

THE AFFAIR AT ISLINGTON.

By Matthew White, Jr.,

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I.

IT was a rainy night, and the house was a poor one. But the members of the company extracted some little satisfaction from reminding one another that they had told manager Roberts how it would be, when he announced that Beverley would be taken in as a one night stand.

"I never saw a good show town yet," declared the first old gentleman, "that wasn't located on a navigable river."

He was talking with Marie Myrwin, the leading woman, just before the curtain went up on the second act. She scarcely heard him. She was feeling utterly miserable. The train had been late, and there was barely time for the company to swallow their dinners and get to the theater. As she did not appear in the first act, she had had it a little easier than the others; but then she had lost her trunk key, the dressing room was a vile place, and now, by the time she was ready to go on, she had a violent headache.

"I shall soon lose my good looks at this rate," she said to herself with a sigh, as, standing in front of the cracked mirror, she gave a final touch of the hare's foot to her make up. "Then half my capital will be gone."

But she had not lost them yet in any degree. Attired in the white evening dress of the ball room scene, the tiara of diamonds in her hair, she was a vision of loveliness as the curtain went up, revealing her to the few citizens of Beverley who had braved the storm to come out and see a play which—with another company—had made a record of a hundred nights in the metropolis.

At the first opportunity Marie swept her eyes disdainfully over the rows of empty seats. How humiliating it was! And what a disappointment the whole life had been to her!

It seemed as if she had never realized this as she realized it tonight; and she had

been in the profession for five years, ever since she was seventeen. The loneliness of it was its most oppressive feature. That excess of fraternal camaraderie, where everybody called everybody else by his or her first name, put out of the question, to her mind at least, any real sincerity of attachment.

She was thinking of this as she toyed with her fan and smiled during her by play with the first old gentleman, while the leading man and the soubrette were holding the center of the stage.

"Why didn't you brace up on a pony, Marie?" Harmon took the opportunity to whisper under cover of a laugh raised by Sophie Waters.

Marie gave a little shiver. Was it possible that she could allow herself to be spoken to in this way day after day and never resent it? But pshaw! How silly she was tonight. What could be the cause of it?

There was no time to speculate on this now, however. Her cue was coming in an instant. She rose and walked toward the footlights, and for a second before she turned for her scene with Harry Vane, she scanned the first two rows of orchestra stalls, curious to see what sort of people this slow little town of Beverley turned out.

"Gilbert Dean!"

She did not even form the words with her lips, but the shock of the recognition was so great that it seemed to her as if she must have shouted the name. She recognized him instantly, in spite of the mustache he had grown since she last saw him, five years before. What a silly quarrel it was that parted them! How different her life might have been were it not for that! She had loved Gilbert Dean as she had never loved any one before or since, and now, as she saw him before her in the full glory of attained manhood, she realized that she loved him still.

"I must have felt his presence in the place," she said to herself, "even though I

was not actually conscious of it. That is why the past has come up before me so forcibly tonight, why Harmon's coarse talk grated on me so. What a contrast between all those by whom I am surrounded now and *him*! It seems hard to believe I am the woman who developed out of the girl he once knew so well."

Had he recognized her? She could not tell. He had given no sign, and she dared not trust herself to look again. But even if he had known her, would he show it? It might be that he had not forgiven her, as she had forgiven him long, long ago. What could have brought him to this little Western town?

Her scene was over now, and she was back in the cramped little dressing room, where her costly robe looked sadly out of place with the rain discolored wall paper and the broken backed chairs. She sat down on one of these, and pressed her hand to her temples. How they throbbed, but it was not with the aching of her head now. Keen excitement, an infinite longing, possessed her. She must speak with him—must ask him to forget her pique on that night so long ago, must tell him how unsatisfying her present life was.

But how could she manage this? She might send the doorkeeper with a note around to one of the ushers, asking Dean if he could not come back and see her for a few moments during the next *entr'acte*. It would be perhaps a strange thing to do, and it might be that he would not come. Then she would feel more wretched than ever. On the whole she decided that she would not try the experiment.

