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CHAPTER XIII.  
MAY'S UNHAPPY FLIGHT.

For several days after the occurrences narrated in the last chapter, May Mellen devoted her time to the comfort of Goldie and her child.

Nourishing food was prepared and taken to the attic where Goldie was fast regaining her health and strength. She had been so long separated from all her friends, that the kindly voice and cheerful smile of her noble-hearted sister accomplished the restoration of her health much more effectually than medicine could have done.

But this constant care, and the fatigue of the journey from the farm to the old house in the wood, began to tell upon May's health, and her cheeks grew less rosy, and her face more oval day by day.

Tim had been forbidden to visit Goldie until she was stronger. So he waited patiently for her to get strong again, carefully counting his money and calculating how long it would take to get enough to buy all the possessions of Mr. Mellen, for he was determined to purchase the old house now, because it had been Goldie's home during her childhood.

About two weeks after Goldie's coming to the old house in the wood, Ned Cameron, who had noticed the change in his betrothed, had a suspicion that all was not as it should be, and resolved to see May the meaning of her strange conduct.

She was seldom at liberty to afford him a moment's conversation, and

when alone with him seemed preoccupied and constrained. He tried to assure himself that all was well, but finally a dark shadow crept into his heart and settled there.

One morning she had excused herself and started for the old house as usual. Ned, under the impulse of the moment, walked on after her.

The morning was fresh and fragrant, and he walked on without any settled purpose. Meeting Tim suddenly, he passed for a moment's conversation, and carelessly remarked: "What takes everybody into the wood nowadays?"

Tim, fearful lest his cherished secret should be discovered, replied: "I don't know what takes you here but I come after rabbits. Miss May must have some purpose in her head for I see her a-going through these woods 'most every day with a man."

"With a man, Tim?"

"Yes; a pretty smart-lookin' fellow 'bout my size, an' looks a good deal like me. Has got that smart way like me, too. That's all she goes to the old house for—nuthin' else in the Lord's world!" answered Tim earnestly.

Of course, Ned Cameron resolved to know more of this strange affair. But he was above questioning the half-witted fellow before him, and determined to watch for himself, and learn what the mystery might be. May was absent during the entire day, and only when the sunset made the earth beautiful did she return.

Her heart beat joyfully as she neared her home, for she had talked with Goldie, and obtained her consent to having her existence made known, and returning to her home.

There need be no more concealment, and, although people would wonder and gossip, what of that? Was not Goldie married, even though her husband was supposed to have deserted her? And so May thought it better to brave all that than trust Goldie out again into the cruel world. She had determined to tell Ned that very evening of her secret, and ask him to walk over to the old house with her.

Goldie was strong enough to ride home, and life seemed better worth the living now that she was found. So May walked on, smiling to herself as she matured her plans.

Ned Cameron stood by the bars watching her, all unseen. She passed him, and an hour later he saw her walking swiftly into the wood again.

He at once followed cautiously after her, and when she entered the old house he was not far behind. She ascended the rickety stairs, and as he followed until she paused at the top of the attic stairs.

He slipped behind the huge stone chimney, and stood there in the shadow while she went to the box where Goldie lay sleeping and took from it the baby, which was fretful and beginning to cry.

Fearful lest it should awaken its mother, May took it to the window, where the bright moon rendered everything as light as the morning.

With a strange feeling Ned Cameron saw May Mellen, his betrothed wife, lift that child, all wrapped in flannels to her bosom, and after kissing its little face repeatedly, murmur audibly: "Poor little darling! Did they go and leave it all alone? Dear little one! Mamma will not forsake her baby! It shall go down to Grandpa Mellen's house, and its own mamma shall tend it carefully up in its own mamma's room, and nobody shall come prying around to find out that the baby has got no papa. No, they shan't!" and much more of the nonsense peculiar to women, who seem to think that their inmost thoughts should be talked over to every baby they come in contact with.

Ned Cameron could not see any other person in the garret, and he at once jumped at the conclusion that May was the mother of this child, and that she had hidden it there.

It was wrapped in many blankets, and from the size of the bundle as she held it in her arms Ned could not judge of its age.

Could it be that this seemingly pure-hearted May, whom he had worshipped as little less than an angel, was a false woman? The more he thought of it the more he became convinced that such was the case, and he left the house.

"May—my beautiful May!" he cried. "I can never bear to hear her voice again. I must write to her all that I would say, and then away before she comes home in the morning."

With this thought uppermost in his mind, he walked rapidly homeward. Tim stood by the great gate as he swung it open and passed into the yard.

"Evenin', sir," called Tim, anxious to learn whether Ned had discovered anything. "Evenin', sir. Did ye follow her? 'Cos, if ye did, an' discovered it, I ain't to blame. I couldn't help it," he continued, seeing that Ned was about to pass on without answering him.

"Half mad with jealousy Ned Cameron hastily replied: "Of course I followed her. How long has this thing been goin' on? How old is the child?"

"Waal, I hain't no kind o' a hand ter reckon time, but I should say that it was about six months old."

Tim would have gladly informed Ned all that he knew of the affair had not that gentleman refused to listen, and walked into the house.

There was no doubt in his mind now. He sat in his room thinking over the best course for him to pursue, and finally decided to write her a letter, and leave the house without seeing her again.

After he had written the letter, he made preparations for departure from the farm early in the morning.

With the sunrise he was all ready for the start, and with his traveling bag in one hand, and the letter for May—which he was to leave with

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Tim—in the other, he went slowly down the winding stairs.

In the entry below he met May, who had started early from the old house and walked through all the dewy grass, because of a presentiment that all was not right at home. She started with surprise at seeing Ned in traveling habit, and asked: "Are you going away, Ned, and without saying a word of farewell to me?"

"This must be your farewell," he replied, giving the letter into her hands, and averting his eyes.

He could not look upon her calm, truthful features and at the same time think how base she was.

"I do not understand this, Ned. Why are you going to leave the farm? What have I done?" she said, her face flushing with wounded feeling.

Ned Cameron attributed her heightening color to the consciousness of guilt within her heart, and coldly answered: "It is worse than useless for us to talk about this matter. Suffice it to say that I followed you to the old house in the wood last night, and saw you kiss that—child—while you pressed it to your bosom and murmured fond words over it. Can you expect me to wed a woman who cannot fail to bring disgrace to the man who weds her?"

He spoke rapidly and with a show of anger.

May's thoughts traveled quickly over the events of the previous evening. She did not for a moment think that he suspected her of being the child's mother, but supposed that he had seen Goldie in the attic, as well as herself, with the babe, and blamed her for mistaking to Goldie.

Tears filled her beautiful eyes, and she asked, with trembling voice: (To be continued.)

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