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"Train coming, Indeed!" cried she,

"That young lady can make trains and

everything else come and go to suit

way in which she's got hold of that young Mr. Ardner, flirting all the time

The remaining two members of the

company who were present glanced ap-

prehensively at Miss Wells. Of course,

everybody knew that she and Cyril Ar

dener had been something very like

lovers before Miss Fairbrother's com-

ing, and had discussed among them-selves the "cheek" of the newcomer,

and the quiet way in which Miss Wells took her desertion. But the subject

had never before been mentioned in her

Now that it was mentioned, how-

ever, Miss Wells was quite equal to the

occasion. She laughed a little, and said, easily, with more of her art than

"Very cruei of him, isn't it? Or at

It was about an hour after this when

they heard steps on the line again, and

somebody mounted up and looked in.

Through the steam on the glass the

face of a man could be dimly seen. He

tapped softly at the window in Miss

A deeper flush came into her white

"Won't you ladies come out?" he said,

But they refused, preferring the ills

they had to suffer to trudging over the

rails in the keen outside air. Miss

"You will come, won't you, Con-

A shiver ran through her, not caused

by the cold. It seemed a long time since

Cyril had called her by her Christian

Cyril helped her out, and led her

across the lines back to the platform.

She hesitated, and then said. "Yes."

"Of course not. Of course

of her nature in her tones:

don't " said the other ladies.

T've found a fire, a real fire."

Wells, however, had not spoken,

stance?" said he, in a lower voice,

Then she asked suddenly:

"Ah!" sald Constance.

with me.

"Where's Miss Fairbrother?"

I don't, you see,"

Cyril Ardener,

It was an all-night journey, and a | the "old woman," gave a snort of indigvery cold one. Perhaps the state of nation. the thermometer would not have mattered so much if the "Great London Success," with which the company were traveling had made a stronger impres-sion upon the audiences of the provin-way in which she's got hold of that cial towns to which it had been pre-

a "wait" of four hours in one of the dreariest of the Lancashire manufacturing towns. The company's gamestation of the company. She doesn't wait for the company. had been detached from the train and shunted on to a siding to wait for the early morning train which was to take

it on to Paisely.

The men of the company had all got out as soon as the train drew up at the



Come 'Along," Said She, Rather Im-

platform, and had gone off into the town in search of some establishment. no watter how lovely, which would open its doors to them and give them refreshment.

The ladies, five in number, remained In their compartment, huddled up in their warmest cloaks, trying to get a little sleep. But it would not do; it was too cold. The "old woman," who was really old, rubbed her eyes misera-

"They've all got off, I suppose!" she grumbled. "And of course they never think of us." A bright young girl from whose

cheeks not even an all-night journey could take the roses, sprang to her feet and let down the nearest window.

"They shall think of us. though!" cried she, as she thrust her head and shoulders out of the window. "Come and let us out! Come and let us out, some of you, any of you!" cried she, im-And the next moment, catching sight, on the dimly-lighted platform, of a figure she knew, she "Mr. Ardener! Mr. Ardener! Come and have pity on us. We are locked in like wild beasts; and I assure you we are getting very nearly as savage. We've been kept too long without food, you see."

The person addressed stepped nimbly down from the platform, and picked his way in the dark across the lines

A tall, well-made young man, with a kindly, open face, Cyril Ardener looked what he was, a really nice fellow, a favorite with his own sex and with the other. As the girl above him looked down into his face, it was easy to see that she was one of those upon whom the "juvenile lead" had made a deep

Miss Lillian Fairbrother (as she was called upon the programmes) had gone on the stage against the wishes of her family, of course; but not without some prospect of success there. She bestowed upon Cyril, the smile of a practised and all-conquering flirt. But he shook a warning head.

"You had much better stay where you are," said he, persuasively. "The other fellows have gone wandering about in search of drinks. And as they are making a great noise and disturbtheir quest, I should advise you to give them a wide berth for the present."

