

CARRIED BY STORM!

By the Author of "The Marquis's Wife," "A Wonderful Woman," "A Mad Marriage," "Redmond O'Donnell," etc.

PART III.

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

Only that, and you are generally so enthusiastic! You are strangely quiet to-night. Are you in pain? Your ankle? Oh, it's all right, mamma, poor little Leo cries out. In pain—yes—but the pain is not in anything so unromantic as an ankle. If he is not engaged to Olga, what then is the matter? Is it that her refusal has hurt him so deeply, in spite of his forced lightness of manner? "There is another friend of the past," Dr. Lamar says slowly, after a silence, "whom I suppose you have never met in all your wanderings up and down the world. I mean, Joanna!"

The name falls so unexpectedly that all start at the sound. Livingston in the darkness turns quite white. "Why do you suppose so?" he answers, and his voice is not quite steady. "I have met Joanna!" There is a universal exclamation. Dr. Lamar starts to his feet, his mother clasps her hands, Leo sits erect and looks eagerly. "You have met her!" Geoffrey cries, excitedly. "You know where she is? Mother, you hear this? At last!" "I have met her—I know where she is," Livingston answers, surprised at the amount of excitement they showed; "is there anything extraordinary in that?" "There is this—that I have searched, and caused search to be made everywhere all these years in vain. I had almost made up my mind she was dead—so impossible has she been to discover. And all this time you have known where she was!" "Not all this time, if you mean these six past years—only within the past two months," says Frank, feeling oddly cold and conscious, and wondering what they would say if they knew.

"And where is she? In New York?" "At Newport, I think, just now. How exercised you are over the matter, Lamar. I always knew of course—" "My dear fellow, you know nothing, absolutely nothing, of the truth. It is the most important concern of my life to find Joanna. She is safe and well, and married to Blake?" "Safe and well, but not married to Blake or anybody else." "What! She ran away with him, you know?" "I know! Frank says, wincing; but she ran away from him, as you must recall, after!" "It was true, then? Odd girl—strange, wild Joanna! And what became of her—what did she do! No harm befall her, I trust?" "None whatever, but much good. She found friends, honest and true friends, and she has worked her way to comparative fame and fortune. She is wild Joanna no longer. She is a refined and thoroughly well-bred young lady with gracious manners, and all womanly sweetness, and goodness and grace." He speaks warmly, his handsome face flushes in the dark. "Thank Heaven!" he hears Mrs. Abbott murmur, and Geoffrey, too, seems deeply moved. "I am more thankful than I can say," he says, after a little. "I always knew the elements of a noble character were there, crushed, warped as they had been. Thank Heaven, indeed! But tell us about her, Frank. You can form no idea of how deeply we are all interested in the well-being and history of Joanna."

his professional life. They are living in comparative poverty and obscurity, but are one and all as delightful people as ever. Here is an aptitude for you, from Geoff, long enough to make one jealous; and Joanna, they count upon you going to them at once." She takes the large letter, and looks at the clear, bold, familiar writing. "I thank God," she says softly, "I have got the desire of my heart. I thank you, Frank, for being the bearer of good news. And you have been there ever since." "My mother had gone," he says, hastily. "She had left for Saratoga before I left New York. I mean to go after her there at once. It reminds me of Japhet in Search of a Father, and seems almost as fruitless a search," he laughs. "Do not, she interposes, and lays her hand on his arm, "as a favor, to me—at least not yet. Wait. Tell me about them. Is Leo pretty?" "Very pretty." She glances at him a moment. "And Mrs. Abbott? she says, then. "As beautiful as ever, but less proud, less cold. You know what I mean. And as for Geoff—dear old fellow, he is looking splendidly. Shall you go at once, Joanna? They will literally be in a fever, I think, until you are with them." "I will go to-morrow." "And I may accompany you, of course? Then I must inform Olga, who wishes to visit them too. They will owe me a vote of thanks, I fancy, for restoring them to their friends." "Go for your cousin at once, for I intend to go alone. Yes; I will have it so. I prefer it. Do you think I cannot travel alone?" laughing, and lifting her brave, bright face. "Have you yet to learn I am strong-minded, and amply sufficient unto myself? And, Frank, do not tell your cousin any more than your mother. Tell no one until I give you leave." "But, Joanna—" he is beginning, impatiently, when Professor Ericson enters, and cuts him short. Joanna informs him of to-morrow's journey, and that Mr. Livingston will dine with him, and so his opportunity is gone. He dines and spends the evening, but he does not see Joanna for a moment alone. And next day she departs, holding to her resolution to go unaccompanied. He sees her, and takes train for Brightbrook and his cousin Olga. Will they meet, he wonders, these two, at the Lamar Cottage; and if so, how? Will Olga be simple, chillingly civil? And how is it that Lamar and his mother take the finding of Joanna so greatly to heart?

