HARRIET and the PIPER

by Kathleen Norris

Illustrations by Irwin Myers



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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Harriet Field, twenty-eight years old and beautiful, is the social secretary of the flirtatious Mrs. Isabelle Carter, at "Crownlands," Richard Carter's home, and governess of 17-year-old Nina Carter. Ward, twenty-four years old and impressionable, fancies himself in love with his mother's attractive secretary. Mrs. Carter's latest "affair" is with young Anthony Pope, and the youth is taking it very seriously.

CHAPTER II.—Presiding over the tea-cups this summer afternoon, Harriet is profoundly disturbed by the arrival of a visitor, Royal Blondin. Next day, at a tea party in the city, Blondin makes himself agreeable to Nina, and leaves a deep impression on the unsophisticated girl.

CHAPTER III. — Harriet's agitation over the appearance of Blondin at "Crownlands" is explained by the fact that he had been a disturbing element in her life ten years before, and she fears him. The man is an avowed adventurer, living on the gullibility of the idle rich. He frankly announces to Harriet his intention of marrying Nina, who, as the daughter of the wealthy Richard Carter, is a highly desirable "catch," and urges her to aid him. She is in a sense in his power, and after pleading with him to abandon his scheme agrees to follow a policy of neutrality.

CHAPTER IV.—Harriet visits her married sister, Linda Davenport, with whom she had had her home during her unfortunate acquaintance with Blondin, and tells her of his reappearance. The two women, realizing the unscrupulous nature of the man, view the future with apprehension.

CHAPTER V.—Knowing the tender feeling she has inspired in Ward Carter, Harriet is tempted to marry him for the position and wealth he can give her, though realizing she does not love him. Blondin has ingratiated himself with Madame Carter, Richard's mother, and she is whole-heartedly in favor of his marriage with Nina. Ward urges Harriet to marry him at once. She procrastinates.

CHAPTER VI.—Angered at his wife's too open flirtation with young Anthony Pope, Richard Carter markedly shows his resentment. Isabelle, ardently returning her youthful lover's attachment, elopes with him on his yacht, and pursuit is useless. The news of the sensational affair, exaggerated, of course, by gossip, is kept as much as possible from being public property.

CHAPTER VII. — Ward Carter again urges Harriet to marry him, but she cannot bring herself to an alliance with him merely for the sake of self-advancement, and refuses. The fact of Mrs. Carter's elopement becomes public. Harriet's capable managing hand is more than ever needed at "Crownlands," and despite the complications she foresees as inevitable she decides to remain.

CHAPTER VIII.—Blondin puts pressure on Harriet to forward his marriage with Nina, but she makes up her mind to defy him. Richard Carter questions her concerning her knowledge of Blondin's intentions, and she counsels active opposition to the match. The family, with Harriet, move to a summer establishment on Long Island.

CHAPTER IX.

The move to Huntington was made quickly and quietly, and lazy weeks followed, to Harriet weeks of almost cloudless content. Ward, early in August, after a serious talk with Harriet, joined some friends for a motor run of three thousand miles, and presently was sending them post cards from Monterey and Tahoe.

They had been in the new home only a few days when Harriet had reason to stop short in a busy morning of unpacking with one hand upon her heart, and a great satisfaction in her eyes. Nina, reading from a note from Royal Blondin, announced the sensational news that he had broken his ankle. He was with friends at Newport, and must remain there now for weeks, perhaps a month. Nina was pleased to write to him, and to give his regard to Miss Field, and ask her not to forget him.

For several weeks they were safe. Nina did not know the family Royal had been visiting, there was a long interval before she could possibly see him again. He would write to the girl, of course, and Harriet knew with what absorbing emotion she would look for his letters. But Nina was young and Nina wrote wretchedly, and anything might happen, thought Harriet, consoling herself with a vague argument that was in itself youthful, too.

With September came changes. Blondin wrote that he was limping about with a stick, and wanted to limp down to them as soon as they would ask him. Ward was home again, as always irresponsible, a little older and in some vague way a little coarser, Harriet thought, but still a most enlivening element in the quiet household. Madame Carter had brought with her, for several weeks' stay, a friend of Isabelle's, a pretty, dashing little grass widow, Mrs. Tabor. The resolute brightness and sweetness with which Ida Tabor attempted to amuse Richard gave Harriet some hint of the plan which was taking shape in the back of his mother's head. But she could only make Mrs. Tabor comfortable, and fit her somehow into the youthful plans of the household.

