

he felt certain that Mike was relating the experiences of a nightmare.

"The skeleton forms of one of the trappers and his murderer, I suppose," he said, stooping over the flame to light his cigar.

"The face of Winona," uttered Mike, in a tone of such deep awe that Archie gazed at him in astonishment, "the eyes or her lookin' into mine, an' her long, black hair drippin' wet all round her, just as you an' me sed her last, an' behind her—Sally! what's come to the child? Spake, asthore. Mrs. Harty, ma'am, spake till her, for it's dazed she is!"

Sally had risen from the low settle in the chimney corner on which she had been seated, and was gazing past Mike with such blank horror in her dilated eyes, such stony terror in her fixed face, that her fresh young beauty had given way to the wanness and lines of old age. At the same moment a sudden hurricane filled the room, the fire leaped up in lurid splendor, the rain and surf dashed coldly on the faces of the startled group, as the heavy door dashed back against the wall.

"Look!" came from Sally's blue lips, and in the act of raising her arm she fell straight along the hearth.

Joe's love was for his daughter, and before he turned his pale face to look, she was in his arms, with her white face lying like a lily on his broad breast. He turned, and for the first time in his life his heart melted like water. Mike, Archie and Mrs. Harty stood motionless, as though carved in stone, facing the open door; and on the threshold, her length of black hair torn by the wind, her bronze face and stary eyes lighted by the red billows of light from the fire, stood the lofty form of the Indian girl, Winona, and behind her a shadow that crouched from the glow that swept out into the murky light.

Mike Murphy dropped on his knees, his hair rustling as it rose on his head; and Mrs. Harty threw her blue apron over her face to shut out the spectral form.

Archie recovered his mental poise at once and sprang forward, determined to solve the mystery at any risk.

At the same moment Winona glided into the apartment.

CHAPTER X.

MR. MACER.

"So extremely unkind of dear Olla," murmured Cecil Bertrand with infinite pathos, folding up a closely-written sheet of pink paper with a dainty monogram, all pale purple and gold at the top, and raising her speaking eyes to the watchful face of Mr. Denville, who strode at her side, looking down at her curiously.

They had come from the Post-office and were strolling up King Street at the fashionable hour, about half-past four in the afternoon. She had met him down town, and he had joined her, a proceeding to which she was by no means averse.

Miss Cecil was in her glory. There was a soft, bracing breeze blowing, just sufficient to deepen the delicate tints in her cheeks, and stir to a more bewitching "fluffiness" the fantastic but perfectly enchanting "waves, frizzes and curls" of sunny hair that was the envy of every woman she met. There was the pink shade in the afternoon sunlight Parisian milliners recommend to all complexions in their artistic toilettes. Her fall suit had three more frills and a more gracefully draped "panier" than that of any to be seen the whole bright length of King Street, and her light blue velvet "toque," set jauntily somewhere on the top of the puffs and King Charles curls, she felt was the greatest success of the season; the pheasant's wing in the left side, she was proudly certain, being fully three inches taller than any she had seen during her promenade. She was a lovely little creature of the pure Canadian type, a dainty, glowing blonde, fragile and spiritual looking, but rounded and moulded to a perfect symmetry. The blonde hair was bronze but where the light touched it; the eyes deeply blue, with the archest lights flickering in them, or wells of deepest tenderness, as occasion required. There were the merest shadows of dimples playing round her mouth, and on the upper lip, to the left, was a jet black mole about the size of the head of a pin, and which Cecil regarded as a treasure beyond all price, for if anything could have heightened the luscious pearl and rose of her matchless skin, that mole was decidedly the thing. She was one of those daintily "fast" girls of the period who can venture upon doing almost anything, confident of tripping out of even a shallow of reproach with the most bewitching air of innocence, and supremely blest in never sinning against the "proprieties" ingratiatingly. The men raved about her, flung as many bouquets under her kid "botines" as though she were Patti or Nilsson, lost incalculable amounts of Jewin's gloves to her in insane bets, and filled her music-rack with new music, with which she charmed their rivets in her melting little voice, that was just loud enough to be confidentially audible to some happy wight turning the pages for her in a shadowy corner of the drawing-room.

She was one of the fortunate few who retained alike the favor of the military and civilian parties, and dispensed her smiles with great exactness between the red coats and the black coats. If Lieutenant Prancer had the privilege of "sitting out" a quadrille with her in some shady retreat in a conservatory or heavily-draped bow window, young Briefless was pretty certain to whirl her off in the next gallop after supper, so she kept the balance pretty well

poised. She made it a point to be "engaged" to a new man every six months or so, and Archie Frazer was her ninth victim. Him she had made up her mind to marry if "she could not do better," and as Mr. Denville was "better" financially, she was spreading a net as fine as those invisible cobwebs most fatal to flydom for his capture.

