

For the Favorite.
WINONA;
 OR,
THE FOSTER-SISTERS.

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CHAPTER XVII.

MISS BERTRAND'S NEW CONQUEST.

"Glad to see you, I'm sure," said Spooner, kindling into a faint animation, as Archie strode into the reading room of the Rosins, where he was improving his mind with a relishing murder case from one of the English papers. All Spooner's predilections and ideas were of the faintest kind; but by a strange anomaly his soul panted for the most gory and hair-raising literature that could be procured. He would not willingly have injured a kitten, but his heart sang within him when he lighted on such pleasing domestic tragedies as young agricultural gentlemen of acquisitive idiosyncrasies smashing the heads of their venerable bedridden relatives, in order to possess themselves of the sum of "two bob and a tanner," as one youth playfully mentioned it in his last speech and confession.

Engrossed as Spooner was in a spicy account of the murder of a whole family of promising children by their affectionate father, he flung down the paper and got up to welcome Archie, who was a great favorite with his brother officers. Faint rumors of Archie's adventures in the wilds were rife amongst his set in Toronto, and as it had got about that Cecil Bertrand had "sold" himself about him, he returned to find himself a man of some note. Cecil was reported to be "down no end of a pit" about the affair; and as there were heavy bets pending as to whether she'd "hook" him again or not, his presence was very much required.

"A Jove, sir!" said Spooner, shaking hands with him. "I'm glad you're back. It's no end of dull work here just now; nothing but girls (he was not long from school), and a fellow gets bored to death with the way a fellow's hunted up, you know. Eh? you know?"

"I understand," laughed Archie. "How are you all getting on? How's the charming Flora?"

Flora was the pretty presiding deity at the flower shop, about whom Spooner was always in a state of profound despair. He bought stacks of flowers and lingered in the perfumed neighborhood of her tower at all hours, sucking his cane and adoring her through the eye-glass, watched grimly from the opposite side of the road by young Damask, the upholsterer, who was "engaged" to the pretty Flora, and who had been known to utter dark and malign speeches concerning the precarious hold Ensign Spooner would have on this life "if he caught him at it!"

"It's a dance of a shame, you know, the way she treats a fellow," replied Spooner, sentimentally. "I've nearly ruined myself buying flowers from her. Why, there's not a book at my rooms but is full of them pressed, and I have to keep giving 'em away to other girls, and then they fancy a fellow means something, you know. She's the star of my existence; and whatever sinister view my grandmother and aunts may take of me and call me a young fool, which they have not hesitated to do before this, I'll make her the bride of a soldier and carve out a fortune for her on the battle-field; besides which, you know, my uncle Joe allows me a hundred a year. She's a regular downright angel, you know, and I can't live without her."

Spooner's juvenile affection, to do him justice, was an honest sentiment, such as it was, and very ardent for the time.

"Well, with that little affair on your hands, you can't find it so dull," remarked Archie, smiling.

Every one liked Spooner, and with Archie, who had a natural affinity to everything that tended towards the best and purest, the honest,

simple-minded boy was a great favorite, and in return, he was the confidant of Spooner's love troubles.

"Oh, well," said Spooner, ruefully, "you see you can't manage to call in more than once a day, and then it gushes one's feelings most awfully to find her most likely behind the oleander bushes talking to that Damask, the red-headed beast! Billiards are all very well, but they don't seem much when your existence is a howling wilderness, only inhabited by a grandmother and aunts who are always down on a fellow with trusts and wholesome advice if a fellow's letter home only smells of a cigar. Macer was a bit of excitement, but he's gone."

"Macer," said Archie, thoughtfully. "I remember I met him with Donville. Mish with a great black beard, wasn't he?"

"Yes," said Spooner, "and played a jolly good game. He left here the morning after you passed through. Going home to Scotland, he said."

Archie nodded. Macer's face was vividly before him, though he had seen him only twice, for a brief instant each time, but how often have we all seen faces flitting past in a crowd that haunt us for years, with no volition of our

measurably more so, than death itself, had he married Cecil before his eyes were open to her true character, and as yet he did not know what a dark shadow her falsehood had thrown across the light of his gentle sister's life. He had received no hint from Olla that Cecil had written announcing her engagement to Theodore Denville. Had he known this, how many bitter hours it might have spared poor Olla!