Nina, Ward and Harriet fairly lived in the water, and Ward had unconsciously served his father's cause by bringing home with him a tongue-tied pleasant youth named Saunders Archer, whose presence in the house had helped to keep Nina pleased and amused. She had already imparted to Harriet the valuable information that Saunders had never known his mother, and had never had a sister, "and of course I have always been such an oddity in the family," said Nina, "that I got right at his confidence in that dreadful way of mine! He said he didn't know why he talked to me so frankly."

Harriet had seen to it that a variety of delightful plans awaited the young people at every turn. The retirement natural after the recent domestic catastrophe was too dangerous to risk now. And Harriet hoped, hoped, hoped, feverishly, incessantly, wearyingly, that the danger was past.

But Amy came down, mild and colorless as ever, yet still more poised, more socially adept than Nina, and with Amy innocently diverting Saunders' bashful attentions, Nina returned to thoughts of Royal. He was coming down with Madame Carter and Mrs. Tabor in her car. Richard was bringing two men down for golf this week-end, and with Saunders and Amy, Royal and Madame Carter and Mrs. Tabor, the house would be filled. She had plenty to do with the managing, the endless details that were brought her mercilessly, hour after hour, by maids and housekeeper. And yet under her quiet busyness and her happy hours with the young people there lurked incessantly a fretted sense of danger approaching.

Something of this was in her mind as she and Nina basked on the gently heaving float, in the sunshine. Nina talked incessantly of Blondin. Harriet fancied she saw an opening for a little talk she felt extremely timely.

"Mr. Blondin likes you, Nina, just because you aren't flirtatious and silly, like the other girls. But he isn't the sort of man to get very deeply interested in any woman, dear."

"No, I know he's not!" Nina said quickly, turning suddenly red, and looking attentively at the print of her wet hand on the dry, hot boards.

"And I would be sorry if he were," Harriet pursued, not too seriously, "for I want you to marry a man of your own age, when you do marry, and not a man who has had—well, other affairs, who has that confidential, flattering manner with all women! You will be rich, Nina—"

"Why don't you say that Royal is after my money!" Nina burst out, with symptoms of tears. The ready name frightened Harriet afresh; she knew that they corresponded, that grass was



"Why Don't You Say That Royal Is After My Money!"

not growing under Royal's feet. "The first man I ever really liked," Nina said, with a heaving breast, "the first man who ever understood me—!"

"Nina," Harriet said, "you don't want to have to write your husband a check on your honeymoon?"

She felt it a cruel cut; but seventeen years of flattery and smoothness had armed Nina in impregnable complacence. She gave a sneering laugh that trembled on the brink of tears, and tried to control a mouth that was shaking with anger. One look of utter scorn she did manage, then she shrugged not so much her shoulders as her whole body, and flung herself furiously into the water. Harriet called "Nina!" first impatiently, and then coaxingly. But the younger girl swam steadily to the shore, and Harriet saw her a minute later, shaking herself outside the shower, before she disappeared into the big bathhouse.

Harriet had entirely forgotten Ward, until he swam under the float, and with a characteristic yell, rose streaming like a seal under her very feet.

Genuinely startled, she gratified him with a scream, and they both laughed like children as he flung himself dripping on the hot boards, and proceeded to bake luxuriously in the sun.

"It's the most gorgeous thing I ever saw, do you know that?" he asked, with one hand touching the river of sparkling gold that blazed and tumbled on her shoulders. "Listen, Harriet, do you remember the little talk we had some weeks ago?"

"Perfectly," she said, a little unwillingly.

"Well, how about it?" the boy said, after a pause.

"It wouldn't be fair to you. Ward," the girl said, slowly, after a pause. "I love you, but I don't love you the way your wife will!"

"I want you!" he said, sullenly. "I'm crazy about you! My God—"

"Ward, please don't touch me!" she said sharply, getting to her feet with a spring, as he put his arm about her. "Don't—! I shall tell your father if you do!"