In the late afternoon of that day a cab sets Joanna down in front of the Lamar Cottage. They have not expected her so soon, and Mrs. Abbott alone is in the house. As she sits the door opens, and a tall young lady enters hurriedly, and falls on her knees beside her, and clasps her in her arms. "Mrs. Abbott, the familiar voice cries, "it is I. Oh, my friend, kindest, truest, dearest, best, look at me—bid me welcome—say you forgive me—say you are glad to see me. It is I—Joanna—come back!"

CHAPTER IX. HOW JOANNA PAID HER DEBT. They sit in the half-lit parlor, the lights turned low under shades, and Joanna listens once more to the story Jud Sleaford has told. Her hand is clasped in Mrs. Abbott's; Leo nestles beside her after her usual clinging, childish fashion, and Geoffrey is the narrator. No sound disturbs him; there are tears in his mother's dark eyes, otherwise she is calm. In the startled eyes of little Leo there are wonder and fear, but she says nothing, although what she hears now she hears for the first time. For Joanna, she sits quite calm, and listens to the end. Even then there is not much said—there is not much that it is easy to say. Leo buries her face in Joanna's lap, and is sobbing softly. "Oh, how could papa—how could he—how could he?" It is not in that tender little heart to blame any one too hardly. She is afraid to look at her mother, at Joanna, her sister, both so deeply wronged. Her sister! How strange that thought. A thrill of gladness goes through her as she clasps her closer in her arms. She has grown so famous, she bears herself so nobly—she feels so proud of her—it almost compensates. And she will be a great heiress—Joanna—it is her birthright, all that splendor and luxury—beautiful lost Abbott Wood. Ah! her heart aches for Abbott Wood often and often, her stately home down by the sea. All is Joanna's now. Not one spark of envy or jealous grudging is in her—all good fortune that can befall her, Joanna deserves, has bravely earned. They were the usurpers, and held her for her years what should have been hers. Her own sister! How good, how comforting is that thought. She has never felt the need of a sister; mamma and Geoffrey have always sufficed, but it is a rare and sweet delight to find one at this late day. And this is why everything had to be given up, why mamma took her former name, why papa shot himself. "Poor papa! he used to be so fond of his little Leo." She sobs on, her face hidden, the tears stifled in Joanna's lap. No one has a tear for the dead sinner but tender-hearted little Leo. All this time they have been talking, brokenly, disconnectedly, but Leo has not been listening. She has only been hearkening to her own thoughts. Now Joanna lifts the bowed, dark head. "Crying, little Leo? why, I wonder? Surely not because poor Joanna is my sister? Ah, my darling, it is the one bright, bright spot in all this darkness, and sorrow, and pain." "Oh, my dear! my dear!" Leo says, flinging her arms about her, "do you not know I feel that? I thank the good God for giving me so great a gift. I love you, Joanna—no sister was ever more dear—but I cannot help thinking of—of him. He was fond of me, you know." She droops her face again, crying with all her heart. "Fond of you, my little one?" Joanna says, her own eyes moist. "I wonder who would not be fond of you? And we all love you the better for those tears. But you?" "Joanna lays her hand on Mrs. Abbott's, and looks up with wondering eyes into her calm face—"how you bear it, I wonder as I look at you. And you used to be—"

