

A TERRIBLE WEDDING TRIP.

CHAPTER I.

My life, on the whole, has been commonplace and uneventful enough. Nevertheless there stands out one episode, so strange and fearful, that even at this distance of time I am unable to contemplate it without a shudder. Before narrating it I must introduce myself and give a brief account of my antecedents.

I was born in India. Of my father, who was a surgeon in the army, I have but an indistinct recollection, for he died before I had attained the age of seven, and his kind face has faded into a dim memory. Very vividly, however, can I recall my mother's grief at his loss, and the sad voyage which followed from India to her native country, England. I was too young at the time to feel very acutely either my father's death or the reverse of fortune which accompanied it; but the fact that we were left with no other means of support than the small pension of an officer's widow and child was a bitter aggravation of mamma's trial. Naturally extravagant, the practice of economy was a new and difficult task for her. Prompted, however, by her excessive devotion to myself, she learned it well; and it is to the exercise of a rigid self-denial on her part that I owe the very liberal education which she contrived to afford me. Unable to support the expense of a house, however small, we lived during the first ten years after coming to England in lodgings. But at the close of that period, when I had accordingly reached the age of seventeen, an event occurred which produced a welcome change in our position. Upon the death of her half sister—a wealthy widow, who, with the exception of her son, Mr. Hugh Fernley, had been our only relative in England—mamma found herself possessed, in addition to the legacy of a few thousand pounds, of a prettily furnished cottage in Westmoreland.

To our new home we removed forthwith; but though at first highly delighted both with it and the charming scenery by which it was surrounded, we soon found that a residence in the rural village of Elstonlee was not without its drawbacks. Pleasant as it was during the summer season to ramble about in fragrant woods and country lanes, these innocent recreations palled in time; and when the long winter months succeeded and our door life became less enjoyable, the loneliness and seclusion of the place oppressed us, and I learned to consider Woodbine Cottage as by no means a paradise. Our society consisted of the rector and his wife and Dr. Adair. The latter was a gentleman about forty years of age, a bachelor, well educated and intelligent, but rather sedate. As the only physician in the neighborhood, he enjoyed an extensive practice, his services being in requisition for miles of the country around our village. Undoubtedly a clever practitioner and having a gentle and sympathetic nature, the doctor was a universally esteemed and welcome guest, but it was at Woodbine Cottage that he elected to spend most of his spare time.

Constituting himself from the first a friend of the family, he took an untiring interest in all our little affairs, and mamma and I had reason to be grateful for innumerable kindnesses rendered. His evening calls became more frequent and prolonged as the time passed on; and as they formed the only breaks in the monotony of our lives we were not sorry when they grew to be of even daily occurrence. Gifted with a wonderfully retentive memory and possessing a large amount of wit, our friend proved an agreeable companion. Though never appearing to exert himself for our entertainment, he would at each visit manage to amuse us by the relation of an anecdote or, when he could do so without betraying professional confidence, by the repetition of some local gossip. Regularly each evening mamma and he would indulge in a few games at back gammon; whilst I would drown the noise of rattling dice beneath the sweeter sounds of Handel's water music, Bach's symphonies or Beethoven's sonatas. Dr. Adair was passionately fond of music; and not infrequently at the conclusion of a game he would lean for a few moments over the back of my chair, silently watching my fingers as they strayed over the keys of the piano.

One evening, some two years after our settlement in Elstonlee, I had been playing with rather more taste and pathos than usual, and the doctor had taken his favorite position, when, happening to glance upwards, I detected an expression upon his face which brought the warm blood rushing in a torrent over my cheek and brow. It was the suddenness of the revelation which had broken upon me, and not any pleasure that I derived from it, which made my heart palpitate so rapidly as I continued the melody. Until that instant I had never conceived such a thing as possible, yet that one glance had sufficed to convince me that the elderly physician was my lover. Had I needed further assurance of the fact, it

was forthcoming, for upon the following day I received from him an offer of marriage. This, though with much distress on his account, I was obliged to decline, for I had learned to regard the good doctor rather in the light of a father, and could not now feel for him a warmer sentiment. For three days this contretemps disturbed the pleasant relationship which had subsisted between us; but upon the fourth Dr. Adair reappeared at the house. There was a shade of gravity discernible in his demeanor for some time afterwards, but the offer was not again alluded to, and by degrees we fell into our former manner of intercourse.

