

New Serial Story IN THE SHADOW OF SHAME

By Fitzgerald Molloy

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CHAPTER I. Valerius Galbraith stood by one of the open windows in the drawing room of an old-fashioned brick house in Hexton road, St. John's Wood, surrounded by its own grounds and screened from the thoroughfare by a high, bulging, ivy-topped wall.

Rather above the middle size and slight in figure, well made and graceful in his movements, he was a man whose presence gave the impression of elegance and distinction. His fair and rather florid complexion, wavy auburn hair, broad forehead, prominent blue eyes, his chin, and long, light mustache gave him claims to be considered decidedly handsome. Though close upon forty years he scarcely looked thirty, so free was his face from lines or wrinkles, so perceptible the desire for pleasure his face betrayed, so bright his outlook upon life.

The graver cares and deeper sorrows of existence, if ever known to him, had left no trace behind. His freshness of spirit and mental youthfulness were contagious.

Independent if not wealthy, lord of himself, without ties or responsibilities, he had traveled through every country of Europe, obtaining the experiences, realizing the pleasures which foreign scenes afforded.

And now on the eve of a journey to the East—the land of color, luxury and romance, which had ever possessed a fascination for his ever restless temperament—he had come to say farewell to the friend and companion of his boyhood, to her whom he had loved, whom now he loved, who with her daughter were his sole relatives.

As he gazed absently across the garden with its great plots and its flower beds crowded with early chrysanthemums, he thought of his past—that idle, profitless, pleasant past, which might yet

The dining-room was lighted by clusters of candles in sconces of silver, and by a single central lamp whose vermilion shade flung a rosy radiance on the table.

"And when will your novel be published?" asked Galbraith as the soup was removed.

"Next month; autumn is the best time for publication."

"The same publisher?"

"Yes; George Bostock."

"You trust him?"

"Implicitly. Why do you ask?" she queried wonderingly.

"I can scarcely say. One hears so much about publishers nowadays. Is there not a society especially organized for keeping them in order? Of course, there are publishers and publishers, as you have found out. Now, I don't know George Bostock—"

"But I do," she replied warmly. "He is a gentleman, a man of honor, and—"

"I am very glad," Galbraith replied, fearful that he had displeased her. "I merely thought of him in connection with your interests, you know."

"They are quite safe in his hands."

"That's satisfactory. You have made a big hit from the first. For my part, I don't know which I like best—your short stories or your long novels—but, at all events, I feel quite proud of my distinguished cousin."

"When I see mother's photographs in the shop windows, and her books on the railway stalls, I feel that all the world must know us," remarked Veronica, with an air of satisfaction.

"And yet I probably never should have written, if necessity had not compelled me," the authoress said, gravely.

"What a lucky necessity!" Galbraith answered.

A sudden silence fell upon the table. Mrs. Dumbarton bowed her head. Valerius, conscious that he had made an



"Send but a word and I will come to you, wherever I may be."

be changed, if but the light and guidance of the woman he loved were his. But that he dared not hope, would ever be, no matter how he longed.

And suddenly through his day dream came the sound of the soft rustle of a dress, and he turned quickly to meet his hostess as she entered with a smiling face and outstretched hands.

"Will you forgive me?" she said, and her gentle voice seemed to soothe the troubled current of his mind.

"Certainly; I know I am unfashionably punctual," he replied.

"I hope you don't say that in reproach," remarked Olive Dumbarton archly. "One doesn't stand on ceremony with relatives. The fact is, I have been so busy correcting proofsheets that I had no idea it was so late until Veronica came to call me."

"Proofs of your new novel, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes. I have almost finished them."

"Ah, if you only knew how tiresome and stupid the book seems! I tremble when I think what the critics will say."

"You have no cause to fear. But you are overwrought, for, as usual, I dare say you have been working too hard."

"That's what Dr. Quave, my friend and neighbor, says, but then my work is the one thing in the world which gives me pleasure, and," she added sadly, "with the exception of Veronica, the only object for which I live."

Her daughter, a girl of seventeen, entered the room.

"You grow bigger every time I see you," said Valerius, when by an effort he had recovered himself and had shaken hands with the girl.

"And more like mother?" she queried.

"Yes," he answered, rather from a desire to please her than from a sense of conviction. "The fact is, Olive," he added, "you will have to present her as your sister, for no one will believe she is your daughter."

"I prefer being her daughter," remarked Veronica, laughing.

Then, a servant appearing at the door, Mrs. Dumbarton said:

inappropriate remark, became confused, while Veronica looked from one to the other inquiringly.

"My sole reason for referring to the necessity for work," the authoress remarked, "was to point a moral, which is, 'We never know what we can do until we try.' Now, apply that moral to yourself, Valerius."

"It's too late."

"How do you know?" Olive Dumbarton persisted, her low, gentle voice full of earnestness. "You have talent, though in what direction it lies I can't say. You have seen the world. You have rich stores of experience. There are your materials—begin to use them; make a career for yourself."

