

POOR DOCUMENT



Gertrude McKervy.
 SAINT JOHN, N. B., December 11, 1893.
 My dear mother,
 I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are all well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are all well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write you.

Carol Richmond
 — OR —
THE MAN WITH THE BLACK GLOVE
 — OR —
 Continues.

You have my answer, sir. What more can I say to make it stronger? Your wife I can never be. I do not claim a woman's right to live at least in peace. Go from me, then, Captain Grant, and as you deal with my poor father, may God so deal with you. I am a heart-broken woman, and all I ask is for peace and rest.

Those you shall find with me, Carol. Girl, did I not tell you I had sworn to make you my wife? Though the heavens fall, that shall be so. What sense is there in this fighting against your destiny? Mine you are, and mine you shall be, and I defy man or angel to come between.

He had seized her wrist in an iron clasp and his eyes were fastened upon hers with the fascinating power of a serpent's. She seemed charmed, powerless to move, and could only look into his scintillating orbs and shudder.

Hands off, you villain!

The voice was not that of a man, and dropping the wrist of Carol, Captain Grant turned like lightning to the spot from whence it came. There a cry fell from his lips—the cry of a baffled conspirator almost driven to the wall.

Barbara Merrills, by all the fends! he gasped.

CHAPEL XXIV.
 A WOMAN WORTH WINNING.

It was in truth the gypsy girl who stood there—she whom Captain Grant had seen go over the terrible precipice, and whose body he supposed had been crushed out of all shape upon the jagged rocks far below, or swept away by the restless waves of the Potomac.

That he had not hurried her over, but it had been because of him she had fallen, and when he might have saved her he would not raise his hand, so that he was at heart a murderer ever since, and the sight of her standing there alive and in the flesh gave him such a shock as he had not experienced for many a day.

Carol, too, recognized her as the strange girl who had first warned her of Roger Darrel, and she knew not whether to look upon her as friend or foe; though the gypsy's words would seem to place her the former.

The tableau was quite a dramatic one for about the space of a minute, none of the three moving a speck. During this while, however, the arch-schemer was rapidly recovering himself, and that meant much.

He knew that Barbara had not come there without a purpose, and, although he had cause to fear her, he was just the man to brave it all through trusting to fortune to clear him in the end.

Therefore he faced her boldly, and in a way that staggered Barbara, who had fully expected him to cower at sight of her, and perhaps sink out of sight like a whipped cur. She ought to have known that was not his way of doing business.

Had he been married a dozen times, he would have faced the whole of his wives undimly, and have denied them all with the same cool, sneering manner which he could assume so well. Although she knew it not, there had come a crisis in the affair of Carol Richmond, and, while all stood thus in silence,

the fates were shaping matters as they willed.

She expected no good news from this dark-skinned girl.

When they had met before it had been in her power to wound Carol most terribly, and in her mistake Barbara had been as cruel as it was possible for her to be, so that the young girl had no cause to look upon her with favor, except, perhaps, from the fact that her opportune coming and sharp words had caused Captain Grant to loosen the hold he had upon her wrist and turn his hated attention in another quarter.

The first words of the gypsy reassured her, and she heard much of which she had been ignorant before.

Lady, you remember that when last we met I warned you against your lover, and told you that he was a scoundrel of the first water, that he had terribly wronged me in the past, and that he had a wife in the mad-house—one Nora Warner. Though I knew it not at the time, I was wronging both you and an honorable man, but I thought this man who now stands before you was your lover, and not the other. Can you ever forgive me for such a mistake, lady?

Before Carol could reply, the Captain broke in with a harsh laugh.

You must be crazy, girl. Why, I never set eyes on you before. What do you mean by coming here and intruding yourself upon my presence unasked? Go leave this spot at once, or I will find a means to make you. I would not hesitate a minute about giving you in charge, and having you locked up as a mad woman.

I believe you, villain. Perhaps the time has not yet come for your downfall, but it is close at hand, never fear. You thought me dead, but Heaven spared my life most miraculously, not because it was worth much to me dead, but in order that I might become an avenging Nemesis, to track you down to your doom. Oh, man, foul wretch that you are when you remember the cruel, heartless deeds of the past and then look at this pure girl, does not your heart reproach you?