Equanimity, however, had not long been restored to our little party before it was again discomposed by anxiety on account of the state of my health. A severe cold had settled upon my lungs, appetite had entirely forsaken me, and day by day I was growing paler and thinner. Mamma nursed me indistinctly, whilst the doctor's kindness and attention were unremitting. Still there was no improvement, and the fear of consumption began to loom over our horizon. Winter approached, and my obstinate cough defying all remedies, our medical adviser, though with evident reluctance, expressed his opinion that it would be advisable for me to spend it in a warmer climate. Mamma at once resolved to follow his recommendation, which I hailed with pleasure, as not only affording the prospect of recovered health, but also of some change from our quiet and solitary life. Consultations followed as to the best locality for the winter quarters, and after a little hesitation between the rival merits of Ventnor and Torquay, decision was given in favor of the latter place. A preliminary bustle ensued, and we left Westmoreland for the more genial south.

Arrived at our destination we took up our residence in a fashionable boarding house or private hotel. Albyn Hall stood in extensive grounds of its own, occupying a delightful situation; and the establishment, which was large and furnished with elegance, was in every respect well conducted. The season having commenced before our arrival at Torquay, the house was already well filled, and whilst the whole party was social, many of the guests to my satisfaction were young. It did not lessen my content to find that they were also gay, and that it was customary for the more quiet and elderly people to retire each evening to one of the drawing rooms, whilst the other would resound with music and dancing. It took me some time to get accustomed to our new life, offering as it did so great a contrast to the existence which we had of late been leading. But I began to feel quite at home, and delighting in society my gratification daily increased. I had never before felt so happy, and to my exuberant spirits was in a great measure to be attributed the almost miraculous improvement which took place in my health.

We had been at Torquay about two months, when one evening I sauntered into the drawing room to await there the ringing of the dinner bell. Several gentlemen were dispersed about the apartment, reading newspapers or chatting upon politics, and amongst them was one lady. A glance showed me that this was Lady Janet Griffiths, an especial favorite of mine; and seating myself by her side I was admiring some lace work upon which she was engaged, when the tones of an unfamiliar voice struck upon my ear. Looking up I observed that a stranger sat directly opposite us, conversing with poor Herr Ferberhard, a young German, who was endeavoring by a winter in Torquay to prolong his life.

The new comer was a handsome man, apparently about twenty-eight years of age. His features were finely cut, and his clear complexion contrasted well with his black hair and moustache. His eyes were large and dark, and his figure was finely moulded. Never before had I seen so singularly impressed as I was by this gentleman. Having once or twice encountered his glance I felt my behavior to be anything but feminine, so I turned to Lady Griffiths and strove to interest myself in her work. Mamma was late that evening, and as I waited until she made her appearance we were the last to enter the dining room. Upon reaching my usual place at the table I could not help feeling a sensation of pleasure on perceiving that the stranger had been accommodated with a seat next to my own; and so interesting did his conversation prove that the hour of dinner passed but too rapidly. There was no dancing that evening. Mr. St. Julien—that was the name of my new acquaintance—was my partner in a game at whist, and he still kept his place by my side when it was finished.

That evening was but the prototype of those which followed; Mr. St. Julien continued to select me as the principal object of his attentions. How happy I was as day by day our friendship deepened and the conviction forced itself upon me that Herbert St. Julien was falling in love with

me! It was so. He loved me with an ardor and devotion equal to that which I bestowed upon him in return; and in little more than six weeks from the day I had first met him Herbert St. Julien and I were affianced. Rejoicing in my joy, mamma readily gave her consent to the betrothal, and expressed perfect satisfaction with the account Mr. St. Julien had given of himself. This was briefly that, with the exception of a sister-in-law, he had no relation in the world; that he had latterly been living in Cambridge, where he had a house; but that, having been seriously ill, he had been recommended to travel. He had not intended to remain at Torquay longer than a week, as he was merely taking the place on his way to Italy; and had it not been for the 'sweet cause' of his change of plan, he would now have been at his estate upon Lake Como.

The mention of this latter particular brings me to notice the only thing which occasioned me any uneasiness with regard to my future prospects; for from all I could gather, my intended husband was a man of enormous wealth; from time to time he would mention by name some castle, property or estate belonging to him until it appeared to me that he had possessions in almost every European country. These possessions I presently learned to regard with positive dislike, perceiving that the responsibility of wealth and the care of so much landed property was a source of much solicitude to my lover. Indeed he allowed this anxiety to become oppressive. It seemed to me that a change passed over Mr. St. Julien's face whenever his estates formed the subject of conversation, and that his dark eyes, usually so calm, took a different expression and wandered from one object to another with a kind of uneasiness. This peculiarity did not attract mamma's notice; but convinced that it was not imagination upon my part, and attributing it to the cause I have mentioned, I quietly resolved that so soon as we were married I would persuade Mr. St. Julien to dispose of some of these estates, and thus to lessen his care. My determination upon this point was strengthened when I found that, whilst I was myself better than I had ever been in my life, poor Herbert's health declined rather than otherwise from the time of our engagement.

