

**DISILLUSION, IN
THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Disillusion, in three volumes, Vol. II by Dorothy Forsyth

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DOROTHY FORSYTH

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THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

DISILLUSION

DISILLUSION

A Story with a Preface

BY

DOROTHY LEIGHTON

AUTHOR OF 'AS A MAN IS ABLE'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER IX

'Not a word for you,
Not a look or a kiss,
 Good-bye.
We, one, must part in two :
Verily, Death is this,
 I must die.'

CHRISTINA ROSSSETTI.

THERE are always some moments in a man's life which register themselves indelibly, with all their accompanying sensations and associations, on his brain ; and that in which Mark Sergison went in search of Celia to break the news to her of her father's death was one of these. He never forgot how she looked when he found her. She was still standing talking to Watson, and leaning against a black pillar, one hand thrown carelessly behind her, the other swaying to and fro a large red fan, which

disturbed the air and lightly blew her hair about. Her face was in profile, and it stood out on a background of gold lent by a thick Oriental curtain of rich colour, bringing to his mind with vivid force those lines of Browning's :

'If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile . . .

Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts !'

A military band was playing in the distance, and above the buzz and roar of voices the strains of a plaintive Russian melody made themselves heard, sounding to Mark's hyper-sensitive ear like a funeral dirge.

All this noise and crowd! all this badinage and frivolity! and in sharp contrast the news

of the sudden, awful tragedy that he was bringing into the midst of the gay throng!

He felt unnerved by it, and Celia's voice, in laughing retort at some light remark of Watson's, struck painfully on his ear.

'Can I speak with you a moment, Miss Adair?' he said, coming close up to her and speaking in as quiet and steady a tone as he could command.

She stopped in her chatter and looked quickly at him.

'What is it?' she asked, with a faint tinge of irritation.

'I want to speak to you, please,' he repeated, with quiet emphasis.

She frowned a little, for she hated mysteries, and the expression on Watson's face annoyed her.

'You can say it,' she said, imperiously, wishing him to understand by her tone that she could have no secrets with him.

‘Do you mind coming outside for a second, Miss Adair?’ he persisted. ‘I really must speak to you alone.’

He looked so grave as he spoke, that, wholly against her inclination, she felt compelled to yield; and shrugging her shoulders she said, laughing a little scornfully, to Alec, ‘Quite mysterious! I’ll come back—don’t vanish; I want some tea directly.’

Mark walked with her across the room to the landing outside, which was the only quite secluded spot he could devise, knowing all the time how much she was hating to obey his wishes in this way. As soon as they were beyond ear-shot she exclaimed petulantly, ‘What does this all mean, Mr. Sergison? I do hate secrets. Do be quick and have done with it; it looks so ridiculous.’

Something in his face suddenly told her that he was going to tell her bad news, and