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A Broken Vow;

—OR—

BETTER THAN REVENGE.

CHAPTER VIII.

Olive Varney awoke in the morning with a curious feeling of helplessness. She lay for some time, thinking over all the business on which she had so impulsively embarked, and seeing, for the first time, that there was a possibility she might not triumph so completely and so suddenly as she had anticipated. It was well enough, of course, to have got into the place, and to be lying there—a secret and unsuspected enemy—within a yard or two of the girl; but to be lying there practically powerless was a galling thing. And her powerlessness arose from the fact that she was without money, and was therefore to a large extent at the mercy of those who were prepared to be charitable to her.

In her eagerness to get to work upon that scheme laid down for her by her father, she had lost sight of the fact that she had no scheme to work upon, save that vague one that had been always in his diseased and distorted mind. Again, in coming into the place and so lightly declaring that she was Aunt Phipps, and penniless, she had lost sight of the obvious fact that Christopher Dayne must be called upon to support her. And, so far as Olive Varney was concerned, Christopher Dayne was a stranger. She must, of course, utterly refuse to accept his charity; yet, on the other hand, she must accept that charity if she would remain under that roof. Altogether, Olive Varney began to feel that she had made rather a muddle of the business to begin with.

She racked her brain to find what was to be done. There was no one on whom she could call for help, because of necessity the matter was a secret one, which concerned herself only. Impossible to claim that sum of money which had been hoarded by her father for this very work; because that sum was locked away in a bag which could only be claimed by Olive Varney, or by someone who knew her; and Olive Varney had vanished out of the world. Impossible to go to the real Aunt Phipps, because that feeble old creature had apparently no money even for her own wants, and nothing to give save her name—which Olive had already stolen. Thrice galling to think, when presently a knock sounded on her door and a fresh young voice summoned "Mrs. Phipps" to breakfast, that she was to eat the food of her enemy. But that enemy should pay a bitter price for all this later on.

Christopher Dayne missed his usual cosy breakfast in his room—missed, above all things, the bright presence of Lucy with the tray. For the conscientious Odley, making up her mind that relations should not be parted, and that above all an aunt and a nephew might very well breakfast together, had had breakfast for two laid in a room downstairs; so that Christopher, a little bewildered by the fact that he had been told that breakfast was waiting, went down, to find Aunt Phipps looking out of a window and waiting for him. He closed the door, stopping his cheery whistle from sheer nervousness, and advanced slowly to the table.

"Good morning, Aunt," said Christopher, hesitating a little on the title, and wondering to find that Aunt Phipps in daylight was so young. "Did you—did you sleep well?"

"Not very well," she replied, seating herself at the table. Then, as he sat down, she suddenly grasped the corners of the table, and stared across at him, and spoke quickly.

"You said something last night about having to look after me—to provide for me," she said, in a low voice. "I have lain awake all night thinking about that; I never intended that you should do anything of the kind. In fact, I don't want you to trouble about me; I shall be able to provide for myself."

"Don't you trouble about that, Aunt," said Christopher, with more calmness than he felt. "You've been good enough to come all this way to break bad news to me, and I can't very well turn you out, you know, and leave you to shift for yourself. Please let me have some breakfast, because I'm dreadfully hungry. And don't you worry. I shall rub along somehow, never fear."

What could be said to a young man of this stamp, who simply refused to be set aside, and calmly appropriated this young aunt of his as someone to be looked after and protected? Olive Varney felt a hot blush of shame at the thought of how willingly and innocently he accepted her, and of how mean and fraudulent a thing she really was, no matter what her purpose in coming there. She was glad when presently he spoke, beginning to ask various questions.

"I don't want to revive painful memories, of course," he began, abruptly—"but what did Uncle Phipps die of? I suppose you were awfully cut up?"

"It was a blow, of course," said Olive, coloring furiously; and Christopher decided on the spot that there had been a very great amount of love lost be-

tween his aunt and uncle. "Your uncle killed himself, I believe."

"What? Don't you know?" asked Christopher, staring at her in amazement.

