

# THE DAUGHTER OF FESTUS HANKS.\*

By Robert McDonald.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PUBLISHED.

MADLINE WESSEX, daughter of the millionaire George Wessex, loves Jack Selwyn, who is in her father's employ. But Wessex, who has risen from obscurity in the West and come to New York to display his wealth, is ambitious that his child shall make a brilliant match, and refuses his consent to the engagement. Selwyn leaves the house in despondent mood, and falls in with his friend Bramford, Wessex' lawyer, who takes him to the theater to see the famous English actress, Eleanor Besant. Here they find Claggett, the editor of a newspaper, who invites them to go with him to visit the actress. In her apartments they meet Blake, the author of her play, who tells them that Miss Besant's real name is Rose Hanks. He explains furthermore that she is the daughter of a sailor in Liverpool, who deserted his family, although his wife persists in believing that he was drowned.

The next day Wessex sends for Bramford and asks him to discover who sent to the *Herald* office an advertisement asking for information of Festus Hanks of Liverpool. Bramford recalls that Eleanor Besant's real name is Hanks, and he decides that whoever this Hanks may be, the famous actress is his daughter.

Selwyn is invited by the Hartleys, friends of Miss Besant, to take supper with her after the theater. The actress learns that he is in love with Madeline Wessex, and Hartley tells her of the marvelous rise of George Wessex. A young man in the party chimes in with a reporter's story of a sailor who claims to know secrets of Wessex' life; and Miss Besant invites the young man to bring the reporter to see her.

That evening Blake shows her a newspaper which contains the story of her life, and her father's name as Festus Hanks. Blake has developed a hatred for Miss Besant, and has told the story of her life to the newspapers to vex her. Wessex sees the story, and sending for Bramford tells him that Festus Hanks was his friend, but that he died in 1870 at Elko, Nevada. He asks Bramford to go to Miss Besant and tell her so.

The actress receives the news of her father's death with a sadness which touches Bramford. After him comes the reporter, who fixes firmly in her mind her suspicion that George Wessex is Festus Hanks. She sends him to look for the sailor.

Next Selwyn comes to see her, and with the scheming brain which lets neither threads nor opportunities drop, she recalls that she has heard that Wessex dislikes Selwyn. If she is to put herself in her proper place as the millionaire's daughter, she must first estrange him from Madeline. The best way is to bring in the hated lover. She encourages Selwyn to go back to Madeline, and he leaves her filled with a sense of her charm and goodness.

## XIII.

"SINCE Miss Besant proves to be the daughter of an old friend of yours, I do not see why you do not let me ask her here to stay."

"Hardly an old friend," Wessex said

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wearily. His face, with its thin lines and compressed lips, looked more bloodless than usual. He was trying to eat his breakfast, which stood upon a light table by the side of his chair. The winter sun came cheerfully in at the wide windows, and made a beautiful atmosphere about Madeline's head, but brought out her father's face with painful distinctness.

"Well, if not an old friend, then an old acquaintance. She is very anxious to meet you as soon as you are well enough to see her. She is so gentle, you might see her any time."

"Do you like her so much?"

"She is charming."

"But what would people say at your having an actress stay in the house?" Mr. Wessex suggested.

"People say!" Madeline looked at her father in astonishment. "Why, papa, I never in all my life knew you to care what people said. And besides, everybody in London, and here, invites Miss Besant. She was quite the center of everything at Mrs. Hartley's dinner. She is so *great*, so self contained, that there is no question as to your receiving *her*. It is all a matter of her receiving you. She has as much of that masterful way as you have," and Madeline laughed lightly.

She admired her father extravagantly, and was seldom afraid to say anything to him. In these days she was so happy in her new understanding with Selwyn that there had come to her a sprightliness, a beaming happiness, such as she had never known before. She had not told her father, because in some way it had not seemed to be his affair.

Selwyn had told her all of Miss Besant's advice, and Madeline, with her generous girl's nature, had seen in her a model of kindness and worldly wisdom. They had gone together into a little room which Mrs. Hartley had curtained off, hung with embroideries, cushioned with Turkish divans, and lighted by quaint hanging lamps, and

to which she had given the name of "the ingle nook." The fire of this ingle, though, was down in the basement in the furnace.

The two girls had attracted considerable attention. Both were conspicuous by reason of a charm of personality. In Miss Besant it was the essence of power; in Madeline, the beauty of youth. Each was dressed exquisitely, one in white, and the other in black; one belonging to the aristocracy of money, and the other to the aristocracy of genius. They sat together upon Mrs. Hartley's mass of colored cushions, and Madeline told the other woman every heart throb she had. It had been drawn out of her, she hardly knew how, and she had gone home feeling that at last she had a woman friend. And she was so proud of her. As yet, she had not seen her act. Miss Besant had looked at her with a shadow over her great black eyes, and had asked her not to come to see "The Other House."