"What, may I ask, is your friend guilty of to call such a complaint from you?" said Mr. Denville.

He was a good fellow, and if any one had called him a "firt" he would have been in a very honest rage; but he had melting black eyes, a deep baritone voice, and a dangerous habit of accenting personal pronouns and quoting Tennyson. He was deeply in love with Olla Frazer, but as he glanced down into Cecil's face, one would have thought his happiness was dependent on her smiles alone.

Cecil flashed a tiny smile and graceful bow to a group of young officers on the opposite side of the street, and then sighed slightly.

"It's so provoking," she said, "I quite reckoned on taking Olla with us to-night to the Calico ball. Every one is to be there, and though she had promised to be in Toronto to-day, here she writes me not to expect her for an indefinite period. Too bad, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," returned Mr. Denville, with an air of supreme indifference that delighted Cecil, who was far from guessing what the effort of self-control cost him. "You will show to-night, of course, Miss Bertrand. Do give me the first galop, please."

"Oh, of course, mamma, Linda and I are going; but as to the first galop, I'm so sorry, but—"

"Exactly! engaged, of course; well, tell me at what hour of the evening I may approach your throne."

"You may have the first slow waltz after supper; my card is full up to that."

"Thanks. I shan't require to 'make a note of it,' like the famous Captain Cuttle, I assure you, Miss Bertrand."

Cecil smiled sweetly. The compliment she understood, but whether Captain Cuttle was a nautical contemporary of Confucius, or an officer in the new regiment ordered to Toronto, she was in total ignorance, as her literary researches extended not beyond the monthly fashions and the Sunday lessons in church. When conversation came dangerously near the sunken reefs and shifting sands of literature, it was droll to observe how skillfully she "tacked" until she caught a favoring gale in her rosy sails, and danced lightly away on the foam of flirtation from the uncanny neighborhood, fit only, in her estimation, for strong-minded sirens of an uncertain age, in spectacles and some one else's chignons, certainly not for a creature who looked as though she had just stepped daintily out one of Watteau's artificial Arcadias, or floated on butterfly wings from some fairy-land where the forests were of myrtle and roses, and the chief end of woman was to dance and do "shopping" after some Celestial fashion, or "catch" the most eligible Fairy Prince of the season.

"Olla says," she said, dashing into conversation, lest Denville, who was rather literary, should talk "books," "that she does not like to leave home until her brother's return from—what's the name of the place—Man—something or other."

"Manitoba," suggested Denville.

"It's islands," said Miss Bertrand; "but the name doesn't sound quite right."

"Manitoul, up beyond the Georgian Bay."

"Oh, that's it, thank you. Do you know Captain Frazer had a most romantic adventure up there! Got shot by an Indian with an arrow. It was so nice it wasn't a gun, because, of course, it couldn't be so dangerous, and it's so much more common, and there was something about a young woman in it."

"Oh!" said Mr. Denville thoughtfully, with a sudden lightning of his face, "that is Olla's reason for postponing her visit, is it?"

He called her Olla in a tone that was unmistakable to Miss Bertrand's practised ears, and she hastened to add:

"I think dear Olla has some other reason for not caring to come to Toronto just now. Do you know young Armor of Montreal?"

"Slightly. What of him, pray?"

Cecil laughed and blushed prettily, toyed with the tassel of her glove, and turned away her face ever so little from her companion, who was watching her with darkening brow, and eyes full of the shadow of her coming words.

"I am to be bride's-maid in the spring," she said, laughing merrily, "and I do so enjoy the idea. Do you know I never was one before, and a wedding is such jolly fun; don't you think so?"

"No," said Mr. Denville, with a countenance worthy of Othello. "I must say *au revoir*. I have some business up town."

"Don't forget to-night," said Cecil, giving him her soft little hand, and smiling up in his face dangerously.

Denville strutted away with his nose in the air and his heart like an old red sandstone under his unexceptional waistcoat. He loathed the smiling, rustling, bowing crowd he wended his way through, and, like Mr. Longfellow's very uncomfortable friend in the light toilet of boues,—

"Hateful to him were men,
The sunlight hateful!"

