



CHAPTER XXXII

Lesley read Cynthia's letter as a man does the warrant for his execution. He had known all along it was coming, yet it struck him a blow all the same, for, beside the inevitable uncertainty becomes almost hope.

She announced the news at breakfast with a flourish, at a moment when making coffee apparently absorbed all her faculties, and putting the right amount of sugar into each cup of her dearest object in life.

She looked neither at her father nor at Yelverton, but as several of the men present knew Ronny, and one or two Cynthia, there was a general buzz of talk over the news, in which Lesley joined.

"It's an old affair between them," said Holcroft, "and she is a magnificent specimen of a woman, for those who like the subdued red haired type."

"Too jealous," said a fair man present, shaking his Rufus head. "Too faithful," said Lesley calmly. "But I think they'll be very happy all the same. She will just devote her life to him, as he might have continued to devote his to horses if—"

Holcroft smiled. "My dear Miss Malincourt," he said, "Ronny Kilmer may not need to marry a nurse, really. I dined with Sir James as I passed through town the night before last and pumped him thoroughly about Ronny's case, and this is what the great surgeon said."

He panned the whole table passed too. Even the servants, with dishes in their hands, stood listening. "Ronny Kilmer," said Sir James, "will make a perfect recovery. It is purely a matter of time. The French doctors misunderstood the case. The bullet never penetrated farther than the muscles. The wound became inflamed, but now the bullet is extracted. He has only to get up his strength, and this day six months you'll probably see him winning every big race, as usual."

"Thank God!" cried Yelverton from his heart, and the cry was warmly echoed round the table. "This is news indeed to me," said Yelverton. "I haven't seen him for ten days, and though he never complained I saw he had no hope of recovery whatever. Hurrah! Do you think Sir James told him?"

He said not. He said Kilmer was too tired to be told anything after the examination, and his mother was ill and resting. He had to go out of town yesterday, but meant to go and tell Ronny today.

The eyes of Yelverton and Lesley met in a flash that said: "If Sir James had told Ronny the truth the day before yesterday, should we have got that news from Cynthia today?"

And Lord Malincourt's heart was heavy. He knew Lesley's face well by now and what it had cost her to make that announcement with the supreme carelessness she did.

"I wish she had less pluck," he said to himself as he glanced round at the indifferent men, the picturesque comfort of the beautiful old dining hall, through the open windows of which came the brisk September air, "and the man's a fool," he added to himself savagely. "It comes seem to be pretty poor stuff when it comes to matters of common sense."

In the hall later Lesley, seeing off the men, got a cruel word in her ear. "I hope you are satisfied," said Yelverton. "You have just spoiled three lives, for you have surely imagined Cynthia will be happy?"

"Of course she will be happy," said Lesley, with her proudest air, "and so shall I," she added, walking away from him in a way that made a man who did not know the subject of conversation decide that really these country girls had a consummate cheek about them that a town girl could not hope to imitate.

But the check was all gone when Lesley, escaping to her bedroom, saw in a looking glass the blue eyes, the little white face, that was to be always her own now, never Ronny's.

How had it come, this love for him? She did not know. We do not know how life comes, how it goes, how the sun rises, but it is there. Beyond her own face she seemed to see Ronny's unburned one, with gray, coldish eyes and the brown mustache that she once told him was his stock in trade, but which could not hide the lines of his beautifully drawn, firm mouth, and he had a cleft in his firm, clear cut chin, and no man can escape his fate with women if he have that.

The fair brows of his curly head would have made a much better contrast to her own dark locks than Cynthia's chestnut one would do. In her white robe it suddenly struck Lesley that she bore an odd resemblance to Lady Hamilton's famous picture as Circe, for there was the same long limbed, symphonic air about them both, they being more than commonly tall.

Suddenly she covered her eyes for shame at her selfishness. "The great, the glorious news about Ronny's recovery had been forgotten. He would pass through the antechamber of suffering to the full life beyond that he loved. He would be able to indulge the one great passion that had hitherto filled

his existence, and what was Cynthia or Lesley or any other woman in comparison with that?

And, for her own part, to stay here at Malincourt, with the dear old dad who was better to her than any lover ever could be, was by no means an ill portion, and when Bob and the rest of them realized that she meant to be an old maid perhaps they would let her alone altogether.