The illness from which he had before suffered at but rare intervals now became of frequent occurrence. Knowing that he had been recommended to travel, and believing that this would be the most efficacious remedy for his indisposition, mamma and I endeavored to persuade him to leave Torquay at once for the continent, more especially as we were ourselves upon the point of returning to Westmoreland. But to this proposition he could not be induced to listen, except on condition that I should accompany him as his wife. And so persistently did he urge that our marriage should take place at once that mamma at last gave in, and passing over to his side, expressed her opinion that Herbert's proposed journey to the continent might just as well be our wedding trip. Against these united forces there was no reason for my holding out, and before long I had given a not very reluctant consent that the marriage should take place within a month.

(To be Continued.)

A Shallow Argument Exploded.

If all the wealth in the world were divided equally to-day, by to-morrow or next day or a week later, there would again be inequality. This is a platitude with which callow philosophers, learned and illiterate think they completely answer all who advocate a reform in our system of social economy. And they add, that though an equal division were made the wealth would inevitably find its way into the hands of the shrewd, the industrious and the frugal, and in a very little time the shiftless and the improvident would be as needy and wretched as before. Now though it is true that under conditions equally fair to all, the frugal, industrious and intelligent would naturally have more of the comforts and luxuries of life than would those destitute of these virtues, it by no means follows that under the present social conditions the wealth of the world is divided on the same ratio and money the people of intelligence, industry and frugality. To assert that it is to insult our reasoning power.

Yet we repeat, and the contrary cannot be maintained, if all men had the full measure of their national rights; if no unjust law or custom existed; if society were so constituted as to guarantee to every human being, first, equal access to the natural sources of wealth and, second, undisturbed enjoyment of the results of his labor, the distribution of the world's wealth would be in exact proportion to the world's intelligence, frugality and industry.—Sunday Truth.

The union cigarmakers of Chicago have announced to their bosses that they will demand an advance on May 4, and they will strike in case of being refused.

SAVED BY A HAIR.

It was a dark and stormy night without, and I drew my chair closer to the fire as I sipped my tea and regaled myself with the news of the local paper. As the storm and sleet rattled furiously against the window and pedestrians hurried by, anxious to reach a place of shelter, I felt thankful that I was not obliged to leave my comfortable home for the night.

'What's this?' I said, as my eye alighted on a startling paragraph.

'Mysterious murder! Mr. John Randolph, one of our old and wealthy citizens, was this morning found dead in his room, having been murdered during the night by some unknown person. Edgar Morton, a clerk in his employ, and who was soon to be married to his daughter, has been arrested for murder, and circumstances are said to be against him.'

Now, although I am usually among the first to hear of criminal news from the nature of my business, this was the first intimation I had received that such a murder had been done. This seemed very strange, as I was on the very best of terms with Mr. Randolph and his whole family.

'And so this is the way that Edgar Morton repays the benefactor of his youth! Yet no,' I cried; 'I will stake my life on that young man's innocence.'

As I spoke there came a gentle tap at the door, followed almost immediately by the entrance of my deceased friend's daughter, Cecilia Randolph.

'Excuse me, Mr. Ferguson, for entering uninvited, but urgent business must be my only excuse.'

'Be seated, Miss Randolph,' I said, rising and handing her a chair.

'Oh, Mr. Ferguson!' she sobbed forth, burying her face in her hands; 'that I should ever be obliged to come to you on such an errand as this!'

I endeavored to quiet her and partially succeeded, when I drew from her what few facts she knew regarding her father's death.

'He retired last night at the usual hour, apparently in good spirits, and no sound was heard during the night to cause any alarm. In the morning, as he failed to appear at breakfast, a servant was dispatched to summon him. Knocking at the door and receiving no answer, he finally opened it and advanced into the room. What a sight did he then behold! My poor father lay upon his bed with his throat cut! Death must have come suddenly—so suddenly as to prevent an outcry—and the unknown assassin had no trouble in making his escape.'

'But,' I said, 'I can't see why any one should suspect Edgar of the murder.'

'That is the most mysterious part of the sad affair. This morning, when Edgar was told of the murder, he turned very pale, reeled and would have fallen to the ground had not support been given him. Some of the ignorant beholders of this scene thought his actions denoted guilt, and an officer was summoned, who at once insisted on searching his room. A razor, on which was several spots of blood, was found concealed under the carpet, together with an old suit of clothes belonging to Edgar, which was bespattered with blood. This was considered sufficient evidence to warrant his arrest, and he now lies in jail charged with the awful crime of murder. O, Mr. Ferguson! if you can do anything to save him, and at the same time bring the guilty perpetrator of the deed to justice, I will amply reward you.'

'Do you know of any enemies of your father or of Edgar who would be likely to commit such a crime, either for robbery or revenge?' I asked.

'Oh,' she replied, 'it was not done for robbery, as everything in the room was as my father left it the night before. His watch and pocket book, the latter containing a good sum of money, were found in his room, so that the crime must have been committed to gratify a fiendish thirst for revenge.'

