant Royce sprang upright, his face ablaze, then it went pale again and he laughed harshly.

"Thanks, Miss Mazurka. You have played your part very well, and we are intensely amused and interested. But please to remember that this is not the house of the Coronet, that it is a lady's drawing room, and that however deeply you may consider that you have been injured by me, it is not worthy of even you to slander me before Miss Trevelyan."

"Very well done indeed," said Miss Mazurka, nodding approvingly. "Oh, I didn't think you were brought up in the gutter. I knew you would make a fight of it, and you are, aren't you? Quite right; tell this lady that you are a swindler and a card sharper. You say it."

"No, I don't take the trouble," said

Royce, scornfully. "If you had said a gambler, alas! I should have had to plead guilty. But I have touched cards for the last time, Miss Mazurka; I leave them and all the evil companions of my past behind."

Miss Mazurka flushed hotly under the covert insult.

"Will you desert Mr. Craddock, also?" she said.

"Mr. Craddock?" he said, with a beautiful look of bewilderment.

"Yes, Mr. Craddock, of Chain Court, who picked you out of the gutter? Mr. Craddock, the money lender, whose jackal you have been; the jackal who entrapped and enticed the victims into Mr. Craddock's den in the city. Are you going to desert him?"

His face quivered, but the smile still sat upon his lips bravely, as he turned to Joan, standing pale and amazed and bowed down under a sense of coming ill.

"I am afraid Miss Mazurka's love for romance is leading her into extravagance of imagination, Ida," he said.

"Don't you think this unpleasant scene has lasted long enough?"

"Not quite," said Miss Mazurka, before Joan could reply. "You don't know Mr. Craddock? It is not you who led Lord Dewsbury into his clutches? It is not you who go down at night to Chain Court, Fenchurch street; who received Mr. Craddock at your rooms in Mount street, Mr. Royce?"

"It certainly is not," he said, with a scornful smile.

Miss Mazurka went swiftly to the door and opened it, and Lord Bertie entered, pushing old Craddock by the shoulders in front of him.

Bertie thrust the old man against the wall, where he stood trembling and shaking, his small eyes gleaming at Royce like those of a rat caught in a trap, and Bertie went and took Joan's hand.

"Will you come away now?" he said.

"Come with me and I will tell you all that this means."

But Joan shook her head and clung to her chair.

"No," she said, trembling, but trying to keep calm. "I will not go. I must know all—now"

Bertie pressed her hand and stood beside her protectingly, drawing still closer to Mordant Royce, white with passion, strode up to him.

"Lord Dewsbury," he said, between his clenched teeth, "this is an intrusion, and I resent it! Leave this lady's side, sir, and this house!"

Bertie, pale and stern, looked him full in the face.

"Get out of my reach," he said.

And although that was all that passed his lips, Royce shrank back to his former position by the fire, where he stood, his dark eyes turning from Bertie to Miss Mazurka, as if he could slay them with a glance.

"Mr. Craddock," said Miss Mazurka, "this gentleman—and she pointed to Mordant Royce—"says he doesn't know you. Is that true?"

Old Craddock looked around stealthily, and moistened his trembling lips, and steadied himself against the wall with his claw-like hands.

"No!" he croaked. "He knows me. I brought him up from a boy. I taught him everything. He's clever, but I made him. I made him what he is. I picked him out of the gutter." Then he turned appealingly to Mordant Royce. "Royce, it's no use; the game's up. This woman—she's a devil!"—and he shook his claw at Miss Mazurka, who smiled sweetly—"she found it out—the Lord knows how! They caught and seized me at my office, and dragged me here against my will. But I'll have the law of 'em! I've got you under my thumb, my Lord Dewsbury, and you shall smart!" and he grinned threateningly at Bertie, who scarcely wasted a glance upon him.

Mordant Royce glared at him.

"What do they know?" he said, hoarsely. "That I, like many other men, have had dealings with you! That's all!"

Old Craddock shook his head despairingly.

"They know more than that, Royce!" he croaked. "I can't tell how much they do know!" he whined. At that moment Bertie moved slightly, and the old man's eyes fell for the first time upon Joan. With a shrill shriek he shrieked against the wall. "Royce! Royce! Who's that? Look there—there!" and he extended a shaking hand in the direction of Joan. "Look at her!"

There was intense silence for a moment, and in that moment Mordant Royce screwed up his courage.