She tried to think of other things, and took up a novel she had brought to pass away the time while she was off. But she read the words without taking in their meaning.

"Of course he didn't recognize me," she was saying to herself. "I have grown older; my make up changes me, and then there is the other name on the bill."

She dropped the book in her lap, and sat staring out through the open door, at the chaotic confusion of disused scenery stored at the back of the stage. Just then the band struck up a waltz, one of the old favorites, to which she had danced many a time with Dean in bygone days. Every strain sent a fresh recollection pulsating through her brain.

"Oh, I must make at least an effort to see him," she cried under her breath; and she thought how she would chide herself for missing this opportunity when it was past.

She hastily tore out a fly leaf of the paper covered book, and wrote with a pencil she borrowed from a stage hand as he went by:

DEAR GILBERT:

Do you not recognize me in Marie Myrwin? I would like to see you again, in memory of the old days. Can you not come around to my dressing room at the end of this act?

Yours,

ESTELLE.

Folding this into three cornered shape and pinning it together, she went out to the doorman and asked him if he would not send it to the gentleman in the aisle seat, center block, second row of orchestra stalls. Then she returned to her dressing room to wait, more nervous than before, for the answer.

But now her second call for the stage came, and as she went on she saw the usher going down the aisle with her note. During her dialogue with Harmon she managed to watch Dean as he received it. She detected the start with which he turned as he felt the usher's hand on his shoulder, but then she was obliged to cross to a cabinet on the stage and stand with her back to the audience for an instant or two. When she turned around again, Dean was whispering to the lady beside him.

She was not a particularly pretty woman, Marie noticed with some satisfaction. She wondered a little why Dean had selected her as his companion at the play. The next instant she forgot everything else, and almost her lines, in seeing Dean rise and walk out of the theater.

She hardly knew how she got through the rest of the scene. She felt that he had come at once in response to her request, was even now waiting for her in the wings. How she would thank manager Roberts for playing this despised one night stand!

At last the curtain fell. Marie hurried off. Yes, there by the door of her room stood Dean—tall, handsomer than ever.

"Gilbert!"

She just managed to breathe out the word, as she gave him her hand; then they were inside the room, his lips had touched hers, his arms were about her, and she was looking up into his face with all the restful confidence in his affection of the old, old days, that had seemed so far away an hour ago.

"Estelle," he said, holding her off an instant for admiring inspection, "how strange I did not know you till I read the note! I saw the resemblance, but never expected to find you in these surroundings. Ah, dear, how good it is to be with you again!"

"Then you are not sorry I was so bold as to send for you?" she asked, half timidly. "You—you have not forgotten how we parted?"

"That was when we were boy and girl, Estelle," he answered gravely. "It was a childish sensitiveness that separated us. But tell me about yourself. How did you come to go on the stage?"

"Papa lost his money after we went away from Lakefield. Then he died, and I must do something. I was reckless, having lost you, and craved excitement. One of my schoolmates had made a success in light comedy, so I went to a manager and asked him if he couldn't start me. And this is as far as I have got in the five years."

"Then you don't care for the life?" Dean said eagerly.

"Care for it? I hate it. You do not know, none can know but we who have lived it, the miserable substitute for satisfaction that is got out of our profession. To feel that I am the mere puppet to amuse others, that I must put my arms around the neck of men for whom I don't care a fig, must smile and jest when my heart is black with gloom; and beyond all to realize that the world, whether rightly or wrongly, holds me without the pale of respectable society, and gives me of its smiles only when the orchestra pit is between us—all this is too galling to be offset by the glitter and the glare that the audience sees. But why am I wasting the precious minutes lamenting my lot? Tell me of yourself, Gilbert. How came you to be in Beverley?"

"Simply traveling, and stopped here over night to break the journey. How fortunate that I did, now that I have met you here! I never expected to see you again, Estelle."