"Never mind. I'm coming out," said Miss Fairbrother, with the ob- urally large. After a long silence he stinacy of the spoilt beauty. "Open said suddenly: the door, please.'

'You'll have nobody to talk to," persisted Cyril, as he took out his key. "Not even you?"

Not even me. I'm going off to try and keep the others out of mischief." The door was opened by this time, and she was preparing to descend. She graciously allowed Cyril to assist her, and rewarded him with another smile.

'Come along," said she, rather impatiently. For Cyril was lingering to cust a glance inside the carriage before he shut the door. As his eyes rested upon a pale, worn, refined face, that of the leading juvenile lady, a change came over Cyril's face.

"I wish I could get you a cup of hot coffee, Miss Wells," he said.

But before she could thank him the impatient Lilian had pulled him by force away from the door, crying out in pretended terror that she heard a train coming. The face of Constance Wells flushed slightly as she settled herself again in her corner. Miss Browning,



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onging tenderness which thrilled her, warmed her in spite of herself. "My darling, couldn't you trust me?

Don't you think I would make you happy as long as you live?" He could see in her eyes the struggle which was going on between her feel-

ings and her instincts of duty and "Don't you think I would make you a

kind husband, Constance?"
With a sudden impulse she snatched her hands away.
"Ah, if you could! If you only could!" she said, piteously. "But you know you can't, you can't, while my husband is

Cyril moved impatiently. "Now isn't this nonsense, child?" said he with an air of indulgent tolerance. "Your husband treated you usgracefully; as badly as a man could treat a woman. He deserted you for another woman five years ago. Since he went to America three years ago, you haven't heard whether he is alive or dead, and have the strongest reason for thinking he is dead. And yet you must bring this hideous memory-for he is nothing more to you-to stand in the way of your own happiness. For you would be happy with me. Don't you know it?

Come now, tell me!" "Yes, I know it; I am sure of it," whispered she, "And yet-"Well, and yet what?"

"I can't do it, I can't, I can't." "Give me only a reason, and I'll re-

spect it. Her head dropped. Though I never really cared for my husband and do care a great deal for you, still I can't pretend to be your wife while he is alive. I don't say I'm wise; I don't even say I'm right. But that's how I feel, and-there's the end

of it." She sprang to her feet, and drew her cape around her shoulders again. She would go back to the carriage, she said. But he conced her. And, because she least it would be cruel if I minded, But loved him, because it was a delight to her to be with him once more, even if their interview was as full of pain as of pleasure, she stayed.

At last, though she would not yield to his entreaties, she gave a half-consent to his proposal that she should take lodgings for the ensuing week in the house where he was going to stay. This seemed a very good suggestion, as the town to which they were going was notorious for the badness of its lodgings, cheeks as she came face to face with a white face,

and the poor Scotch inn, where Cyril and the manager was going to stay, offered a prospect of comparative luxury. But Constance, when she again sat back in her corner of the railway carriage, found herself dwelling with so much eagerness on the pleasure she would have in being for a week constantly in the society of the man she loved, that she recognized with fear that the joy was in fact a temptation. When, therefore, Cyril came to the door of the compartment at their journey's end, he found that her mood and her manner had changed.

"Come, said he, gently, as he took her bag and offered her his hand. "We shall have to walk, but it isn't far to "She's gone off with Glynn," said the hotel." Cyril, smiling. "After quarreling She looke

She looked steadily before her, with "Thank you. But I have changed my hind. I am going to stay with Miss

Cyril could detect jealousy, pique, Browning,"
pride, in the simple utterance. They And she walked quickly away with-



"Take Her Home," She Said in a Low Voice.

to the office of the station-master, ply.

where a bright fire was blazing. With a cry of delight Constance went down on her knees before it, and spread down at her delicate, worn face, in

"You think I asked you to come out because I had quarreled with that lit-tle firt? You were wrong."

