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The Broken Circle!

CHAPTER XLIII.
No knight would ride down the avenue to woo her. She wondered if many women gave their lives for love.
"Come to the library, Leah," said the general. "I like bracing, clear, frosty weather like this; but I felt a twinge in my right arm this morning, and I must not neglect it." Seeing that Hettie looked at him inquisitively, he continued: "An old wound is like an old friend. I received a sword-cut on this arm more than twenty years ago, and sometimes on very cold days it teases me even now; the moral of which is that it is easier to give a wound than to cure a wound. Do not leave your cozy corner, Hettie; I will send Leah back to you in ten minutes."
As they walked down the terrace together, Hettie wondered if the time would ever come when they would discuss matters before her, if she would ever be really one of themselves, if, when Leah was married, she would take her place in her uncle's confidence.
Not caring to watch Leah and her uncle, Hettie looked down the avenue, and saw a gentleman walking up to the house. She drew back, thinking that it was some visitor for the general and the next minute had forgotten about the occurrence.

CHAPTER XLIV.
Sir Basil walked slowly up the avenue; he looked tired and pale—not at all like a gay bridegroom. Shadows in his eyes told of sleepless nights, of weary days, of sad thoughts. Yet he had in his manner something of the man who has fought a good fight and has overcome. He reflected, as he walked between the long lines of leafless trees, that after all he was more fortunate than many men. He had known the rapture of true love, even though it had lasted so short a time. Many men lived and died without ever knowing one such hour as had fallen to his lot by the sweet southern sea. The glow of it, the warmth of it, would last him through life, even through the chill of long years.
How well he remembered the first morning that he came to Brentwood, and the beautiful face shining in the midst of the passion-flowers! What a fatal morning it had been for him! He could recall the peculiar expression of Leah's face the first moment her eyes met his; and she had told him since, that in that first moment she had loved him. How loving and faithful she had been to him ever since! How many men would give their lives for the love she lavished on him—and he

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was so good! He made many good resolutions as he walked up the avenue, where the November sun shone brightly through the bare branches. He would be more loving to her. Never again should his thoughts rove to the fair, pale face that had lain on his breast for five minutes, never to lie there again. He would forget it, and think of the beautiful face that had smiled only for him. He would be loving loyal to her, and in time Heaven would send him peace. No man was either great or wise, or truly noble until he had suffered pain. It was the lot of every man; some live without pleasure, happiness, or love, but no one lives without pain.
"I will make it all up to her," he thought; and then through the leafless trees he saw the terraces and the pretty balustrade where the great clusters of passion-flowers grew in summer—the very spot in which he had first seen her; and, unless he was mistaken, she was there now. Yes, he could see the folds of a long black dress on the white stone of the terrace; he could see one white hand lying idly on the hedge where the brown tendrils looked withered and dead. She was surely there; she had told him she loved that spot best, because it was there she had seen him first. She was looking toward the house. He would go to her noiselessly and take her in his arms; he would kiss her and say loving words to her.
He went quietly up the great white steps, where the marble statues stood and the huge vases were filled with evergreens, round the great clusters of almond-trees to the corner: that Leah loved best. He smiled to himself. Ah, he was not mistaken!

A tall, slender figure stood there, with a black dress trailing on the steps, a white hand resting on the balustrade. He could not see her face or head, for she was looking toward the house. Should he call her name? If he uttered but one word, she would turn to him with her face all bright with glad and happy love. No; he would go up to her and clasped her in his arms and kiss her, while he made her guess who he was.
One arm was half round her, and his dark handsome head bent over her before he perceived that the beautiful masses of hair were of gold. The next moment the fair face seemed to flash into his own, a cry came from the pale lips, a great shock overwhelmed them.
There was a terrible moment of fear and pain, of bewilderment and surprise, followed by a deep silence that was full of agony. Then faintly from him came the name "Hettie!" so tremulously spoken that it was like a sigh.
"Hettie," he repeated, "is it you?" She shrank back with a little wailing cry, which seemed to go straight to his heart.
Could it be Hettie? Was that the golden head which had lain for a few happy minutes on his breast? Was that the fair pale face which he had covered with kisses and tears? Could it be the girl whom he had left by the sea, never to meet again?
"It is really Hettie," he said; and he laid his hand upon hers, as though he half fancied she would melt into thin air: "I cannot trust my own eyes. Speak one word to me. Are you really Hettie Ray?"