"I never meant that you should, Gilbert. Our paths have trended too far apart. You should not be here now, perhaps, and yet when I saw your dear face, islanded like a welcoming oasis in that desert of strangers, I could not resist sending to see if you would come. This little talk will help me much in the days that lie before me."

"But I shall see you again, Estelle, surely—tomorrow. How long do you stay here?"

"We leave the first thing in the morning, so you see I must say good by now."

She tried to speak bravely, but though there was a smile on her lips there was almost despair in her eyes. She knew now that Gilbert Dean was not going to say, as she had hoped for a moment that he would:

"Do not live this life another day. Throw up your engagement, and be that which you should have been years ago—my wife." What if he were already married? The thought now occurred to her for the first time. He had started to reply to the information she gave him, after a brief hesitation, when she exclaimed, "Gilbert, tell me something."

"Well?" he queried, smiling down at her, while she paused for an instant, gaining courage to go on. She was thinking of that plain woman who sat beside him.

At this moment there was a knock at the door.

"Miss Myrwin," called out the stage manager, "you must take your cue."

She flung herself on his breast. "Good by, Gilbert," she half sobbed; then she sped away into the wings.

II.

"You missed quite a good deal of the third act, Gilbert. What detained you so long?"

"Oh, an old acquaintance happened to spot me, and couldn't rest till he'd had me out for a chat. Funny I should run across him away out here, isn't it?"

Dean picked up the opera glasses from his wife's lap, and leveled them at Harry Vane, not because he cared particularly about seeing the leading gentleman at close range, but because he felt a flush rising to his cheeks, and wished to conceal it in so far as might be possible. He was not accustomed to lying. His nerves still tingled from his interview with the woman he had thought dead in his affections long ago. He was dazed as yet, feeling the ground of respectability slipping out from under his feet.

She was on the stage now, talking badinage with Vane, a vapid looking fellow with pale blue eyes and a weak voice. How beautiful she looked, and how unhappy she was! How unhappy Dean was himself! And yet, fifteen minutes before, he had been passively contented. Two years previous he had married a girl he did not love, to please his mother. He had thought it no particular wrong at the time. The girl was very fond of him; he loved no one else; it seemed to him that his capacity for loving had been taken away from him when Estelle Osgood went out of his life.

And yet he had not regarded this attachment as so very serious. He was only nineteen when they quarreled and parted. He simply realized that it seemed impossible

for him, as a man, to care for other girls as the boy had cared for Estelle. So he had made two people very happy by proposing to Louise Dartmouth, who brought him a wealth of affection and an opening in her father's establishment in Islington that made him looked up to as one of the wealthy men of the town.

He had been—he was—greatly respected as well. It was the consciousness of this fact that caused his brain to seethe now as he recalled what he had done. And yet, as he watched Estelle Osgood move about the stage, listened to the enchanting tones of her voice, realized that he possessed the power to draw out its tenderest chords—he felt that were he once more permitted to decide, he must do just as he had done.

And yet all the while he recognized the hideous wrong of it. He even took a morbid satisfaction in viewing the affair on all its most abhorrent sides. This for a time; then he began to justify himself. Surely, he reasoned, a man had a right to go to see an old friend, to kiss her even. He was certain he knew of many respected husbands who kissed women who were neither their wives nor their sisters. How absurd in him to try to deceive Louise about it! Why had he not frankly shown her the note and told her that this might be his only opportunity to see a friend of his youth? She might even have gone back with him; she would have been interested in penetrating that usually forbidden region.

And at this point the other reaction set in. He knew that he would not have dared ask Louise to go with him; that he did not want her to see his meeting with Estelle, because, from the first instant that he realized she was before him on the stage, he was conscious that he loved her as he never had loved, never could love, his wife.

"Why don't you applaud, Gilbert? I can make no sort of noise with these gloves on. That little soubrette is very cute, isn't she?"

"Yes, oh yes," he answered mechanically, and began to clap just as the others ceased.

