

NOT OWN HIS CHILD.

Lisbeth Dacre was a very happy girl until one day she was going to meet David Bertram she saw that he was walking with a tall handsome woman. They kissed each other, and the woman said: "Dear David, the knowledge of your love and the hope of seeing you again sent me up all the year." I will meet you again soon, dear," and so they parted.

Lisbeth waited to hear no more, and when her mother told her that her Uncle Edwin had grown rich and wished them to come and share his home she readily consented to go.

When Bertram came again to seek his betrothed he found that she had left town, and his face was white as he read the curt, cold note she left behind for him.

"I never thought her such a coquette," he murmured, as he turned away.

In her new home Lisbeth did not lack for want of suitors, but she turned a deaf ear to all the proposals.

One afternoon Lisbeth found her mother perusing a letter just received.

"Lisbeth," she said, "would you mind telling me now what it was that came between you and Mr. Bertram? I have a reason for asking."

Then the girl told her mother of the scene she had witnessed.

"It is as I thought. Read this," was Mrs. Dacre's only comment.

The letter ran thus:

"I don't suppose you ever knew that old Mr. Bertram had a daughter, who married against her father's wishes, and that he disinherited her. The girl's husband died after a time, leaving her entirely destitute. She did not dare to return home, but in her strait she appealed to her brother. For a year he maintained his sister with his own earnings until, taking advantage of a favorable opportunity he got his father to receive and pardon her. Isn't it romantic? I can tell you David Bertram is a splendid fellow, and we were all surprised when we found out that your Lisbeth had broken her engagement with him."

At length the papers came filled with accounts of the burning of the Bertram mill, and stated that the son of the proprietor, while endeavoring to rescue another, had himself been mortally injured.

"I am going to David, mother," Lisbeth said. "I must see him before he dies."

And Mrs. Dacre, sympathizing with her daughter's anguish, made no objections.

A party of friends who were going east offered to take Lisbeth, and so she went.

At last her feet once more trod the familiar streets, and she stood before the Bertram's door. No mourning symbol told of desolation within. David still lived.

A beautiful sad-faced woman opened the door in response to her ring.

Lisbeth knew her at once. It was the sister who had been restored to her home through her noble brother's means.

"I am Lisbeth Dacre," she said in answer to her look of inquiry. "I heard of your brother's accident and I have come to see him, if I may."

She had stepped into the hall as she spoke.

A look of intelligence flashed over the other's face.

"Lisbeth Dacre! The girl who broke my brother's heart!"

A wave of color swept over Lisbeth's pale face.

"Please do not deny me; let me see him."

Lisbeth's words evidently carried conviction to their hearer.

"You shall see him," she replied, "though, thank God, he is not dying, but has been pronounced out of danger."

An ejaculation of joy escaped Lisbeth's lips.

"Do not rejoice too soon," David's sister continued, "for, though he will not die, my brother's fate is a sad one. Ever since the accident he has been unable to see."

A couple of hours later:

"Dear brother, here is an old friend who has recently heard of your illness and has come to see you."

David turned his sightless eyes toward the door where Lisbeth stood. He was so changed, so white and wan, that the girl's heart almost ceased beating. She feared to speak lest he should know her voice and the shock be too much for him.

He put out his hand.

"Any of my friends are welcome," he said, "but I do not know who it is."

Like a snowflake Lisbeth's little hand fell into his. A swift thrill shot through the sick man's frame. He knew well the soft, clinging touch of those small fingers. With a quick motion he drew her to him.

"Speak?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Am I dreaming? Is it—can it be my Beth come back to me?"

With a cry Lisbeth wound her arms about his neck.

"Oh, David! David! can you ever forgive me for all the pain I have caused you to suffer?"

After the first rupture of reunion was over Lisbeth told David and his sister what had caused her to act as she had, and how she had herself suffered through all these years in deeming her lover false.

When the time came for Lisbeth to return with the friends in whose companionship she had come, she carried with her the sweet assurance that when she again saw her lover his eyes would be freed from the film which had obscured their vision.

During the past week David had undergone a successful operation, and the surgeons held out strong hopes of his speedy recovery of his sight.

"So you are not going to be an old maid after all, Lisbeth," said her fond old uncle when six months later David made his appearance for his promised bride.

"Well, dear, if you make as good a wife as you have a daughter and niece your husband will have occasion to consider himself a favored man."

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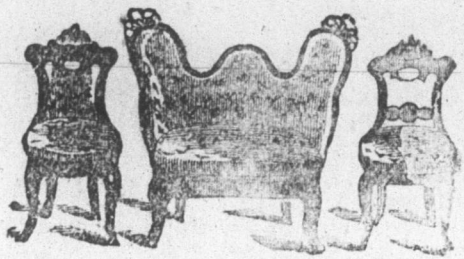
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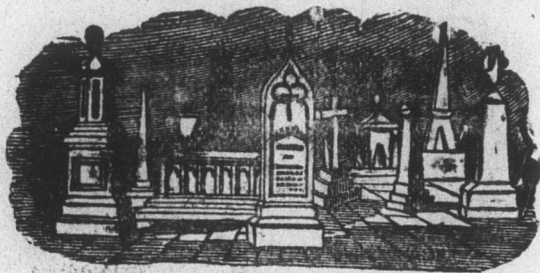
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