He had seen her last in her homely dress, plainly made of plain material, in the midst of her homely surroundings. Now she stood arrayed in costly silk, with great folds of crape, with a certain subtle change—more fair and lovely than ever in his eyes—Hettie still, but a very different Hettie from the simply-dressed maiden he had known at Southwood.
She raised her blue eyes and looked at him.
"Do you not know me?" she said reproachfully. "Surely I am Hettie Ray, just as surely as I am the most miserable girl in the wide world."
"Hettie, Hettie, what brought you here?" He made no attempt to caress her. He drew back from her, and looked at her with wild, troubled eyes.
"What brought you here?" he repeated. "I have tried my best; I have fought a fiercer fight with my heart than any man ever fought; and now, when I had begun to hope for peace, you rise from the very ground, as it were, before me. Hettie, in Heaven's name, tell me what brings you here?"
The face before him was miserable enough; there was the very anguish of woe in the blue eyes.
"Do you not know," she said slowly, "who I am?"

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"You are Hettie Ray," he replied.
"Alas, alas!" she cried, wringing her hands. "I begin to see now; I begin to understand. What have I done that Heaven should punish me so? What have I done?"
"Hettie," he said, gently, "I do not understand. What is the matter?"
"Who are you?" she cried. She stood before him, with her hands clasped, her pale face raised, hanging as it were on the words that were to fall from his lips. "Who are you?" she repeated. "Do not keep me in suspense. Tell me quickly."
Still no glimmer of the truth came to him. He wondered at the intense anxiety of her manner.
"I forgot," he said: "you never knew my name. I am Sir Basil Carlton of Glen."
She repeated the words after him, her white lips trembling. They brought no memory to her.
"Sir Basil Carlton!" she repeated. "I do not mean that. Who are you? Tell me for Heaven's sake, are you Leah's fiance? They said he was coming to-day. Heaven cannot be so cruel—you are not Leah's fiance!"
"I am Leah's lover, my poor darling," he said, sadly.
"And she loves you so! Oh! how has it happened? We were talking about you the other day—no, this morning; it seems to me long since she told me about her lover, and how she loved him. O, Heaven, how it all comes back to me! I told her such a great love could never be a happy one; but how little I thought—!" She paused, and then, after a minute's silence, she looked at him again.
"You," she said—"you are Leah's lover. She loves you so dearly, she said she should die if she were parted from you. And you—I remember you told me that you did not love her, that it was circumstances which had led to the engagement. And she loves you so! Oh, hapless Leah, oh, miserable, thrice-wretched me!"
She shrank back, crouching against the withered sprays of the passion-flowers. All her strength and youth seemed to leave her; her white face and wild eyes were terrible to see.
Half frightened because of her despair, he drew nearer to her.
"Hettie," he said, "what is Leah to you? Tell me who she is."
"Do you not know?" she said. "Have they not told you?"
"Told me what?" he cried. "What is it?"
A sickening sense of insecurity came to her. If neither Leah nor Sir Arthur

had said anything to him, what could she say? Was he to know all about her? If she told him that she was Leah's sister, and that they were both daughters of Martin Ray, what would happen?
Her heart grew faint with dread and pain. She held out her hands to him with an imploring gesture.
"Do you not know?" she said. "Can you not guess who I am?"
"How can I? Why, Hettie, what need is there for mystery? You can have nothing to fear in telling me. What brings you, Martin Ray's daughter, to Brentwood, and what are you to Leah?"
"You cannot guess?" she said. "You have no idea."
"None. I cannot guess. What are you keeping from me, Hettie?"
"My story—and Leah's," she replied; "and I cannot tell it to you. You must ask them to tell it."
In his sudden surprise and complete bewilderment he never thought of what Martin Ray had told him of his two daughters; all power of thought and memory had gone from him.
"Hettie, you have lost faith in me!" he said.
"No; it is not that. I—see, there is some one coming. Do not let me be seen."
The quick footstep of one of the men-servants was heard on the terrace. Without a word, Sir Basil went to meet him.
"Sir Arthur would be glad to see you in the library at once, Sir Basil," said the man. If he felt any curiosity about the figure crouching against the balustrade he gave no sign.
(To be continued.)

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