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A TRUE STORY.

THE MAN WHO CAME
BACK.

Arnold Galloway was soon forgotten by the world. A great deal of interest had been taken in him when he had stood his trial on a charge of forgery. Galloway was a member of fashionable society with a distinguished diplomatic career to his credit.

Those who had known him did not believe it possible for a man of his proud position to be guilty of the despicable crime of forgery, but their trust had received a rude shock when he had entered the dock and pleaded guilty to the charge.

After he had received his sentence of five years' penal servitude he had marched from the dock without a tremor, and when he had vanished down the stairway to the cells below he disappeared from the memory of all who had been pleased to call him friend—all save one!

That single exception was a woman, and from her memory he never vanished, for she could not forget that one sweet night when he had taken her into his strong arms and her heart had beat against his breast as he told her how much he loved her.

Even in face of his confession it was hard for her to believe that a man like Arnold Galloway could be guilty of a mean fraud. Yet his open acknowledgement of guilt should have shattered her faith in him, despite the dictates of her heart.

From the first he announced his readiness to take his punishment, and so, after the briefest of trials, Galloway went to prison to pay the penalty of a paltry crime.

Nearly five years had passed since then, and it was now a night of celebration at Parkmead House. The occasion was the twenty-fourth anniversary of the birthday of Hazel Loraine, the girl who had wept for the man in his lonely prison, and whose heart was still heavy with sorrow.

The ball was at its height as a figure strangely out of keeping with the gorgeous spectacle within the great house crept across the grounds in the rear of the brilliantly lighted building.

The figure was clad in the ragged remnants of a suit that hung loosely upon his spare form. The light from one of the windows fell upon his face as he moved stealthily and silently towards the palm conservatory.

The face was pale and drawn, and, even had it been seen by any of the gay throng within the house, few would have guessed the identity of its owner. For this thin broken wreck of humanity was in strong contrast to the Arnold Galloway who had gone out of the world's ken five years before.

He had come back a gaunt and pitiable shadow of his former self.

He moved stealthily as he gripped in his hand something that was in strange contrast to the rest of him. It was a bouquet of roses, and he held it as though it was to him the most precious thing on earth.

The bouquet had cost him eight shillings of the last half-sovereign of the money which had been given to him on his discharge from prison. But he had spent the money cheerfully enough, for this was to be the last birthday offering he would make to Hazel Loraine.

He had remembered that it was her birthday, and he had bought her the flowers which he knew she loved best.

He meant to make his gift secretly and steal away unseen. He was going to creep into the conservatory when the way was clear and place the flowers where he knew she would find them. A short note was attached to the bouquet:

"My last prayer will be for your happiness."

That was all, and the message was unsigned.

Reaching the conservatory, he peered cautiously in. There was nobody inside, and the door was slightly ajar. He pushed it open and stepped inside, crossed the tiled flooring to the palm bower.

It was Hazel's favourite seat, the seat in which she had been sitting on that never-to-be-forgotten night when she had whispered back the soft words which had told him that her heart was his.

As he reached the bower the sound of approaching voices came to him, and his jaw tightened grimly. Somebody was com-

ing to the conservatory, and escape by the way he had come was cut off. To reach the door he would have to pass in front of that through which the newcomers were entering the conservatory, thus revealing himself in all his raggedness and shame.

There was only one thing to be done. He must hide until the coast was clear again, and, knowing the place well, he darted across to a thick cluster of palms which he knew would afford him shelter.

He had no sooner screened himself from view than two people entered, a girl and a man.

The one was Hazel Loraine, and the other Raymond Thorne, a man whom Galloway had known well before he had lost his place amongst men. The pair sat down, and a hungry, yearning look came into the cold grey eyes of Arnold Galloway as he gazed upon the face which had been before him constantly in his dreams during the past hopeless years.

Raymond Thorne leaned forward on his seat and looked into the sad face of the girl by his side.

"You know what I am going to say, Hazel," began the man, "for I have said it to you so many times. You know, dear it was your father's wish and my fondest hope that you would become my wife. Can't you care for me just a little, Hazel?"

The girl sighed hopelessly. "I shall never love any man again," she answered, "for I gave my heart years ago to a man whom I believed to be the best and noblest man in all the world."

"And he proved himself worthless!" exclaimed Thorne. "You cannot even think of him now without shame. Besides, he has gone out of your life, and even if he came back you could never forget what he is."

"I think of him only as he was," replied the girl with a flush. "He was both true and honest once."

"But, Hazel, you cannot go on like this, wasting your young life upon a memory. Besides, dear, there is your father to consider; he wants you to take your proper place in the world to which you belong."

Hazel Loraine spoke again, and her voice was tired and weary in its tone.

"I know that it is my father's wish that I should marry you, Raymond, and I am anxious to do all I can to carry out his wishes. I will become your wife, but I will tell you now, as I have told you before, that I shall never be able to blot out from my heart the memory of the love which I once knew."

The man took her hand greedily and drew her towards him. At the same moment the man watching from behind the palms, weak from lack of food and a fruitless search for work, was almost overcome by the emotions which raged within him. He swayed slightly, and, in endeavouring to recover himself, stumbled.

Thorne and the girl turned sharply at the sound, and, realising that discovery was now inevitable, Arnold Galloway stepped out from his hiding-place and stood revealed, his drawn face twitching convulsively. His grasp upon the bouquet relaxed, and the roses fell to the floor at his feet.

Hazel Loraine cried out at the sight of him.

"Arnold!" she cried hoarsely, and she moved impulsively towards him.

