

Fate and Marriage

(By Clara Mulholland)

Archibald did not reply at once "This useless to let the world know where and how we have been living I'd like to secure the privacy of the cottage a while longer," he told himself after a moment's thought.

"Quite so, my lord. Mr. Fane said to that before he knew your lordship was in England."

"I understand them call me a hansom. I have just time to catch my train."

"It's a mercy, a real blessing, to be moving about, going somewhere," Archibald murmured, as he condescended himself in the corner of a first-class smoking carriage in the Margate express, and unfolded his newspaper.

"My nerves seem thoroughly unstrung. The air of that gloomy house in which lies the poor old man, shut up in his coffin in the big, dreary bedroom, oppressed and saddened me. Then my desire to press my Isabel to my heart refused to be set aside. It insisted upon being gratified as quickly as possible."

The train steamed out of the station, and, as its speed increased, his spirits rose, and his heart beat gladly.

"I'll lunch with them to-day, my legs under my own mahogany," he murmured, unable to fix his attention on Time or Telegraph, so full was his mind of his joyful meeting with his wife and little ones. "How surprised they will be when I walk in. What kisses they'll give! What questions they'll ask! This is a splendid train. How fortunate I was to catch it! Three minutes more, and I'd have been obliged to wait for the slowest in the day. What a rate we are going at! What—My God!"

These were his last words. The awful crash and shock that provoked them were his death warrant. Tearing along the lines at the rate of some sixty miles an hour, the Margate express ran into a goods train and, crushed in the debris, Archibald Fane's life came to a sudden close, his short reign as Lord Linton ended for ever.

For human bliss and woe in the frail thread of human life are all so closely twined.

That till the shears of fate the texture shred, The close succession cannot be disjoined.

Not dare we, from our hour, judge that which comes behind

—Sir Walter Scott

CHAPTER IX.

Isabel awoke that morning with a strangely heavy weight at her heart. A feeling of sadness, a dread of some approaching evil oppressed her, and she started up with a cry of alarm.

"Something has happened," she exclaimed, trembling all over. "Ah, I know! Archie is away. But," smiling, "how foolish I am! His absence is not to be a long one. He will soon come back and I feel sure he has written to tell me why he went off in such haste without a word of good-bye."

She dressed hurriedly, and ran downstairs in the hall she met John wheeling his bicycle out into the garden to clean it.

"Well, darling," she said, kissing him, "has the post come?" "Yes, mother. But the letter we are all wishing to see is not there. Isabel bent down upon the lowest step of the short stair.

ed up and down the little drawing-room alone. "He spoke, in his note, of being away for several—two or three—days, and doubtless considered that enough. But it does not satisfy me, I may be unreasonable—too easily scared. But I can't help it. Something is wrong, I feel convinced. Oh! God!" a sudden sharp pang at her heart—"how helpless I am! If only, only I knew—had an idea of his whereabouts—of the business that took him to London, I might understand and feel less uneasy. But it is all wrapped in mystery. That he, who was always so outspoken about his affairs who had not a secret thought, and idea or desire, that he did not share with me, should leave me as he did last night, without a word of explanation, was strange enough. But that he should neither write nor come home to-day puzzles, alarms, maddens me. Something is wrong. Something must have happened. What it is I dread to think."

The day passed over slowly; the sun shone as brightly as ever, the birds sang, the bees hummed in and out amongst the flowers. The air was sweet with the perfume of roses and the scent of the fresh-mown hay in the distant meadows. The little cottage and the bit of garden that Archibald had loved and cultivated with so much care looked peaceful and pretty as bees in the light of the summer sun. But in the eyes and hearts of the young mother and her children as they went to and through the house, or round the lawn was a sadness, a sense of loss and coming sorrow that they had never known before.

"Will father never come home?" Beryl asked as she and John stood sadly by the gate one afternoon. "Does mother think," in a low, awestruck voice, "that he's dead?" She must, I think, she seems so sorry."

John's face was pale, and his lips quivered as he answered—"Hush, dear. Don't let us think that I hope, feel sure, we shall soon hear from him. After all, he only left home a day or two ago."

"I wish mother wouldn't be so sad," sighed Beryl. "It's just dreadful!" "She can't help being sad. She's afraid, I think, that father has had an accident, and she doesn't know what to do."

"Oh!" Beryl clasped her hands in an agony. "Then, she—does—she think he may be killed?" and the little girl began to cry.

"Not so bad as that, dear. I hope—I trust—but he—Oh! I don't know what to think, and mother says she hasn't a friend, and does not know what to do or where to turn. And John leans heavily against the low gate, and, feeling helpless and dejected, stared hard down the road. His eyes were full of tears, but boy-like he did not care to let anyone, not even Beryl, see that they were there.

