

On Her Wedding Morn.

By Charlotte M. Braeme. Continued from 1st Page.

There was not the faintest gleam of pleasure on her face, such as most girls show when they are complimented and praised.

"Do you think that beautiful?" she asked, indifferently. "Do, indeed. I wish I could see them more busily engaged. What will put more life and busy motion into those lovely hands?"

"Not at all," she replied. "There are little life and little motion in my heart—what can you expect at my hands?"

"I was always to be her friend—to visit her—to care for her; but I was never to know more of her than that."

"I went back to Neville's Cross, and was pleased to find that some of my friends or neighbors knew that I had been staying at the River House; they were all content with the explanation I gave that I had been visiting a friend."

"And then the second phase of my curious acquaintance began. I was invited to two or three times each week to visit Miss Vane. I took her the review papers, the most beautiful I could procure. Perhaps on my next visit I found the books unopened, but never remembered to bring her."

"How does Miss Vane spend her time?" I asked of Jane one day.

"In her usual way, Mrs. Neville, when you are not with her. She reads, sometimes in-doors, sometimes out in the air. She seems to be very fond of the river—always listening to it; and she has done the same for more than three years now."

"Does she never read, sing, play the piano, draw, paint, or write?" "Never," replied the maid, briefly.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

I have forgotten to mention that I had suffered some little annoyance in the interval of time the events of which I have been recording. One great cause of this Neville's Cross had for me was its freedom from all the evils and misdeeds of a manufacturing neighborhood. No tall chimneys reared their smoky heads near the river, and no noisy machinery, no picturesque loveliness of the scene; the Daintree line did not cross the boundary of the river, and the railway station after Miss Vane had come was formed upon a wooded slope, far from the public benefits, and, after a long resistance, I was compelled to sell one of my best rooms, which I had been using as a study, and then, to my great regret, a bridge was built over the widest part of the river, just above the River House, for by that route the trains were to enter Daintree.

"I was so relieved and vexed—now the shrill railway whistle would drown the sweet song of the nightingale, and mingle with the rapid rush of the river. I did not like the bridge, either: it was plain ugly with its nothing pleasing or picturesque about it."

"When I knew what had been decided upon I went to tell Miss Vane. She appeared perfectly indifferent, merely raised her beautiful eyebrows in wonder at my excited tone of voice. I had found her sitting under her favorite cedar-tree, watching the river, with the usual reserved expression on her face."

"At least you might pretend to sympathize with me, Miss Vane," I said. "There was a strange, far-off look in her eyes."

"It will not matter," she replied; "I shall not mind the railway whistle—I shall not even hear it—and you will be fast asleep."

"But it will completely spoil Neville's Cross," I observed. "No," she said, "it is not worth troubling about."

"I wish I could attain your height of calm philosophy," I rejoined. "It is this railway bridge was destined to be the scene of strange occurrences."

"A few unusually long and severe storms, I mention it because I read afterward that in all probability this was the primary cause of the accident. It was followed by a rapid thaw during which the river level flooded the whole country."

"What was the cause of the terrible accident, no one quite knew. Whether the unusual weight of the water had caused the foundations of the bridge to give way, or whether it had been caused by the first, no one seemed quite sure."

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