He wondered why his wife did not see that he was terribly distraught. He was so unused to dissimulating. He recalled Sydney Rollins, his chum at college. What an adept he was in the art! "The Two Poles," he and Rollins had been called by their classmates, they were so opposed to each other in their tastes and habits. Dean had never been in a "scrape"; Rollins was scarcely ever out of one. What

if Syd knew of this Estelle Osgood incident in Dean's life? Dean felt that he would almost be willing to tell him for the sake of hearing the ejaculation of amazement it would elicit. Rollins was a bachelor still.

"Too many loves for me ever to settle down with a wife," he would say recklessly, and yet Dean could not imagine him doing as he himself had just done; and with this thought he began to conceive a horror of himself, to liken himself to the sleek hypocrites in long coats and white ties who bring discredit upon the church whose banner they are supposed to uphold.

"Am I like these?" he almost cried out in utter loathing; and then the curtain fell on the third act, and his wife began to ask him how he enjoyed the play.

"How do you like Marie Myrwin?" she went on, luckily not waiting for him to express an opinion. "Rather stagy, don't you think?"

As the play drew toward its close, Dean caught himself wondering if the farewell glimpse of Estelle he had as the curtain fell, would be the last time he would ever see her. At this thought every fiber in his heart rebelled. He could almost feel the impress of her lips upon his own yet. To think that he would never again know the sweet sensation was maddening. He had made no appointment with her; had never even asked to what town she was going next. His brain reeled. He was torn between the conflicting elements of love and self respect. And in the midst of the conflict the curtain fell, with her eyes fixed on his as she formed the central figure in the final tableau.

As Dean put away the opera glasses, and placed his wife's wrap about her shoulders, it seemed to him as if he were preparing to leave paradise.

"I've enjoyed it very much, Gilbert," said Louise, as they walked back to their hotel. "It was ever so good of you to bring me. I know you don't care so much for this sort of thing."

Each word was a stab for Dean, and yet before he slept that night he was hoping desperately that the "Borrowed Plumes" company would embark the next morning for Kansas City, their own destination. In fact, when he came to think the matter over, he could not see very well how they could be going anywhere else. He remembered noticing the low comedian on their train the day before, so they were not bound westward.

"I shall see her again!"

These words repeated themselves over

and over in Dean's mind. That he would be able to speak with her he had no hope. He was not sure that he wished to do so; he was not sure that he could live without doing so.

III.

THE Deans were late in reaching the station the next morning, and had barely time to step aboard the train before it started. Dean glanced hurriedly up and down the platform, but saw no sign of the players. Very likely Estelle was still in Beverley. They took chairs in the second parlor car, and Louise began to chat about some friends in Kansas City.

"Do you think we had better telegraph them we are coming," she said, "or just drop in and surprise them?"

"Oh—er—what is that, Louise?"

Dean was thinking that he was by no means certain that Estelle was not on this train. Nearly every one had been aboard by the time he reached the station. He was wondering what excuse he could make for walking through the cars.

Louise repeated her question, and still Dean was helpless. His mind was so filled with Estelle that it was impossible for him to admit any other topic at short notice.

"I don't know, my dear," he said at length. "I never was good at conundrums."

"Gilbert," exclaimed Louise, turning on him reproachfully, "what has come over you this morning?"

"Haskell, I guess," he replied, trying to laugh it off. "The fellow I was telling you of last night. I think I saw him get on one of the rear cars. I'd like him to know you. I'll go off now and hunt him up."

Dean was amazed at himself. How easily he talked of this subterfuge! He had not seen Haskell; the idea of using him as an excuse for making a tour of inspection occurred to him in a flash.

"You will be back directly, Gilbert?"

"Yes, dear," and he was gone. He seemed to be as helpless as a straw caught in the eddy of a stream that is sweeping it onward to the rapids.

"And that is where I am being swept," he muttered, as he passed through the vestibule into the car behind.

