

THE MASTER OF MAN :-: By Sir Hall Caine

An Outspoken and Moving Study of a Deep Sex Problem by the Noted Author of "The Manxman," "The Deemster," "The Eternal City," "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," Etc.

Is Man's Law Too Hard for the Woman in the Case? Is Conscience Enough Punishment for Him, While She Pays the Legal Penalty?

In This Frank and Gripping Story the Man, as Judge, Sits in Sentence on the Girl Tried for Their Sin.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY
Victor Stowell, son of the Deemster or Chief Judge of the Isle of Man, is handsome and of fine nature. He is in love with Fenella Stanley, daughter of the Governor, a beautiful girl and with advanced views on the rights of women. In a moment of mutual passion he has had illicit relations with Bessie Collier, a handsome peasant girl, stepdaughter of Dan Baldromm, a harsh firebrand. She is loved by Alick Gell, Victor's chum and fellow attorney. Victor feels he must marry her, especially when he learns she is trying to educate herself. But he is unable to tell his beloved Fenella his sordid secret.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES
CHAPTER XV
The Woman's Secret
WHEN Stowell awoke next morning at Ballamoor a flock of sheep, liberated from a barn, were bleating before a barking dog. He had passed a restless night. All his soul revolted against the secret he had carried. The renunciation he had imposed upon himself. It was like life-long imprisonment. What was he to do? He must decide and decide quickly. It was only he thought of the Governor. The strong sense and practical wisdom of the Governor might help him to a decision. But Fenella's father—how could he tell his story to Fenella's father?

At last an idea came to him whereby he could obtain the Governor's counsel without betraying his secret. He was at the crisis. On what he did now the future of his life depended. And not his own life only, but Fenella's also, perhaps, and * * * Bessie Collier's. At 3 o'clock he was at the Government offices in Douglas. Police inspectors were at the door and moving about in the corridors. One of them took him up to the Governor's room—a large chamber overlooking the street and noisy from the trams that ran under the windows. The Governor's iron-gray head was bent over a desk-table. "Sit down—I shall not be long," Stowell felt his heart sink in advance. Never would he be able to say what he had come to say. "Well, you gave us the slip nicely, didn't you?" said the Governor, raising his head from his papers. "I'm sorry, sir," said Stowell (he felt his lip trembling). "It was an important matter, and I've come to town today to ask your advice on it."

"Something you've been consulted about?" "Well * * * yes." "I'm no authority on law, you know." "It's not so much a matter of law, sir, as of morality—what an honorable man ought to do under difficult circumstances." The Governor looked up sharply. Stowell struggled on. "A client * * * I should say a friend engaged himself to a young woman a while ago, and now, owing to circumstances which have arisen since, he finds it difficult to decide whether it is his duty to marry her." "Manxman?" "Yes." "What class?" Stowell felt his voice as well as his lips trembling. "Oh, good enough class, I think." The Governor picked up his pipe from the table, charged it, lit it, turned his chair toward the fireplace, threw his leg over the rail-fender and said: "Fire away."

Then trembling and ashamed, and making a strong call on his resolution, Stowell told his own story—as if it had been that of another man. When he had come to an end there was a long silence. The Governor pulled hard at his pipe and there was no other sound in the room except the rattle of the trams in the street. Stowell felt hot, his lips felt dry, and pushing back his black hair, he found sweat on his forehead. "Any harm done?" he said. "My man doesn't defend himself. Still he thinks the circumstances aren't wasn't deliberate?" "Good Lord, no!" "In fact a kind of accident?" "One might say so." "Harm done?" Stowell turned white and began to stammer. "I * * * no, that is to say * * * no, I've never heard."

"And yet he promised to marry the girl?" "He felt responsible for her. He couldn't be a scoundrel." "Did he care for her—love her?" "I can't say that, sir. He might have thought he did." "And now he loves another woman?" "With all his heart and soul, sir." "But the Governor was pulling plainly: "He has promised to marry the little farm girl, and she's away somewhere educating herself to become his wife?" "That's it, sir," said Stowell (his head was down), "and now he is asking himself what it is his duty to do. I have told him it is his duty as a man of honor to carry out his promise—to marry the girl, whatever the consequences to himself. Am I right, sir?" There was another moment of silence, and then the Governor, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and bringing his open palm down on the table, said: "No."



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Is that how he expects to make her happy? Ten to one the girl will be a miserable outcast in her husband's house to the last day of her life. But that's not the worst, by a long way. "If he marries her it will be out of a sense of duty, will it not?" "Ye-es." "Well, what woman on God's earth wants to be married out of a sense of duty? And if he loves another woman do you think his wife will not find it out some day? Of course she will. And when she does what do you think will happen?" "I'll tell you what will happen. If she's one of the sensitive kind she'll feel herself crushed, superfluous and pine away and die of grief and shame, or perhaps take a dose of something * * * we've heard of such happenings, haven't we? And if she's a woman of the other sort she'll go farther."

"Suspicion, jealousy, envy! She may not care a brass farthing about her husband, but her pride as a wife will be wounded. She won't give him a day's peace, or herself either. He'll never be an hour out of her sight, but she'll think he's with the other woman. And then—what's the sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander! If he has another woman as likely as not she'll have another man—we've heard of that, too, haven't we?" Stowell dropped his head. His heart was beating high, and he was afraid his face was betraying it. The Governor touched him on the shoulder, and continued: "In the next place, it would be a crime against the man himself. He's a young fellow of some prospects, I suppose."

"I—I think so." "And the girl has some family, hasn't she?" "Yes." "They may be good and worthy folk of whom he would have no reason to be ashamed. But isn't it just as likely that they are people of quite another kind? Brothers and sisters and cousins to the tenth degree? Some vulgar and rapacious old father, perhaps, who hasn't taken too much trouble to keep the girl out of temptation while she has been at home, but freezes on to her fast enough after she has made a good marriage. Possible, isn't it?" "Quite possible, sir." "Well, what are your man's own friends going to do with him with a menagerie like that at his heels? No, he has fettered himself for life to failure as well as misery, and while his wife is railing at him about the other woman he is reproaching her with standing in his light. So the end of his noble endeavor is that he has set up a little private hell for himself in the house he calls his home."

Stowell was wincing at every word, but all the same he knew that his eyes were shining. The Governor looked sharply up at him for a moment, lit his pipe and said: "Then there's the other woman. I suppose her case is worthy of some consideration?" "Indeed, yes." "If she cares for the man * * * I can't say that, sir." "Well, if she does, she, too, will suffer, will she not? And what has she done to deserve suffering? Nothing at all! She's the innocent scapegoat, isn't she?" "That's true." "Fine woman, I suppose?" "The finest woman in the world, sir." "Just so! But your man would doom her to renunciation—a solitary life of sorrow and regret. And so the rest of it, his sense of duty, as you say, and all the rest of it, is that he will have ruined three lives—the life of the woman he marries and does not love, the life of the woman he loves and does not marry, and his own life also."

"Then you think, sir * * * you think he should wop even yet?" "Even at the church door, at the altar-steps—if there's no harm done, and he is sure she is the wrong woman." Stowell felt as if the vapors which had clouded his brain so long had been swept away as by a mountain breeze, but he thought it necessary to keep up the disguise. "I feel you must be right, sir," rising to go. "At all events I cannot argue against you. But I think you'll agree that * * * that if my man can wipe out this bad passage in his life without injury to anybody and without scandal, * * * I think you will agree that his first duty is to tell the woman he loves * * *"

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