People found him, Archie, exceedingly reticent concerning his adventures, and no amount of "chaff" drew an enlightening retort from him. He let them speculate to their hearts' content, and extraordinary were the romances that grew out of faint inklings of truth and strong touches of the imagination.

Cecil was in, not despair, she was too young and pretty for that, but she found she had placed herself in a dilemma, from which it would take all her tact to extricate herself. Lovely as she was, men who knew the story of the Fraser-Denville affair, though they flirted as of yore, avoided sentiment, and, what was a great deal more injurious to her "matrimonial chances," people laughed at her discomfiture. A woman may, and often does, ride triumphant over a tempest of hate, slander and malice, but show me the

thing of that nature, in the possession of which, the higher and vaster his love, the greater power to do and dare amongst his fellow-men develops. A student, he had known no life beyond his books; a lover, the dream of fame was forgotten, and he lived but in his love. He might, as a soldier, a statesman, even an artist, have risen on the wings of fiery enthusiasm, but he could not entertain in his soul a second guest.

Had his steps not strayed into the golden mists and fragrant paths of rose-bordered love-land, whence he had no power to emerge, his life would have known nothing of its sweet influence.

To do Cecil justice, her ideas of love represented merely a state in which the sterner sex became decidedly "soft," and developed a pleasing tendency to bestow gifts on the objects of their affections. Of the great life of the heart she was totally ignorant; of the tragic possibilities or lovely hopes that the potent wizard, love, might trace on the web of life, she neither knew nor cared, and according to her light so must she be judged.

He was a handsome lad, innately elegant and refined, and it pleased her vanity that he should grace her triumph. She had no vision of her chariot wheels crimsoning themselves in his blood. Archie and she bowed when they met and passed on smiling, but if ever Cecil knew a real, substantial sentiment, it was a keen desire to revenge the failure of her plans on him whom she had deliberately cast off. As for Archie, occasionally he felt a little ashamed that, like Romeo, he had so speedily lost all memory of his love for Rosaline in the present power of his affection for Juliet.

And so the first snow fell, and the fotters of ice were cast on the mighty waters of the land!

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIDNEY'S ADVENTURE.

The air was full of life that nipped your blood until it danced through your veins glowing and tingling. The sky was a real Canadian winter sky, cloudless and intensely blue, with a sun rolling through it like an orb of lustrous gold. The solemn pines were

crested with snow, and the limbs of every tree, the outline of every object open to the weather were traced in the pearly shower, that drifted before the frolicsome wind, like a fine vapor, in wreaths that caught a diamond glitter from the morning sun.

It was a morning to walk or drive fast, to think hopefully of leaden troubles, to feel an exhilaration of the brain and heart that no breath of summer ever brought, a morning on which it was impossible to fold the hands and say "I despair." It was intensely cold, cold enough to whiten the black beard and moustache of a gentleman walking briskly along the Brampton road, and cold enough to have formed ice half a foot deep on currentless pools and still waters, though the St. Lawrence still rolled proudly free, soon however to succumb to the breath of King Frost.

The Brampton road was a quiet country highway, not lacking a few hundred acres of dense forest, for a part of its length, a cedar swamp unavailing for culture, smelling spicy in the clear air, and making a densely green avenue paved this morning with virgin snow, and as dazzling in the sunlight as an enchanted road of burnished silver.

Up this radiant white path the solitary pedestrian strode, admiring nature through a pair of blue-tinted spectacles, and whistling merrily as he faced the wind; a tall, black form in the universal brightness, occasionally standing aside, as a gay cutter whirled past, all jingling silver bells and waving fox-skins, or a wood or wheat sleigh glided past, the owner perched aloft cracking his long whip, serenely content as he carried his honestly toiled-for wealth to a secure market.

