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MIRIAM!

The Romance of Heatherleigh Hall.

By Manda L. Crocker.

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CHAPTER XVI.

In these last days of his unlucky life, these last weary days, every thing conducive to a lingering remorse had united against the proud soul of Sir Rupert, even the old facade suggested a tomb.

It only needed a little something more to tip the balance, and in favor of a hastening demise Sir Rupert could say: "I am ready. Oh! Charon; I stand waiting on the treacherous sands."

Peevish and restless he finally grew spending hours in climbing up and down the silent staircases, echoing only to his faltering steps.

Sometimes resting on the landings, he would mutter to himself of the deceased Lady Percival, and of Miriam, and often of the little grandson.

Then there came a time when he risked the staircase no longer alone; and in these wretched days he strayed about the dark, gloomy corridors above during the long, monotonous summer afternoons, but oftener in the midnight watches.

The whole household were daily growing nervous and uneasy, and were obliged to occupy rooms near those of their master in order that his many strange fancies might be the easier looked after.

One great hallucination of these desperate days was Sir Rupert imagined that Miriam was secreted in the Hall somewhere, and he caught her peeping through the half-open doors, and waking him so often from his afternoon naps, he said. For hours and hours he would search along the halls and corridors, going with stealthy step and unwearying patience. Often he would pause in these searches and listen long and anxiously for the sound of her footstep and the music of her voice. Sometimes he would start up at dead of night and cry out, eagerly: "Oh! she is coming now; Miriam, my beautiful daughter, is coming; I can hear her steps on the stairs!"

Growing contented after these outbursts and glad flights of expectation, he would wait quietly for her appearing until another nervous attack seized him, or he had quite forgotten whom he was waiting for.

Once he was so determined that Miriam had been in his apartments and had touched him on his arm, awakening him from a sound nap, that all the servants had to be aroused to search for her because he failed to find her. All uncomplaining the sleepy household instituted a mock search to quiet him.

So thus in the midnight hour, with tapers alight, they moved slowly about the silent, gloomy rooms, above and below, searching for the satisfaction of their master, who followed them in his feeble march, leaning on the arm of one of their number and talking incessantly of his children.

After hours of marching to and fro, hither and thither, at Sir Rupert's designation, he wearily concluded she was hiding in the gallery, and no words of persuasion would deter him from going thither. A search in that lonely of all lonely rooms in Heatherleigh was all that would pacify him, and with many misgivings and superstitious fears crowding their courage to the wall the servants led him into the chamber of sorrows and bitter memories. Ancil and James guided Sir Rupert's feeble steps, and the trembling Peggy went ahead with a lighted taper.

"Howly mother of Christ!" she ejaculated, as she stepped aside for Marcia to unlock the apartment, "an' if this ghostly perade wud only coom to an end O'd fale relayed immensely."

The key grated in the unused lock, the heavy door swung open, and the party entered the midnight gloom of the musty, close atmosphere of the gallery.

On entering, Sir Rupert cast a quick, inquiring glance around them, as if really expecting to see Miriam somewhere in the gloom, but nothing save the empty silence of the shadows rewarded his anxious vision.

He stood perplexed and disappointed for some time, and the white-faced, frightened servants watched him with bated breath. What next? The question was plain in each face of the much-tormented household.

But the question was answered without delay, for Sir Rupert, as if recollecting himself, suddenly stretched out his arms toward the row of reversed portraits opposite him, and while a light of recognition gladdened his old face he exclaimed, almost gleefully: "Ah! now Miriam is here after all."

They assisted his eager steps across to the portraits indicated by his unnaturally bright eyes, and instinctively paused beneath Miriam's picture. James titered over the portrait, at a look from Sir Rupert, and Peggy held the taper up close to the beautiful face looking calmly, proudly down from its heavy black drapery on the midnight visitors.

And Sir Rupert exclaimed eagerly, clasping his thin fingers in rapture: "Oh! Miriam, my daughter, you are here; the old, merciless tradition of our house is at fault at last! There is love—love, instead of hate, existing between us; between Sir Rupert Percival and child. Is it not so, Miriam?" and his face lighted up wonderfully with love's wistful questioning.

Peggy hid her face in her apron and sobbed convulsively, while Ancil and James brushed the unbidden tears from their overflowing eyes in silence.

Oh! the eager, hopeless questioning of an affection that came too late!

"Lord! what a pass it has come to," moaned the sobbing housekeeper, and James made answer in a chocked voice: "Yes, too late is the only certainty of the Hall."

Sir Rupert caught at their meaning, especially the lament of the honest butler, on whose faithful arm he rested. A shadow of deep disappointment crossed his features as he looked from one weeping servant to another, and then, as if realizing something of the cause of their grief, he dropped his hands nerveless by his side, and murmured in a blank, uncertain way: "Ah! I see how it is at last."