in his flawless vitality. His mother grows anxious, and begs him to spare himself, but in vain. Coming home on this sultry evening, tired, depressed, hungry, out of sorts, his mind filled with grim streaks, and the grim faces of poverty and disease, he sees a vision! Standing in the parlor, alone, the last light full upon her, dressed in some gauzy, silky robe, that floats like a cloud, softly over the carpet, her golden braids twisted coronet-fashion around her head, a diamond star flashing at her throat, he sees—Olga. It comes upon him like a shock of rapture. He has not been thinking of her at all, and she is before him a dream of light of loveliness. He stands quite still, quite pale, unable for a moment to advance or speak, looking at her. It is she who comes forward, blushing slightly, smiling and holding out her hand. "Are you going to swoon at my feet, Dr. Lamar? Do not, I beg—I would not know in the least how to bring you to. Yes, it is I in the flesh—Olga—shake hands and see. How unflattering amazed you look to be sure! And yet, with the prettiest of pouts, you must have known I was coming. "I had forgotten," says Dr. Lamar. "The words are not flattering, but he still holds her hand, and gazes at her as though he could never gaze enough. "Complimentary, upon my word! But it is just like you all—out of sight, out of mind. Leo and your mother had not forgotten, sir! Men have no memories. Will you not come in? The house is thine own—or do you mean to stand staring indefinitely. You remind me of the country swain, who sighs and looks, and sighs and looks, and sighs and looks again. If you sigh and look into the dining-room it will be more to the purpose? Your dinner is waiting there, and your mother has been left lamenting over your prolonged absence, and the fowl that is spoiling while it waits." She runs gaily, she sees all the surprise, the admiration in his face, and she likes it. She is a hero-worshipper; this fair, white, Olga, and Geoffrey Lamar is her latest hero. She does not understand very clearly, but for honour's sake he has given up a fortune, and gone out single-handed to fight with fate. He is a hero in that, to this romantic young lady, he is working himself to death among the poor and suffering, heedless of rest, or food or comfort; he is a hero in that also. And it is a grand thing to be like that. She adores strength, bravery, usefulness. And what a distinguished-looking man he has become; but then he always had that air—noble even as a boy, which she admires so much, and sees so seldom. Dr. Lamar is off duty that evening, really off duty, and enjoys his home circle with a zest, a delight that is not untinged with pain. To sit and look at that lovely face is a pleasure so intense that he is almost afraid of it. Frank is there near Leo. Mrs. Ventnor, too, is present, talking earnestly to Mrs. Abbott. "But, my dear Geoffrey, you have pledged yourself blindly to obey, and must abide that rash promise. I will it so." "And Joanna is queen regent now; it must be "as the queen wills" cries Leo, gaily. "Well—if I must, I must, but I see no sense in it. And your plans? for that is not one. But perhaps it is too early for you to have formed any."

"No—my plans, such as they are, are formed, and are few and simple enough. In the first place, I leave the stage." "Of course!" promptly "that goes without saying." "In the second," smiling, "I stay here a week or two with you all, if you will have me." "I will have her—oh!" says Leo, opening wide her velvet eyes. "Then I start for San Francisco, escorted by my dear old professor, who would escort me to the world's end, at an hour's notice, and take my mother, my poor mother, out of her prison of years." "Good child," says Mrs. Abbott. "You will find her well, too. Geoffrey had a letter from the doctor, only a fortnight ago, saying so, and saying she still kept calling for you. Ah! Joanna, that fatal fortune will do some good, after all—it will rescue her." "In Joanna's hands it will do much good," says Geoffrey, with decision. "Well, and after that?" "After that—after that the deluge! I hardly know. Thus far I have planned, and no further. I do not quite realize it all yet. My plans and wants will increase, I suppose, as I do. But oh! through it all, this fairy fortune—this strange, tragical story, there is one thing I do realize to my heart's core—how glad I am to be with you all again. What would it all avail but for your goodness in the past? Geoffrey, my first friend, I cannot thank you—indeed, I will not try, but you know—you know what I feel! And Leo is my sister—my very, very own sister. It is better than a score of fortunes. And you?" she puts her arms suddenly about Mrs. Abbott, "my dearest! my dearest, my more than mother, how good you were to me in those long gone days. Your lessons of love, of patience, of gentleness seemed to be thrown away then, but I hope—oh! I hope they have come back and borne fruit. Nothing good is ever lost; it all returns sooner or later. I have found my own mother, but I can never love her better than I love you."