That part of Cynthia's letter relating to Yelverton did not enter into Lesley's thoughts at all. She supposed the old Stourbridge woman must have got the idea into her head when she dined at Malincourt and written off post haste to her cousin, Lady Appuldurcombe, but it never occurred to Lesley that her supposed engagement had preceded Ronny's.

And then she sat down and wrote to Cynthia. "May you both be happy," she said, "you and Ronny." That was all. If a tear fell as she folded the sheet and she was too blinded to see it, did Ronny, to whom those two lines were handed next day, guess its origin?

And Yelverton wrote: "Ronny, you're a fool. Why couldn't you wait?" And not a word more. And Ronny puzzled greatly over this, and for what seemed to him an eternity no sign of any sort came from Malincourt.

CHAPTER XXXIII Yelverton had a father. If he had owned a mother, he could not for so long have closely devoted his attention to the affairs of other people, and very soon after his curt epistle to Ronny he was sent for post haste to Yorkshire, only to find that his parent, who was in a hurry, had not been able to wait and take a formal farewell of his heir.

It is thus, I think, that most of us depart, not with all our boxes nicely packed, our cupboards sealed and our keys neatly docketed to hand over to our successors. Our exits are almost as impromptu as our entries, and it is only when we retire with flags flying and all the honors of war.

The funeral and a good deal of business kept Roger well engaged till the end of September, his only correspondent besides business ones being Lesley, who in her turn wrote him frequently. Was he only a man that gradually hope whispered how, now Ronny was entirely out of her life, Lesley liked no one so much as herself, as Bob Heathcreek knew to his sorrow?

And he was to go back to Malincourt for October, while in Yelverton castle his master seemed to see the half shy, half proud, wholly lovely figure of Lesley moving about light as thistle down, and already in his stables he had selected the loose box about good enough for Miss Coquette.

And meanwhile Lesley was saying to Miss Coquette, her real confidante in these days, since from Lady Cranston she only got reproaches: "You must be kind to me, Coquette, for I love no one but you. No one but you—now." And yet no one ever dared to pity Lesley in these the most awful days of her life.

I think they were bad days to a good many people just then—to Bob, who was slowly digesting the fact that to want a thing very badly is not always to get it, and that the conqueror's baton is not carried in every lover's knapsack—to Lady Cranston, whose own play days were over and whose only interest in life lay in watching friends live dramas and acting them to go wrong—to Lord Malincourt, who cared himself for that punishment of Lesley which had proved punishment indeed to a good many people, including himself—to Ronny, realizing his folly as he grew stronger every day and emancipated himself from that atmosphere of physis and nurses that had done more to quell his spirit than all his suffering—to Cynthia, meeting only kindness instead of love, tolerance taking the cold place of eager longing—to Lady Appuldurcombe, slowly pining under some real bodily illness and very real heartache—and with a glorious, ripe autumn crowning all, and crying to every one of them to have done with human emotions and come out to lose themselves for awhile on nature's breast, to learn from her lessons of patience, of self control, to bear like her all the pain, the cold, of winter, knowing that spring would come and joy return—as indeed it did in time, to all save Lady Cranston.

And to Lesley, the day before Yelverton was expected at Malincourt, came a letter, written in Mrs. Crockett's laboratory hand (which had never kept pace with her brains), that ran as follows:

APPULDURCOMBE HOUSE, Sept 20, 1894. HONORABLE MISS—My lady is very ill, though she keeps it from Mr. Ronny, and cries in her sleep, and the curse lies on her mind as she called down upon you, and she is well aware now she does you wrong, and if I may make so bold as to say so, honored miss, a sign of you and a kind word would save her a bad illness. I write this quite unbeknownst; but, though my lady's too proud to say it or even own she was in the wrong, flowers in May wouldn't be as welcome as you'd be to her now. She seems to see as how the (here "mistake" was partly rubbed out) engagement ain't for Mr. Ronny's happiness, and I hope, honored miss, yours, as we have all heard one may be just as happy as can be. Honored miss, will you please accept me and Mr. Charville's best respects? Your obedient servant, Sarah de Crockett.

Lesley read this letter carefully over, not once, but many times, before she took it to her father.