"For shame!" he cried, turning on Lord Dewsbury. "Don't you see the condition of the old man you have brought, as you think, to confound me? He is out of his mind. Look at him! His feet heaven's sake, come away with him from these people!" and he took a step toward her.

Joan, scarcely knowing that she did it, shrank back, and put her hand upon Bertie's arm.

"Stand back!" he said, sternly, warningly. "He is not mad, and you know it. Who is this lady?" he demanded of old Craddock, who was still glaring at Joan.

"She's Joan Ormsby! Joan Ormsby, the old earl's granddaughter," he croaked, absently. "The girl Royce and I nearly found. 'No, no!' he croaked, suddenly, 'no, she's not! I forgot, Joan Ormsby was drowned, wasn't she, Royce?' drowned?"

Joan rose, white and trembling, and opened her lips as if about to speak, but Bertie gently forced her into the chair and whispered:

"Not say anything."

"Joan Ormsby?" said Mordant Royce, scornfully; "I never heard the name! What mummery is this? Ida—" "Address another word to this lady and I throw you from that window!" said Bertie.

"You see," said Miss Mazurka, "Mr. Royce knows nothing of all this, Mr.

Craddock. He never heard of Miss Ormsby, this respected granddaughter of Lord Arrowsfield. He knows nothing of what you say, and he has been looking for nothing at all!"

Royce forced a smile to his white lips.

"For the first time during this strange scene Miss Mazurka speaks the truth," he said. "I may have had dealings with this man Craddock. Like other, I have been the victim of his villainy."

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"Silence!" said Bertie, sternly. "You deny all knowledge of this lady's real name and position, and of Lord Arrowsfield's still. Are you mad? Do you forget it was I who found that will?"

"Found the will?" croaked old Craddock. "Found the will! Royce, do you hear that?"

Mordant hit his lip.

"This is a conspiracy," he said. "I refuse to remain here to be baited by an old madman and a pair of vindictive fools," and he glanced scornfully at Bertie and Miss Mazurka. "Ida," and he turned swiftly to her with a sudden despairing, pleading tone and gesture, "for heaven's sake, send them away, or come with me; I will explain everything. Ah, come!" and he held out his hands.

She shrank back, her hand on Bertie's arm, and her eyes fixed on Mordant Royce's face as if she would read his soul.

She read there in his eyes enough to convince her. With a sigh that was almost a groan, she held up her hand as if to put him from her, and turned her head away.

With a cry, low and fierce, and full of infinite despair, he put his hand before his eyes, as if to shut out her gaze, then staggered maddedly to the door.

"Quick!" cried Miss Mazurka, and as she spoke Bertie rushed forward, seized the retreating man by the arm, and him round against the wall.

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Mordant Royce looked at him with a world of hate and malice.

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"To love," cried Mordant Royce. "Yes, I understand, I loved her—Heaven knows I loved her as well, as deeply as you would do, my lord. And if she had stood by me and been true to me, she would have made her owner of Deerwood and the Arrowfield money; but she made her choice; she resigned the law of 'em! I've got you under my thumb, my Lord Dewsbury, and you shall smart!" and he grinned threateningly at Bertie, who scarcely wasted a glance upon him.

He raised his eyes for a moment and shot a baleful glance at Joan, then turned to Miss Mazurka with a sardonic smile.

"You are a clever young lady," he said, slowly, softly; "very clever; but you have overreached yourself, Miss Mazurka. This skillfully prepared denouement has, I fear, not culminated as well as you could wish. Blame yourself and let your friend, Miss Ormsby, thank you for the scheme which deprives her of her estates."

Miss Mazurka returned his glance without a word.

Bertie paced up and down, overcome for a moment by the deliberate, cold-blooded villainy of the man he had once trusted and believed in as a friend. Emphatically understood the ramifications of the plot, yet realizing that Joan had lost a fortune, wept silently.

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"You are a clever young lady," he said, slowly, softly; "very clever; but you have overreached yourself, Miss Mazurka. This skillfully prepared denouement has, I fear, not culminated as well as you could wish. Blame yourself and let your friend, Miss Ormsby, thank you for the scheme which deprives her of her estates."

Miss Mazurka returned his glance without a word.

Bertie paced up and down, overcome for a moment by the deliberate, cold-blooded villainy of the man he had once trusted and believed in as a friend. Emphatically understood the ramifications of the plot, yet realizing that Joan had lost a fortune, wept silently.