"You would get a wrong idea of me," she had said. "It would be impossible to disentangle us again. That play is not an expression of my character, and yet it is my art to so represent it." And Madeline had not gone.

"Her companion, Miss Lord, is not at all well, and although she is so devoted to Miss Besant that she says she will not leave her, they are going to send her to Lakewood for a little while. I thought, if you did not mind, I would ask Miss Besant to come and stay with me at that time."

Wessex sat for a long time looking into the fire behind its great fender. The light twinkled on the grotesque figures that formed its ornaments, and they seemed to be enjoying what they saw in Wessex' narrowing eyes.

"Have her here if you like," he said finally.

"May I? How delightful! Not that I am at all sure of her coming, but I do know that she wants to see you, and I think her delightful. I am going to sit right down here and write it."

She walked over to the desk beside which her father's chair stood, and began looking through the neatly arranged drawers.

"What are you doing there?" Wessex asked sharply.

"Now don't be cross. I am only looking for some respectable writing paper. I cannot write to Miss Besant upon legal cap, or whatever you call this lined stuff."

"You will find some in that lower drawer there—the one with the crest carved on the front."

But Madeline had picked up a paper which was in one of the drawers, and her face had grown pale as she looked at it. She held it almost as though she were afraid of it.

"Oh, papa!" she said.

"Put that down. Why do you touch my papers!" Then, seeing the hurt expression upon her face—the face which was so dear to him—he put out his hand and drew her to him. "My dear, it is very stupid of you to see anything uncanny about my will. I know that most women have such a feeling, but it is absurd. As though I were going to die one day sooner because of it! But I want to feel, and I want you to feel, that when I am dead your future is provided for, whatever happens—whatever happens."

"What could happen? Why need you make a will at all? Am I not your only child, everything you have? It makes me shiver to think of it."

She held his head against her bosom as she sat upon the arm of his chair, and gave it a little pressure as she spoke.

"Perhaps," Wessex said deliberately, "to save you from fortune hunters."

Madeline stood up, and then went over to the window.

"And so I may ask Miss Besant?" she said presently. "I will go up to my room and write the letter."

#### XIV.

MISS BESANT drove up to the door of the Wessex house in the Wessex victoria, one of the stylish high backed vehicles which have appeared in New York within the past few years. This was painted dark blue, with a crest upon a panel in the back which had brought a queer lift to Miss Besant's short upper lip.

As it swung into the court, and stopped before the great front door, the footman alighted from the seat and stood for the actress to descend. She never made a stage entrance with greater dignity than she took that one step to the door. She turned and looked about her as the great portal opened, and there was in her eye a light which had never been there before. It was as one stepping upon a mountain top; as one drawing a deep breath after the first victorious heat of a race.

Madeline met her guest at the door, with a greeting in which eager hospitality was blended with almost wondering admiration.

"How good of you to come to us," she said, taking Miss Besant's hand; "to us who are so quiet now."

"You mean how good it is of you to ask me. What a great, beautiful home you have! It is like the palace of a king. It is grander than most of them."

"I know nothing about palaces," Madeline returned, leading her guest up the noble staircase, which wound across the back of the hall. "I have never been abroad—in that way. Father says that he wants me to be presented to the queen, because he thinks it a ceremonial I should enjoy, and says I should meet a number of delightful people. My grandmother was presented at court. Have you ever been?"

"No. Ah, no! But—the agreeable people! They are few and far between. I have met most of them—at least most of the men. They were usually anything but delightful."

"It makes little difference to me," Madeline said lightly, and then, as Miss Besant turned and looked at her, her face crimsoned. She gave a little laugh, and the hand upon the actress' arm touched it with a light pressure. "How can I ever thank you?" she whispered.

Rose took the pretty face between her hands and kissed her. It was the kiss of a mother or an elder sister. The big black eyes were solemn, and the corners of the mouth were drawn in. The big hat, with its cluster of feathers standing up at the side, and the great ruffle of black velvet under her white chin, accented Rose's face. Her garments never suggested the theater, but everything she wore took on something of her own individuality.

"I wonder if I could ever tell a happy girl like you, what it is to have *friends*—to have some one to give confidences to you, to come to you, to want you? There has been so little love in my life. Let me hope that you are going to give me a little."

Madeline kissed her warmly.

"You are going to have a great deal. Did you not bring *everything* back to me? Come in and see the rooms I have prepared for you."

Rose clasped her hands in real delight. The rooms were a suite of four, and money and art and maidenly care had made them beautiful. The sitting room was arranged for comfort, with Turkish divans, and easy chairs, and screens, and little tables holding flowers and books.

"You are too good to me," she said again. "When am I to see your father?"

"Papa? Oh, yes! How stupid I am. I know how anxious you are to see him, and indeed he wants to see you, but he is such an invalid now! After dinner, perhaps."

"But I must go to the theater then."

"Ah, yes! I will see now."