Ha! he had been trifled with, his heart had been ripped up by a faithless coquette whose shy smiles had meant nothing! He had—but was there no remedy? Hope, the dulcet charmer! sought to murmur in his ear, but Reason

gave such loud denial that Hope, fragile child of mist and sun, faded and died. He glared straight ahead, and thought grimly of "La Trappe," of Peter the Hermit, of St. Senamis, of Robinson Crusoe, of some land where women, and consequently falsehood, were unknown, of suicides as fashionable amongst the Japanese, and then he pulled up the flying steeds of wrath and despair that were running away with him, and became majestic and philosophic, and politely cynical for a little. He smiled loftily at his burst of rage and pain, and asked himself, "Was there a woman worth a second thought on the face of the earth?" and he answered, "Not one" with infinite readiness; and then he was in the middle of the whirlpool of disappointment and lacerated affection again, tossed to and fro as madly as ever, and feeling curiously stunned and bruised and light-headed. In this mood he turned into a billiard saloon off Yonge Street, much frequented by the upper ten of Toronto, and found a number of men there he knew, with three or four officers, young fellows possessed of fine animal spirits and illimitable ideas on the subject of "chaff."

"Hillo! Denville, so you're entered for the Bertrand," shouted Lieutenant Prancer, as Denville walked up to the table. "I say, old fellow, is it your cue to cut Frazer out in that quarter? Confound that ball! say I."

The Lieutenant missed his stroke, and swore gently for a minute or two.

"You'd better leave that game alone," said another. "Archie Frazer is a Tartar, I tell you, once he's roused."

"What are you talking such nonsense for?" said Denville angrily. "Miss Bertrand is a mere acquaintance. Be good enough to leave her name out of our discussions."

"As if we didn't meet you as spooney as Romeo and Juliet," cried Ensign Spooner, "not twenty minutes ago! But it's *fin contre fin* there, let me tell you, my boy, if flirting's your ticket."

Ensign Spooner, in complexion and physique, bore a startling resemblance to the copies of humanity in gingerbread sold by elderly ladies under the peaceful shade of calico umbrellas at fairs and street corners, and chastely decorated with gilding. An immense eye-glass went about with him, with which he was ever engaged in a spirited but fruitless struggle to make it stick in his eye with the proper air (his eye was like the current optics gracing the before-mentioned works of ordinary art), and the glass invariably remained master of the field.

Denville cast a withering look at the Ensign. He turned to Prancer.

"Come," he said, "will you play?"

"Thanks, no more just now," said Prancer; and then, lowering his voice a little, "regularly cleaned out by that fellow with his chin in a black muff. You should see him play."

"Who is he," said Denville, turning and looking at the man indicated by a slight nod of Prancer's head.

"Don't know, I'm sure," returned the Lieutenant, yawning dismally. "Going to the Calico affair to-night?"

"Yes, and after that all you fellows come back with me to the Rossin, and we'll have a champagne supper in my rooms."

"Thanks." The Lieutenant drew out his watch. "I must be off to old Bluebell's to order a bouquet for La Bertrand for to-night. She lives such a dence of a way out of town that I'll just have time to canter out there and back before dinner. *Adio, mio amico*," and with a wave of his hand Lieutenant Prancer took leave of the company, and was quickly followed by Spooner and the other officer, a ponderous young man with a red head, and an upper lip projecting like a bracket.

The room was nearly deserted, and Denville walked up and down once or twice impatiently. He would have given a thousand dollars for some means of drowning remembrance of Olla's deceit, even for a moment, for each instant the memory was becoming more intolerable to him. Once or twice he felt tempted to rush to some bar-room and drown all thought in wine, but he was not a weak man, and rejected the idea the instant it formed itself in his mind. He had, as the French term it, too much "respect of himself in the presence of himself" to venture on such a debasing expedient, the last and ruinous resort of a coward.

"The man with his chin in the muff," as Prancer had happily described him, stood by an empty table, knocking the balls about in an idle, desultory fashion, but with a style and skill that would have delighted Dion. He was a tall, stalwart-looking man, with a face bronzed almost to the hue of that of an Indian, jet black hair and immense beard and whiskers, flowing in an ebon tide on his chest. He sauntered quietly round the table, glancing occasionally at Denville, and exchanging a word or two with the billiard marker. In his present vein, Denville was on the *qui vive* for something, no matter how trifling, to distract his attention, and after standing for a few moments, watching the skillful caroms made by the stranger, he approached the table, and, after a remark or two, proposed a game, to which the other readily assented. On the stranger's proposal, they played merely for "tables," and though his play was far superior to that of Denville's, the latter soon saw that his opponent was not giving his undivided attention to the game. He seemed greatly more inclined to talk than play, and, a rather uncommon gift, he spoke well. He had a trite fashion of moulding his sentences, and a clear, low, incisive voice, that dropped every word like the single soft stroke of a ball on the car. He had seen a great deal, and drew

