

Farmer Grabbal Talks.

This is Me! I'm standing in my barn door. Smokin' city seagars...

TWICE MARRIED.

CHAPTER XVII.

The weeks rolled by, and gradually Mrs. Mason grew convalescent. She was still confined to her room...

She had been playing a long time one evening in April, and had left the piano for a low chair beside the open fire...

The front door opened quietly—it was always on the latch—and footsteps came along the hall...

Thorne came across the room, and stood opposite, a great light of joy in his eyes, his hands outstretched for hers...

Thorne murmured, speaking softly and keeping a tight rein over himself. "Your eyes are like a startled fawn's..."

"How frightened you look, my darling," Thorne murmured, speaking softly and keeping a tight rein over himself...

"You knew I loved you, Princess," he repeated. "Yes, you must have known. Love like mine could not be concealed..."

Thorne started slightly, but commanded himself. It was the former marriage; the divorce; it felt it keenly...

tenderness, "you know why I have come—why it was impossible for me to keep away. I love you, Princess, as a man loves but once in his life..."

"I know of what you are thinking, Princess. I know the idea that has taken possession of your mind. You have heard of my former marriage, and you know that the woman who was my wife still lives..."

"Listen to me, Princess. That woman—Ethel Ross—is my wife no longer, even in name; she ceased to be my wife in fact two years ago..."

"I had no right to speak then; nothing can excuse or palliate the weakness which allowed me to. I should have waited until I could have come to you untrammelled..."

"I can not understand, Mr. Thorne, that love for me suggested the thought of divorcing your wife?" she questioned hoarsely...

"Princess," he said, meeting the honest, agonized eyes squarely, "I want to tell you the story of my marriage with Ethel Ross, and of my subsequent life with her..."

Then he briefly related all the miserable commonplace story. He glossed over nothing, palliated nothing; bearing hardly now on his wife, and again on himself, but striving to show throughout how opposed to true marriage was this marriage...

He saw that her sympathy had been aroused, that she suffered for and with him, and he could not forbear from striving to push the advantage. He went on speaking earnestly; he demonstrated that this marriage which had proved so disastrous was in truth no marriage, and that its annulment was just and right...

"My love," he murmured, extending his arms with an appealing tenderness of look and gesture. "Come to me. Lay your sweet face on my breast, your dear arms around my neck. I need you, Princess; my heart cries out for you, and will not be denied..."

"I can not come," she wailed in anguish. "Have you no mercy?—no pity for me? There is a barrier between us I dare not level; a chasm I cannot cross..."

Thorne started slightly, but commanded himself. It was the former marriage; the divorce; it felt it keenly—every woman must; some cursed meddler had told her. "My darling," he answered, with patient...

which I do not see; which I swear does not exist—I will cross it. If you can not come to me, I can come to you; and I will. You are mine, and I will hold you—here in my arms, on my breast, in my heart..."

"None," he answered hoarsely. "Have you any for me?—for us both? I love you—how well, God knows, I was not aware until to-night—and you love me I hope and believe. There is nothing between us save an idle scruple, which even the censorious world does not share..."

"I am not bound," denied Thorne, fiercely, bringing his hand down heavily on the mantle; "whoever tells you that I am, lies, and the truth is not in him. I've told you all—and yet not all. Ethel Ross, the woman who was my wife—whom you say is my wife still—is about to marry again. To join her life—as free and separate from mine as though we had never met—to the life of another man. Isn't that enough?"

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against prison bars, had taken strong hold of the lad's imagination, and the fancy grew that he too would sleep more sweetly under the shadow of the old cedars in the land the young soldier had loved so well...

Norma and Pocahontas stood near each other beside the newly-made grave, and as they quitted the inclosure, their hands met for an instant coldly. Pocahontas tried not to harbor resentment, but she could not forget whose hand it had been that had struck her the first bitter blow...

After Warner's death, Mrs. Smith appeared to collapse, mentally as well as bodily. She remained day after day shut in her chamber, brooding silently and rejecting with dumb apathy all sympathy and consolation. Her strength and appetite declined, and her interest in life deserted her, leaving a hopeless quiescence that was inexpressibly pitiful...

CHAPTER XIX. The summer passed quietly for the family at Lanarth, broken only by the usual social happenings, visits from the "Byrd girls," as they were still called, with their husbands and little ones; a marriage, a christening, letters from Jim and Susie, and measles among the little Garnetts...

