

## Love's Awakening

By ALBERT J. KLINCK

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THE two had long sat silent, the husband holding a folded newspaper, the wife toying with a costly fan. The light from the single lamp hardly penetrated to the corners of the large room, and the fire in the grate had burned so low that it was all but out.

"Yes," the wife said, "it is time a change took place. We cannot agree. There is no comfort for either of us here."

He went on rolling the paper in his hands, his eyes averted, his lips firmly set.

"Why should we both suffer?" asked Constance Harcourt, after a pause. "There is no reason why we both should not be happy. And if not both, then one of us at least. But for once I am going to be selfish, Arthur. I am going to be happy. I am going to leave you to-night."

He sat more erect in his seat, raised his eyes to hers, but still sat silent.

"It is the only way," she went on. "We are not at all suited to each other. It has been some time in dawning upon me, but I see it all now. Mistakes will happen. Of course we are neither of us to blame. I have packed up a few of my belongings. I suppose you will allow Chalmers to convey them from the house?"

His grip upon the newspaper became more tense.

"There need be no scene when I go," she continued. "Our little drama has already been brought to a fitting climax. I'll just slip out. That will end it."

Constance Harcourt rose from her seat, cast the fan carelessly upon the table, took up a book that was lying there, and left the room.

Arthur Harcourt did not move until he heard footsteps in the room above; then he roused himself and thought over what his wife had said. His brow was furrowed at first, his breast heaved. Then he laughed. It really was such a huge joke. Constance going to leave him! Constance going to—. He laughed again. But his levity was suddenly cut short, for he heard a swish of skirts in the hallway, and a few hurried words spoken in an undertone. A moment later Chalmers, the butler, came into the room, placed upon the table a tray holding a bottle and a single glass, and was about to withdraw when Harcourt asked:

"To whom were you just speaking?"

"Mrs. Harcourt, sir," he replied.

"And what was the conversation about?"

"She asked me would I please carry some parcels for her," said Chalmers. "Is she dressed for the street?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell Mrs. Harcourt I desire to see her at once."

"Yes, sir," said Chalmers, leaving the room.

Arthur Harcourt was walking up and down when his wife entered. She came in noiselessly, and he was not aware of her presence until he heard her "Well?" in a high, clear voice.

"You are carrying this farce too far, Constance," he began.

"You forget," she said. "We have already gone beyond the bounds of farce. We have entered the realm of drama."

"Be careful that the end of it will not be tragedy," he said coldly. "Where are you going?"

"And if I refuse to answer your question?"

"Where are you going?" he asked again.

Constance said nothing.

"Are you going to your father?"

"Perhaps, and perhaps not."

"Say yes or no," Harcourt demanded.

"I shall do neither."

Arthur Harcourt stood still. For a awful moment his eyes were fiercely upon her. Then he stretched forth his hands to clutch at her white throat, but she quickly withdrew, closing the door behind her and locking it from the outside. Then she motioned to Chalmers, and led the way to an unused wing of the large house. Here she removed her gloves, hat and wraps, and turning up the lamp, addressed the bewildered butler:

"You are to tell no one of my presence here. When the opportunity presents itself bring my meals to me. In case cook questions you, tell her to mind what I have told her. She'll understand. Should my husband ask where you went with me, tell him I entered a cab at the corner, and dismissed you. You are positively not to tell him I am here. Do you understand, Chalmers?"

"Yes, Mrs. Harcourt, I understand," he replied.

For the next two or three days Arthur Harcourt was in a daze. He shunned his friends, acted queerly when at his business, and when evening came sat alone in the great room that had been the scene of his last interview with his wife. He could not read, he could not sleep. The memory of the evening clung to him like a leech. There were times when Chalmers felt extremely sorry for his master, especially when he found him sitting alone in the evening. And it was because he felt this way that he one night admitted Sam Truxton into Harcourt's presence. Chalmers had strict orders to state that his master was at home to no one. On this occasion, however, he saw fit to disobey, reasoning that a quiet little chat with a friend would be of great benefit to his master.

Upon entering the room Truxton started at sight of the dejected figure in the large armchair. Harcourt looked bad enough in the daytime, but at night, in the yellow glow of the lamp, he looked positively ghastly.

"This 'll never do, Arthur," Truxton began. "And I'm going to be frank with you. This story about your wife's being away is all bosh. She's here in the very city. She's—"

"Good God, Truxton," cried Harcourt, "where is she?"

"Then you don't know?"

"No."

"I suspected that from the first," said Truxton. "I knew it was that

that worried you. And as a friend I feel it my duty to tell you what I heard last evening."

"What did you hear?" broke in Harcourt.

"That the veiled dancer at the Alcazar is Mrs. Harcourt," replied Truxton.

"The veiled—the Alcazar—" Then Harcourt put his hands to his temples. "She used to be a good dancer," he went on, as if to himself. "Yes, but the Alcazar—that of all places!"