more than one short, grim laugh from Denville by a droll anecdote or two of his personal experience of the gaming tables of Homburg and Baden, and the *rouge-et-noir* of Paris. An hour's conversation with him left Denville under the impression that his companion was a gentleman by birth and education, possibly a roué and blackleg by profession, certainly untroubled by too dainty a code of honor, a thought cynical, one who concealed strong and long claws under *pattes de velours* of conventional refinement; in fact, a man with whom parents would hardly care for their sons to associate. He won of course, for Denville played only a tolerable game at the best, and finding that he also was staying at the Rossin House, Denville and he strolled slowly thither in company, as dinner hour was approaching. As they turned a corner, into a quiet but fashionable thoroughfare, a pretty little "bit," in art parlance, met their eyes. A light spring wagon, freshly painted green, and drawn by the most demure, roundest and brownest cob that ever trotted between the shafts of a vehicle. The cart was a moving bank of bloom and emerald foliage, scarlet geraniums, rose camellias, oleanders, roses wagging their luxuriant heads in the breeze, fuschias vibrating their graceful bells of scarlet and purple, every blossom that the skill of a florist could force to bloom at that season, and great plumes of ferns waving over all. A pretty, soft-eyed girl was standing on the step of a florist's shop, watching the wagon move away, and she moved aside as Denville drew his companion into the store, and walked behind the marble counter, flecked here and there with scarlet petals blown from the plants in the window.

"What can I do for you, sir?" she said, as the young man looked round the dainty bower of this mercantile Flora.

"You make up bouquets here, of course," he said, while the stranger looked on with amused interest in his dark eyes.

"Oh, certainly," she said, smiling. She was very pretty, and smiles became her. A great damask rose in a hanging basket touched her jetty hair, and an oleander tree behind her tossed a fountain of pink blossoms above her head.

"I wish you to make me up a bouquet for a lady for the Calico ball to-night," said Denville, impatiently tapping the marble slab with his cane, for he felt that he was doing a foolish thing. "Make it as large and as brilliant and as expensive as you possibly can," he added.

"For a brunette, then, of course, sir?" said Flora suggestively.

"Not at all; the lady is a small blonde, but I fancy she doesn't care much about flowers unless they cost a great deal."

"For a blonde, I should recommend white camellias, a spray or two of scarlet geranium, cape jessamine, daphne and tube-roses. Shall I also send for the confiture? Flowers will be mostly worn this evening with the calico toilettes."

"Oh, certainly. Can you send them to the house of the lady?"

"The boy has just driven flowers for the decoration of the tables to the hall, but on his return he shall take them right away. The name, please?"

"Miss Cecil Bertrand, at Maple Villa, a little beyond the Asylum. Be kind enough to place this with them."

He tore a leaf out of his note-book, and wrote in pencil, "With Mr. Denville's compliments," and handed it to Flora, who read it with a little twitching of her cherry lips.

"I wonder who he is," she mused, as she slipped the crisp notes he had handed to her into the dainty rosewood till; "rich, that's plain. That's the sixth bouquet I made up to-day for that little mix. She's safe to wear his though, for it cost the most. Won't that Prancer be in a jolly rage?"

Miss Flora came in for curious little bits of the great drama played by the puppets of the Paphian boy, in her leafy bower on the busy street.

The stranger stood in the hall of the Rossin looking after Denville as he disappeared to his rooms to prepare for dinner.

"I think I see my way to something I want," he said; "but I must be careful. Well! I seldom am anything but that, and yet how Fate has gone against me of late. *Patienza, mio amico*."

"What say, sah?" said a waiter skipping up, with a napkin dangling from his sabie fingers.

"I say bring me a sherry-cobbler to my room, and to-day's paper, and be quick, my friend."

"Cerr'y, sah. Jim! sherry-cobbler and paper to No. 8. Nice gunner No. 31 Golly! what a beard he got. Wunner whar he cum from."

CHAPTER XI.

WINONA'S RETURN.

Mr. Murphy bounded from his knees, and, with the spring of a grass-hopper, bounded towards the back-door. Of all the powers of earth arrayed, rank and file, against him, his Milesian heart knew not fear, but the appearance of Winona's "Fetch," heralded by such tempestuous turmoil, opened the flood-gates of superstitious terror, and with a "whoop" of exceeding mental anguish, he sought safety in flight. Mrs. Harty had taken the precaution of fastening the latch with a cord early in the evening, and Mike found his retreat in that direction cut off.