But Rose held her. "No! No!" She was not ready to see Wessex yet. When that meeting came, she preferred to be fresh for it; she wished to come to it with every power of person and mind alert and ready to conquer.

"Nothing would induce me to see your father before he sends for me. Sit down, won't you? I suppose you cannot understand my eagerness to hear of my own father—you who have always had a father."

There was a note of sadness in the flexible voice. She took off the big velvet hat and laid it upon the table beside her, and sat with her black gloved hands demurely crossed in her lap.

"It was through my father that you learned of your father's death, was it not?" Madeline asked sympathetically.

"Yes. He was with him when he died. Think of it! I had always been so sure of his being alive. I knew, it seemed to me, that he was alive. And to have all my hopes shattered like this! To know that all that is left of them is a lonely grave up there in the mountains. It nearly breaks my heart to think of his coming all this way, and then to die. I have lost him over again in this knowledge."

"I have some idea of your feeling," Madeline said. "A few days ago I went into father's room, and was fumbling over some papers, and I found—his will in his desk. It gave me a terrible start. I have thought of father as being ill, as suffering, but truly I had never before thought it possible that he might—*die*."

"But that was another evidence that you were ever and always in his mind. It was you he was caring for. Why should he make a will when you are all he has, except to insure your having everything?"

"Of course," Madeline said, but her thoughts were on other things. She was imagining what her life would be without her father, who, while he was stern to every one else, was tender and indulgent to her. Her eyes filled with tears.

"It seemed odd that he should keep his will in his desk, though. I should think his lawyer would have it."

"He keeps a great many papers of importance near him. I suppose, however, he will give it to Mr. Bramford. I wish he would burn up the gruesome thing."

Miss Besant laughed a reassuring little laugh and went over and took Madeline's hands.

"Let us not borrow trouble, my dear. If

live men's wills were all that we had to trouble us, life would be sweet. I am not going to dress until my maid comes. Indeed, if you will allow me, I will wear this gown to dinner. I so dislike dressing over and over. Will you not come and show me through the house? It is so full of beautiful things which I am so curious to see. I have heard of the great picture gallery."

"It is too big," Madeline said gravely. "It would suit you, but I am lost in it."

As they passed the entrance of the room where Wessex sat through most of his days, they met Bramford coming out, closing the door carefully behind him. He looked at the two young women with an interest which was thrilling to himself. He seemed to feel a premonition of events.

Rose stopped and spoke to him with the greatest cordiality, tempered with a sadness which made him know that she had not forgotten that it was he who had brought her the recent news of her father's death. Although it was a bereavement so old, it was recent and fresh to the daughter, as she made him feel.

Bramford had met Miss Besant several times since the day when Wessex had sent him to her, and each time he had come away more and more impressed by the seeming simplicity of her character, and more and more puzzled by a something underneath. The two had sat together and talked through afternoon calls, and had grown to be quite friends, after a surface fashion; but all the time Bramford had an uneasy consciousness as if a mental finger were probing in his brain, finding all sorts of hidden things. He had a constant experience of closing doors into which an eye seemed to be looking.

He had come down the hall after one of these visits to Miss Besant's hotel, saying to himself that she was "infernally deep," and then he had apologized to her for having such a thought, all in his own mind. Whatever she was, she had never given him any infernal suggestions. He had brought away from every interview a new belief in her power, a respect for her ability to take care of herself, and a wonder as to how much she knew. He had lost all doubt in his own mind as to her identity, and he was waiting with an interest which was more than the casual notice he usually gave to such external things, for the meeting between the two.

"If she is his daughter, and he knows it, and she knows it, that coming together will be a scene for history," Bramford said to himself.

"How is papa after your talk? I fear these long talks," Madeline began. "I wish I could get him to drop business altogether. It cannot be necessary that he should go over so much of the work of the office himself."

"I thought you were going to take him to the south of France." There was perfect gravity in Bramford's eyes, but Madeline's face flushed, and she turned aside. Ten days ago Bramford would not have given her even so slight a cause for offense; but valuing people as he did for their possessions, for their possible usefulness to himself, and constantly keeping before his eyes the wonderful, the dazzling fact that Rose Hanks was the real daughter of this house, he had lost some of his fine reverence for Madeline. To him she had never appeared as the beautiful young girl, but as the heiress to a hundred million dollars.

Bramford had lain awake upon long nights, and imagined himself spending the income of millions. He looked at other men, not half as clever as he, who had made great fortunes, in many cases through advice which he had himself given them. For years he had wondered; but there had come, with larger experience, a deeper knowledge of human nature, and of that aggregation of human nature which we call the world. He saw how his own sensitiveness, his sense of humor, had been an obstacle in his path. Where other men were so thick skinned, so obtuse, that they had no outside view of themselves, they moved with twice the courage.