But he did not hesitate; swiftly he walked down the aisle of the common coach, eagerly scanning the faces on either side. He recognized several as belonging to the "Borrowed Plumes" company, but Estelle was not among them. Nor was she in any of the three rear cars.

"It can't be that she remained behind," he said to himself, as he went back to his own car. "It is very odd."

"Well, did you find Mr. Haskell?" asked Louise.

"No; I must have been mistaken."

He tried to think of something else to say, but the words which would come most readily to his tongue were, "What a hypocrite I am!" And yet, with the full realization of this fact, he could scarcely sit quiet, from the impatience that possessed him to ascertain if Estelle were anywhere else on the train.

He tried to think that this would satisfy him, that he could then return to his wife, and be at ease for the remainder of the journey. But he knew very well that it would not be so, knew that if he saw Estelle he could no more refrain from speaking to her than he could still the throbbing of his pulse.

For a while he tried to chat with Louise about her friends in Kansas City. He caught himself hoping that she would wish to stay there awhile. The company would play in a city of that size for probably three nights at least.

Finally, he could control his impatience no longer.

"If you don't mind, my dear," he said, taking a cigar from his pocket, "I shall go forward and smoke for a few minutes. Amuse yourself with this," and he bought a novel from the train boy, who had just made his appearance.

"Don't be long, Gilbert," and as Dean noted the glance she sent after him, and realized that as yet it was all of affection and not of suspicion, he despised himself for his weakness. Nevertheless, he kept straight on past the smoking compartment and entered the coach ahead.

IV.

HE did not see Estelle at first, for the reason that she was so close to him, just at his right in the first chair from the sofa. He sat down on this, and bending slightly forward, said softly, "Estelle!"

She was too well trained an actress to appear startled. She turned around in her chair, and replied simply:

"Why, Gilbert, you here!"

But Dean could see in her eyes the great joy his coming gave her, and from that moment he knew that he would be reckless of consequences.

"I was afraid you were not on the train," he began. "I have been looking for you."

"How comes it you are here?" she rejoined.

"It is a happy coincidence. You see we are on our way home to—"

He stopped quickly, realizing from the look in her eyes that he had betrayed himself by that little pronoun "we."

"Then you are married," she said. "I wanted to ask you last night, but there was no time. You are very happy, I suppose."

What beautiful eyes she had! And she fixed them on him now with a wistful expression that went straight to his heart, and made him long to rise up just where he was, clasp her to him, and cry out to all the world: "This woman belongs to me by all the prior rights of love. Who says that we must keep apart?" For although her words were "You are very happy," he saw that she was thinking "How happy she must be," and the thought that Estelle was hungering for the devotion he had no right to give her well nigh drove him mad. By a powerful effort he controlled himself, and answered: "I am accounted a very fortunate man in Islington, where I live."

For an instant there was silence between them. Just then the train slowed up a little, and they had quite a distinct glimpse of a tiny cottage by the track. There was an arch of honeysuckle over the porch, and framed by it now stood a young girl. A sturdy fellow in overalls, and with a tin pail in his hand, stood on the steps beneath her, and an instant before the picture was blotted from the view of those two on the express, the girl bent down and kissed him.

"Love in a cottage is sweet," Dean leaned forward to whisper. The whisper ended in a half sigh.

"My poor boy," said Estelle, "you are not happy."

"How can I be happy," he replied passionately, "when I have missed having you to make me so?"

"But, Gilbert, you have no right to say that to me."

"Yes, I have a right," he went on doggedly. "I want you to know, Estelle, that I did not marry for love, but to please my family, and—and because I thought I could never really care for any woman again after losing you."

"Please, don't, Gilbert. Don't you see—don't you realize that you are making it very hard for both of us?"

"But it seems so unjust, so cruel," he went on blindly; "and if we can obtain some little satisfaction out of talking of what might have been, may we not allow ourselves that?"

"No, dear; because you risk too much. For me it does not matter so much; I am only an actress."