Again he laughed, this time coldly.

You are pleased to be melodramatic, I see. There is nothing in my past to make me shudder when I look upon the face of this young girl, whom I hope to make my wife.

Your wife? Never! Think you Heaven would permit you to accomplish such a selfish act? Sooner than you suggest, I would rather see you die than become a wretch, a just God will strike you down in the midst of your crimes. Remember my words, Roger Darrel, for I shall haunt you like a shadow, and the gypsy vanished among the trees like an evil spirit.

Roger Darrel surely she must be out of her mind to call him by his name. Perhaps she has mistaken you for him; there is a certain resemblance which I have sometimes noticed, said Carol, after the gypsy girl had gone.

The crisis had come and passed, and she was deeper in the mire than ever. Captain Grant was quick to see this, and he smiled.

You are right Carol, the girl is mad. It seems to me every one almost has gone crazy of late. Only the other day I was forced in a duel by an unknown party who proclaimed himself my wife and called herself Nora Warner, and declared I was Roger Darrel. I wish I was I declare; then I would go and hang myself for having injured so many people and caused them to curse my name!

She buried her face in her hands, but though she could not bear to hear him talk so of the one she loved so well, nothing could cause her to doubt Roger again, but at the same time she was now placed in a position where she dare not think of that last duel's should creep into her mind, and at the same time it served to keep her from guessing the truth.

Strange that Roger's words did not occur to her. We shall meet once more, and when you see as the man I am, and not in the guise of a villain, who chances to belong to my family and bear my name, then perhaps you will deign to offer me your forgiveness.

Had she but thought of these all would have been well, but not daring to let her mind rest upon the subject, she threw not how close she had been to a solution of the terrible secret.

Captain Grant, seeing he had the upper hand, kept on.

I have searched far for you, Carol, but at last I have found you. Will you go back with me?

All at once there flashed across the mind of the young girl a thought of the past, and the actions of this man toward her. He had acted as no gentleman would or should act, and she now recalled from him as if from an adder.

Leave me sir, she cried. I would return to my mother, the only one left for me to love—the only one.

Oh, say not so, Carol, he exclaimed, passionately. I will confess that I began this suit without much love, as a man of the world, but I found in you a woman worth winning and I have grown to love you madly. Say that I may have some hope, oh, give me but the faintest hope and I will cling to it as a shipwrecked mariner would to a plank that had been thrown within his reach. I know not that you disliked me, else I would never have used my influence with your father to hasten our marriage. Forgive me for that Carol, and give me a grain of hope for the future. With your love I should be able to do much in this world; without it I feel like a rudderless vessel, drifting at the mercy of fate.

His words were eloquent, his acting of

the very finest order, for he saw what he believed to be a good chance, and, as Carol was separated from her lover, hoped to catch her heart in the rebound; but she half-fathomed his motives and shrank from him as though he were a spirit of evil.

I can never be more to you than I am now, Captain Grant. My heart is too sore to think of love. Leave me in peace to return to my mother, he said slowly.

His face flamed and a fierce light shone in his eye. It seemed as though he was tempted just to carry her off, even against her will, but on second thought he dismissed the idea.

As you will, Miss Richmond your word is law to me. Good-by until we meet again, and he vanished in the direction the gypsy girl had gone.

CHAPTER XXV.
 A WOMAN'S LOVE.

My God! it is my wife. This is retribution. My sin has found me out.

As these words fell from the lips of Lawrence Richmond, he stood as if rooted to the spot. The woman who lived in the haunted mill raised her head proudly, and her eyes were looking up to his, so that he found himself gazing speechlessly upon the face of that wife whom he had not seen in all the years that had passed since he drove her away from him with curses that were to be so bitterly repented—curses that were to come back home to roost—curses that had ever since remained in his memory like plague spots, and which would not be erased, though at times they almost set him crazy.