"At my age?"

"Now is the time when your gifts are ripe. Do something which will advance yourself; or, better still, which will help your fellowmen. That way lies happiness."

"I was born lazy."

"No; but you were spoiled by having from the first more money than you needed."

"You are wrong. It was not that which spoiled me," he answered, a meaning which she could not mistake underlying his words.

And once more a silence fell upon the table, while Galbraith emptied his glass, and a faint color crept into Olive Dumbarton's face.

Presently she arose, saying:

"Would you not rather smoke your cigarette with us in the drawing-room than sit here alone?"

"Very much," he responded quietly, and he arose likewise.

There was something of regret and self-reproach in his voice which she understood and appreciated. The low-roofed, yellow-walled drawing room was half in shadow as they entered, and both felt glad of the repose it lent. A glow of firelight flickered on the painted tiles of the hearth beside which they seated themselves, Mrs. Dumbarton with an air of languor.

Her figure was rather tall and somewhat thin, but without angularity, and with a grace of movement that was a charm in itself. Her face, more long than oval, was lighted by large, gray-

blue eyes, thoughtful almost to gravity, intelligent, inquiring, trustful, and so clear that one seemed to look through them into a soul troubled by many doubts and stirred by many longings—truthful, aspiring, honest and pure, dreading no scrutiny, harboring no evil, desiring but good. The thick masses of hair brushed from her wide forehead were lightly streaked with gray above the temples.

Mrs. Dumbarton declined the coffee when served.

"I dare not drink it after four o'clock or I should be stretched upon a rack," she explained.

"Oughtn't he," he suggested, raising his eyes to hers.

"Yes, I sleep badly."

"I felt sure you were unwell. You have worked too hard."

"I am always like this when I have come to the end of a book; writing is such a strain upon the nerves."

"I have seldom seen you look so ill," he remarked gravely.

"For the past week I have been terribly depressed without apparent cause. The very silence of the house weighed upon me. The atmosphere loomed full of tragedies; it seemed as if something dreadful might happen at any moment or every hour."

"Overwrought nerves. I wish you were coming with me to Egypt. Think of it. I'll put off my journey to suit your convenience; it will do you all the good in the world. Come."

"Impossible. Next month Veronica and I may run over to Paris, of which I am so fond."

"The present is the time you most need change," he urged earnestly.

"How delightful. We should see the pyramids and camels and the desert," said Veronica, her face brightening.

"There are many reasons why I cannot leave home at present," replied the authoress. "Perhaps next year—"

"Better come now," interrupted Valerius. "Who knows what may happen between this and next year?"

"Do come," she repeated, absently.

"I cannot. And now, Veronica, your hour has struck," said Mrs. Dumbarton, looking at the clock.

"The girl rose without a murmur.

"Good-night, mother, dear," she said.

"Good-night, my darling, and may God bless you."

"It will be good-night and good-by to me," said Galbraith, as, bending down, he kissed the girl's forehead.

"To think," said Mrs. Dumbarton, as the door closed upon her daughter, "that she is just seventeen, the age at which I was married. It was wrong to sanction such a marriage; what was I but a child who did not know my own mind?"

"But nothing would dissuade you from marrying him. Surely you cannot forget how I tried—how your mother—"

"Yes, I know," she replied, with a movement of impatience, "and how I have suffered for my obstinacy. The punishment seems out of proportion to the fault. At times I grow rebellious at my fate."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know," exclaimed Valerius, starting. "He did six months ago, but he has returned."

"Begging?"

"Demanding."

"And you?" Valerius said, anxiously.

"I made no reply."

"Olive," said Galbraith, in a low, earnest voice, "it is not yet too late. Take the advice of your friend, of your only relative. Divorce this scoundrel who has ruined your life."

A half-stifled sob, more piteous than a cry, was her only response.

"He has squandered your fortune in vice," continued Valerius, excitedly. "He has well-nigh starved you and your child; he has heaped insult and injury upon you, and then deserted you—divorce him!"

"No," she answered, in a voice strained from her struggle with emotion. "You know my ideas on the subject are old-fashioned. He is the father of my child, and if only for her sake I could not make his infamy public. I dare not state what I have suffered. I shrink from holding up my wrongs to the view of a curious, morbid and mocking public."

"The matter would be forgotten in a month."

"I, whom it most concerned, could never forget. Besides, I see no advantage to be gained. I have bought his consent to a legal separation, so that he cannot harm me any more."

"Is there no other reason for you to desire a divorce?" Galbraith asked in a still graver voice that trembled in anticipation of her reply.

"None," she answered, without hesitation.

Valerius quivered as if he had received a blow; and then, after a second's silence, he half reluctantly rose to take his leave. She stood up likewise, and for a second he looked into her eyes, freighted with pain patiently borne. Then with an air of despondency he turned from her.

"You will let me hear from you now and then?" she said, understanding his feelings and wishing to soothe him in the hour of their parting.

