

FOR HONOR'S SAKE.

BY B. L. PARSONS.

Author of "Great Porter Square," "The Bright Star of Life," Etc.

(Continued)

His career at college ended, he came to London. There he made the acquaintance of Edward Layton's father, a man who, although well on in years, was as weak minded as he was himself. They entered into a kind of partnership, in which, no doubt, the elder man, now in his grave, was the leader and promoter. From Eustace's description of Edward Layton's father I recognized a man weak minded as Eustace himself was, and whose inherent honor and honesty were warped by his fatal passion for gambling. Old Mr. Layton for a long time was a man of distinction from the knowledge of his son, and it was not until he was actually involved in crime and disgrace that Edward became aware of it. Long before this Edward had, through his engagement with Mabel Rutland, been employed in the hopeless task of endeavoring to save her beloved brother, but when the knowledge of his own father's disgrace was forced upon him he knew that all hope of Mabel's father consenting to his marriage was irretrievably gone. It was not only that the young and the old man had lost in him the love of her father which Mr. Beach, the father of the woman whom Edward Layton afterward married, held in his possession. It was this that first took Edward Layton to Mr. Beach's house. Mabel had implored him to save her darling brother, against whom Mr. Beach had threatened to take criminal proceedings. He knew that Edward Layton had revealed to Mabel the disgrace which hung also above his father; but that is immaterial. Agnes Beach, Mr. Beach's only child, saw and felt her father's disgrace, and she was devoted to her daughter, was guided by her in all that subsequently transpired. The hills he had determinedly refused to part with, unless Edward Layton married his child.

In the terrible position in which he was placed, knowing that Mabel Rutland was set to him for ever—knowing how deeply and devotedly she loved her brother Eustace—knowing the disgrace which hung over his own name, he saw no other way to prevent utter ruin than to enter into this fatal engagement with a woman whom he did not love. But, with a full consciousness of the disreputable connection he was about to form, he laid no pressing claim upon her. In fact, indeed, old Mr. Layton, aware that he was in Mr. Beach's power, was by no means desirous to meet him. Love lost, honor lost, the sword of her father's disgrace, Edward Layton submitted to the sacrifice. There was no duplicity on his part. Agnes Beach knew full well that he did not love her. He received her, he believed, the whole of the forged bills which Mr. Beach held, and it was not until some time after his marriage that he discovered that three of these fatal acceptances had been withheld from him. He had been deceived in his discovery he was leading a most unhappy life with his wife, and on more than one occasion she taunted him with the power she held over him.

It was shortly after the marriage that well minded Eustace made the acquaintance of Ida White. She was an attractive woman, well versed in the wiles of her sex, and she played upon him and entangled him to such an extent that there was no escape for him. It is unnecessary here to enter into the details of this connection. It is sufficient to say that Ida White, who had been completely in her power, with a firm conviction that if she could induce him to marry her she could, after the marriage, obtain the forgiveness of Eustace's father—which would assure her a life of ease and luxury. But there was still a certain firmness in the young man.

"Marry me," she said. "I will marry you," Eustace replied, "when I get back home." "Where were they? In Mrs. Layton's possession?"

Close as was the intimacy which existed between the unhappy lady and her maid, Mrs. Layton retained so jealous a possession of these incriminating documents that Ida White, who had been brought to her hands upon them. In the company of Eustace Rutland she was supping in Prevost's restaurant on the night of the 25th of March. She had slipped into her room, and she had had one of her hands before her, by which time, doubtless, Mrs. Layton would be asleep. She knew that under her pillow Mrs. Layton kept the documents which Eustace had threatened to obtain, and the possession of which would make her, Ida White, his wife. If Mrs. Layton awoke and resisted while the forged bills were being abstracted, Eustace would have to use force, if necessary; and it was principally from the wish to compromise her lover so deeply that he would not dare to break his promise to marry her that she had determined to get the idea into her mind. She knew that ordinarily Edward Layton kept the latch key of the street door in the pocket of his ulster. She disclosed the scheme to Eustace, and threatened him with the dire consequences if he did not do as she desired. It was she who took the ulster from the wall of the restaurant, and it was she who, secretly and expeditionally, assisted Eustace to enter the carriage. Before acquainting Eustace with her design she had ascertained that Edward Layton's carriage was waiting for him and Mabel, and she had her own resources to keep her master out of his house after she and Eustace had entered it.