Was there any plot among the old servants to bring her face to face with Ronny? Did they dislike Cynthia, or was Cynthia in Lady Appuldurcombe's bad books, as Lesley had been?

At breakfast she and Lord Malincourt met alone. "Dad," she said, when he had read the letter, "what does it mean?" "It means that Jane Appuldurcombe is a fool, and her folly has come back to roost," he said angrily, for he had never forgiven that cruel letter about his girl, and never would. "She did not think you good enough for her precious son Ronny, and now she doesn't think another woman good enough, and that's all about it," he added, with a man's masculine summing up of details.

"Dad," said Lesley, remembering Aunt Jane's stolen visit to kiss Ronny in his sleep, "it's a hard thing to bring up your child to make some one else happy, and that's old—at least 32—and the others have all married, and he hasn't."

"So she gets a fit of the megrims," said Lord Malincourt dryly. "Well," he added, "of course if you mean to run away again, I can't stop you."

"No," said Lesley quite gravely. No one on earth would stop her, once she had made up her mind. "But if she died and I hadn't forgiven her it would worry me to the end of my days."

"Oh," cried Lord Malincourt impatiently, "you are all in the same boat! Here is a letter from the lawyers, saying I must go up, if only for a few hours, to swear my evidence." And he quoted a case in which he was involved and of the deepest interest to all masters of foxhounds.

"Very well, dad," said Lesley, "we can go up together by the early train, and I shall do a lot of shopping after going to Aunt Jane for an hour, and we shall still get home for dinner at 9."

And though Lord Malincourt protested, yet such were the exigencies of law and his daughter's wishes that quite early next morning Lesley found herself once more—but with how different a heart!—on her way to town. Ronny could not be out of his room when she arrived, so there was no need to think of what she should say to him if they met.

CHAPTER XXXIV Ronny had not seen his mother for two days, but was put off by so many messages, all cheerful, that he did not realize anything serious, though perhaps had the clock hand been between them he would not have taken her absence so quietly.

The charm between them was broken now—they no longer spoke of Lesley—and with returning energy Ronny drifted every hour farther from her. He was always kind—oh, that deadly kindness which passion never knew—and he would marry her and be good to her when he happened to be at home, and his heart would be Lesley's to the day of his death.

He had insisted on rising early that morning, and when Lesley, invited by Lady Appuldurcombe's servants, as Lord Malincourt said angrily to himself, came to the door of his half sister's house, Charville, scarcely believing his eyes, ushered her joyfully up into the big saloon, and throwing the double doors wide open disclosed Ronny, standing in the middle of the room, one arm round Cynthia's shoulders, and in his left hand a stick upon which he leaned heavily.

Lesley walked forward slowly, blindly; as a freezing blind man draws instinctively to the warmth that he feels, but cannot see, even so Ronny drew her, her soul, her body, till the two had come face to face, and broken hearted, looked upon each other, humbly, too, as those who, not denying their love, know their yearning to be in vain. Then Lesley pulled herself together, and with all the pride of her race turned away.

But Cynthia caught and held her back, with Ronny's arm still round her shoulders. With one look at either face, she knew "as well might one deny God's sunlight as such love as this," and, murmuring, she covered her eyes, the pallid puppet play of her own

Did not know when Cynthia crept away, and Ronny's loves fallen to bits in sorrow before her. Lesley's sacrifice had been made in vain, and now her turn had come should she flinch from it? Slowly she lifted her head. The life seemed to be going out of her in great throbs as she said: "You gave him up to me, Lesley," and took Ronny's slack arm from her shoulders, and twined it, oh, how willingly, round the girl's neck, "and now I give him back to you."

I am sure that in that moment of pure ecstasy the two saw only one another, and did not know when Cynthia crept away; the world stood still and only they were in it as folding both arms about his beloved, Ronny strained

her as a man can but once in his life, when having lost and half died for his love, he awakens from his long night of anguish to find her warm heart beating against his, as only a loyal, pure heart can beat.

And Lesley took his gaunt face in her hands and kissed him, brow and lips and chin, no misgiving in her bosom, drinking deep in the one supreme joy that life cannot deny us, and perhaps they might be standing there till this moment, lost in one another, had not Charville, keeping discreetly behind the door he opened by inches, announced that her ladyship was worrying for Miss Lesley, and would Mr. Ronny come too?