Joan alone seemed quite untouched by the incident.

There was a moment or two of silence, then Mordant Royce raised his gleaming eyes.

"May I ask, Lord Dewsbury, what is the next step you intend taking? Is it your desire that, this scheme should be known, which demands my presence elsewhere, or I should be delighted to remain and assist in this interesting conference."

A low murmur came from Joan, and the words, "Let him go!" dropped from her pale lips.

"No!" exclaimed Bertie, sternly; "he shall not go. By this last diabolical act he has rendered himself answerable to an outraged law. He shall meet the punishment he has merited. Miss Trevelyan Ormsby, let this villain go free would be an injustice to the world at large."

"Let him go!" murmured Joan, pleadingly.

"Such a man should be trodden under foot! Yes; he shall go in custody. Mordant Royce, I charge you with stealing and destroying the will of the Earl of Arrowsfield!" and he strode to the bell.

Mordant Royce struggled his shoulders.

He never heard of Miss Ormsby, this respected granddaughter of Lord Arrowsfield. He knows nothing of what you say, and he has been looking for nothing at all!"

Royce forced a smile to his white lips.

"For the first time during this strange scene Miss Mazurka speaks the truth," he said. "I may have had dealings with this man Craddock. Like other, I have been the victim of his villainy."

"What?" shrieked old Craddock, shrilly; "villainy! You say that, Royce—you! You! I took from the gutter—you! I made what you are—"

"Silence!" said Bertie, sternly. "You deny all knowledge of this lady's real name and position, and of Lord Arrowsfield's still. Are you mad? Do you forget it was I who found that will?"

"Found the will?" croaked old Craddock. "Found the will! Royce, do you hear that?"

Mordant hit his lip.

"This is a conspiracy," he said. "I refuse to remain here to be baited by an old madman and a pair of vindictive fools," and he glanced scornfully at Bertie and Miss Mazurka. "Ida," and he turned swiftly to her with a sudden despairing, pleading tone and gesture, "for heaven's sake, send them away, or come with me; I will explain everything. Ah, come!" and he held out his hands.

She shrank back, her hand on Bertie's arm, and her eyes fixed on Mordant Royce's face as if she would read his soul.

She read there in his eyes enough to convince her. With a sigh that was almost a groan, she held up her hand as if to put him from her, and turned her head away.

With a cry, low and fierce, and full of infinite despair, he put his hand before his eyes, as if to shut out her gaze, then staggered maddedly to the door.

"Quick!" cried Miss Mazurka, and as she spoke Bertie rushed forward, seized the retreating man by the arm, and him round against the wall.

"Give me the will!" he said, in a stern voice.

Mordant Royce looked at him with a world of hate and malice.

"You fool!" he hissed; "you will never see it! I have burned it! Let me pass!"

CHAPTER XL.

Mordant Royce looked round with a scornful defiance.

"I have burned the will," he said.

A dead silence fell upon them all, and Bertie stood aghast and appalled for the moment.

Mordant Royce stepped back to the fireplace and regained his old attitude, his glance shifting from Miss Mazurka, who sat regarding him with the most marked self-possession, to Lord Bertie, who seemed utterly non-plussed by this admission of villainy.

"If you had listened to me," said Mordant Royce, hoarsely; "if you had treated me with common fairness, as he spoke that man driven to bay you forget that a man driven to bay is desperate. I drew a paper from his pocket and dropped it into the fire. Easily saw the action and cried out, warningly."

"Look! Look! He has thrown something in the fire just now!"

Lord Bertie sprang forward, but Mordant Royce, exerting all his strength, kept him back for the half-minute required to consume the paper; the rest seemed too paralyzed by excitement and fear to make any attempt to save the document.

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Bertie, sternly. "Do you realize what you have done?" and he pointed to the woman who stood, pale and sorrowful, "do you realize that you have robbed the woman you professed to love?"

"To love," cried Mordant Royce. "Yes, I understand, I loved her—Heaven knows I loved her as well, as deeply as you would do, my lord. And if she had stood by me and been true to me, she would have made her owner of Deerwood and the Arrowfield money; but she made her choice; she resigned the law of 'em! I've got you under my thumb, my Lord Dewsbury, and you shall smart!" and he grinned threateningly at Bertie, who scarcely wasted a glance upon him.

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JUST ONE WOMAN IN THOUSANDS

Who Can Say "Dodd's Kidney Pills Made Me Well?"