"You didn't talk that way at Crownlands last June," the man said, sulkily. "I don't see what has made such a difference now!"

"I think perhaps I'm different, Ward. The summer—" Harriet's voice died into silence. Her eyes were fixed upon the figure of a man who came down the little pier, and dove into the ing water. Two minutes late great gasp of satisfa Carter drew himself up

"Ha! That is something like! My Lord, the water is beautiful today! How about the buoy? Who swims with me to the buoy?"

"Come on, Harriet!" Ward said, poising.

Harriet rose, and bundled the glory of her hair into a blue rubber cap that made her look like a beautiful rosy French peasant. With no further speech she made a splendid dive, and the men followed her.

It was one of life's beautiful hours, she thought, as in a great splash of salt water she reached the buoy, and hung laughing and panting to its restless bulk. Ward had preceded her by a full minute, Richard was half a minute behind her. With much vainglorious boasting from the men, they all rested there before the homeward swim. Harriet hardly spoke, her cup was full to the brim with a mysterious felicity born of the summer hour, the heaving waters, and the joyous mood of father and son. When Richard praised her swimming she flushed in the severe blue cap, and the blue eyes met his with the shy pleasure of a child. It was while she was hastily dressing, in the hot bathhouse a little later, that a sudden thought came to her, and flushed the lovely face again, and brought her to a sudden pause.

A tremendous thought, that made her breast rise suddenly, and her eyes fix themselves vaguely on space for a long, long minute. Her palms were damp, and she put them over her hot cheeks. But that—she whispered in the deeps of her soul, that was nonsense!

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Blondin had been waiting for Harriet at the church door. Coming out, she had indicated without a word that he might walk beside her. The service had been ill-attended, and the few women who drifted away from it did not walk in their direction, so they found themselves alone.

Harriet opened the conversation with a frank yet reluctant confession.

"I'm so sorry, Roy! But it is only fair to you to say that I've changed. You will have to do what you think fit about it, of course. But I can't pretend that I'm—I'm playing your game any longer."

"What game?" Blondin, falling into graceful step beside her, asked pleasantly.

"I mean any possible—idea you might have of Nina!" Harriet said, bravely.

"Oh, Nina!" he shrugged his shoulders lightly. "Don't take me too seriously, Harriet," he said. "Why, whenever we are alone together, should you promptly begin to cross-question me about that little person?"

Harriet made a faint, impatient ejaculation.

"Well, anyway, you know where I stand!" she said.

"And you know where I do," he answered, after a pause. "I can see Carter has no particular enthusiasm for me—I suppose that's your work."

"You know where I stand," she could only repeat. They had reached the garden now, and were at the foot of the steps.

"I don't quite see how you can take that tone," Blondin hinted. "Do you expect to marry the boy?"

Harriet did not answer, except by a faint shrug. Her heart was sick with fright, but there was no reason why he should be informed that she had definitely broken with Ward. But he had never come so near a threat before.

"Of course I am entirely at your mercy," she said, simply. Blondin watched her for a full moment of silence before he said suddenly:

"Look here. I'll make a bargain with you. If you will consent not to make any allusion to—well, to ten years ago, I'll do the same. I'll give you my solemn promise on it. Say what you please about me now. You're under no bond to protect me. I can hold my own. But the past is dead. Neither you nor I will speak of it without agreeing to do so. How about it?"

She hesitated, the black lashes dropped, her restless hands twisting and torturing her handkerchief. It protected her, she thought, while leaving her free to oppose him.

"I'll agree," she said, finally.

"Promise?"

"Oh, I promise!" She bit her lip, and frowned, as if she would add something more. But no words came, only her troubled eyes met his fully and splendidly for a second.

Then with a brief, familiar nod she turned, and without another word went into the house.

The morning dragged. It was dry and hot, with promise of a storm later.

Madame Carter's breakfast had been sent upstairs, and Mrs. Tabor had joined her, for when the old lady sent a message to Harriet, the two women were together, in elaborate negligee, and a litter of Sunday papers was scattered about the beautiful bedroom. Upon Harriet's entrance Mrs. Tabor gracefully rose to go, but she paused for a pleasant good morning.