Here a word is necessary as to the true meaning of Edward Layton's proceedings during the day and night of March 25. Abandoned as were the hopes in which he and Mabel had once fondly indulged, she still relied upon her efforts to save her brother from ruin. And he had lost heavily upon certain races. He had made a despairing appeal to her, and she called upon Layton to assist the erring lad. It was the endeavor to recover Eustace that Edward Layton had driven from place to place to obtain from him the information necessary to rescue him from his peril. Mabel had, by letter, engaged to meet Edward Layton in Bloomsbury square at 10 o'clock on the night of that day, in order that he might relieve her anxiety with respect to her brother. How they met, and what transpired after they met, have been already sufficiently detailed.

Ida White's maneuvers were successful up to a certain point. She and Eustace entered the carriage, were driven home, and, as usual, she obtained entrance into the house. The correspondence between Eustace and Mabel had been for some time conducted through the medium of the system of the nine of hearts, and it was either by an oversight or by accident that Eustace, during the drive from Prevost's restaurant to Edward Layton's house, took from his own pocket one of these cards and let it drop into the pocket of the ulster. But when they were safely in Layton's house, and crept stealthily and noiselessly into Mrs. Layton's bedroom, they made the horrible discovery that the card which Eustace had dropped had been found by her. She emptied the bottle of poisonous narcotics, and had by her own will destroyed herself. The proof was at her bedside. When she had swallowed the fatal pills she had been completely overwhelmed by them. She summoned up sufficient strength to rise in her bed, to take paper and the pen from the inkstand, and before the death agony commenced in her system, she wrote upon the paper the confession which fixed upon her the crime of suicide.

Having reached this point of the strange story, I demanded to know from Eustace

FOUND WHAT BECAME OF THAT CONFESSION.

"Ida took possession of it," he said, "and I have not seen it from that moment to this."

"Why did you not come forward and make this public?" I cried.

"Because," was his reply, "Ida told me that if she had done so she would have nothing could save us from the hangman."

"Did she obtain possession of the forged acceptances?"

"How was it that the tumbler from which the fatal draught was taken was on the mantel shelf?"

"Ida placed it there."

"It was enough. The entire facts of this mysterious case were clear to me. I required nothing more to prove Edward Layton's innocence than the possession of the document written almost in her death throes by the unhappy wife."

I unlocked the door and called up Fowler. Briefly and swiftly I told him what was necessary, and said it was not at all improbable that this document was in Ida White's lodgings at Brighton, and I had scarcely uttered the words before a rattle-tat came at the street door.

"It is she!" cried Eustace.

"Ida," he replied, in great excitement.

"It serves our turn exactly, sir," muttered Fowler to me, and then addressing Eustace, he said: "Is that your bedroom?" pointing to a communicating door.

"Yes."

"We will go in there. Let the lady come up."

We disappeared, leaving the communicating door partially open, and the next minute I heard Ida White's voice.

"Cursed luck!" she cried. "I've lost 250!"

"I tell you what it is, Eustace—if we can't win our money, let's get out of this place before we are married, we shall have to turn bookmakers ourselves."

"Why don't you speak?" she continued.

"You are a devil! Why have you driven me to this? I hate you, hate you, hate you! You find, you have killed my sister!"

Fowler did not wait for me to act. He seized me by the arm and pulled me after him into the room.

"What!" screamed Ida, "you two?"

"Yes," said Fowler—and in the midst of my own excitement I could not avoid observing the expression of calm satisfaction on his face.

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