

# A Live Wire

Every nerve is a live wire connecting some part of the body with the brain. They are so numerous that if you penetrate the skin with the point of a needle you will touch a nerve and receive a shock—pain it is called. Aches and pains come from a pressure, strain or injury to a nerve; the more prominent the nerve the greater the pain. When the pain comes from a large nerve it is called

## Nervalgia

whether it be the facial nerves, or the heart, stomach, sciatic or other prominent nerve branch. To stop pain, when you must relieve the strain or pressure upon the nerves. Dr. Miles' Anti-Pain Pills do this.

"I suffered intense pain, caused by neuralgic disorders and used various medicines without getting relief until I began taking Dr. Miles' Anti-Pain Pills. They did me more good than all the medicines I ever used. They never fail to cure my headaches, and their use never leaves any bad after-taste."

Mrs. WM. BECKMAN,  
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Dr. Miles' Anti-Pain Pills will guarantee that the first package will benefit. If it fails, he will return your money.  
25 doses, 25 cents. Never sold in bulk.  
Miles Medical Co., Elkhart, Ind.

# THE Masquerader

By KATHERINE CECIL THURSTON,  
Author of "The Circle," Etc.

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It was upon this same incomplete and yet temorous chain that his mind worked as he traversed the familiar streets and at last gained the house he had so easily learned to call home.

As he inserted the latchkey and felt it move smoothly in the lock a momentary revolt against his own judgment, his own censorship, swung him sharply toward reaction. But it is only the blind who can walk without a tremor on the edge of an abyss, and there was no longer a bandage across his eyes. The reaction flared up like a strip of lighted paper; then, like a strip of lighted paper, it dropped back to ashes. He pushed the door open and slowly crossed the hall.

The mounting of a staircase is often the index to a man's state of mind. As Loder ascended the stairs of Chilcote's house his shoulders lacked their stiffness, his head was no longer erect. He moved as though his feet were weighted. He had ceased to be the man of achievement whose smallest opinion compels consideration. In the privacy of solitude he was the mere human flotsam to which he had once compared himself—the flotsam that, dreaming it has found a harbor, wakes to find itself the prey of the incoming tide.

He paused at the head of the stairs to rally his resolutions. Then, still walking heavily, he passed down the corridor to Eve's room. It was suggestive of his character that, having made his decision, he did not delay over its performance. Without waiting to knock, he turned the handle and walked into the room.

He looked precisely as it always looked, but to Loder the rich, subdued coloring of books and flowers—the whole air of culture and repose that the place conveyed—seemed to hold a deeper meaning than before, and it was on the instant that his eyes, crossing the inanimate objects, rested on their owner that the true force of his position, the enormity of the task before him, made itself plain. Realization came to him with vivid, overwhelming force, and it must be accounted to his credit in the summing of his qualities that then, in that moment of trial, the thought of retreat, the thought of yielding, did not present itself.

Without answering, she walked to a cabinet that stood in the window, unlocked a drawer and drew out several sheets of flimsy white paper, crumpled in places and closely covered with writing. Without a word she carried them back and held them out. He took them in silence, scanned them, then looked up.

In a long, wordless pause their eyes met. It was as if each looked speechlessly into the other's heart, seeing the passions, the contradictions, the shortcomings, that went to the making of both. In that silence they drew closer together than they could have done through a torrent of words. There was no asking of forgiveness, no elaborate confession, on either side. In the deep, eloquent pause they mutually saw and mutually understood.

"When I came into the morning room today," Eve said at last, "and saw Lillian Astrupp reading that telegram nothing could have seemed farther from me than the thought that I should follow her example. It was not until afterward—not until he came into the room—until I saw that you, as I believed, had fallen back again from what I respected to what I despised—that I knew how human I really was. What has happened?" she said.

"You look like a ghost," Loder made no answer. Moving into the room, he paused by the oak table that stood between the fireplace and the door.

They made an unconscious tableau as they stood there—he with his hard, set face, she with her heightened color, her inexplicably bright eyes. They stood completely silent for a space that for Loder held no suggestion of time. Then, finding the tension unbearable, Eve spoke again.

"Has anything happened?" she asked. "Is anything wrong?"

Had he been less engrossed the intensity of her concern might have struck him, but in a mind so harassed as his there was only room for one consideration—the consideration of himself. The sense of her question reached him, but its significance left him untouched.

"Is anything wrong?" she reiterated for the second time.