When smokeless powder was invented, old generals said that a clear view of the battle field would work more mischief with the nerves of the soldiers than a clear sight of the enemy would conduce to victory. Bramford's mind was so clear that there had never been any possibilities hidden. He had never been a coward, but in his own affairs he had been cautious to failure. He saw many things with too imaginative eyes. Another phase of this same quality showed in the vision of Miss Besant conquering Wessex as she had conquered every one else, and entering triumphantly into what he felt was absolutely her own.

"I will go in and speak to father," Madeline said, "if you will entertain Miss Besant for a moment."

"Keep me from losing myself in this great place," the actress replied; and as Madeline closed the door after her, "Is this the door to Mr. Wessex' room?"

"His bed room? Oh, no! This is only a sort of library where he sits during the day,

where he sees people and keeps his books and papers. His own rooms are in a different part of the house. He is brought in here every morning, and sits all day; or rather he brings himself. He is not half so ill as most people think. He dislikes seeing people, active exercise, and all that sort of thing; and this is an easy way of getting out of it."

"Why should you tell me this? Am I one of the people he dislikes to see?"

"No. He may be ignorant of the fact, but you are one of the people he will delight to see. Mr. Wessex is not eccentric—altogether."

"It seems to me, from what his daughter tells me"—Miss Besant carried a lorgnette upon a pearl strung chain, and now she sprung the glasses from their pearl monogrammed handle and put them up to her eyes, and looked at the ceiling of the hall as though she had no other interest in life—"it seems to me, from what his daughter tells me, that Mr. Wessex must be eccentric in some ways."

"For example?"

"Well, it isn't usual, is it, for a man to keep his will lying about in his sitting room?"

"Does Mr. Wessex do that?"

"His daughter said that he did—that she had seen it there yesterday, or some time recently."

Bramford looked at her, and there came into his suspicious mind a thread, which he held with a firm mental grasp. Miss Besant had made but one mistake. She had not found any reason for believing that Bramford connected Wessex with the dead and buried Festus Hanks. What was Wessex to her but an object of idle curiosity, as an eccentric millionaire? She knew Bramford well enough, and Wessex was so entirely a public personage that they might discuss him even here.

Bramford became in a measure confidential. He was anxious above all things to know how much this young woman knew or suspected.

"There could be no particular reason, of course, for Mr. Wessex' being careful of his will. He has only one heir, his daughter. If anything should happen to it, there might be an old servant or two who would lose a legacy; but what possible reason could there be for his not being careless with it? Although I confess that it might be called eccentric for a man to will away an empire, and leave the document lying upon the library table." And Mr. Bramford looked as though he might have poured out streams

of valuable but unheeded advice to careless millionaires.

"Will you stay and have dinner with us, Mr. Bramford?" Madeline said, coming back to them. We are going to dine early."

"And then I suppose you are going to the theater to see 'The Other House.'"

"No! No!" Miss Besant said. "I have a desire to keep one friend who does not associate me with horrors. Orders have been given at the door that Miss Wessex is not to be admitted."

"But she will be waiting for your return—to hear of your triumphs."

"Indeed, no. One of my express stipulations has been that Miss Wessex is to be safe in her own room. I am not going to disorganize this household by my Bohemian ways. I am going to have a latch key."

"I will not stay to dinner, thank you, Miss Wessex," Bramford said; "but I may run in for a moment this evening to see your father again. He wants some advice which I am to try to give him then."

It was almost ten o'clock when Bramford came back that evening. As the man let him in he walked toward Mr. Wessex' library door. The man knew him very well. "Mr. Wessex has retired, sir, I think," he said very respectfully.

"Probably. I am going into the library to do some work. It is not necessary to say that I am here, and if I work until late, I will let myself out."

Mr. Bramford's work could hardly have been important. For almost an hour it consisted in a slow march up and down the long room, with sometimes a halt at the windows which opened upon the avenue. He would stand in the shadow of the heavy curtains and look out as though he were expecting some one. Once he stopped in his walk and laid a heavy paper upon the desk, which was partly open.

The fire had died down, leaving only the red embers in a glowing bed. Bramford had turned off the lights except about the desk. There a soft white ball of electricity glowed. Between the desk and the window there was a tall screen. Three priceless Dutch panels by famous artists had been mounted in ebony and dull silver to shield the Colorado miner from the draughts. Bramford suddenly turned from the window and sat down in a heavy chair behind the screen. He had been in the room for almost two hours. He put back his head against the cushions and sat like a sleeper.

There was a soft little sound presently, and the great door swung slowly open. It

made no noise. The *frou-frou* of silken skirts coming over the heavy carpet was the only vibration upon the air. There was no indecision in that sound, however. It went straight to the desk, and stopped.

Bramford slowly rose in his chair, and his eyes came upon a level with the open scroll work in the top of the screen. He stood for an instant, and then walked into the circle of light.

Miss Besant looked up from the paper she was reading, with entire composure. The leaves in her hand did not rustle. She might have been reading the morning paper, and have looked up to see her maid.