When Ronny had put her hat quite straight, then made it very crooked again and dusted a spoke or two of dust from her blue lion gown with his hands of white embroidery, he remembered Cynthia, and asked a little sternly, though the sternness was not for her, what she had meant.

"We both, sir," said Lesley, making him an audacious courtesy, "had the bad taste to fall in love with you, and we drew lots, and you fell to Cynthia. Oh, poor, poor Cynthia! And now she has behaved splendidly and given you back to me."

"Poor Roger!" he said, but, being a man, not in the least as she had said "Poor Cynthia!" just now. "He is all right," said Lesley hard heartedly. "Don't our two heads make a nice contrast?" she cried out suddenly as they came to a mirror, and leaning their cheeks together, looked in each other's eyes.

"Oh, Ronny," she said, rubbing her little face against his palm one, "I never thought to see you come to Malincourt, and I'll nurse you up, and you shall be as strong as ever you were in three months!"

Charville overheard the last words as, with a subordinate, he waited with the invalid chair to carry Ronny up stairs, and he beamed upon the insensately happy pair, when they came out, his aristocratic looks.

Decency forbade Ronny's taking her hand as she frolicked up the stairs beside him, all her buoyant youth miraculously restored, but outside his mother's door he found her support absolutely necessary, so they entered with a good deal of help from one another, and Jane Appuldurcombe (had the good news already flown through the air to her?) held out her arms as they drew near and without a word kissed them both.

"I have been a very wicked woman, my dear," she said presently, her elegance, like her apartment, quite unimpaired by her remorse, when Ronny had been made comfortable in an easy chair, dozed with "drops" and generally taken care of. "I think if you had not come—and forgiven me—I should have died. And I think Ronny would have died too."

Presently mother and son were alone together, for after kissing Ronny openly, shamelessly, Lesley had stolen away. "She has gone to Cynthia," said Lady Appuldurcombe softly.

"But, thank God," said Ronny, "she is coming back to me."

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### THE DANGER OF STOMACH TROUBLE.

There is No Telling Where Disease of the Stomach and Bowels May End—But South American Nervine has Proven a Remedy for the Most Desperate Cases—The Wonderful Story Told by a Meaford Resident.

Have you noticed in how many cases of death the explanation is given that the real trouble was in the stomach? It had refused to perform its important functions. Food would not remain there, and with almost every mouthful eaten the most terrible pain had been endured.

People may well think seriously when the stomach and bowels become deranged. This was the case with Mr. Samuel Elya, of Meaford, Ont., a prominent Patron of Industry. He hardly saw how he could survive the hold disease of the stomach had secured on him. "I was in great trouble," said Mr. Elya, "with pain in the bowels; my food felt like lead in my stomach. I could not sleep, and my nerves were entirely shattered. I had used different doctors' medicines, but they all failed to cure me, or, indeed, to do me any good. An advertisement of South American Nervine came under my notice, and I purchased a bottle of this medicine from the local druggist. It did me so much good that I got two more bottles, and these three bottles, I honestly believe, cured me. I know it was the best three dollars I ever spent. I now enjoy health as I have not for many years. My whole system seems to be substantially built up, and these blessings I do not hesitate to attribute to South American Nervine."

Two Christmas Gifts. This is something that happened last year—or perhaps it was the year before, or even the year before that. At any rate, it's just as good to be telling as it were brand new. There is a man here whom Mother Nature, by way of recompensing him for the loss of his sight, has richly endowed with artistic abilities. That isn't in the story, you know, but it describes the way. One day the wife of his bosom said:

"My dear, I've bought you a lovely Christmas present."

"Where is it?" he asked.

"There," she answered; "it's a painting there on the wall."

"That evening he said to her, 'My dear I've just been buying you a lovely Christ Christmas present.'"

"Indeed," said she, "what is it?"

"An overcoat," was the answer; "I have it on."—Washington Post.

### THE KENNEDY CASE.

Well Known Marble Dealer Cured of Rheumatism.

Too Far Gone to be Safe—Four Years Suffering—Ended by Using Three Boxes of Dodd's Kidney Pills.