Alone with her determined old enemy, Harriet assumed her usual air of respectful readiness. Madame Carter had sent for her?

"Yes," said the old lady, looking aimlessly about her before gathering her garments together, and sinking into a chair. "I wanted you to know that the young people propose to drive to Easthampton, at about two o'clock—my granddaughter has been here, teasing Granny for the plan, and I have consented. They will dine there and be back at about—well, after dinner."

"But won't that tire you?" Harriet asked.

"I? Oh, I shall not go. Ward will chaperon his sister, and Nina, Amy. Mr. Blondin will see that they get home in time. It's quite all right, Miss Field; I am entirely satisfied. They—"

"But, Madame Carter!" Harriet interrupted her as she had expected to be interrupted. "Surely it would be better—"

"We won't discuss it, please, Miss Field!"

Harriet's cheeks reddened, she was silent.

"Your devotion to my son and his family is extremely praiseworthy," Madame Carter, coldly. "But, as or, who is of course a woman ld, and comes of a very fi e was a King family—as Mrs. T saying, Richard is just the sort of chivalrous, splendid man who is perfectly helpless in his own house!"

Harriet smiled, with a touch of scorn.

"When Mr. Carter is dissatisfied with me, Madame Carter, I shall of course consider myself—dismissed. But until that time I am very glad to make his own house comfortable for him."

The hard, angry color of old age had been rising in Madame Carter's face during this speech, and now she was quite obviously enraged.

"You are hardly in a position to dictate to me in this matter!" she said, shaking. Harriet watched her gravely as she rose from her chair, made a few restless turns about the room, opened and shut bureau drawers, dropped and plucked up handkerchiefs and newspapers. In a dead silence the girl asked:

"Was that all?"

A sort of sniff was the answer. Harriet sighed as she entered her own suite to find Nina and Amy complacently dressing themselves for the afternoon's run.

"We're going to Easthampton, Miss Harriet; Granny said it was all right," Nina said, in great spirits. "I know you won't feel hurt, because the car simply won't accommodate more than five, and it's too long a run to sit on laps—"

"But, dearie child," Harriet said, in her friendliest manner, "I don't believe you had better do that! You're all pretty young, in case anything occurred—"

A mutinous line marked Nina's ba-



She Would Not Yield to Any Nursery Control Before Amy!

byish mouth. She would not yield to any nursery control before Amy!

"Anyway, I'm going!" she muttered, lacing her high white buckskin shoes, with some shortening of breath. "Granny says a girl's brother—"

Harriet paid no further attention to them, and the two developed a splendid case for themselves. But she went down to find Ward, and took him partially into her confidence. Would he please be a darling, and see that there was no nonsense? She could not well cross his grandmother and Nina without his father to back her. Would he promise her that they would be home by ten o'clock, at latest.

Somewhat comforted by Ward's affectionate loyalty, Harriet went up to dress for the one o'clock luncheon, and while she was dressing a new idea came to her. For a few minutes she shook her head, stood thinking, with a face of distaste.

"I could do that!" she said aloud. And she picked up the gingham dress that she had laid on the bed.

But there was a prettier dress in Harriet's wardrobe, a gift from Isabelle, that she had never worn. It was a flowered silk of mull, of a soft deep blue that was exactly the color of Harriet's eyes, and at the throat and wrists it had frills of transparent lace. The soft ruffles that made the skirt were cunningly edged with black, and there was a great open pink rose at the belt.

Harriet put on this enchanting garment, and as she did so she felt some half-forgotten power rise strong within her. There was one trump in her hand that she had never thought to play in a game with Nina Carter, but she was glad to find it now.

At half-past two o'clock the car was at the side door, and Nina and Amy came downstairs with their wraps, and Saunders and Ward ran about laughing and confusing things. Blondin watched the performance lazily from a basket chair on the porch, but when Nina called him a half-laughing, half-daring, "We're ready, Mr. Blondin!" he sauntered down to the car with his pleasantest expression, but with the regretful statement that he was not going: a vicious headache had developed since luncheon.

Whatever the effect on Amy and the young men, to Nina this was a staggering blow. She had triumphed all through luncheon, had laughed and chattered, had made Ward telephone a dinner reservation for five, and had assumed a hundred coquettish airs. Now all this crumpled, faded away, and Harriet knew, as she stood beside the car looking down at the folded light rug on her arm, that she was ready to cry.