Poor Mrs. Smith did not rally as her family had hoped, and the physicians—as is customary when a case baffles their skill—recommended further and more complete change. They must take her abroad, and try what the excitement of foreign travel would do toward preventing her from sinking into confirmed invalidism...

Some weeks before the day appointed for her marriage, Ethel removed herself and her belongings to the house of a poor and plastic aunt, who was in the habit of allowing herself to be run into any mould her niece should require. According to their agreement, Ethel gave her william husband due notice of her plans, and Thorne at once removed the child to Brooklyn, and placed him under the care of a sister of his father's, a gentle elderly widow who had known sorrow. His house he put in the hands of an agent to rent or sell, furnished with all the furniture he had belonged to his parents. The house was hateful to him, and he felt that should the beautiful, new life of which he dreamed ever dawn for him, it must be set amid different surroundings from those which had framed his matrimonial failure...

CHAPTER XVIII. The next day Thorne quietly returned to New York, without making any attempt to see or communicate with Pocahontas again. He had considered the situation earnestly, and decided that it would be his wisest course...

Pocahontas told her mother, very quietly, of Thorne's visit, his proposal, and her rejection of it; just the bare facts, without comment or elaboration. But Mrs. Mason had a mother's insight and could read between the lines; she did not harass her daughter with many words, even of approval or with questions; she simply drew the sweet young face down to her bosom a moment, and held it there with tender kisses. Nor did Berkeley, to whom his mother communicated the fact, volunteer any comment to his sister. After what had passed, Thorne's proposal was not a surprise, and to them the girl's answer was a foregone conclusion. Poor child! the brother thought impatiently, the mother wistfully, how much bitterness would have been spared her could she only have loved Jim Byrd...

During the weeks that followed Thorne's second return north, the two families were thrown together more and more intimately. Blanche's engagement and Warner's increased illness served to break down all restraints. All through the winter the boy had steadily lost ground, and as the spring progressed, instead of rallying as they hoped, his decline became more rapid. The best advice was had, but science could only bear the announcement of bereavement; there was nothing to be done, the doctors said, save to alleviate pain, and let the end come peacefully; it was needless to worry the boy with change, and needless experiments. Even to the mother's wilfully blinded eyes, and falteringly held hopes, conviction came at last that her son's days were numbered...

Berkeley, Royall and other of the neighboring gentlemen took turns in aiding with the nursing and the night-watches, as is the custom in southern country neighborhoods where professional nurses are unknown. Of all the kindly friends that watched and tended him through long weeks of illness, the one that Warner learned to love the best was Berkeley Mason. There was a thoughtful strength in the nature of the man who had suffered, the soldier who had endured, which the weaker nature recognized, and rested on. To the general, during his time of trouble, the young man became, in very truth, a son; the old debt of kindness was cancelled, and a new account opened with a change in the balance...

CHAPTER XX. Winter again; the city dull, listless and sodden of aspect in the gloom of a January evening. Since her return from her wedding trip, which had lengthened to four months amid the delights of Paris, Mrs. Cumberland had found time for only one short visit to her little son. There had been such an accumulation of social duties and engagements, that pilgrimages over to Brooklyn were out of the question; and besides, she disliked Mrs. Cresswell, Thorne's aunt, who had charge of the boy, and who had the bad taste, Ethel felt sure, to disapprove of her. It was too bad of Nesbit to put the child so far away, and with a person whom she did not like; it amounted to a total separation, for of course it would be impossible for her to make such a journey often...

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A sharp ring at the door-bell, tardily answered by a servant, and then footsteps approached the parlor door. Husband and wife looked up with interest—with expectation. Was it a visitor? No; only the servant with a telegram which he handed Mr. Cumberland and then withdrew. Cecil turned the thin envelope in his hand inquisitively. He was fond of having everything pass through his own hands—of knowing all the ins and outs, the minutiae of daily happenings...

"What is it?" questioned Ethel, indolently. "A despatch for you. Shall I open it?" "If you like. I hate despatches. They always suggest unpleasant possibilities. It's a local, so I guess it's from my aunt, about that rubbishy dinner of hers."