"For the love of heaven, Estelle," he pleaded, "don't speak of yourself in that strain. You will make me rail more fiercely at fate than ever, to think I am not permitted always to be with you, to protect you from the affronts to which you must be exposed. Tell me, when you play in the large cities, who goes with you from the theater to the hotel?"

"Oh, sometimes one of the company, sometimes another. It depends on what other engagements they have."

"And I suppose when they all happen to have these engagements you go alone?" Dean interjected, gnawing at the ends of his mustache.

"It has happened that way sometimes," Estelle admitted.

Dean ground his heel into the carpet.

"And must I feel that it will happen again," he muttered; "realize that much as I care for you, I am powerless to give you the protection you need?"

Estelle looked into his eyes; there were tears in her own.

"I fear," she murmured, "that just now I stand more in need of protection from you than from any one else."

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly, his face white.

"If I had known you were married, Gilbert, I would not have sent for you last night. It was not right for you to come, to—to greet me as you did."

"Heaven help us, Estelle. I could not have done otherwise."

She raised her hand in protest.

"Do not make it harder for me than it is, Gilbert. Ever since I have found out that you were bound to another, oh, how earnestly I have wished I had not seen you last night!"

He bent forward eagerly, and barely restrained himself from snatching her hand.

"Don't say that, dear," he murmured beseechingly. "Full of torture as our position is, I would not have missed knowing what I know now for life itself. Think, since I have come to man's estate, I have not realized what it is to love till last night. Is that not worth all the pain of loving?"

"But you are playing with fire. Every syllable spoken thus is an insult to your wife. There is only one thing for you and me to do; we must not see each other again."

"You condemn me to unhappiness, then—you, Estelle, who have it in your power to make my life one long Elysium!"

"That is not true, Gilbert; not now, at least. Your wife stands between us. There could be no real happiness for us, however reckless we might be. You will forget me again, as you have forgotten me once, and I—I will forget you."

There was a catch in her voice as she added this last. Dean's heart ached for her. He was about to speak, when she went on again quickly, as if fearing what he might say: "Your wife is with you on this train, then?"

"Yes," Dean said. "We merely stopped in Beverley over night. She dreads the sleeping cars."

"And does she know that you are talking with me?" Estelle went on.

Dean flushed slightly.

"No," he replied; "she imagines that I am in the smoking compartment."

"And you are deceiving her on my account. That is not like the Gilbert of the old days."

"I am not that Gilbert. He was a purposeless, thoughtless boy. I am a man, dominated by a passion whose seeds were sown in those halcyon days which we never half appreciated. Am I to sit down calmly to my humdrum existence, and deny my soul a moment's true happiness?"

"But you made this life your own, did you not?"

"Yes, but then I did not know that you were so dear to me. I thought that the regard I had for you was a boyish whim, which absence had caused to wither and die. When I think——"

"No," she interposed. "You must not think on this theme. You must not be with me. It is time already that you left me and returned to your wife."

"Not yet," Dean pleaded. "I may never see you again."

"It is not 'may'; you *must* not see me again. Good by." She held out her hand, but he did not take it.

"Not now; just a little longer," he begged, adding, with a smile: "A cigar would not be half smoked yet."

The smile was not reflected in her face.

"That you resorted to such a subterfuge shows me how necessary it is that I should not allow you to see me at all. Did you tell your wife just why you left her in the theater last night—that you came to pay me a visit?"

"No."

"It will be all the harder for you, then, when she learns the truth. If any harm arises from that call of yours on me, I shall never forgive myself."

A weary look came into her eyes. She rested her head against the back of her chair.

"I can't allow you to blame yourself in this way, Estelle," Dean said. "A thousand to one I should have recognized you before the play was over, and gone back to see you of my own accord. And now I want you to promise me something."

"Yes, Gilbert. What is it?"

She wondered if she could endure the ordeal much longer. Looking down the dreary vista of her life, she was appalled. The only way was not to think of it. But with this man beside her, his very presence reminding her of what might have been, what should have been, the desolation of that which was, which would continue to be, was forced inexorably upon her.