"No, you'll have a far nicer time without me," said Royal, throwing away his cigarette, and resting one arm on the car. "I wouldn't interfere, because I knew you'd all give it up! You just all have a perfectly wonderful time, and I'll be down next week-end and hear about it!"

Nina stood irresolute; too choked with sudden disappointment to risk her voice. It was all hateful, maddening, horrible! Those two boys and Amy—ah, there would be no "fun" now! She loathed Amy, getting in so briskly, and saying, "Come on, Nina!" She hated Ward, she wished that they were all dead, and herself, too.

The storm came at Good Ground, and they all had to scramble with curtains, "smelly" curtains, Nina called them. And the dinner was eaten in m. sticky half-darkness on a hotel porch, with horrible music making a horrible racket, according to the same authority. Saunders and Amy held hands all the way home, too, and Nina thought it was disgusting; everyone was too tired to talk, they bounced along silently and crossly.

And upon getting home, Miss Harriet came out of the shadows on the porch, looking perfectly exquisite in her new gown, sweetly interested and cheerful. She said that she was so sorry the dinner was poor, they had had such a nice dinner at home, and that she had had a talk with their father, and they were to go back to Crownlands next week. Nina did not see Blondin; for the first time in her life she cried herself to sleep.

Harriet had assuredly triumphed, but it was on terms that for more than one reason did not entirely please her. Richard, finding the pretty secretary prettier than ever in her blue gown, and warmed by a relaxed day at the club and a mood of friendliness, had specifically instructed her that she was to dine with the family on all occasions, and to dress as the others did, and to regard herself as "a member of the family." And this, Harriet was quick to realize, placed her in a peculiar position, made difficult by Richard's kindly championing no less than his mother's hostility, by the adoring sympathy of the servants, and the affectionate familiarities of the Carter children. Richard's friends took their cue from him, as was natural, and in the first early winter dinner parties at Crownlands Harriet could not but sparkle and lead; she had reached her own level at last.

A sense of well-being and happiness began to envelop Richard Carter for the first time in many years. He was conscious of a desire to express his appreciation to Miss Field. It was natural that this should take the form of money; a little present, in the form of a check. She had a sister who was not rich; she would like to go home with laden hands. But the question was, how much?

He was musing over this very point and other matters of deeper moment one morning when Harriet herself came in. She returned his smile with her usual bright nod, but he thought she looked pale and troubled.

"Mr. Carter," she said, bravely going to the point, "do you think Nina is able, with your mother's help, to manage your house?"

Richard looked at her silently for perhaps two minutes. Then he said, quietly:

"Mr. Blondin, eh?"

The girl looked bewildered.

"My mother has given me a hint, indeed I've seen, that he would want to take you away from us!" Richard said.

Harriet, without any show of emotion, looked down, and was silent in her turn. But it was not, he saw with surprise, the silence of confusion. On the contrary, she seemed simply a little thoughtful and puzzled.

"Mr. Carter," she said presently, "I have reason to believe that Mr. Blondin would be a very bad husband for Nina. I had no scruple in—in diverting his thoughts. But if he was the only man in the world"—and to his surprise, she slowly got to her feet, and spoke as if to herself, her eyes fixed far away—"I would sooner kill him than marry him!" she said.

Richard sat genuinely dumfounded. Her beauty, her assurance, and the cleverness with which she had managed that Blondin's allegiance should be temporarily shifted from his own daughter, held him mute. It was with the charm of watching perfect acting that he followed this extremely amusing and unexpected woman.

"I confess that I am glad to hear it!" he said, dryly.

"Nina is very angry at me," Harriet said. "Well, I have to stand that!"

And she gave Nina's father a whimsical and friendly look.

"But what then?" Richard asked. Harriet immediately became serious again.

"But this," she said, "you know your mother is right. You're all too kind to me; I am really a member of the family. I love it. I love to dress for dinner, and order the car, and charge things to your accounts! But—it's not possible. You see that?"

Richard was quietly looking down. Now he made several parallel lines with a pencil before he looked up.