All the fierce power seemed to have been taken out of the old man at one fell blow, and he, who had but a minute before been so full of savage force, now stood there incapable of motion and drawing his breath in gasps, as it were, while his eyes roved with wonder and vague horror, rested upon that woman's face.

He could not just then comprehend the noble sacrifice she had just made for him.

The burnt mortgage was still smoldering upon the little fire, but he had completely forgotten it in the excitement, still more intense, produced by this astounding discovery.

He had wronged this woman terribly in the past, in a manner that had shocked him whenever he thought of it—for he had afterward learned that she was as innocent as an angel, and had searched for her, but she could not be found; and the old doubts crept over his mind again obscuring it—and in that dread moment he only saw what a splendid chance for revenge had come to her.

Should she so desire, she could crush him with a single blow.

This was why the feeling of horror had entered his brain as he stood there, still clutching her white wrist fiercely.

Then there flashed upon his mind the late act and words of the noble woman, and his eyes almost unconsciously were turned upon the fire where the document was still smoldering, though past recovery.

His nerveless hand loosened its grasp upon her wrist, and he staggered back a pace or two.

My wife he muttered; my wife come back to me from the dead! Oh, I am dreaming. This is some horrid fancying specter. My wife is dead and I am her murderer.

He groaned with mental anguish, and he stirred the woman's heart to its full depth to hear the man whom she had never ceased to love thus exhibit his terrible suffering.

Not so, Lawrence. You see before you the unhappy woman who was once your wife. The years have come and gone since last we stood face to face, years of suffering to me; and yet I have patiently awaited the will of Heaven. Perhaps there may be more in this meeting than we either of us imagine.

Not dead, not dead, he muttered with inhibited breath, as he gazed eagerly upon her; oh, then God has heard my prayer. He has sent you to me that the last act of my life should be my atonement to you. There see me kneel as at your feet, with the pride that ruined my life and yours, trampled down forever. Oh, can you forgive me for the past, my wretched mistake which I have deplored in tears of blood ever since?

I know I do not deserve it, but if you could only forgive me, it would be the act of an angel. Pity me, pardon me.

He had sunk at her feet in abject misery. His mind was once more cleared of all doubt, and he knew that he was in the presence of the noblest woman God ever made.

She was deeply affected by this evidence of his contrition, and her whole frame trembled, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Now she could realize what this proud man must have suffered in the days and months and years of the dim past, and, suffering, made no moan. She knew now that all the time he had been haunted by the demon of remorse, that had well-nigh devoured his heart.

The past with its great wrong seemed wiped out by this repentance of the present.

Kneel not to me, Lawrence, for what sin you committed against me has long since been forgiven. My act of a minute ago proves that I have never ceased to love you. Ask the great Master above to forgive you, but do not kneel to me.

Oh, woman, every word you utter sinks me into an abyss of shame. I see myself a fool, a knave, a brute. I am not

worthy to touch the hem of your garment. May Heaven bless you—and forgive me, he moaned.

She made him rise, even assisted him, and, weak and trembling, he sank back into a chair, almost incapable of motion. The fierce will, the strong frame, they seemed withered up by the mad force of this demon, remorse.

Oh, Lawrence, I thank God for bringing us face to face again. I have with me proof of my purity, proofs that will dispel all those terrible charges of the past—

Peace, he said, interrupting her. I would not look upon one of them for a king's ransom. Oh, did I not find out the truth for myself? Has it not been the consciousness of this that has pierced my heart like a knife at times rendering me almost mad? Wife, wife, I have atoned in suffering for my sins. God has punished me well, punished me well.

How she trembled at the mention of that sacred name. She was no wife of his; the law had come between long years before. His wife! Oh, Father, in Heaven, that would be too much!

Yes, the old man went on, brokenly; a thousand times have I clasped my child to my heart, and, seeing your face in hers, raised kisses upon it, in memory of you. Heaven bears me witness—that these long years have been one continual season of bitter repentance. I sought not safety, but when I gave up all hope of finding you, I retired from life to brood over the past, and give myself to the care of my child. The old demon, passion was not entirely subdued, for when she told me she loved the man whose life she had saved, I forgot all the past.

To be continued.

1893. 1893.
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