"Promise me this, Estelle," Dean went on, "that if you are ever in any trouble, if there is anything in the wide world I can do for you—promise me, dear, you will let me know. Who has a better right to aid you than your oldest friend?"

"He would have the best right," she replied, "if—if he were not more than a friend."

"Never mind about that. Your promise!"

"Will you go, then?"

"Yes."

"Then here is my hand on it."

Dean rose. "God bless you, Estelle," he murmured under his breath; and "I promise. Good by, Gilbert," she said.

Then he hurriedly went out, and crossed back to his own car.

V.

SEATED in the smoking compartment, Dean tried to restore his nerves to their normal tension before going back to his wife. But it was a difficult task. His interview with Estelle had convinced him of the fact that she cared deeply for him, so that now to love was added compassion. Over and over in his mind he repeated her every word; every varying expression of her face was photographed there indelibly.

"How brave she is!" he told himself.

"May I have the strength to be as heroic a man as she is a woman, and do that which will raise, not lower me in her eyes!"

Even while this resolve was forming, it was all Dean could do to remain where he was, when he realized that only a few steps would take him into the next car, where Estelle was sitting—alone. Only by reminding himself that he was doing her will was

he enabled to stay and smoke his cigar out. Then, resisting an almost overpowering temptation again to enter the coach ahead, he returned to his wife.

She was eagerly awaiting him, anxious to talk over a situation in the novel he had bought for her, in which the interest centered on a *mariage de convenance*.

"It seems to me," she said, "that they should have separated as soon as they found that it was really misery for them to live together. Don't you think that would be better, Gilbert, than constant bickering?"

"But that would be hard for the one who loved," Dean rejoined, his thoughts on an instance that was not in a novel.

"It couldn't be," Louise went on, "for, don't you understand, neither loved the other. They went into the thing with their eyes open, and both soon awoke to the fact that they were equally miserable. And I dare say this fiction finds many a counterpart in fact. It has made me realize what a happy woman I am. Why, do you know, Gilbert, it has seemed to me as if our honeymoon had never waned."

"That is what all true marriages should be, my dear," Dean replied: "a perpetual wedding journey."

He despised his own hypocrisy as he spoke the words, but there was now in his mind a grim determination to be a true husband to Louise, to accept his lot as Estelle would have him do.

"Sometimes it seems to me," Louise continued, "as if I had too much happiness, more than my share. You know there are so many marriages where love, like riches, takes wings after the first few months, and flies away."

What tortures Dean was suffering! Contempt for himself, pity for Louise, anxiety and fearful foreboding for Estelle—all these emotions were commingled in his heart. He could scarcely command his voice to make reply.

The day wore on. When the dining car was attached Dean hoped he might see Estelle, even if he were not permitted to speak to her; but she did not appear. When he went to smoke his after dinner cigar, it called for the mightiest effort of his life to refrain from stepping into the forward coach to inquire how she was. She had grown very pale toward the end of their interview, he recalled. But no; he must not go.

He went back to his wife, and they chatted over plans for some alterations in their house, till dusk began to descend. Then a silence fell upon them, and each gazed out

over the dreary landscape of flat plains, with only here and there a tree, and scarcely ever a house.

"As monotonous as my life will be," Dean muttered to himself.

Would he be able to endure it? How far could he trust himself? "Till death us do part." This phrase of the marriage service came to his mind. He must expect no happiness out of life, only a passive submission to the inevitable. "May it be short, then," was the half impious wish that formed itself in his breast.

The train had been running very swiftly; darkness had just closed in about it; the lamps were lighted, making the interior bright and cheerful. Louise put out her hand to draw the shade and shut out the lonesome prairie—a jar, a crash, and instantly they were hurled from their seats. Women shrieked, men were white with fear. A wild stampede was made for the doors.