It is a scene, and these women weep together, and when, an hour later, good-nights are said, it is a very happy little household that retires to sleep. But Joanna does not sleep—at least for hours. She is excited, she wants to be alone, I think. She has the room lately vacated by Livingston on the table, a flower given him by Leo, dead and dry on the window-sill. It is of him she is thinking—he is rarely absent long from her thoughts—he is coming to-morrow with his cousin Olga. He must not know—not yet, not yet. In these dim plans of hers for the future, his figure does not appear; she tries to place him there, but she cannot. A week with Leo, and already the abrupt mention of his name sends a flush into the dark, mignonette face. Is it so, then? And he? She is the sweetest little blossom possible, a tender, gentle, adoring little heart, the sort to sit at her husband's feet, and worship, and see no faults. No, in the picture of her future, Joanna cannot fancy him, try as she may. Next day he comes, and with him Olga Ventnor. Dr. Lamar is very busy in those days, and disease and death are very busy, too, in the city. He and they do battle by day and by night; he has very little time to give them at home. Fever is spreading, and will not be stamped out; the weather is hot, damp, murky, oppressive—real fever weather, and in the pestilential purities many lie unto death these few July days. He is indefatigable in his profession, he seems to live in his carriage, he begins to look ragged and worn, strong and robust as he is, splendid

but if things go on, she will be Mrs. Livingston to you before long. Dear, we go fast, my friend. Your heart goes out through your eyes, it seems. And only two months ago he proposed to me! What a crashing blow to my vanity!—As for little Leo— But the door opens, and little Leo comes in with Joanna, and the cousins part—Livingston covered with confusion as with a garment, and Olga's sapphire eyes laughing with malice. The days go by; Joanna's week has nearly melted into two. They hold her by force, it seems; Mrs. Abbott's pleading eyes, Leo's pleading lips, Geoffrey's pleasure in her prolonged stay. The Ventnors are still here; Livingston is every day, and all day every day, almost, at the cottage. "Dr. Lamar works as hard as ever, spares himself as little as ever, and begins to look really haggard and ill. His mother and Joanna watch him with anxious eyes, and what they fear comes to pass. Olga's hero goes down on his battle-field, but facing and fighting the foe until he falls, prostrate and conquered. And then there are tears, and pain, and terror in the bright little household, and a sudden scattering of the happy circle. And in this hour, Joanna comes forward to pay her debt—to pay it, if need be, even with her life. She is calm and self-possessed, where all is dismay. She takes Livingston aside, and speaks to him as one having authority. "Last night I spoke to Geoffrey," she quietly says; "he felt this coming on, and knew he could rely upon me. He wished to be taken to the hospital, but that I would not hear of. He wished me to go, but that was still more impossible. Then we decided what to do, and you must obey. You must leave at once, and take Miss Ventnor, her mother, and Leo with you to Brightbrook, if you are wise; this city is not safe. I remain with Mrs. Abbott. A professional nurse is coming and his friend, Dr. Morgan, will attend. To obey is the only way in which you can help us, and with the help of Heaven, Geoffrey will be restored to us." "But, oh, Joanna," the young man cries out, "it may be death to you." "She smiles; it is a smile that goes to the heart. "If Heaven please, but I think not. I am so strong, so well. I have never been ill in my life, and I am not in the least afraid. I do not think that for me there is the slightest danger. But for your cousin and Leo there may be much. Take them away, Frank, and do not come here any more."