Then standing quietly as if revolving the matter more thoroughly in his mind, he burst out with: "Merciful God! I had forgotten. Miriam is indeed here; but she only is here to gaze on her aged father with merciless reproach. She will not speak to me, her poor, old, stricken father! Oh! she is beautiful, but so cold; heartless and cold is my only daughter, and dumb to all entreaty. Yes, James; I am too late! I don't quite understand it; but I feel that I am too late for reconciliation for some reason. Miriam understands it; I know by her looks. Take me away, James; take me away before my old heart is slain in its faithfulness; before she kills me with her proud, cold, wordless contempt!"

"Howly mither! an' what a taching this expairiance wud be to sum o' thim as holds spite and hathred among thimselves, if they only cud be here to hear an' see," said Ancil, desperately, as he turned the portrait to its reversed position.

Then they started with Sir Rupert for his apartments.

"I wish to his highness that this may be his last trip," exploded Marcia, desperately, as she banged the massive door to its place with an angry wrench, and turned the key in the lock viciously.

"Hush! ye haythenish spalpeen," reprimanded Peggy, savagely. "An' ye'll need to chop out this night's lesson fer yer avil feelin's."

"It's no evil thing to wish him dead, I'm sure," responded Marcia, with a defiant toss of her head. The dismayed Chirkop made no response to this assertion, said

"I WILL NOT NEED YOU FURTHER NOW, JAMES."

Marcia hung the key in its accustomed ring with the air of one who has won the day by a rash, but nevertheless complimentary, method.

Outside the Hall the winds were whispering in the great elms and sighing in the dark, gloomy yews, predictive of a rising storm.

Not one of the inmates, however, had noticed the gathering of the threatening elements, so intense had been the ward excitement within. A sudden and heavy peal of thunder drew their attention to the fact, and they hurried up the staircase as fast as their almost helpless master would allow. He had become in these latter days of his life terribly frightened whenever a thunder-storm came on, and they wished to get him into his own apartments before the tempest burst over Heatherleigh.

But he was not to be hurried. He slowly mounted the stairs murmuring: "So proud! so cold! so dumb! Oh! Miriam! No pity; no love!"

Suddenly there came a vivid and blinding flash, followed by a peal of heaven's artillery that reverberated through the Hall, and seemed to shake Heatherleigh to its ancient corner-stone.

Sir Rupert staggered and fell prone on the landing without a cry; the servants carelessly extinguished the tapers in their terror and Peggy shrieked out that the "God above had taken Marcia at her wurrud."

CHAPTER XVII.

Wedding bells rang out clear and sweet on the soft, breezy September air. It was the morning of Patty's wedding. All nature vied with the merry-making of the inmates of Fairfax Place to make the day one never to be forgotten for its beauty.

Mme. Montcalm, the mother of the groom, and his sister Louise, a pale, quiet girl, in silks and diamonds, had come down from London to take part in the festivities.

The Fairfax family not being yet out of mourning, the wedding was a quiet one, and did not take on the air of grandeur Mme. Montcalm desired it might. She was rather vain and fond of display, and this being the occasion of the marriage of her only son, she was a little disappointed that the moments at Fairfax did not come out in the blaze of social glory she deemed necessary. Nevertheless she was sure that her son Hollis was marrying into a very aristocratic family, and that his wife was a model of good breeding and a beauty of the pure English type, and that was something to be proud of.

They had lost their property, to be sure, once, but now they were, if anything, better of than former; though people did say that it was mainly through the superhuman efforts and wonderful business tact of the dead brother and son that the Fairfax house was again recognized in polite society.

"I am so glad that it happens to be such a perfect day, it portends a happy life, you know," said Louise.

Mme. Montcalm was speaking to one of the guests in the handsomely decorated rooms at the Fairfax home.

"Yes," answered the one addressed. "I sincerely hope the second marriage of the Fairfax house will prove a happier one than the first; though that one was happy enough had not its first years been clouded with hard, grinding toil, and the last by the failing health, and finally the death of the husband."

"I understood they were very much devoted to one another," said Mme. Montcalm, avoiding the mention of toil, which grated on her aristocratic ears, and devoting herself to the heart-side of the subject.

"Oh! certainly," was the rejoinder. "Arthur Fairfax was a devoted husband to a most devoted wife. By the bye, his widow will not be here at Patricia's wedding. She is just recovering from a long illness and, although able to be about, will not undertake the trip."

And other guests having arrived, came up to claim the attention of the speaker and get an introduction to the very aristocratic madame, the mother of the groom, whose vanity was very much flattered by the attention she was receiving from Patricia's friends.

No, Miriam could not go over to attend Patty's wedding; she felt that she had no part in happiness now; but the day was beautiful, and Patty, sister Patty, would be very happy. It was not far over to Fairfax Place, a lonely country seat, just outside a dreamy, quiet village, nestled among the hills, some few miles up the shore. Patty had wanted her to come, but had not urged, knowing that her heart was sore over her losses.