Dean seized his wife in his arms, and a moment later they were out on the ground. Shrieks of agony filled the air; a car, shattered into almost a shapeless mass, lay before them where it had plunged from the rails. Flames had already started, and it seemed as if none within would escape. And it was the first Pullman coach, the one in which Estelle rode.

Dean felt as if he were going mad. Seizing an axe he remembered seeing in their own car, he dashed almost into the very midst of the flames. In a frenzy he worked to cut away the imprisoning timbers, for now he saw her, helpless, but mercifully unconscious, close to him, and yet apparently doomed. It was a race between himself and the conflagration. The man won, by a hair's breadth, and with the only woman he had ever truly loved in his arms, he staggered out from under the breath of the flames that an instant later would have swept over them both.

His wife was watching for him, and she it was who knelt beside his unconscious burden when he had placed her on the grass.

"My brave boy," she exclaimed, "you have saved her life; but she must not stay here. Is there no place where she can be carried and made comfortable? Gilbert, look about and see if you cannot find a house."

And Dean went off, leaving those two together—his wife and the woman he loved. But he thought little of this just now. His chief concern was for Estelle's safety, for till she was herself again, till she looked at him

with eyes that recognized who was before them, he could not feel that his act of rescue was complete. He knew that behind him he left a tragedy, for he had seen more than one dead body carried out of that shattered car; but one life was all with which he was concerned, and he kept on till he found a farm house, whose inmates he startled by his announcement of the railroad accident.

Checking the torrent of questions that were showered upon him, he quickly arranged with the farmer to bring a wagon to the scene of the wreck. There was a physician among the passengers, whom Louise had found out and brought to the side of the woman she had watched over faithfully during her husband's absence.

"He says that she will be all right, but she needs care and attention, Gilbert," she told him now. "She seems to be all alone. We will go with her to the house, and see that she is made comfortable."

Dean could as yet scarcely realize that all their plans had been changed so suddenly, and by Estelle, of all people. The thought that he had been permitted to save her life thrilled him, and yet, at the same time, inspired an awful fear. He was sensible that having risked so much for her, she was now more than ever endeared to him. Fate seemed determined to throw them together, to test him to the uttermost. How should he be able to conceal his feelings from his wife?

And Estelle herself? What would she

think, she who had counseled so insistently that they two must not see each other again? Precious as this opportunity of being with her, of being permitted to care for her, would be to him, it must needs be a pleasure much fraught with pain to them both.

Louise had not yet recognized in Estelle the actress she had seen the previous evening. She was indefatigable in her attentions, her quick woman's sympathy going out unrestrainedly to this sister who had escaped so narrowly from a horrible death, whom her own husband had saved.

Estelle was unconscious still. Louise held her head against her breast during the drive up to the house, now and then gently stroking the hair back from the white temples. It seemed to Dean as if some awful catastrophe were impending. To have Estelle so close to him and in trouble, and not be able to take her in his arms and claim the right to protect her, would be torture enough; but to realize that his wife was filling these offices, all unsuspecting of the truth, sent a dagger thrust to his soul, and called out upon his brow the heavy drops of anguish.

What would Estelle say when consciousness returned? How could he steel himself to see and talk with her before Louise as he would to a perfect stranger, which his wife naturally thought her to be? The tragedy of death they had left behind them, he told himself, was as nothing to the tragedy of life which might lie before.

(To be continued.)

APOLLO AT THE PLOW.

FAITHFULEST and dearest of the friends I have,
 Forgive me for the weakness which I show,
 That while youth is, its nerve, its spur, its glow
 Are quite consumed. Forgive me that I crave
 A deep repose, aye, even in the grave.
 Forgive me that the fires of hope burn low—
 Condemned to ignominious steps and slow
 'Mong ravin wolves within a prison cave.
 If thou couldst see me now! But what I was
 Thou knowest well; and from thy memory
 Ambition's shape will rise, then quickly pass
 To me, the Sampson of these grinding days;
 Apollo plowing lorn and ruefully,
 His harp abandoned in the flowerless ways.

Edgar Lee Masters.