Suddenly, through an almost blinding mist of tears, he saw a man approach. He was tall, erect, broad-shouldered, with a dark, bronzed face and a firm, yet kindly mouth. His figure seemed familiar. John watched him with a puzzled expression. Where had he seen him? Who could he be? The man came nearer, and put his hand upon the gate.

"Are you John?" he asked, looking down at the manly little fellow with the sad, dark face. "Yes, I am, John Fane. And I seem to know you yet."

"Cannot put a name on me. No wonder you have not seen me for two years. I come from the Antipodes. I am your father's friend, Jerry Otway."

John's face brightened and he put out a little brown hand. "Father's friend and mother's, too. Oh! I'm glad you have come. You'll tell us what to do?" "What to do?" He drew Beryl towards him, and kissed her rosy lips. "You are my goodchild dear, so I may surely take a kiss. The little girl looked at him shyly, but clung to his hand, as though begging his protection. He smiled down upon her well pleased. Then turned again to John.

"Quite so. Quite so. And has he been gone long?" "Nearly a week. He went away without saying good-bye."

"No wonder! Otway's face grew stern to fierceness, as he murmured, low, "His sins had found him out. He did not dare to say good-bye. And yet he was returning. Otherwise why that train? Perhaps it's as well he died. They need never know his real name. Away from here, in New Zealand with me, amongst people who love Isabel, and will welcome her as a lonely, heart-broken widow, asking no questions, never dreaming of any wrong, these children will grow up and prosper. I loved their father for his sake, in spite of all, in memory of our friendship. Above all, because of my love for their mother, I'll do what I can for them—help them in every way. But, oh! the pity of it. The pity of it!" And he strode on to the cottage and entered the hall.

He was taken to Isabel's room. Then telling John to take Beryl into the garden again, he entered Isabel's room and closed the door. The room was full of light, though the muslin curtains were drawn across the wide windows, near which Isabel reclined, all white and tearful, in a big arm-chair.

"Jerry! Oh! Jerry!" she cried in deep agitation, half rising and holding her trembling hands out towards him. "What shall I do? Where shall I turn to learn news of my husband? This anxiety is killing me. Tell me, tell me what you think. What would you advise me to do?"

He caught her hands and held them tightly within his own. "Isabel, dear Isabel, would that I could save you from an instant's sorrow. But I can't, and you must be brave, dear, and bear up, and be courageous for your children's sake."

She gazed at him with dry, wild eyes. "My children? Why for them only? Oh, Jerry, do you know, or is it that you fear the worst?" "God help me! Yes!—I! He looked steadily away from her. "I have heard—"

She sprang to her feet. "That Archie was ill, dying, perhaps? Oh, Jerry, where? Tell me that I may go to him."

"Sit down, dear," he drew her down into her chair again, "and—down," he breathed heavily, "I will tell you. Archibald left London on Thursday."

"To come back to us?" gasped Isabel. "Then why," a cold perspiration stood upon her forehead, an awful fear took possession of her, "Oh! why is he not here?"

"He came," Otway said in a low, choking voice, "in the Margate express. Just below Sevenoaks—"

"There was an accident? Oh! my God!" in an agony of supplication, "grant that!" "The Margate express," continued Otway, "ran into a goods train, and was wrecked. A great many people were injured, several were killed."

hand, threw himself upon his knees by her side, and put his arms round her neck. "Mother, what is wrong? Dear mother, speak to me!"

At the sound of the sweet childish voice Isabel turned and clasped him and tearful little Beryl in her arms. "My fatherless children! God help you and me! He is dead, John, dead! Think what that means, boy. He is dead!" And she wept and sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Tears will bring relief," murmured Otway, "but would to God she knew the worst! Death is bad—a trial hard to bear when those we love are taken. But there are things far worse than death, and that she will have to learn." And he stole away into the garden.

For some days Otway gave himself up to the one painful task of consoling and comforting the unhappy little family. With great difficulty he restrained Isabel from rushing off to Sevenoaks to gaze at the scene of the disaster. She wept and clamored to be allowed to do so, declared she must go and identify the body of her husband, and see that he was buried in a fitting place.

"All that has been seen to," he said gently, "and everything that could be done has been done. You are too ill to leave the house, Isabel. And then," with some hesitation, "you forgot how many days have gone over, how long it is since the accident."

She gazed at him wildly. "Then—then—it is all over? My beloved is hidden away from me for ever? Oh! cruel, cruel fate! But oh! tell me, how was it? Did they—Was it well, shivering, "properly done?"

"Yes. The funeral was all that could be desired. It was carried out with much ceremony and the greatest respect. Archie was laid to rest with more honors than either you or I could have paid him, dear as he was to us."