Raymond Thorne's eyes flashed dangerously and he bit his lip. Then he, too, advanced until he stood between the girl and the man from prison.

"Are you lost to all shame, Galloway?" he demanded hotly. "Have you not brought enough sorrow and disgrace upon this house without returning to awaken the memory of your perfidy?"

Something of his old spirit flashed in the eyes of the outcast, but he checked himself and his head drooped forward.

"I did not intend to be seen," he answered brokenly. "I came because I could not help it—because I could not help remembering the date."

"Arnold!" Again the girl breathed his name.

The ex-convict, motionless as a statue, stood regarding her with an expression of hopeless yearning in his eyes.

Then with an effort he turned away, and

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moved towards the glass door leading to the garden.

"You are right, Thorne," he said quietly. "I should not have come back. I am an outcast amongst men, a branded criminal, not fit to mix with decent people. I make no excuse for what has passed but I am sorry that I was weak enough to come into her life again. But it shall not be repeated, for to-night the world shall know of me for the last time."

Hazel Loraine looked up instantly, and there was an expression of horror and apprehension in her beautiful face.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Where are you going?"

Arnold Galloway shrugged his spare shoulders.

"Back to my place on the Embankment," he answered bitterly. "Night after night I have sat there, trying to pluck up courage. To-night I do not think I shall find it so difficult."

The girl cried out again and rushed towards him, but Thorne held her back. The next moment Galloway was gone.

II.

Stunned by the happenings of the last few minutes, Hazel Loraine was incapable of making the effort which was required in order to free herself from Thorne's hold. Indeed, her senses were reeling, and she seemed on the point of swooning, until the cool draught coming in through the still open door revived her.

She pressed Raymond Thorne away from her, and stood for a moment motionless, tortured by her thoughts. And then her eyes fell upon the bouquet of roses lying upon the ground a few feet away.

A little cry broke from her throat as she moved suddenly towards the flowers.

But Thorne was too quick for her, and, anticipating her intentions, he snatched them up, before she could reach them.

"It is not fit that you should soil your hands by touching the offering of a creature so debased," he said; and twisting the flowers in his two hands, he flung the broken petals to the ground.

The slim figure of Hazel Loraine straightened to the full extent of its height, and her eyes flashed withering scorn.

"How dare you!" she cried, in a tense voice.

The man fell back before the bitter contempt in her tone.

Hazel bent down, and picking up one of the crushed blooms pressed it to her breast. The man did not trust himself to speak.

The oppressive silence which followed was broken by the girl.

"I wish you to forget the promise which I made to you a short time ago, Mr Thorne," she said, speaking slowly. "I told you then that I could never love you. I know now that I could not even tolerate you. Your presence is loathsome to me, and I hope you will spare me the pain of seeing you again."

Without another word she turned and left him.

She made her way back towards the hall-room, but reaching the great hall leading up to it, she came upon one of the servants hurrying in her direction.

"There is a policeman waiting in the library, and he wishes to speak to you at once, miss," the manservant told her. "The master was called to Downing street a quarter of an hour ago, or I should have gone to him."

"Thank you, Evans," was all the girl said; and passing down the hall she

turned into the library.

The police inspector, who was waiting in the room impatiently, stopped as she entered.

"You are Miss Loraine?" he asked.

The girl nodded.

"I have come from the Metropolitan Hospital, where I have left your brother Keith Loraine," went on the man, "has had an accident, and his condition is very serious."

The girl drew a deep breath.

"Why—what—what has happened?" she stammered, for she knew something of her brother's wild ways, and she was half afraid to hear the truth.

"It happened an hour ago," the inspector informed her. "A wounded soldier walking on crutches, slipped and fell from a cab in Piccadilly Circus. Your brother saved his life, but I fear that will pay a big price for his noble deed. The doctor does not think he will live another hour, and the youngster is desperately anxious to see you."

Only Hazel knew the effect of this upon her already bruised heart. But she was a woman, and the sorrow which she felt at her brother's possible end tempered by the pride which thrilled her at the reason for it. "I will come with you immediately," she said.

III.

The Thames Embankment presents a dismal spectacle at night. Upon the sweeping stretch built by the river side, a stream of homeless creatures shamble along, looking for some kindly corner in which to rest for the night, out of sight of the police. Some, in passing glance down hopelessly at the dark water below, and a few among them seek the rest which they cannot find on earth. This dismal promenade has been named "Misery March."

Arnold Galloway was among the less ones that night, and he was one of the few who thought to find peace and forgetfulness in the bosom of the river.

A few yards east of Waterloo Bridge he came upon a creature even more pitiable than he felt. It was a woman, and she was leaning upon the parapet, gazing down upon the river as if she were sullenly against the Embankment wall.

Galloway knew the sign; he knew that despair had beaten her and that at any moment she would fling herself over the rising tide. He walked up to her and as she turned towards him, the light of the street lamp fell upon her pale, still pretty face. "What's the matter, die?" he asked her gently, for she only a youngster, and her expression pitiful in its misery.

She looked up at him, and he moved, but she did not speak. "The world has been hard with you," he said kindly. "It is so with many of you are young, and life must hold hope for you, however black the future may seem."

His hand went to his pocket, and took from it a two-shilling piece, all he had left in the world after his fall upon his last offering to the girl he loved.

"Will you take this?" he asked, "spare it, and it may help to tide you over the dark hours. When you have had food which you so clearly need, you will find the outlook brighter."

The girl looked at him and then at the money, and a sob broke in her throat. "You need it yourself," she said.

(Continued on page 4)