"I will take them away," he answers, "but as for not coming here any more—" He does not finish the sentence; he turns to go. Then suddenly he comes back, and he clasps her closely in his arms, and kisses her again and again. "God bless you, my own darling—my brave, noble, great-hearted Joanna, and make me worthy of you in the time that is to come." Olga Ventnor, and her mother, and Leo are taken away. Not willingly; rebelling, and under loud protests and tears on Leo's part; white, mute grief on Olga's. Her heart burns as she thinks of Joanna there in the post of danger, by his side, and she here selfishly safe and free. But she says little. What is there for her to say? and maiden pride is very strong in Olga Ventnor. They see that she is pale; that as the days go on she grows thin as a shadow; that she wanders about like a restless spirit; that she listens breathlessly to the report Livingston brings daily, and many times a day. For too cruel—and Frank here constantly about the cottage, and tries to catch glimpses of Joanna. There are not many glimpses of Joanna to be had; she literally lives in the sick-room, she shares the nightly vigils, she scratches brief naps in her clothes, while she insists upon his mother taking her proper rest. No Sister of Mercy, no adoring wife, could have watched, nursed, cared for him more devotedly than does she. And the days pass—the long, sunny, summer days. Everything that medical skill can do, that tireless nursing can do, are done. And they triumph. There comes a day and a night of agonized suspense, and waiting, and heart-break—a night in which Olga Ventnor knows in her agony that if Geoffrey Lamar dies, all that life holds of joy for her will die too—a night in which Leo weeps, and Livingston roams restlessly, and Joanna watches, and waits, and prays. And as day dawns, and the first lacrus of sunshine pierce the darkened sick-room, she comes out, white as a spirit, wasted, wan, but oh! so thankful. Oh! so glad. Oh! so unexpressably blessed. Frank Livingston starts up and comes forward—pale too, and worn and thin. He does not speak—his eyes speak for him. "Do not come near," Joanna says, remembering, even in that supreme hour, prudence. "Go home and tell them all to bless God for us. Geoffrey will live." He goes and tells his glad news. Mrs. Ventnor and Leo cry with joy, and are full of outspoken thanksgiving, but Olga is silent. And presently she rises, feeling glidy and faint, and goes to her room, and falls on her knees by the bed, and there remains, bowed, speechless and motionless, a long, long time. And whether it is for Geoffrey she is praying, or—Joanna—she can never tell.

CHAPTER X. THE TIME OF ROSES. "I never thought to see it again, the dear old place. Nowhere in the world can ever seem so much like home to me as Brightbrook. It is good, good, good to be back." So says little Leo, drawing a long, contented breath. She stands leaning against a brown tree trunk, her hat in her hand, the sunshine falling down upon her like a rain of gold, flecking her red cambric dress, her braided dark hair, her sweet, soft-cut face, the great black velvet eyes. Those dark eyes gaze with a wistful light in the direction of Abbott Wood, whither she has not yet been. Sitting in a rustic chair, near Frank Livingston looks at her, thinking, artist-like, what an unconscious picture she makes of herself, and with something deeper, perhaps, than mere artist admiration in his eyes. They are all here, the Lamar family, and have been for two days. To Leo it is as though they had never quitted it. The villa, the village, the faces of Frank and Olga, everything seems as though she had only left yesterday. The gap of years is bridged over; she is rich and prosperous Leo Abbott once more. Only her old home she has not seen; she longs to go, but dreads to ask. In an invalid chair, close by, sits her brother, very much of an invalid still, pallid and thin to a most interesting degree, and petted by all the womankind until Livingston declares in disgust that after cooing must be ten times harder for Lamar to bear up against than the fever bout. Olga is an exception. Olga, now that she has gotten him safely here, feels a limitless content, but she does not coddle. She watches the re-

turning appetite, the growing strength, the gradual return to life and health, with a gladness, a thankfulness all were weak to tell, but she puts not at all. She treats him a trifle more tenderly, perhaps, than Geoffrey Lamar, vigorous of strength and life, of some weeks back; but feel as she may, Olga Ventnor is not one to wear her heart on her sleeve for any man; sick or well. She is a fair, a graceful, a lovely young hostess, full of all gentle care for the comfort of her guests; but Geoffrey is her mother's especial province, and to her mother she quietly leaves him. It is rather against his will, truth to tell, that Dr. Lamar is here at all; but very little voice was given him in the matter—his faint objections were overruled by a vast majority, and he was en route hither almost before he knew it. Colonel Ventnor had come for his wife and daughter, alarmed for their safety, and finding the patient convalescent had waited a few days, and absconded him, willy-nilly. The cottage had been shut up, and the family are safely here, recuperating in the fresh, sea-scented breezes of Brightbrook, and Olga and Leo at least, in their hidden hearts, supremely happy. For Frank and Geoffrey—well their rooves are certainly not thornless. For Geoffrey, he finds himself yielding irresistibly to the spell of other days, and it threatens to be a fatal spell. In those other days it was different—he might have hoped then—no hope would only be another name for presumption. He has loved Olga ever since he can remember, it seems to him, and even when he thought her assigned to Livingston, had hoped, feeling confident of being able to hold his own with that careless woman. But all that has been changed; in those days he was the heir presumptive of a very rich man; in these days he is a penniless doctor, able to earn his daily bread, and little more. And for all the best years of his life it seems likely to be so. For himself he has quite made up his mind to it, has not been unhappy; but now—now, after this inopportune visit, after long days spent in her society, it will be different. He can hardly love her better, and yet he dreads to stay. He will spend his life for nothing, a hopeless passion will mar all that is best in him, a love she must never know of will consume his life, eat out his heart with useless longings and regrets. Meantime Joanna speeds on by day and by night, on her long journey to her mother. Her prediction has proven true—she does not take the fever. And the doctor tells them all that to her indefatigable nursing more than anything else do they owe Geoffrey's life. "Thank her if you can, young man," Dr. Morgan says; "she never spared herself by night or day. But for her you would be a dead man this morning."