By an effort he raised his eyes. No man, he thought, since the beginning of the world was ever set a task so cruel as his. Painfully and slowly his lips parted.

"Everything in the world is wrong," he said in a slow, hard voice.

Eve said nothing, but her color suddenly deepened.

Again Loder was unobservant, but with the dogged resolution that marked him he forced himself to his task.

"You despise lies," he said at last.

"Tell me what you would think of a man whose whole life was one elaborate lie." The words were slightly exaggerated, but their utterance, their painfully brusque sincerity, precluded all suggestion of effect. Resolutely holding her gaze, he repeated his question.

"Tell me! Answer me! I want to know."

Eve's attitude was difficult to read. She stood twisting the string of diamonds between her fingers.

"Tell me!" he said again.

She continued to look at him for a moment; then, as if some fresh impulse moved her, she turned away from him toward the fire.

"I cannot," she said. "We—I—I could not set myself to judge—any one."

Loder held himself rigidly in hand.

"Eve," he said quietly, "I was at the Arcadian tonight. The play was 'Other Men's Shoes.' I suppose you've read the book 'Other Men's Shoes?'

She was leaning on the mantelpiece, and her face was invisible to him. "Yes, I have read it," she said without looking round.

"It is the story of an extraordinary likeness between two men. Do you believe such a likeness possible? Do you think such a thing could exist?" He spoke with difficulty. His brain and tongue both felt numb.

Eve let the diamond chain slip from her fingers. "Yes," she said nervously. "You're quite right, I believe it. Such things have been."

Loder caught at the words. "You're quite right," he said quickly. "You're quite right. The thing is possible. I've proved it. I know a man so like me

connected with this great discovery—was not even suggestive of it. It was something quite immaterial to any real issue, but something that overshadowed every consideration in the world.

"Eve," he said, "tell me your first thought—your first thought after the shock and the surprise—when you remembered me."

There was a fresh pause, but one of very short duration; then Eve met his glance fearlessly and frankly. The same pride and dignity, the same indescribable tenderness that had responded to his first appeal, shone in his face.

"My first thought was a great thankfulness," she said simply. "A thankfulness that you—that no man—could ever understand."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

As she finished speaking Eve did not lower her eyes. To her there was no suggestion of shame in her thoughts or her words, but to Loder, watching and listening, there was a perilous meaning contained in both.

"Thankfulness?" he repeated slowly. From his newly stirred sense of responsibility pity and sympathy were gradually rising. He had never seen Eve as he saw her now, and his vision was all the clearer for the long oblivion. With a poignant sense of compassion and remorse, the knowledge of her youth came to him—the youth that some women preserve in the midst of the world when circumstances have permitted them to see much, but to experience little.

"Thankfulness?" he said again incredulously.

A slight smile touched her lips. "Yes," she answered softly—"thankfulness that my trust had been rightly placed."

She spoke simply and confidently, but the words struck Loder more sharply than any accusation. With a heavy sense of bitterness and renunciation he moved slowly forward.

"You saw him on that night?"

"Yes, and the sight chilled me. It was a big drop from supremacy to the remembrance of—everything."

Involuntarily she put out her hand.

But Loder shook his head. "No," he said; "don't pity me! The sight of him came just in time. I had a reaction in that moment, and, as such, it was, I acted on it. I went to him next morning and told him that the thing must end. But then—even then—I shirked being honest with myself. I had meant to tell him that it must end because I had grown to love you, but my pride rose up and tied my tongue. I could not humiliates myself. I put the case before him in another light. It was a tussle of wills, and I won, but the victory was not what it should have been.

That was proved today when he returned to tell me of the loss of this telegram. It wasn't the fear that Lady Astrupp had found it. It wasn't to save the position that I jumped at the chance of coming back. It was to feel the joy of living, the joy of seeing you, if only for a day!" For one second he turned toward her; then as abruptly he turned away again.

"I was still thinking of myself," he said. "I was still utterly self centered when I came to this room today and allowed you to talk to me, when I asked you to see me tonight as we parted at the club. I shan't tell you the thoughts that unconsciously were in my mind when I asked that favor. You must understand without explanation."

"I went to the theater with Lady Astrupp ostensibly to find how the land lay in her direction—really to heighten my self esteem. But there fate or the power we call by that name was lying in wait for me, ready to claim the first interest in the portion of life I had dared to borrow." He did not glance toward Eve as he had done in his previous pause. His whole manner seemed oppressed by the gravity of what he had still to say.