Bramford started half a dozen sentences, but they all stuck in his throat. He had never seen so handsome a creature. She was in the beautiful gown of the last act of her play. Tonight the stage coloring was still upon her face. Her eyes were like two fires, Bramford thought, as they caught a ray of the electricity and showed the claret through the black of their coloring. Her perfectly curved upper lip was drawn back sharply from her teeth, in a smile which seemed to hold the situation.

"Well?" she said interrogatively.

"You seem to be interested in Mr. Wessex' will."

"I am."

Her coolness put something into Bramford's nerves that had never been there before. He took the arm, the bare white arm, nearest him, with all the force of his slender hand, but she only met his eyes with hers, unflinchingly.

"Why?"

She did not answer.

"Why, I say?"

"What is it to you? I am interested in the fact that every penny of this money is left away from Madeline in case she marries John Selwyn. Madeline is my friend. She loves Selwyn, and Selwyn is my friend."

"You are a strange woman, indeed, to take so much care for a woman friend, one you met only a little while ago. The disinterestedness of your heart is beautiful. I find by closer acquaintance more and more to admire."

Miss Besant laughed in his face—and Bramford flushed. His cheap sarcasm seemed so unnecessary.

"What is it for?" he blurted out.

"What are you here to watch me for?"

Her eyes narrowed with the same old trick which had belonged to slender, ill nourished little Rose Hanks washing dishes in the sailors' lodging house upon the

dingy street by the Liverpool docks. She was thinking.

"Ah!" she said—and opening her eyes looked at Bramford with a fullness of comprehension. "Are you going to tell Miss Wessex, Mr. Wessex? Is that part of your duty?"

"No." His clutch was still upon her arm, and his breath came quickly. "Don't you see that I love you? That I would do anything—anything, to spare you, to assist you? Haven't you seen it? You know you have."

"And it was because you loved me that you hid in this room to watch for me to come here tonight—after telling me that the will was here."

"I knew you would come some time. Better I to find you—"

"Did he tell you that he was my father?"

"Who?"

"Who? Who? You know! You know that this George Wessex is the Festus Hanks who left my mother and me twenty five years ago. You know that he is my father, and you know that I know it. Why else could you know that I should walk into this trap? Did he tell you? Does he know that I know it?"

"No. If he had known it, would he have allowed his daughter to bring you here?"

"I really do not know. Judging from my own character—my own inclinations—which I suppose I inherited from him—I rather think he would. There are some pleasures in tantalization. And then—that girl! She is clay. How could my father care for a daughter like that?"

"She is nothing like you!" There was a tremendous admiration in Bramford's eyes. The audacity of the woman was the quality which he himself lacked.

"Can you prove that he is your father?"

"What has that to do with it?"

"Everything, and nothing. If he dies without a will, and you can prove it, you are heiress to his fortune. If he dies with a will, he will leave everything to Madeline Wessex."

"Provided she does not marry John Selwyn." She held out the document.

"Yes."

"Suppose she marries Selwyn before he dies?"

"He will forgive her," Bramford said with conviction. "He loves her."

"Then"—she looked straight into his eyes, and spoke with slow words—"it would be better for him to die without a will."

An expression in her face took him into her confidence, into comradeship. Her arm, which had been rigid in his grasp, grew soft.

"Yes." Bramford felt his senses floating in the claret light from her eyes.

"The will is in your possession?" she almost whispered. They stood together under the one electric globe, seeing nothing save each other's faces and the thoughts behind them.

He put his other hand around and took her wrist in his, and stood for an instant.

"I love you!" he said.

"Well?"

"Will you marry me?"

"Do you want money so much?"

"Damn the money!" Bramford said furiously. "It is you I want. Will you marry me?"

"If my father dies without a will, come to me and ask anything."

## XV.

THERE is a sort of calm that comes with the Sabbath everywhere. People on ship-board say that they can feel it; that there is a hush and peace, and a lack of vibration in the atmosphere on Sunday, which come from the stopping of the world's work. In the Wessex house there was no change from the ordinary routine of the day, except that Miss Besant was not going to the theater that evening. She had gone to church in the morning with Madeline, who had been brought up in the orthodox faith. Miss Besant had sat by her new friend's side, an object of polite curiosity to the congregation.

The newspaper reporters were busy commenting upon Miss Wessex' entertainment of the actress, and one woman writer had elaborated an article to show that we were nearing the English more and more, every year, in our manners and customs. There was a rumor here and there that Miss Besant's father and George Wessex had been early friends. The story had come from Miss Wessex herself, who was very proud of her friend, and glad to establish any sort of connection with her.

The attitude taken by Madeline toward the English actress had made a new attitude toward both of them. People looked at Madeline Wessex with a new respect, as a woman who had some original opinions, and a large ability to carry them out. She ceased being the millionaire's daughter only, and established a personality of her own. The world is a toady, but it is a

toady to power alone. The rich man or woman who is ruled by others, singly or in the aggregate, is a nobody.