Cecil tore open the envelope and read the few words it contained with a lengthening visage; then he let his hand fall, and stared blankly across at his wife. "It's from that fellow! and it's about the child," he said, uneasily. "What fellow? What child? Not mine! Give it to me quickly, Cecil. How slow you are." And she snatched the telegram from his unsuspecting hand. Hastily she scanned the words, her breath coming in gasps, her fingers trembling so that she could scarcely hold the paper. "The child is dying. Come at once!" That was all, and the message was signed Nesbit Thorne. Short, curt, peremptory, as our words are apt to be in moments of intense emotion; a bald fact roughly stated...

"Cecil!" she cried, sharply, "don't you hear? My child! My baby is dying! Why do you stand there staring at me? I must go—you must take me to him now, this instant, or it will be too late. Don't you understand? My darling—my boy is dying!" and she burst into a passion of grief, wringing her hands and wailing. "Oh! send for a carriage. There's not a moment to lose. Oh, my baby!—my baby!" "You can't go out in this storm. It's sleeting heavily, and I've been ill. I can't let you go all that distance with only a maid, and how am I to turn out in such weather?" objected Mr. Cumberland, who, when he was opposed to a thing, was an adept in piling up obstacles. "I tell you it's impossible, Ethel. It's madness, on such a night as this..."

"Who cares for the storm?" raved Ethel, whose feelings, if evanescent, were intense. "I will go, Cecil! I don't want you, I'll go by myself. Nothing shall stop me. If it stormed fire and blood I should go all the same. I'll walk—I'll crawl there, before I will stay here and let my boy die without me. He is my baby—my own child, I tell you, Cecil!—if he isn't yours!" Of this fact Cecil Cumberland needed no reminder. It was a thorn that pricked and stung even his dull nature—for the child's father lived. To a jealous temperament it is galling to be reminded of a predecessor in a wife's affections, even when the grave has closed over him; if the man still lives, it is intolerable...

He was not a brute, and he knew that he must yield to his wife's pressure—that he had no choice but to yield; but he stood for a moment irresolute, staring at her with lowering brows, a heavy curse on living father and dying child slowly formulating in his breast. As he turned to leave the room to give the necessary orders, a carriage drove rapidly to the door and stopped, and there was a vigorous pull at the bell. Thorne had provided against all possible delay. Then the question arose of who should accompany her, and they found that there was not a single available woman in the house. It was impossible to let her go alone, and Cumberland, with the curses rising from his heart to his lips, was forced, in very manhood, to go with her himself. In Brooklyn Mrs. Cresswell met them herself at the door, and appeared surprised—as well she might—to see Mr. Cumberland. She motioned Ethel toward the staircase, and then with a formal inclination of the head, ushered her more unwelcome guest into a small parlor where there was a fire and a lamp burning. Here she left him alone. Her house was in the suburbs, and there was nowhere else for him to go at that hour of the night and in that terrible storm...

The room was warm and cheerful, a child's toy's lay scattered on floor and sofa, a little hat and coat were on the table, beside a cigar case and a crumpled newspaper. There was nothing for the man to do save to stare around and walk the floor impatiently, longing for death to hasten with his work, so that the false position might be ended. Guided by unerring instinct, Ethel went straight to the chamber where her child lay dying—perhaps already dead. Outside the door she paused with her hand pressed hard on her throbbing heart...

It was a piteous sight that met her view as the door swung open, rendered doubly piteous by the circumstances. A luxurious room, a brooding silence, a tiny white bed on which a little child lay, slowly and painfully breathing his life away. (To be continued.)

Get Their Names in the Papers. Rochester Herald: The summer is no sooner here than people begin to go in bathing where the water is deep without stopping to reflect upon the dangers which surround a person who goes into water where wading is impossible and good swimming is imperatively necessary. The inexperienced boatman who "changes places," the bather who can't swim, the amateur yachtsman who doesn't know enough to anticipate a squall and the surf bather who is ignorant of the strength of the undertow, are all mentioned in the newspapers at this season of the year, and unhappily they all figure in the mortuary list. Why don't the people learn to swim?

A Two-Strike. The out-door household work in summer such as that of the summer-kitchen, washing and ironing, is a sort of makeshift with many mishaps like burns and scalds. But Mr. Jno. Heinemann, Middle Amana, Iowa, U. S. A., has found the true remedy. He says: "I scalded my leg with boiling water, and had a sprained ankle at the same time. One bottle of St. Jacobs Oil promptly cured both." That doubles its value easily, and shows its great usefulness.