"No. I don't see that!"

"Mary—Mrs. Putnam, for instance, who is very fond of me, and Mrs. Jay. They want to ask me to dinner—to Christmas parties—and they're not quite comfortable about it. I am not a member of your family even though you are kind enough to treat me as one. I am a paid employee, and Madame Carter naturally resents their treating me as anything else. But most of all," said Harriet, seeing that she was not making headway, "it's myself. Nina, and your mother, and Mrs. Tabor—it's just a hint here and there—nothing at all! But it undermines my position. I dress, I entertain your friends, I join you in town; it makes talk. And I can't—I can't—"

She stood up and turned her back on him proudly, and he knew that she was crying.

"Just a minute," Richard said, finding himself more shaken than he would have believed. "It is—you're sure it isn't Blondin?"

"Royal Blondin! No, it's more serious," Harriet said. "It means constant irritation for your mother. It means that she is always in a state of exasperation. I think—I don't know, but I have reason to think—that she made it a choice, for Mary Putnam, between us!"

"She has no right to do that," said Richard, soberly.

"I'm not—you know that!—criticizing," Harriet said. The man sighed, and tossed a few papers on his desk.

"Sometimes I have hoped," he began, on a fresh track, "that you and the boy might fancy each other. I'm not satisfied with Ward. He needs an anchor. That would be a solution for us all!" It was a random shot, but to his surprise she flushed brightly.

"Ward knows that there is no chance of that," she said, quickly, "dearly as I love him!"

Richard's eyes widened with whimsical amusement again.

"So you've refused Ward, have you?"

"Long ago," she answered simply.

The man laughed; but a moment later



"So You've Refused Ward, Have You?"

his face grew dark and troubled again as he said:

"I hardly know what to do! The girl is the first consideration, of course, and she needs you. I feel that she is not only safe, but happy, when you are here. I've unfortunately reached a place where I've got to feel free. You've heard us all talk of this new asbestos merger—my dear girl, that will keep me going like a slave for months, perhaps years! I won't know when I am to be home, or what I shall have to cancel. I suppose I can't convince you how badly we need you. My mother—well, she has always taken life that way; she can't change now. I shall have Ida Tabor as a fixture here, I suppose, Nina running wild, Ward never home! You—you give me exactly what I want here! Good dinners, fires, hospitality, a good report from Nina and Ward; I can bring men home, I can—" He mused, with a smile touching his fine, tired face. "In short, I wish there was some fortunate young man somewhere to make you Mrs. Smith or Jones, Miss Field, and let you come back to the Carters immediately again!"

Harriet laughed, sighed sharply immediately upon the laugh.

"Unfortunately, there isn't such a man," she said. And she added, "Even a widow, sometimes, is vulnerable."

Richard smiled, but some sudden thought made the smile but an absent one, and he sat quite obviously plunged in meditation for a long minute. "Here's another suggestion, Miss Field," he said suddenly, looking up. "I don't know how this will strike you; it has occurred to me before. Gardiner hinted it—or I thought he did, and the more I think of it the more possible it seems. You are a business woman and I am a business man. You know exactly what I am, exactly what occurred in my married life, after twenty-two years. That—that sort of thing is over, of course. But there is that way of settling it, if you care to consider it—"

He paused, with a questioning look of encouragement, embarrassment and affectionate interest. Harriet had grown pale and had fixed her eyes upon his as if under a spell.

"You mean—" Her voice failed her.

"I mean marriage. I mean that you and I shall quietly get married in a few weeks, when I am free," he answered. "I have just indicated to you what it would mean to me. I hope," he added, watching her closely, as she sat stunned and silent, "I hope that it would also have its advantages to you. Your position then would be unquestionable, my mother—Nina—the world, would have nothing to say. Your influence on Ward is the one thing that may save the boy. Of Nina we've already spoken. My mother—I know her!—would immediately become the champion of her son's wife. There would be a three days' buzzing—that would end it!"

The swift uprushing of joy in Harriet's heart was accompanied with the first agonies of renunciation, was perhaps all the more poignantly sweet because of them. She had not come to this hour without knowing what he meant to her, this quiet man with the splendid mouth and the keen gray eyes, and she trembled now with an exquisite emotion that seemed to drown out all the past and all the future—everything except that she loved him and he needed her! But when she spoke it was as coolly as he:

"Mr. Carter—what of your wife?"