Constance flushed slightly, but did not glance up. "I asked you because the little goose let out something which was the last

thing she should have let me know if she wanted me to forget you. You have been fretting, it seems." Brought to task so abruptly, Constance could not keep the tears out of

her eyes. "No," said she, rather feebly. "Oh, but you have. Now tell me, is it true that you are not so hard as you pretend to be? Is it true, for instance,"

and he came nearer to her, "that you are serry you snubbed me so unmercifully that day-you know when?" There was a pause. Constance was much agitated. But she gathered her

forces together, and answered with some spirit: It is not true. I am not sorry." But there was a tremor in her gentle voice, a tenderness in her eyes, which

belied her words. "I don't believe you," said Cyril, as he knelt down on the floor beside her. 'I mean I don't believe your words. I believe your eyes. And I can read in

them that you do care; that you have been unhappy, lonely, since you quarreled with me." Then she gave way, and a piteous lit-tle sob betrayed the feeling she had been trying to hide. He stole one of her white hands, which not even the frost had succeeded in making red and ugly, and held it tenderly in his own. She

cried in silence for a few minutes, and then turned upon him flercely:
"Why do you torment me?" she asked, with something like terror in her

"Because I love you, Connie; because I know you have had a hard life, which not growing any easier, and because I want to give you some ease, some rest, some happiness, darling."

walked along the platform in silence out giving him time for protest or re-

There was no reward of virtue for poor Constance. All that week Cyril devoted himself to Miss Fairbrother; ing everybody, without succeeding in out her stiff fingers in the welcome and Constance, although she managed warmth. Cyril stood near, looking to hide the misery she felt, could not stifle it. She felt that she loved this man which the blue eyes looked preternat- so deeply that he powers of resistance were growing unequal to the strain. After all, was there not truth in what he urged, that she owed no duty to the man who had so neglected her? This nominal husband that must indeed be dead. For three years she had heard nothing of him. Was she not free, in law as wel as morally, to contract a

fresh marriage? So she tortured herself, and meanwhile held aloof as much as possible from all intercourse with Cyril except on the stage. But the parts they played were those of lovers; and the harrassed woman felt that they betrayed their feelings in every word, in every look, that they were forced to exchange

in the business of the stage. At the end of the week, as she left the theatre after her night's work, the hall-keeper told her that there was a man outside waiting for her.

"He wanted to come in and wait here miss; but he was too drunk to stand, and I wouldn't let him in. There he is by the doorway. If you go the other way you'll miss him."

But Constance was looking at the human wreck the man pointed out with wide eyes full of fear. She knew him, changed though he was, He was in rags, dirty, haggard; W.n.

appalling spectacle. She answered the hall-keeper by a gesture rather than by

words, and made step in tht direction of the doorway within the shelter of which her husband was standing. He staggered forward and clutched her arm. As she stopped Cyril Ardener came out by the stage door on his way homewards. He uttered an exclamation of disgust, and darted forward to send the wretch about his business. With

one quick movement he released her, and supporting her trembling figure in his arms, said quickly: "My poor darling! Don't be frighten-ed. I'll see you home." The other man uttered a hoarse sound meant for a laugh. He was slinking away without a word, when Constance

recovered herself. "Let me go. Let me go, Cyril," she whispered. "It is-my husband." "But you can't. You know you can't.
Oh, Cyril, Jon't begin it all over again!"
But he had both her hands now. He was holding them in a firm grip, looking into her face, with an expression of "Let me go. Let me go, Cyril," she whispered. "It is—my holokand."
Cyril was so much shocked that he was speechless. Before he could recover from his disgust and amagement, Miss Fairbother, pretty, bright, brim-Cyril was so much shocked that he was speechless. Before he could re-cover from his disgust and amazement,

ming over as usual with provocative co-quetry, ran out and stopped at the strange group. She had caught Con-stance's words, and her face was a picture of amusement, horror, and mali-

cious satisfaction by turns. Constance gave Cyril one eloquent look, full of pathetic sadness, of rigid determination. Then she glanced at the young girl, who seemed unable to

pass the group.
"Take her home," she said, in a low And she turned to her husband.

"Tom," she said, "are you coming "Yes, if you'll have me," he answered. in a hoarse voice.