This afternoon Madeline sat in the long drawing room. She had inherited from her mother's people a habit of seeking a different room on Sunday. This great heiress, this girl who had been brought up in a wholly new environment, had all the ways of her Virginia ancestresses. She barely touched the piano on Sunday, and then it was to play softly sweet old hymn melodies.

Miss Besant was up stairs writing busily. She had found Blake waiting for her when she returned from church. He had the revised manuscript of the new play in his pocket.

"There," he said, throwing it down, "see what you think of that. I've given it another coat."

"Alfred," Miss Besant had answered, drawing her brows together, and her gloves from her hands, "why do you never make a play with a murder in it?"

"Am I a writer of melodramas? I have changed my style—have adapted my style to suit your conceptions of life, until I have made a row of deformities, a chamber of horrors. But up to this my devils have been of the gentlemanly order. I have not begun to draw ruffians, murderers, and such."

The tone of Blake's voice, and the set expression of his face, made Miss Besant look at him more closely. "You will not be creating anything much longer, unless you let brandy alone," she said.

"Your point of view, starting as it does upon the Liverpool docks"—but in that instant Blake caught the black eyes of Miss Besant with his wandering gaze, and taking up his hat he started to go without another word.

"Sit down a moment," she said. "Why do you not write a play with a murder in it? Make a woman do it. Make her kill a man for none of the conventional, pardonable reasons, but for one of the ignoble motives, and so surround the crime with circumstances, make the criminal so human, that an excuse for her will be found in every heart."

"Make you the criminal?"

"I will act it."

"You are essentially the most immoral human being that ever lived," Blake said with conviction.

"Not immoral—unmoral. I am an artist. Art knows no morals. You may go. Leave the play. I will go over it again, and try

and get a line or two of reality into it. You used to draw life, but nowadays you make wax dolls, with a phonograph inside for a soul. Go home."

A servant came softly into the room where Madeline sat, and held out a tray with a white slip of pasteboard islanding its surface. She took it up with some surprise. Sunday visitors were rare with her, and she rather resented them. But her face flushed, and she half arose, as she saw Selwyn's name.

It was the first time he had been in the house since that snowy afternoon, when she had come in to find him going away, hurt and angry, after her father's refusal of his suit. She had not asked him to come back. She had met him at Mrs. Hartley's, and had gone for long walks with him through the wintry park. They had strolled along that arbor-like path which leads to the Belvidere, that playground of ragged children upon summer nights, given over now to lovers who could wear sealskin.

It was the first time since they had been acknowledged lovers that they had been alone together without the whole outside world for witnesses.

Madeline went forward to meet him with almost a lump in her throat. She gave him her hand shyly. "How did you happen to come?" And then, fearing she had not been cordial, she added, "I am so glad to see you, Jack."

"Your father sent for me, asking me to come here at seven this evening. I extended the time, and came earlier, hoping to find you alone."

"I seldom have visitors on Sunday, so of course I am alone. Miss Besant is here, but she is asleep, I believe."

"Do you still find her so charming?"

"She is *lovely*."

"Has your father seen her?"

"No; but I am hoping he will today or tomorrow. He seems a great deal better. I have been battling with my conscience, Jack. Do you think father is really ill, that I ought to insist upon his going away for the rest of the winter? I meant to, but—I do not want to leave you."

Miss Besant left her writing and came down stairs. She stopped at the door of the room where Madeline and Selwyn sat, and pushed the door open. She supposed Madeline to be there alone, but it was a habit of Miss Besant's to move softly. She looked in, and turning, drew the door after her, and went away again without a sound. She stopped a passing servant and asked him to take a card in to Mr. Wessex.

In a moment the man came back and said that Mr. Wessex would be very glad to see Miss Besant, and with her head in the air, her black eyes shining, Rose Hanks went through the door into the presence of the man who had buried Festus Hanks.

She gave a start of surprise which made her step backward when she saw the figure in the great chair. She had imagined a great, commanding presence; but instead she saw a man of medium size, thin, shrunk-en, pale, with tent-like lids over keen gray eyes. He leaned back wearily upon the cushions behind him. It was late afternoon, and the light was waning. The electric globes were still dark, and the fire lighted up the room and Wessex' face. It threw a glow over Miss Besant and the white gown she wore. It gave a roseate tinge to her pale cheeks.

Wessex looked up at her with a keen scrutiny, as though he might be seeking for some trace of that old friend of his youth, who had died so long ago.

"I must ask you to pardon me if I am intruding, Mr. Wessex, but I sat in my room and thought of you down here, knowing so much of my father, until I could no longer resist the temptation to come down and ask you to tell me something of him. Mr. Bramford told me that he was an old acquaintance of yours, and that you were with him in his last hours. I came to America to find him. It has been the quest of my life; and now I find but a memory. I could not put off hearing that any longer."