She looked at him in a dazed, bewildered way. "But those he loved were absent? Oh! Why did you not tell me this in time? My strength would not have permitted me to go to the graveside, but John should have been at his father's funeral."

"No, no!" He took her hand. "He is too young. He could not have gone. Some day I will tell you all particulars of dear Archie's burial. But you could not bear them now. You must trust me, Isabel, and believe I think only of you and what is best for you."

"You are a good friend. I do trust you. But oh! in tones of bitter reproach, "why did you not come to me in time? Why did you not tell me of the accident at once, and let me look upon my beloved one before they hid him away from me for ever? Why did you wait a whole long week, and then come to me, too late?"

A shadow passed across Otway's honest countenance, and his lips were pressed tightly together as he looked down with sad, pitiful eyes upon the heartbroken woman. "You forget, dear," he said, after a pause, "that I was on my way from New Zealand, and only heard of the disaster after some time. Then, by accident, I discovered that Archibald was in the train."

arrived in England from New Zealand. You have no idea to what part of the country he went, I suppose?" "Yes, Mr. Fane, from what he said and the train he would catch, I came to the conclusion that His Lordship went into Kent. He was just in time for the Margate express at Charing Cross, sir. At least, I feel sure he was."

"How those servants watch and consider our every movement!" thought Fane. "But I wish this old pomposity knew a little more. I feel curious about Archie's home, and would give a good deal to know what goes on there. I wonder—"

"Terrible accident near Sevenoaks," shrieked a couple of hoarse-voiced men running suddenly up the street with bundles of newspapers under their arms. "Horrible loss of life! Many killed—several injured!"

"Good heavens!" Tristram started round, all white and excited. "The Margate express! The very train you say Lord Linton went in!"

"Yes—oh! yes, I'm afraid he did!" Weldon's pomposity of manners was all gone. He was genuinely startled and alarmed.

"Here—paper—man—quick!" cried Fane, and thrusting a penny into the news-vender's hand, he seized The Globe, and, going into the house, shut the hall-door.

"He may have escaped, of course," he muttered, as with trembling hands he unfolded the paper. "All those who are in a railway accident don't come to grief!"

Eagerly, he scanned the two short paragraphs telling of the accident caused by the express dashing into a goods train on the line.

"No names yet. They will come out in a later edition," he said, then, letting the paper fall on the floor, he took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

He sat down upon one of the hall chairs, breathing heavily. The weight of disappointment that pressed suddenly upon him horrified him, and his hands and face grew clammy, a mist obscured his sight.

"It—it would make a great difference to me," he murmured. "But no, no, it is not—I trust it may not be." Weldon stooped, and casting a curious and altogether comprehensive glance at Tristram Fane, picked up the paper.

THE RHEUMATIC WONDER OF THE AGE BENEDICTINE SALVE

This Salve Cures Rheumatism, Felons or Blood Poisoning. It is a Sure Remedy for Any of These Diseases.

A FEW TESTIMONIALS 193 King Street East, Toronto, Nov. 21, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—I am deeply grateful to the friend that suggested to me when I was a cripple from Rheumatism, Benedictine Salve. I have at intervals during the last ten years been afflicted with muscular rheumatism. I have experimented with every available remedy and have consulted, I might say, every physician of repute, without perceivable benefit. When I was advised to use your Benedictine Salve, I was a helpless cripple. In less than 48 hours I was in a position to resume my work that of a tinsmith. A work that requires a certain amount of bodily activity. I am thankful to my friend who advised me and I am more than gratified to be able to furnish you with this testimonial as the only easy of Benedictine Salve. Yours truly, GEO. FOGG

Treatment House, Yonge street, Nov. 1, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—It is with pleasure that I write this unsolicited testimonial, and in doing so I can say that your Benedictine Salve has done more for me in one week than anything I have done for the last five years. My ailment was muscular rheumatism. I applied the salve as directed, and I got speedy relief. I can assure you that at the present time I am free of pain. I can recommend any person afflicted with Rheumatism to give it a trial. I am, Yours truly, (Signed) S. JOHNSON

333 Victoria Street, Toronto, Oct. 31, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Nealon House, Toronto. DEAR SIR—I cannot speak too highly of your Benedictine Salve. It has done for me in three days what doctors and medicines have been trying to do for me for years. When I first used it I had been confined to my bed with a spell of rheumatism and sciatica for nine weeks; a friend recommended your salve. I tried it and it completely banished rheumatism right out of my system. I can cheerfully recommend it as the best medicine on the market for rheumatism. I believe it has no equal. Yours sincerely, JOHN McMOGGAN