Emerging from the swamp, he came on a deep pool by the road-side, coated with incrust ice, and shining amid the snow like a diamond laid on ivory. Fringed daintily with low, feathery cedars, their dark green flecked with snow, and guarded by a mighty pine, that reared its dark spire into the cloudless blue; every branch and clinging cone, defined blackly as though carved in jet, against its dazzling background.

A snake-fence reared it from the road, and the gentleman paused by it for a moment and looked through his blue spectacles at the glittering pool.

Two young girls were flying hither and



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own in the matter? Rising like a spectre and so departing.

Archie and Spooner strolled up King street, and then the former left him and went to the offices of the two principal papers and left with each a copy of an advertisement, to appear in their daily issues. It contained an accurate description of Winona, and offered a handsome reward to any one who would bring intelligence of her to the advertiser. Archie did not stop here, for against the evening the dead walls and fences were alive with small posters containing a repetition of the advertisement. It was placed in bar-rooms, saloons, close to churches, on the wharves, headed by the magic word in large capitals, "Reward." In order to avoid question and remark, the two dailies appeared as the advertisers, and none suspected how nearly Archie was connected with the mysterious placards that excited no little comment and curiosity amongst those who have time to be curious in the hurry and bustle of a Canadian city.

It was, in the course of a week, scattered broadcast over Upper and Lower Canada, and copied into every paper along the front, but for some time there came not the slightest clue to the missing girl.

Archie developed a restlessness, and at times an irritability quite foreign to his usual even and cordial nature; and people remarked on it in various ways. Some said the breaking off of his engagement with Miss Bertrand was the cause; but as that young lady allowed him to see that he could easily remedy that if he were so minded, the gossip was at fault as to the cause of the change in him. When off duty he haunted the depots and the wharves; but of course no one dreamed of connecting the disappearance of the Indian girl with the romantic name and Archie's disquietude.

He kept out of Cecil's way carefully, for he had not the faintest desire to renew the old tie between them; and the gossip of the city soon informed him as to Miss Bertrand's true reason for casting him off.

He laughed to himself good-humoredly at the manner in which the little coquette had dug a pit for her own dainty feet, and thanked his good angel that had led him out of her toils in time. It would have been as bitter, nay, im-

woman who does not succumb to the shafts of ridicule!

Any hope of bringing Prancer up "to the point" had faded into thin air, and Cecil, for the first time during her society life found herself without a betrothal ring blazing forth her triumphs on her pretty finger. Flirting was all very well, but she liked a seasoning of serious matter, and pro tem, she spread her shining net for a cousin of her own, a tall, slight, shy boy, who had emerged from the silent forest in which he had been born and bred, to study at the University.

She "read up" with dismal yawns Te ryson and Mrs. Barrett Browning for his benefit, and sentimentalized until she had him bound to her chariot wheels. Above all, she patronized him. She revolutionized his neck-ties, she taught him to dance, she told him what tailor to employ. She swept his foolish young head clear of

every dream of fame, fortune or ambition, and filled it with her own seductive image. She was like some lovely young vampire of society drawing the heart-blood of some tender and appetizing young victim, while she fanned him asleep with her gay wings. People watched the affair with a rather sober interest. Percy Grace was just one of those who, when once they love, surrender reason, prudence, nay, even religion, and live but in the light of the meteor they pursue. Some men, happily by far the greater number, find in love the exquisite and gentle light that cheers them on through the hard struggle of practical life; it is a flower they wear on their breasts, delighting in its all-permeating fragrance and beauty. While their hands are clinging to the ladder of wealth and fame, their gaze is fixed on the shining heights towards which they labor. When the laurel or bay is won, love shines amid the garland, the chiefest ornament, the most beloved, because only for its cheering presence, the sturdy heart had oftener failed, the onward step faltered. To such men love is an inciter to noble deeds, greater and purer than any other, the tender and holy light cast upon the way; not the meteor that absorbs, dazzles, chains the powers of mind and body in a rapt worship, and disappearing, leaves a horrid blackness, a void and death of the soul that seeks for peace in a sister death of the body.

Percy Grace could be but one. He knew no-