"Not exactly," replied Olive, remembering her lesson. "When he found that all the money was gone, he simply left a letter for me, saying that he intended to destroy himself. That is all."

"Yes—but suppose he didn't!" exclaimed Christopher eagerly. "Suppose he was merely spoofing you, Aunt Phipps. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but from what my mother always told me of Uncle Phipps he was such a cheery, happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, that he might have repented at the last moment."

"It is quite unlikely," said Olive, feeling herself getting deeper into the maze every moment. "Surely I ought to know your uncle better than you! Now, I want you to tell me about this girl I have seen in the house," she went on. "Who is she?"

"Lives in the house," said Christopher shortly, as he went on with his breakfast. "Why do you ask, Aunt Phipps?"

"Oh—I am a little interested in her, from what I saw of her last night," replied Olive carelessly. "I am reminded of her, because you suggested last night that you were in love with someone—and I thought perhaps it might be—"

"My dear Aunt Phipps," broke in Christopher hurriedly, as he rose from the table and buttoned his coat across his chest, "for the future I have but one object in life—to work. Save for necessary moments which must be snatched for eating, dressing and slumber, I shall work. I shall, in fact, become a mere machine, to turn out so much a day—and even so much a night, if possible. Which reminds me that I am wasting time. Make yourself comfortable, Aunt Phipps—and good morning!"

He was gone before she had time to reply to him, and he left her with a very uncomfortable feeling in her breast. She was going out of the room herself, and had actually opened the door, when the sound of voices outside stopped her; still with her hand upon the door, she drew back and listened.

"And everything has come right for you, Mr. Dayne, eh?" It was the voice of Lucy Ewing, and Olive stiffened at the sound.

"Well, not exactly that," replied Christopher. "I should rather say that everything has come remarkably wrong. I thought I was going to be rich; but it seems my money has all gone. I am the richer only by an aunt. It'll be a good thing for me, in the long run, of course; all geniuses start that way at some time or other, so that you see I'm on the right path. No one ever heard of a rich genius, so that if this money had happened to come to me it might really have upset everything—mightn't it? Now I am going down to the prosaic neighborhood of Fleet Street, and I'm going to make one or two people there aware of the fact that I'm alive. And, I say, Lucy—"

The voices became so low at this point that Olive Varney heard no more. She closed the door and stood there thinking deeply—wondering in what fashion she should set about the work she had undertaken. Evidently there was some better understanding between Christopher and the girl than she had imagined; that use of the Christian name was startling. What if it should prove that the news she had brought concerning that loss of fortune had roused the girl's sympathies for Christopher Dayne? What if it should happen that she who would so willingly have wrecked the girl's life should be the very means of putting some new happiness within her reach? She hardened at the thought, and beat her hands together softly in her helplessness.

"Money!—I must have money!" she whispered to herself. "I am tied here—an object of charity until I can get that. I can see myself failing in everything I undertake; I can see myself reduced to pleading to them for the means to live. What shall I do?—to whom can I turn?"

Whatever else happened, Olive felt that she must at least be able to pay her way in that house; every instinct within her revolted at the idea of accepting hospitality from the hands of anyone, and above all, from anyone connected, however remotely, with Lucy Ewing. If, as was more than probable, Christopher Dayne found it difficult to pay his way himself, Olive felt that she might actually be living at the expense of Lucy Ewing, in some indefinite way. Maddened at the thought of that, she determined at last to go to the real Aunt Phipps, and to find out if something could not be got—even temporarily—from her.

Odley watched her go, not without some inward satisfaction. As a matter of fact, Odley knew only too well the difficulties with which Christopher Dayne had to contend; and an impecun-

ious first date of seeding with the oat and the barley, and from date of seeding with the oats as. It was observed that, as of seeding was delayed, the of rust in the resulting crop ally increased, with only one eption. The results indicate lance of sowing spring wheat, ls and peas in the order here ring with the spring wheat, ang with the peas. An exceed- ortant lesson may be learned results of this experiment, aw that, for every day's delay ding after the first week had which the seeding took place, an average decrease of 56 oats, 53 pounds of barley, 29 spring wheat, and 23 pounds er acre. of the past five years emmer