"Sit down, Miss Besant," Wessex said courteously. "I shall be glad to answer any questions you may ask me. I only knew Festus Hanks slightly. We were in a mining camp together. He told me something of his early life, and he told me that he had come to the gold fields to make a fortune to take back to his wife and child, who supposed him to be drowned."

"My mother supposed my father to be drowned, but I do not think that I ever believed it. And then one day there came a sailor to the house who said that he was alive in Colorado. Ever since then, I have been ready to come in search of him. I knew that his leaving us was not wanton desertion."

"No," said Mr. Wessex.

"I knew that he only left us to earn more money for us." She hesitated a moment, and her melancholy eyes followed the sharp brass work of the fender. "It nearly broke my mother's heart. She knew nothing of business, and my grandfather was a broken down old man. The

shop went. My mother was very poor. We took in lodgers. I"—there was a smile on the red lips that was not mirthful—"went up to London to be a servant."

If she had expected to see a change of expression in the impassive face before her, she was mistaken. Not a muscle quivered; the glance of the chilly eyes never wavered.

"Is your mother still living?" he asked.

"Yes. She lives in London."

"And who was this sailor of whom you spoke? Who was he? What became of him?"

"He went away almost at once. My mother never believed the story. She believed my father buried in the harbor."

"It is better so. And you never heard of this man again?"

Mr. Wessex seemed very persistent. Rose Hanks looked calmly into his face.

"Yes, I have," she said. "He is here in New York now. He is at my hotel, where he is living at my expense. He says that Festus Hanks is still alive—in George Wessex!" And then, in a burst of tears, she threw herself at his feet, resting her head upon his thin knees. "Oh, my father!" she said in a tone which had thrilled thousands of indifferent men; "know that I am your own child, the baby which you left in my mother's arms. I have searched for you so long! I am so alone! Take me back into your heart, your love—my father!"

Wessex tried to draw away from her. "Woman, you are mad!" he said.

Rose lifted herself from the floor, not awkwardly, as most people come up from their knees, but with one fine spring which threw her dramatically to her full height.

"I am not mad. I am your own child."

"I have but one child, my daughter Madeline."

"And she is not your daughter, but her mother's. What has she of your force, your nature? Even now"—Rose threw out her hand with a fine gesture—"she is in this very house, in the arms of the lover whom you have forbidden her to see. She has no right even to the name she bears. She—"

Wessex arose to his feet. "Leave this room!" he fairly shouted.

"I will not! I am your daughter, and I can and will prove it. Deny me, and I will bring my mother here, and she shall sue you for a divorce in the American courts. How will you face the world you have hoped to conquer, as the husband of a Liverpool lodging house keeper, as a liar, a perjurer, a deserter of wife and child, a bigamist? Your daughter—your daughter whom you

love—illegitimate? Answer me that. Is it to be war between us—peace or war?"

## XVI.

"It is almost seven. I must leave you now, and go to your father."

"But you will come back?" Madeline looked into Selwyn's face with shining eyes.

"Of course I will come back. I cannot keep away. I am going to tell your father that I have seen you. I am going to tell him that I am going to continue to see you if you allow me. I cannot go on in an underhand manner, deceiving him. You ought not to do that, even would I allow it." Selwyn was already taking the upper hand which a woman like Madeline always gives the man she loves, and which she enjoys living under. "I am not going to ask you to marry me now, because your father is ill, and he needs you. I want to know, too, that I have a permanent, a solid, place in the world of business. I thought it was mine in your father's office, but I suppose this visit to him tonight is the end. We can wait."

"Yes," Madeline said. "John, father has made his will, and he has given me to understand that in case I marry you, his fortune goes somewhere else."

"Would that grieve you?"

"I do not care for money."

"I can earn my own living, and that of my wife," Selwyn said. "I do not want you to offend your father, because he is your own father, and you are all he has in the world; but money or no money, father or no father, you are mine!" He put his arms around her shoulders and held her face against his own.

"I will marry you any time, Jack," Madeline said. "Father must love and trust you when he knows you."

"He trusts me now. He knows me better than you do, my sweet. He knows me as one man knows another who has been brought up under his eye. I do not want you to marry me until I can make you comfortable, until I am settled. We will talk of it when I come back." And then he stopped and fortified himself for the long journey down the hall, and the coming interview.

As he left her Madeline sank into her chair and looked about the room. It seemed to be a new place. There was a brightness over everything. The room, the world, seemed like a realm of beauty.

Selwyn looked for the servant who was generally in the hall, to carry his name in

to Mr. Wessex, but the man was not there. The door into the millionaire's room was slightly ajar. Selwyn lifted his hand to knock, and then he was stopped by a sentence which he heard.