"I doubt if a man has ever seen more in half an hour than I have tonight," he said. "I'm speaking of mental seeing, of course. In this play, 'Other Men's Shoes,' two men change identities—as Chilcote and I have done—but in doing so they overlook one fact—the fact that one of them has a wife! That's not my way of putting it. It's the way it was put to me by one of Lady Astrupp's party."

Again Eve looked up. The doubt and question in her eyes had grown unmissable. As he ceased to speak her lips parted quickly.

"John," she said, with sudden conviction, "you're trying to say something—that's terribly hard."

Without raising his head Loder answered her. "Yes," he answered, "the hardest thing a man ever said!"

His tone was short, almost brusque, but so ears sharpened by instinct it was eloquent. Without a word Eve took a step forward and, standing quite close to him, laid both hands on his shoulders.

For a space they stood silent, she with her face lifted, he with averted eyes.

Some of the meaning in his face had found a pained, alarmed reflection in her own. But the awe and wonder of the morning's discovery still colored her mind too vividly to allow of other considerations possessing their proper value. The thrill of exultation with which the misgivings born of Chilcote's vice had dropped away from her mental image of Loder was still too absorbing to be easily dominated. She loved, and as if by a miracle her love had been justified! For the moment the justification was all sufficing. Something of confidence, something of the innocence that comes not from ignorance of evil, but from a mind singularly uncontaminated, blinded her to the danger of her position.

Loder, waiting apprehensively for some aid, some expression of opinion, became gradually conscious of this lack of realization. Moved by a fresh impulse, he crossed the small space that divided them and caught her hands.

"What is it?" Eve asked apprehensively. "What is it?"

By a swift involuntary movement she had tightened the pressure of her fingers, and, without using force, it was impossible for Loder to unloose them. With his hands pressed irresistibly over hers he looked down into her face.

"As I sat in the theater tonight, Eve," he said slowly, "all the pictures I had formed of life shifted. Without desiring it, without knowing it, my whole

point of view was changed. I suddenly saw things by the world's searchlight instead of by my own miserable candle. I suddenly saw things for you, instead of for myself."

Eve's eyes widened and darkened, but she said nothing.

"I suddenly saw the unpardonable wrong that I have done you, the imperative duty of cutting it short." He spoke very slowly in a dull, mechanical voice.

"Eve," he said gently, "I have been trying to analyze myself and give you the results, but I shan't try any more. I shall be quite plain with you."

"From the first to the last word of Eve's story Loder's eyes never left her face. Instantly she had finished his voice broke forth in irrepressible question. In that wonderful space of time he had learned many things. All his deductions, all his apprehensions, had been scattered and disproved. He had seen the true meaning of Lillian Astrupp's amused indifference—the indifference of a variable, flippant nature that, robbed of any real weapon for mischief, soon tires of a game that promises to be too arduous. He saw all this and understood it with a rapidity born of the moment; nevertheless, though more strongly, though more obscurely, by your underlying antagonism.

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She shook her head.

"It was the desire to stamp out Chilcote's footmarks with my own, to prove that personality is the great force capable of everything. I forgot to reckon on that when we draw largely upon Fate she generally exerts a crushing interest."

"First came the wish for your respect, then the desire to stand well with such men as Fraude—to feel the stir of emulation and competition—to prove myself strong in the one career I knew myself fitted for. For a time the second ambition overshadowed the first, but the first was bound to reassert itself, and in a moment of egotism I conceived the notion of winning your enthusiasm as well as your respect."

Eve's face, alert and questioning, suddenly paled as a doubt crossed her mind.

"Then it was only—only to stand well with me?"

"I believed it was only the desire to stand well with you. I believed it until the night of my speech—if you can credit anything so absurd. Then on that night, as I came up the stairs to the gallery and saw you standing there, the blindness fell away, and I knew that I loved you." As he said the last words he released her hands and turned aside, missing the quick wave of joy and enthusiasm that crossed her face.

"I knew it, but it made no difference. I was only moved to a higher self glorification. I touched supremacy that night. But as we drove home I experienced the strangest coincidence of my life. You remember the block in the attic at Piccadilly?"

"Again Eve bent her head.

"Well, when I looked out of the carriage window to discover its cause the first man I saw was Chilcote."

Eve started slightly. This swift, unexpected linking of Chilcote's name with the most exalted moment of her life stirred her unpleasantly. Some glimmering of Loder's intention in so linking it broke through the web of disturbed and conflicting thoughts.

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