He was less grateful than sullen, spiritless. Perhaps he was hardly sober; but his tottering footsteps were the result of illness rather than of in-toxication. She led him to her lodgings. got him some clothes, gave him food, and placed him in a chair by the fire. In all that she did there was no pre tense of welcome or affection; but she was kind, thoughtfully attentive, gentle, as she would have been to a strang-

For the truth was that there was nothing in TomAnderson to rouse tender feelings in the woman who had



I Mean I Don't Believe Your Words.

found him out. He took her attentions in a hang-dog fashion, with some little shame, perhaps, but with still more irritation. When he had eaten his supper and was provided with a cigarette he began to assume airs lofty indignation at the words he had overheard Cyril address to her.

"I don't know whether that's the way you have been allowing every young jackanapes you met to speak to you while I have been away!" grumbled he.
"'My poor darling,' indeed!"

But, much to his amazement, Constance burst out laughing. She had been so gentle that he was prepared to find her humble, also, and ready to allow him to get the upper hand again.

"You won't talk like that, will you, please?' she said, trying to repress her involuntary, bitter amusement. "You must be satisfied to know that I have behaved rightly, according to my own ideas, as you no doubt have, according to yours."

He glanced at her quickly, with a rising flush of indignation in his sullen face. But he was abashed, and had the sense to say nothing.

"I am not going to worry you with any moralizing, any questions," she went on, looking at the fire. "I would, of course, if I cared; but I don't. I will do what I can for you-take care of you till you are better able to go away. But-but that's all."

"Then you are not going to make it up again?" whined he. Constance looked at him quickly and her eyes filled with tears. If there had been a spark of affection in his tone,of longing for the warmth of his wife's purse,-she would not have been hard to him. But love for another and love returned had made her clear-sighted. She shook her head.

"No more than that," she said. gently. He kept his head bent for a little while, looking at the fire. Then he nodded philosophically. After all, he

had outgrown any feeling for his wife long ago. In the meantime he might think himself sure of a roof and a crust as long ts she was in an engagement. "Well, as you like," said he, at last, Over his face there passed a curious

look. In the pause that followed her own words she had been woman enough to hope that he was going to coax, to entreat. And she was disappointed. She rose quickly from her chair.

"I couldn't get another room in this house," said she. "So I've got one next door. But it's a poky little place, nor what you would like; so you can have mine. I will have the one in the next house. Good night."

She waited one moment at the door

looking at him curiously. He glanced "Thank you. Good night." said he

In another moment she was outside the house. On the opposite side of the road a man was standing. He crossed quickly over to her. "Constance, I want to see you."

"Cyril!" "Oh, my poor child, what an experi-

ence for you! What are you going to Then he stopped, looking at her in

'Why, I don't understand. You look happier than I have seen you for ever so long. Is it possible you care for-for

Constance shook her head, smiling rather sadly.

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"I wish it were possible," she said. don't care for him, I care for you. And yet, now that he has come back, I am happier than I was before. I am thanking Heaven that he did come-in time. was not so strong as I pretended, Cyril. I was getting afraid. But Cyril looked impatient, misera-

"You have sacrificed your life!" said

he, passionately.
"And saved my—what is it?—pride?
Well, I am satisfied, Cyril; a man can never understand a woman; I don't understand myself. But I am happier tonight knowing that I am out of danger, that there is to be no more struggling and no more questioning, than I

"He will be a burden to you as long as you live." "I can't help that."

"Constance, this is quixotism." "Well, I can't help that either. Good night."

And she disappeared into the house, When Tom Anderson died, six months later, Cyril Ardener was already the husband of Lilian Fairbrother. But Constance was not unhappy, except in the fear that the little coquette would make an indifferent wife.

She had been true to her best self; she had gained a victory which had made her strong. And to the end of her life she will congratulate herself upon her very best performance. (The End.)

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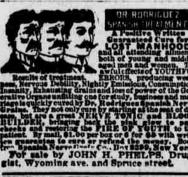
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