A little while later, the man at the entrance to the house opened the door and let in Bramford. He asked that his card might be sent to Miss Besant. As he walked down the hall to the fireplace, he saw Selwyn coming from Mr. Wessex' room door, evidently in a great state of agitation.

Selwyn walked by Bramford without seeing him, on into the room where Madeline still sat, weaving castles in the air, day dreams in the glowing coals of the fire before her.

"Madeline," he said in a voice which shook with some emotion which he was evidently trying to conceal, "I have changed my mind about asking you to marry me now. I ask you to trust me enough to go with me *now*."

"*Now?*"

"Now, this instant. I want you to go with me now, and marry me at once."

"But—Jack, it is Sunday. You are perfectly ridiculous. What did papa say?"

"I did not ask him. I did not see him. I only ask you to trust me. Put on a cloak and a hat, and come as you are."

"Indeed I will do nothing of the sort. Is it a joke? The very idea of your asking me, for a whim, to come off and marry you

like an old fashioned elopement." She was laughing with every word.

Selwyn fairly groaned. "My dear," he said, "believe that I know best. I am asking you to do the thing I believe best for us both. We can come back to your father afterward. Go and get your cloak, and come with me to Mrs. Hartley."

"Jack, I do really believe you have lost your mind. Why should I go to Mrs. Hartley?"

There was a sound of commotion, of servants' voices raised in that house where the voices of servants were velvet. Then a man's authoritative tones said, "Where is Miss Wessex?"

"That is Mr. Bramford," Madeline said wonderingly. "Why, what is the matter with you all?"

The heavy front door shut with a terrible clang, and Bramford came into the room, with Miss Besant pale and pitying behind him. She went straight to Madeline.

"My dear," she said, "there has been an accident, and your father——"

She got no further. Selwyn took Madeline from her. "I will tell Miss Wessex anything that it is necessary for her to hear," he said almost roughly.

"Then you may tell her," Rose said evenly, meeting his glance, "that some unknown person has given her father a blow, and we have sent for a physician to determine the extent of his injuries."

*(To be continued.)*



### MY FLOWER.

I'VE made a flower of words and rhyme  
For thee, my sweet, my soul—  
A flower that knows not land or clime  
From either pole to pole.

Frail was my fancy, rude my art,  
Thrice limited my power;  
But it will live if in your heart  
You wear it for an hour.

*Thomas Winthrop Hall.*

## AMERICAN WOMEN ILLUSTRATORS.

*The rapid advance of women, and especially of American women, in the artistic world—Their notable contributions to the illustrative art of the day—Mary Hallock Foote, Alice Barber Stephens, Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, and many other workers in this interesting field.*

By Harold Payne.

ART is the bloom of sympathy. Ergo, woman, being by nature sympathetic, is naturally artistic. Although it has required the sunshine and the stimulus of our higher civilization to develop her genius into definiteness and vigor, she has possessed the latent germs in all ages and all lands. Even among the aboriginal tribes, where her environment has been sordid and bestial, she has frequently manifested the penchant for art in the form of decoration. While her lord and master sought laurels in the bout or chase, or added to his trophies of valor in the shape of scalps, she whiled away the tedium of the lonely wigwam by embroidering and beading moccasins and garments for her warrior.

From the beginning of the Christian era woman has achieved little in the field of art—down to the present century, at least—owing, doubtless, to the restraints put upon her by society. Now and then an Angelica Kauffmann or a Vigée Le Brun has raised her audacious head above the waves of obscurity; but for the most part the expressions of feminine art have been confined to the pretty trifles of the boudoir.

During the latter part of the present century woman has come rapidly to the front in art, as in everything else; but it remained for the present generation, and for our own land of freedom, to develop those lofty and noble ideals which have made her the compeer of man. It has only been within the last two decades that she has made herself known and felt to any marked degree in the illus-

trative branches of art. Within that period, however, the finer, gentler, more sympathetic touch of woman has been widely felt in book and periodical illustration, adding a rosier, kindlier glow to our philosophy, and a new perfume to our sentiment.

This is particularly true as regards children's books and periodicals. In the old days these were of the crudest character, primitive in coloring as well as in expression—mere illustrated "Humpty Dumpty's" in reds and blues and yellows. Now they have come to be works of art, both in illustration and letterpress, the text real literature and the pictures symphonies of beauty.

But the modern woman has not confined herself to the daintier sorts of illustration. She has taken her place by the side of man in many of the more vigorous and practical branches. Scarcely a daily newspaper, an illustrated weekly, or a comic journal goes forth without some example of woman's work in its art department. Nearly all of the dailies intrust the illustration of their fashion departments to women, and many of the "cuts" used in advertising are designed by female artists.

Mary Hallock Foote stands, according to common avowal, at the head of American women illustrators. Some add that no limitations of sex need be considered when fixing upon her standard. And certainly the strength and completeness of her work is such that in her peculiar line she need have no fear of comparison with any artist. Mrs. Foote (or Mary Hallock, as she was known to