"Come, Truxton," he said, "we must go to the Alcazar at once. I must get her out of that place as soon as possible. Come, Truxton come."

In a short time the two were seated in a box at the theatre.

When the great act finally came Harcourt leaned far out on the box railing, awaiting the dancer's appearance, which was heralded with a dreamy waltz by the orchestra and the sputtering of the calcium. Then a figure leaped lightly into the silver patch of radiance. It was clothed in a spangled costume, long and of ample folds, while covering the whole there fell from the crown of the head upon yard of the thinnest illusion.

Now the swaying figure was like burning gold, now like shining silver. At the next moment it looked as if bathed in blood; then changed to fiery red. Next followed such a rapid succession of colors as seemed beyond man's ingenuity to produce. Distant thunder began to rumble, with faint flashes of lightning. Louder and louder it grew, brighter and brighter became the lightning, each time bringing into view the undulating figure of the dancer. Then came a blinding flash, followed by a deafening roar. The bespangled figure fell to the floor, writhing in apparent agony. A few ghastly contortions, the uplifting of a snowy arm and the dance was over.

Harcourt sat through it all, entranced. He seemed to have forgotten everything save the mystic, gyrating figure. The evolution from one stage to another of the dance enthralled him. Even when it was all over he remained sitting, his eyes staring at the stage curtain. But Truxton finally roused him, and once out on the street, Harcourt turned to his friend and said:

"Jove, it was wonderful!" They walked on. Truxton wondered at the other's silence, but said nothing. When they reached Harcourt's home Truxton noticed his friend turn suddenly round and seizing him by the arm, cried out:

"My God, Truxton, I must go back! It was my wife. I had forgotten."

Truxton expostulated with him—tried to lead him up the steps into his home; but Harcourt was determined to go back to the theater, and Truxton, despairing of changing his mind, at last consented, and together they retraced their steps to the place of amusement.

"To think that I should forget she was my wife!" Harcourt repeated again and again.

The dancer had left when they reached the theater. The manager was standing in the lobby, and Harcourt opened up a conversation with him. He was a gruff man, and in a few words told that the dancer would receive no one, nor would she consent to accept written matter other than that relating to her vaudville engagements.

After this Harcourt tried his best to secure an interview with the dancer. He went to the theater night after night, waiting at the stage entrance to see her come out.

One evening he came home, and taking a revolver from his pocket, lit upon the table before him.

"You'll dance for the last time tonight, Nynganza," he said half aloud. "Your agony will not be feigned. The lightning will strike in earnest tonight."

He put the weapon into his pocket, donned his hat and coat, and went out into the street.

As the door closed after him Chalmers, the butler, roused up the stairs and along the hall to the rooms which Mrs. Harcourt had chosen to occupy. He rapped at the door. It was cautiously opened. A few moments' breathless conversation followed. Then Mrs. Harcourt cried out:

"Order the carriage, Chalmers, quick. Tell Marle to get ready with all speed. I must reach the Alcazar before—"

The door closed and Chalmers bounded through the passage.

Mrs. Harcourt succeeded in getting a box directly back of the one her husband occupied. There was but a thin silken curtain between them.

When the glittering figure appeared Mrs. Harcourt moved still closer to her husband, her eyes wild, her breath coming quickly. Her mind was centered upon reaching over and touching him—to speak a word that would tell him she was not there upon the stage, but in the box behind him, ready to forgive and forget. But she could not. The very knowledge of the impending tragedy turned her into a thing of stone.

The Presbyterians have just inaugurated a movement which takes in all three sides of the city. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman is directing the religious campaign, and such evangelists as Dr. John Robertson, of London; Dr. J. M. Gray, of Boston; Rev. Thomas Houston, the blind evangelist; Rev. A. H. Biedewolff, and a score of others, are his helpers. The Methodists have unitied in the series of meetings, and audiences are gathering nightly in various parts of the city which would make the departing opera singers green with envy if they would only tarry long enough to see them.

The vivid flashes of mock lightning now began to light up the stage. The thunder was gradually becoming louder. The figure on the stage was twisting, gyrating.

The final great flash was about to illuminate the stage. In the short interval of darkness Harcourt rapped at the door, and when Mrs. Harcourt saw it reflected upon the weapon in her husband's hand, she leaped over and touching him upon the arm, whispered:

"Arthur!"

The revolver fell from his grasp. He turned round, his face deathly, his eyes opened to their widest.

"Constance!" he cried softly. "Constance!"

When they reached the rear of the theater both looked back at the stage. In the dazzling light they saw a writhing figure, the uplifting of a snowy arm, then dense gloom.

Once more in the costly lighted drawing room Arthur Harcourt sat down and drew his wife to him.

"Constance," he said, "I did not know how dear you were to me until you had gone. Oh, how miserable I have been! I'll be different now. Constance, Forgive me."

"I forgive you, Arthur," the whispering.

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