"Of course. I will write regularly. And if ever you need me, Olive, send but a word and I will come to you, wherever I may be. Remember."

"Thank you, thank you, Valerius," she replied warmly as she held out her hand.

"Good-by, and a pleasant journey. Good-by."

"Good-by," he answered, in a voice full of regret, and then, acting on a sudden impulse, he cried out: "Olive, I love you now as ever, if only—"

"Stop, stop," she said hurriedly, as she drew back.

Sidelights on the Fox and Stork Story.

"You were speaking about those old dimmers that the fox and stork gave to each other," said the Rattlesnake, as he uncoiled himself slowly and readjusted his thirteen rattle. "Yes, I was there."

"You were?" said the Mud Turtle.

"No? Well, the author was not an acute observer. I was there in an official capacity. To be sure, I did not receive an invitation on monogram paper, and I didn't sit in the parlor. I was the dinner gong."

"Dinner gong! Do I quite understand you?" said the Mud Turtle, politely.

"Yes, I rattled my tail when dinner was ready. Lucky I was there, too. I saved them from indigestion at their own expense."

"How was that?"

"Well, you see, I was on to the game, so to speak. The day before Mr. Fox gave his party I strolled in and saw how the land lay. He had a mighty fine menu—turtle soup it was, if I remember fully."

The Mud Turtle shuddered as if some one were passing over his grave.

"Don't be alarmed. They don't make soup of mud turtle," said the Rattlesnake reassuringly. "As I was saying, Mr. Fox had turtle soup, and it was of a flavor! He was the whole day before

preparing it. He caught the turtle himself. It was a small one so he pieced it out with chicken. It was flavored with saffrais and snakeroot and wild mustard, and was cooked to a delicious turn. My mouth watered so I could hardly keep myself in proper coil. And every time he stirred it I had a sur-reptitious lick at the spoon. Uncle Fox, he set out the table, and I was naming one of his cute games. Very soon I perceived that my suspicions were correct. There was only one dish—a large one, but shallow to a degree."

"Skip that part," said the Mud Turtle. "That's history."

"I skip to the morning of the party. Mr. Stork was to come early; Uncle Fox poured the soup out of the kettle into his one dish; I got the scrapings, and they were extremely small. Being only the dinner gong, I wasn't considered in the bill of fare."

"Pretty soon Mr. Stork arrived, and Uncle Fox met him at the door with a pleasant smile, and they exchanged compliments and the weather, and talked a little about the coal strike, and its effect on the price of firewood."

"And all that time I was alone in the dining-room with that delectable turtle soup!"

"Can't you call it chicken soup?" said the Mud Turtle. "There was chicken in it, too."

"I can, but it's not so stylish. However, for your sake. Well, as I was saying, I was left alone with the tur—I mean chicken soup, and I put it to you, could you have stood it?"

"With my knowledge of the contents," began the Mud Turtle.

"Well, that didn't bother me. There was snakeroot in it, too, but that didn't bother me either. I took a little taste. Then I thought, 'Uncle Fox has fixed things so he gets it all. I wonder if he really does?' Then I took another taste and after that I took a drink. Then I extracted a few morsels of the tur—"

"I mean, and by that time it began to look like old-tide in the dish. So I thought, perhaps I had better ring the gong, which I did. I heard Uncle Fox invite Mr. Stork to the table, and I thought it best to be out of sight, so I crawled off. Uncle Fox looked astonished when he saw the dish, but he couldn't say anything to me, I being hid in the pantry. He invited Mr. Stork to partake, and began lapping greedily. Of course, Mr. Stork—"

"Skip that, please."

"Well," resumed the Rattlesnake, "Uncle Fox was saved from an illness by my forethought. I thought the affair quite a success. Mr. Stork was most polite, but went home soon after supper, and I heard him down by the creek grubbing away, as he hunted for fish and frogs."

"Not very many days after, when I was just getting my chicken soup nicely digested, Mr. Stork sent his invitation to Uncle Fox, and I offered my services as butler. Mr. Stork likes style, and I got the job. I need not tell you that I was able to repeat my little ruse. Mr. Stork served frog bisque in a tall vase, which was just as easy for me, being built in this convenient way, you see. Mr. Stork got what was left, while Uncle Fox leaned up against the vase and looked hungry. I did my butting as quickly as possible and slipped away before the party broke up."

"After all," said the Mud Turtle, "to be domestic like the Stork is well; to be cunning like the Fox is better; to be harmless as the turtle (dove) is all right enough, but the wisdom of the serpent is best of all."

A young man had been calling now and then on a young lady, when one night, as he sat in the parlor waiting for her to come down, her mother entered the room instead, and asked him in a very grave, stern way what his intentions were.

He turned very red, and was about to stammer some incoherent reply, when suddenly the young lady called down from the head of the stairs:

"Mamma, mamma, that is not the one." Philadelphia Ledger.

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