Miss. Louis Delorme, who was always tired and nervous and suffered from backache, tells how she found a cure.

St. Rose de Lac, Man., April 3.—(Special)—The story of Mrs. Louis Delorme, a well-known and highly respected resident of this place, is identical with that of thousands of other women in Canada. It is all the most interesting of that account. She was tired, nervous and worn out. Dodd's Kidney Pills cured her.

"I suffered for five years from backache and too frequent urination, which destroyed my sleep," Mrs. Delorme states. "My head would ache, and I was always tired and nervous. My limbs were heavy, and I had a dragging sensation across the loins. Dodd's Kidney Pills made me well. I used in all ten boxes, but they fixed me up."

Thousands of other Canadian women who have not used Dodd's Kidney Pills are in just the condition Mrs. Delorme was in before she used them. Thousands of others who were in that condition and who used Dodd's Kidney Pills, are now well and strong.

We learn from the experiences of others, and those experienced in them that the weary and worn women of Canada can find relief in Dodd's Kidney Pills.

"You will find it difficult to prove, my lord," he said, quietly. "I admit nothing, not even the existence of the will! Who has seen it? Who knows anything of it? You will find your charge difficult to substantiate. You talk of punishment; in punishing me you will subject this lady—giving his hand towards Joan—to a scandal which will live as long as she lives. As for me," he shrugged his shoulders, "but I doubt whether she will care to appear in a crowded court and give evidence against the man she was about to honor with her hand."

Bertie stood undecided, inwardly raging at the sinister cunning which met him at every point.

"You scoundrel!" he could only exclaim.

Mordant Royce smiled.

"Hard words are easily bandied, my lord," he said. "What do you intend to do? Will you give me in custody on this charge? I think not."

"He's clever! He's clever, is Royce?" croaked old Craddock, who was cowering in a corner of the room, forgotten by all, but watching the scene with ghoul-like interest.

"Yes, he's very clever, isn't he, Mr. Craddock?" echoed Miss Mazurka, quietly, without removing her eyes from Royce's face.

Joan glided forward, and laid her hand tremblingly on Bertie's arm.

"Let him go, for my sake," she murmured. "Ah, let him go."

Bertie bit his lip and led her back again.

"For your sake, then," he said, grimly. Then he turned to Mordant Royce. "The lady you have so cruelly wronged pleads for you," he said; "but for her you should meet the fate you so richly deserve. You may go, Mordant Royce. If you value a sound skin and whole bones keep out of my sight the rest of your life. Go!"

(To Be Continued.)

GOOD READING

Is Not Necessarily Costly to Procure by the People.

Good prose that paints a picture and imparts an idea is a democratic thing. John Bunyan was a tinker, and George Fox was apprenticed to a shoemaker before he began that work which ended in the Society of Friends; yet both have written such prose as many more fortunate in the world's estimation would be glad to write if it gave them like fame. The "Pilgrim's Progress" can be found in any public library, and American editions of the book, English and American, may be bought for very little money; the "Journal" of George Fox is easily had. Now, both these men write a language that for simplicity, strength and sweetness is hard to beat, and their words are those of the people, not of those that learn from mere academic sources and thereby perhaps insensibly ask privilege for learning. The prose of such men as Fox and Bunyan is part of the music of the people; where one has read the "Kasays" of Sir William Temple, a thousand have read the wonderful story of Christian and Great-heart, and Fox will in a sentence or two paint you such a picture as shall be vivid to the eyes. Nobody is asked to relate a parable in a letter of business or to be graphic where exactness is of the essence of the matter, but none can escape the duty of precision, and the only way for each man for himself by reading, but reading what is good.—Christian Science Monitor.

HIS OATH.

(Pittsburg Gazette.)

John D. Rockefeller, jun., at the recent reunion of the Bible class of which he is vice-president, said of a somewhat abusive magazine writer:

"He attacks his country's greatest men, but when I read his attacks, I can't help thinking that he is rather like old Uncle Rastus.

"Uncle Rastus, testifying in a certain lawsuit, refused to be sworn.

"'Ah, will affirm,' he said.

"'But, Uncle Rastus,' said the judge, 'how is this? Last week in the talboun case you swore readily enough.'

"'Yo' honoh,' said Uncle Rastus solemnly. 'Ah was mo' surah o' mah kases in dat case dan in dis one.'

HOW TO SAVE