His eyes met hers wearily.

"Divorce proceedings were instituted immediately it was definitely established she had gone with young Pope. The decree will be absolute."

"But that will not—cannot alter the situation—" Harriet faltered.

"You mean—" the man hesitated, "you mean you—that you regard me as married still?"

Harriet, mute with emotions absolutely overpowering, nodded without speaking.

"Will you—will you let me think about it?" she faltered. A sudden brightness came into his face. "You know how I was brought up to think of divorce," she went on pleadingly. "I've made plenty of mistakes in my life, but I've never deliberately done what I felt was wrong."

"And this would be?" Richard asked slowly.

"Well—I haven't thought about it!" she answered slowly. "My people—my sister and her husband—would say so! I—I would have said so of some other woman!"

"This would not be an ordinary marriage; you would be entirely your own mistress," Richard said, with quiet significance. "It would be a marriage only in the eyes of the world."

"I see," she said. "I—I must have time to think about it!"

"As long as you like!" She had risen, and now he rose, too, and went with her to the library door and opened it for her. "When you decide come and tell me," he said, bowing.

She turned to give him a parting smile, with a desperate wish to tell him half the honor and joy she would feel in taking his name, in sharing his responsibilities, but the pleasantly impersonal nod he gave her chilled the words unspoken. Harriet fled to her room.

"My chance," she whispered, pressing her cold finger tips to her hot cheeks, "my chance at last—and I can't take it! No, I can't take it—I don't care what his world does or thinks—my world doesn't permit it! No—I can't. Not a divorced man, not a man with a living wife! I've been a fool—I've been wrong, plenty of times, but I've never committed myself to folly and wrong!"

She stared blindly ahead of her. After a while she spoke again, half-aloud:

"Oh, but why does it have to be this way! If I could go to him, tell him what he means to me, if we were poor—if we could take a little place next to Linda—never to see Nina or his mother or Ward or Roy again—Oh, what heaven! How I should love it, planning for things together, as Linda and Fred did, having him come home to me every night!

"But it isn't that way," Harriet suddenly recalled herself sensibly, "and it is folly even to think about it! He is a rich man, and a married man, and that ends it. That ends it."

A great desolation swept her spirit. She fell from bitter musing to weakening. The law permitted it, after all. Plenty of good women had shown her the way. The family needed her; she might do good here. And above all, she loved him.

She heard a stirring in the bedroom.

"What time is it, Rosa?" she called, suddenly aware of weakness and fatigue.

"My goodness, how you frightened me, Miss Field! It's just noon."

"Do you happen to know if Mr. Carter is still downstairs?"

"Yes'm, he is; he's expecting Mr. Fox to come."

Harriet smoothed her tumbled hair and went slowly downstairs.

"But I love him!" she said, suddenly standing still on the landing,



"I Love Him With All My Soul!"

to look out at the softly falling snow with brimming eyes. "I love him with all my soul!"

A moment later she knocked at the library door, opened it in answer to his call and went in, closing it behind her.

(To be continued.)

SOUR STOMACH INDIGESTION

Thedford's Black-Draught Highly Recommended by a Tennessee Grocer for Troubles Resulting from Torpid Liver.

East Nashville, Tenn.— The efficiency of Thedford's Black-Draught, the genuine, herb, liver medicine, is vouched for by Mr. W. N. Parsons, a grocer of this city. "It is without doubt the best liver medicine, and I don't believe I could get along without it. I take it for sour stomach, headache, bad liver, indigestion, and all other troubles that are the result of a torpid liver.

"I have known and used it for years, and can and do highly recommend it to every one. I won't go to bed without it in the house. It will do all it claims to do. I can't say enough for it."

Many other men and women throughout the country have found Black-Draught just as Mr Parsons describes—valuable in regulating the liver to its normal functions, and in cleansing the bowels of impurities.

Thedford's Black-Draught liver medicine is the original and only genuine. Accept no imitation or substitutes. Always ask for Thedford's. E 68

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—READ THE TRANSCRIPT, $1.50 PER YEAR.

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