475 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ont., Sept. 18, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Nealon House, Toronto, Ont. DEAR SIR—I have great pleasure in recommending the Benedictine Salve as a sure cure for lumbago. When I was taken down with it I called in my doctor, and he told me it would be a long time before I would be around again. My husband bought a box of the Benedictine Salve, and applied it according to directions. In three hours I got relief, and in four days was able to do my work. I would be pleased to recommend it to any one suffering from lumbago. I am, your truly, (MRS.) JAS. COSSGROVE

7 Laurier Avenue, Toronto, December 18, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—After suffering for over ten years with both forms of Piles, I was asked to try Benedictine Salve. From the first application I got instant relief, and before using one box was thoroughly cured. I can strongly recommend Benedictine Salve to any one suffering with Piles. Yours sincerely, JOS. WESTMAN

12 Bright Street, Toronto, Jan. 18, 1902

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—It is with pleasure I write this word of testimony to the marvellous merits of Benedictine Salve as a certain cure for Rheumatism. There is such a multitude of alleged Rheumatic cures advertised that one is inclined to be skeptical of the merits of any new preparation. I was induced to give Benedictine Salve a trial and must say that after suffering for eight years from Rheumatism it has, I believe, effected an absolute and permanent cure. It is perhaps needless to say that in the last eight years I have consulted a number of doctors and have tried a large number of other medicines advertised, without receiving any benefit. Yours respectfully, MRS. SIMPSON

85 Carlton Street, Toronto, Feb. 1, 1902

John O'Connor, Esq., 190 King Street East. I was a sufferer for four months from acute rheumatism in my left arm; my physician called regularly and prescribed for it, but gave me no relief. My brother, who appeared to have faith in your Benedictine Salve, gave me enough of it to apply twice to my arm. I used it first on a Thursday night, and applied it again on Friday night. This was in the latter part of November. Since then (over two months) I have not had a trace of rheumatism. I feel that you are entitled to this testimonial as to the efficacy of Benedictine Salve in removing rheumatic pains. Yours sincerely, M. A. GOWAN

Toronto, Dec. 8th, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—It is with pleasure I write this unsolicited testimonial, and in doing so I can say to the world that your Benedictine Salve thoroughly cured me of Bleeding Piles. I suffered for nine months. I consulted a physician, one of the best, and he gave me a box of salve and said that if that did not cure me I would have to go under an operation. It failed, but a friend of mine learned by chance that I was suffering from Bleeding Piles. He told me he could get me a cure and he was true to his word. He got me a box of Benedictine Salve, and it gave me relief at once and cured me in a few days. I am now completely cured. It is worth its weight in gold. I cannot but feel proud after suffering so long. It has given me a thorough cure and I am sure it will never return. I can strongly recommend it to anyone afflicted as I was. It will cure without fail. I can be called on for living proof. I am, Yours, etc., ALLAN J. ARTINGDALE, with the Boston Laundry

254 1/2 King Street East, Toronto, Dec. 18, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto. DEAR SIR—After trying several doctors and spending forty-five days in the General Hospital, without any benefit, I was induced to try your Benedictine Salve, and sincerely believe that this is the greatest remedy in the world for rheumatism. When I left the hospital I was just able to stand for a few seconds, but after using your Benedictine Salve for three days, I went out on the street again and now, after using it just over a week, I am able to go to work again. If anyone should doubt these facts, send him to me and I will prove it to him. Yours forever thankful, PETER AUSTEN

Toronto, April 10, 1902

Mr. John O'Connor. DEAR SIR—I do heartily recommend your Benedictine Salve as a sure cure for rheumatism, as I was so much afflicted with that sad disease in my arm, and it was so bad that I could not dress myself. When I heard about your salve, I got a box of it, and to my surprise I found great relief, and I used what I got and now I can attend to my daily household duties, and I heartily recommend it to anyone that is troubled with the same disease. You have this from me with hearty thanks and do with it as you please for the benefit of the afflicted. Yours truly, MRS. JAMES FLEMING

18 Spruce street, Toronto, Toronto, April 16th, 1902

J. O'Connor, Esq., City. DEAR SIR—It gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to testify to the curative powers of your Benedictine Salve. For a month back my hand was so badly swollen that I was unable to work, and the pain was so intense as to be almost unbearable. Three days after using your Salve as directed, I am able to go to work, and I cannot thank you enough. Respectfully yours, J. J. CLARKE

78 Wexley street, City, 119 George street, Toronto, June 17th, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq. DEAR SIR—Your Benedictine Salve cured me of rheumatism in my arm, which entirely disabled me from work, in three days, and I am now completely cured. I suffered greatly from piles for many months and was completely cured by one box of Benedictine Salve. Yours sincerely, T. WALKER, Blacksmith

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