

THE LORDS OF HIGH DECISION.

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Wayne Visits His Father's House.

Most of the houses in the neighborhood were deserted, but lights shone from the Craighill library as Wayne entered the grounds. He had his latch-key but he was not sure that he had still the right to use it.

"Your father's not himself at all. How could he be after that?" "Let us not talk of it. I didn't come for that."

"Your father's business affairs have troubled him. He never talks to me of them, but I know he worries. Mr. Walsh has been helping him, and he has been very kind to me, too."

"The did old be?" and Wayne asked, "I've been at work, Addie, but I've been thinking up there in the back yard, trying to get some kind of sense out of my system. I haven't tossed a drop of anything for so long that I've forgotten the names of the drinks I used to sip at a time."

"Have you seen Jean Morley?" she asked. "This is Cyrus O. Bates, the man who advertises Mother's Joy and Goose Grease. I'm sure two of the greatest things known to humanity."



asked after a silence. He did not know that this question had been on her lips from the moment he appeared.

"Yes, once; to talk to her." "Fanny's asked her to York; she's going there for September."

"I'm not going to York Harbour now or in September," he answered shortly. "But don't you suppose Fanny expects you to come while Jean is there? Fanny has been crazy to go to Denmark to see you. You know how perfectly devoted she is to you."

"Yes; dear old Fanny; it's a good thing she didn't see me up there. It would have given her a stroke."

"Fanny is fond of Jean—and proud of her," Mrs. Craighill persisted, and her note was plaintive. Her presence in the ten house as that hour expressed her isolation. The tone in which she said the words of Jean and his father and it did not escape him.

"I'm going in to speak to father. You needn't be afraid of what I shall say to him. There must be peace between us all."

"She was near to tears, and she was loath to have him go. These were dreary days for Adelaide Craighill; but Wayne had eaten of the fruit of the tree of wisdom and knew the danger that lies in woman's tears. Their hands touched, and he left her."

"Good evening, father, I'm sorry I startled you; please sit down again. I can stay only a few minutes."

"The Hercules National people have pursued me unmercifully," continued Col. Craighill, his voice wavering as he uttered the words. "The others have taken their cue from them. Walsh has done all he could, but they've a lot of iniquities—when I have enjoyed all my life for the honor and dignity of the city."

"Yes; they have put the pressure on at a time when it seems unnecessary, but they are all disposed to be overcautious now, I suppose."

"It is all arranged," said Wayne quietly. "I have taken them up myself and given my own in place of them. You may be at ease about them. I will carry them as long as you want me to. Here are the old notes. They are cancelled, you see."

showed it had been diseased for years. I insisted on the most careful examination!" "I dare say. I didn't come to discuss that. That is your affair. What I have to say concerns me alone. When I offered that night to take whatever blame might follow his death here, it was from no good feelings toward you, but in a spirit of evil. I wanted to place you under a crushing weight of shameful obligation to me—that was it. And I've come back to say that I'm sorry. I'm sorry for every hour of anxiety and shame I ever gave you. Come, father, let us be friends!"

Roger Craighill was slow to comprehend what had happened. He tried to get upon his feet, and Wayne caught him and lifted him up, his arm round his father's shoulders, and it was he who gave the hand-clasp, vigorous and strong with the strength of his redeemed manhood. He had gone low, but he had risen high. He who had been of the companionship of dragons had come into possession of his own soul. He had still his weaknesses, and he might yet stumble and fall; but for an instant he stood above the clouds, master of himself and drinking deep of clean airs of hope and aspiration.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"They're Callin' Strikes on Me." Joe avoided Jean. His days were spent underground, and in the summer evenings when he might have seen her with little trouble, he shunned walks that had known of old together. He heard that she had sold the little cottage that had been her only inheritance from her grandfather, and he knew that this meant the severing of her last tie with the town. The community, rejoicing in her success, whispered the fabulous terms of her professional engagements.

Jean, with her trunk packed, had yet to see him before leaving the valley, and he appeared at the cottage by a characteristic inadvertence, leaning upon the gate as she closed the door for the last time.

"Everybody's sorry you're goin', Jean; but I guess you got to pull out. You're outgrown the town and it's you for the large cities now. I'm going to go where my work is. I'm going to share another woman's studio in New York this fall. I'm goin'! Sure! York's the place. The Bluffs! Sure! York's the place. The Bluffs always go there." Joe replied, proud of his inner knowledge of the Craighills and their ways. "Walsh and Whiskers blew in yesterday and took my loss to Pittsburgh. He said he'd be back in a day or two. He's the busy little worker when he gets started."

"They stood with a new restraint upon them at the gate that had known their childhood and youth. Joe saw that his reference to Wayne had not been fortunate, and he twisted his cap nervously.

"He's come round all right, Jean. He's pretty safe from the drink now. He's worked it off."

"He can do anything he tries. And you've done a real deal to help him. You wouldn't have come back to the mines if you hadn't thought he needed you."

"Oh,shaw! Jean. But I guess I was stuck on him, all right, or I have come back. I guess you know why he came here—it was for you. And the going to work—I guessed you did that, too. It listens like you Jean. And now he's made over—and you made him. I want you to be good to him."

"He's my friend and yours—that's all, Joe," she said finally. "I may not be in Denmark for a good while but I want to tell you before I go that I'm still ready to come back to you. If you'll give me another chance I'll do my best. I mean it, Joe, with all my heart."

"I wish you'd stop thinking about that business. It ain't no use, Jean. And now you got a big chance and I'd only be in the way. You don't want to come back—no, honest in your heart you don't. You just think it's right; and Father Jim told you you oughtn't to have left me—that the divorce was a sin. But you're free—and I'm not holding you."

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