St. Catharines, Jan. 20 (Special).—Great interest has been excited and frequent inquiries as to the case of Mr. Albert F. Kennedy, marble dealer, of his city, who had been reported as recently cured of acute rheumatism. When seen regarding the matter he said:

"Words of praise cannot be to strong when I am speaking of Dodd's Kidney Pills.

"In an acute form I had gone as far as it was safe to go, for sometimes that form of rheumatism is suddenly fatal.

"I had suffered intensely, at times, for the past four years; had lost the use of my hands, wrists and arms, being almost paralyzed.

"I had tried almost everything advertised or recommended before finding what I needed in Dodd's Kidney Pills.

"The result of using three boxes is a perfect cure, and I have had no relapse or

hint of pain for several months since being cured."

Sold by all druggists and dealers. Price 50 cents. If not obtainable, address enclosing price, to the Dodd's Medicine Company, Toronto, Ont.

### Dumplings He Would Have.

An anecdote which was current of Ferdinand I. of Austria at one time greatly delighted his subjects and gave rise to a common saying. One summer day he was hunting in the Styrian mountains, and was overtaken by a violent thunderstorm. He sought refuge in a farmhouse whose occupants were just then at dinner, and his fancy was caught by some smoking dumplings, made of coarse flour. He tasted them, liked them, and asked for more, and when he got back to Vienna, to the horror of the royal cooks, he ordered the same dumplings to be served-up daily.

The courtiers were scandalized that such a course dish should figure on the menu, and even his physicians remonstrated against the use of such food.

The Emperor had always been the most pliant of men, but now he showed that he had a will of his own, and persisted in gratifying his new fancy. Finally the physicians pretended that it was dangerous to his health to be living on dumplings, and insisted on his giving them up.

The hitherto docile sovereign stamped his foot, and declared that he would never sign another official document if his diet were denied him.

"Emperor I am," he shouted, "and dumplings I will have!"

To prevent a stoppage of the government machinery the opposition was withdrawn and his majesty clung tenaciously to his dumplings. Then the imperial phrase became proverbial, and thereafter, when any one insisted on gratifying a silly whim, some one was sure to say:

"Emperor I am, and dumplings I will have!"—Youth's Companion.

Intense Pain From Sciatica. The Myrtle Remedy, South American Rheumatic Cure Conquers It in Two Days.

The following comes from the wealthy lumberman of Merrickville, Ont., Mr. E. Errett: For a number of years I have suffered intense pain from rheumatism and sciatica in my left hip. It is needless to say I have doctored constantly, but without receiving anything but temporary relief. South American Rheumatic Cure was at last tried and its effect was truly magical. In two days the pain was all gone, and two bottles of the remedy cured me completely. I was so bad that for two years I could not lie on my left side if I got the universe for so doing. At present I have not a symptom of sciatica or rheumatism, and hence it is with much pleasure that I recommend this great remedy. I know it will cure. Sold by H. D. Clark and S. McDiarmid.

Mr. Rathbun and His Insomniacal Ram. Lon Rathbun and wife were awakened last night by a noise in the house. The next instant the footboard of their bed was struck with a thunder and split clear off. It was their ugly ram, which had broken loose and entered the house. A minute more and the washstand received an impact from the ram's head which broke the pitcher and cracked the bowl. By this time Mr. Rathbun had got into one leg of his trousers. Before he could complete his toilet the ram got his horns mixed up in them and tore them badly. Then Mr. Rathbun struck a match. Then the ram struck him. The match went out, and so did Rathbun. The ram butted him out of the chamber, which is on the first floor. Scouring a fence board, Rathbun pounded the brute into submission and tied him up until morning.—Mount Morris (N. Y.) Correspondence Rochester Post-Express.

Advertisement for 'Lungs' and 'Cherry Pectoral' medicine, including text like 'TAKING Cherry Pectoral' and 'Lamb, Chicks'.

Advertisement for 'The Teeth & Breath' medicine, including text like 'THE TEETH & BREATH' and 'CURES'.

Advertisement for 'The Man' medicine, including text like 'THE MAN' and 'CURES'.

Advertisement for 'The Keeney Case' medicine, including text like 'THE KEENEY CASE' and 'Well Known Marble Dealer Cured of Rheumatism'.

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