But Geoffrey does not even try to thank her—there are things for which mere words, be they never so eloquent, are a poor return. Others overwhelm her with tears, and gratitude—his mother, his sister, Mrs. Ventnor. Olga says little, but it is at these first days with a tense sort of look in her blue eyes, but she holds herself well in hand, and even Joanna turns away disappointed, from that still, proudly calm face. Only when they say good-by does a glimpse of Olga's heart appear. She is the last to say it, and they say alone. She has held out her hand at first with a smile, and the conventional good wishes for a pleasant journey. Suddenly she flings her arms around Joanna's neck and holds her almost wildly to her. "You have saved his life," she whispers, kissing her again and again. "I will love you while I live for that." And then she is gone. Joanna looks after her, a glad, relieved, triumphant smile on her face. "It is so true," she says, softly, "in spite of all—in spite of pride. I am so glad—so very, very glad." And now they are all here, and the five last miserable years seem to drift away, and the old time—"the time of roses"—comes back. Leo visits Abbott Wood to her heart's content, no one objects, and wanders sadly under the trees, and down by the blue summer sea, through the glowing rooms, speaking of her mother's refined taste, her father's boundless wealth. Poor papa! Leo's tender little heart is sad for him yet. Here is the chapel, beautiful St. Walburga's, with its radiant statues on golden backgrounds, the crimson and purple and golden glass ceiling rays of rainbow light on the coloured marbles of the floor; the carved pulpit with its angel faces, from which Mrs. Lamar's meek countenance used to beam down; and up yonder is the organ where mamma used to sit and play Mozart and Haydn on Sunday afternoons. How silent, how sad, how changed, it all is now. Here is her own white and blue chamber, with its lovely picture of Christ Blessing Little Children, its guardian angels on brackets, her books and toilet things, all as they used to be. Here is Geoffrey's room, bare enough and without carpet, but his tastes were pretentiously austere. In those days, with lots of space, and little else, except an iron bedstead, and tables and chairs. And books, of course—everywhere books. And a horrid skeleton in a closet on wires, and a dismal skull grinning at her under glass.

Leo gets out again as quickly as may be with a shudder at Geoffrey's dreadful tastes. Her first visit leaves her very sad and thoughtful; she loves every tree in the old place, every room in the stately house, and it is never to be home to her any more! It is Joanna's, and, of course, she is glad of that. No good too good, can come to Joanna. But for all that, it makes her heart ache. She may come to it as a visitor, but dear, dear Abbott Wood will never be home any more. No one else goes, not her mother, not her brother. They drive in every other direction, never in that. Leo goes often, and frequent going blunts the first sharp feeling of loss and pain. Another sense of loss and pain, keener yet follows this. What has she done to Frank? He is her friend no more; he avoids her, indeed; he is never her escort if he can help it. Sometimes he cannot help it. Olga, in her imperious fashion, orders him to go and take care of Leo, and not let the child come to harm moving about alone. Leo tries to assert herself, and summon pride to her aid; but Leo in the role of a haughty maiden is a failure. The sensitive lips quiver, like the lips of a grieving child; the velvet black eyes grow dewy and deep, with tears hardly held back. What has she done to make Frank dislike her? He used not to be like this; he used to be nice, and attentive, and polite. But it is so no more. He goes with her when he must, and talks to her after a conventional fashion, and looks at her furiously, and seems guilty when caught in the act. Why should he look guilty, and glance hastily away? There is no harm in looking at her—Leo has a secret consciousness that she is not bad to look at. (Continued on Third Page.)