'Now, then, who of all your acquaintances could do such a thing?'

'I cannot say. My father had not an enemy in the world, to my knowledge, or Edgar either—unless, perhaps, it might be Conrad Smithers, my father's book keeper and head clerk. But it would be impossible for him to do such a deed.'

'What reason have you for suspecting that he is not Edgar's friend?'

'Only this: Some time ago Conrad, whom we have always regarded as one of the family, proposed for my hand, and I told him it was not mine to give. 'I suspected as much,' he muttered. And then, while his features assumed an appearance perfectly fearful, he continued: 'But you shall never become the wife of Edgar Morton while I have life to prevent it.' He then turned and abruptly left my presence. I was much alarmed and thought of speaking to my father about it; but during the afternoon he returned and begged my forgiveness for the words he had used, and made such professions of sorrow in regard to them that I freely forgave him, and have since thought no more of the matter.'

'The fact is quite clear to me,' I said 'I know this fellow well and the sort of company he keeps, and I should not be surprised to find that he committed the murder. Now, then, I want to see the body of your father and the room in which the deed was done.'

'Well, Mr. Ferguson,' she said, rising and preparing to accompany me, 'you will find everything as it was when first discovered. The officer decided not to disturb anything until after the inquest, which takes place to-morrow forenoon.'

Wrapping myself up in my great coat, we set out; and after a brisk walk of ten minutes reached the handsome residence of my companion. I was at once shown to the room of the murdered man, and then began making such an examination as only a detective knows how to make. Circumstances of the most trivial character, which would be overlooked by an ignorant person, are often seized upon by a skilful detective, and sometimes constitute the most damaging evidence of guilt. In this case, however, everything had been done in the most skilful manner, and I could not succeed in making any discovery.

I was about to leave the room in despair, when, glancing toward the bed, I noticed what appeared to be a slight scratch upon the neck of the murdered man just above the wound which had so cruelly let out his life's blood. On examination I found it to be nothing more than a hair, which had in some manner probably become loosened from the head of the assailant and had settled on the neck of the victim, where it now lay, a silent yet truthful witness, pointing out the guilty wretch to the eye of justice. The hair was of a deep red color, which was totally unlike that of any of the household. It was, indeed, the same color and shade as that of Conrad Smithers.

I placed it carefully in my pocket book, and saying nothing to any one of my discovery, started for the residence of Smithers, intent on doing a little acting. I found him, as his attendant said, ill in bed, and on no account must he be disturbed.

This sickness is but a stratagem, I thought, to divert suspicion.

Telling the woman I wanted to see him but for a moment on the most urgent business, she finally reluctantly consented to my entrance. I found him lying upon a bed, apparently in great pain. In my youth I had studied medicine, and was consequently well informed in such matters, and I saw at once, with a quick glance, that he was only feigning sickness. He started up somewhat angrily as I entered, but I silenced him with a motion of my hand.

'Conrad Smithers, this is a desperate game you are playing, but it will avail you nothing.'

'What do you mean?' he exclaimed, springing to his feet, his illness all gone.

'I mean that the game is up, and the murderer of John Randolph is discovered.'

Thrown completely off his guard, as I had anticipated, he sank into a chair, and burying his face in his hands, sobbed out, 'Lost! lost!'

'Do you confess the murder, then?'

'I do,' he answered, 'now that concealment is no longer of use.'

I took him at once into custody, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him change places with Edgar Morton.

Conrad Smithers was tried for the murder; and knowing that any defence would be useless after his confession to me, he pleaded guilty and threw himself upon the mercy of the court, which sentenced him to imprisonment for life.

It needs scarcely be explained that the villain Smithers had found an opportunity of visiting Edgar Morton's room in his absence and possessed himself of the razor and the articles of clothing. After the commission of the murder he had returned to the apartments and deposited the blood stained evidences of his crime, thus incriminating Edgar.

About a year after I received an invitation to the wedding of Cecilia Randolph and Edgar Morton, who live most happily together, and never cease thanking me that Edgar was saved by a hair.

Carrying out the Provisions of a Will.

Oi hear that rich owld uncle of your'n are dead and buried, Tarrance.

He are, Moiles.

And phwat the divil sort uv a will wex that he med, Oi doan' know? The owld amadhaun, shure Oi always thought he wex cracked, but the oidee of lavin instroocshuns to hev twenty-foive thousand dollars buried with him! And you wex execoatix, Tarrance?

Faith, that Oi was.

An' did you folly out the provishuns of the will?

Oi did that.

And wex it goold ye put in the coffin?

It wex not.

Silver?

Divil a ha'porth.

Paper money?

Not a whit.

An' phwat thin?

Shure, I signed a check payable to his orther for the amoont and shtuck it in his phist whin they closed the lid.