She walked the length of the bit of beach below the rocks where she had been sitting out the morning. A great white gull circled over her head and sped away as free as air. The morning sun danced on the calm waters, and a few white drifting clouds lay lazily above the downs stretching away toward the city.

It was on a day something like this, though not nearly so perfect, that she and Arthur were married; but not with sanction and merry-making which would smile a God-speed for Patricia.

Hark! what was that? Was it Patty's wedding chimes! She hardly thought she could hear the bells of St. Martin from where she stood. But, yes; it must be them. Miriam put her hands quickly to her ears to shut out the sound, and sat down by an overturned boat to think. Was she selfish-hearted, that she could not bear to hear the ringing of the bills even? No; but some way it brought it all back so vividly—her own wedding night. Not like Patty's marriage, celebrated in the glow of the beautiful morning, amid friends and music and flowers; no, in the shadows and quiet, sombre interior of lonely little All Saints' she was given away by a stranger, and as a wife she crossed the gloomy porch and walked by the road, out to the portals of the quiet church-yard, without a song, without a flower, or a smile.

Well, it was fitting, after all; the ceremony was only a type of all the rest. No! not all, for Arthur, dear, dead Arthur was true and affectionate, but the shade of the after years. She had only the shadows of death in view this morning; they were always trailing across her path way; their dank, dreamless had grown second nature to her soul. Or she had become morbid on shadows.

But it wouldn't do, this moping forever in the mists; she would go up to the house, and be glad for Patricia. About now the fair village lassies were strewing flowers in Patty's way—happy Patty!

Drawing the soft, rich wrap about her frail shoulders, Miriam toiled wearily up over the rugged path toward the Rest, trying to feel happy for dear sister Patty's sake. When a turn came in the path, by a rock jutting out from among its hoary fellows, Miriam paused for rest.

She might have had the carriage and have driven down the beach road, but she chose to be alone. The presence of even the boy in livery would have disturbed her to-day, she thought, so she had descended the bridle-path alone for her morning walk on the shore.

Far away she caught sight of sails gleaming in the sunlight; some pure white, some cream and rose-tinted, and a great wave of something like homesickness crept over her. The letter which a white-winged messenger had sped away with months ago had been answered. And that dear friend of her mother's had said: "Come;" but only a few days after the receipt of the friendly epistle a raging fever had seized her and she hung hovered between this world and the next for days. Since then she had not been strong enough to undertake a voyage, especially unattended.

In those uncertain days of her severe illness Patricia had never left her bedside. Devoted and kind, she had nursed her through that long period, and said: "We will wait, Miriam; you have not been permitted to cross over and enter into rest and be with her beloved ones was to Miriam a dark problem.

But now, as soon as she was strong enough to warrant the thing, she was going to her mother's friend in the shores of the Narragansett, to cozy little Bay View, as the place had been described to her by letter.

"AH! I SEE HOW IT IS AT LAST."

A party of rosy-cheeked children passed her, scampering down the path, their prim, pretty nurse bringing up the rear with the lunch basket on one plump arm, white from the other she had swung her hat, with its wreath of wild autumn flowers she had gathered by the roadside. They made a pretty picture. One of the children ran up to her, offering her a bouquet of yellow fall flowers it had crushed into a withered condition in its chubby palms. She took the blossoms with a "thank you" to please the little one, while the rosy nurse curtsied very respectfully and passed by.

They were from the Cliffs, a pleasant, roomy mansion some two miles farther up the shore; doubtless the family carriage had been left up at Atherton Place, a few rods from The Rest, and the children had been sent down to the beach for a half-day's outing in charge of Erma, the bright-eyed foreign nurse-girl.

Miriam recognized them instantly, having met them on the beach quite often during the summer, and the Athertons, she had learned, were relatives.

"What a happy little party," mused Miriam, looking after them and watching rather regretfully each little head pass down and out of sight. "What a merry, sunny home The Cliffs must be," she added, thoughtfully.

A merry shout from one of the children below arrested her attention and she, forgetting her sorrows for a moment, arose with a smile, and went on toward home. The purple ivy clusters showed rich and dark against the gray stone of the old wall by which she passed, while here, and there a great leaf of the luxurious vine flamed into scarlet. Ah! yes, it was autumn; autumn of the cycling year once more and dreary, desolate autumn of her own aimless life; and she looked up through the tree-dotted park and saw through hot tears the silent grandeur of the Rest. The curtains were drawn, and rooms filled with a desolateness that made her heart sink.

But the windows must be thrown open, the knotted crape removed, and the merry sunshine must be admitted, for Patty was coming soon, and Patty's life and exuberant spirits should not be dampened by even a suggestion of what she had suffered. No; it would be cruel.

And Patty came. The great lonely drawing-room was thrown open, and the sweet-toned piano in the dim recess, which had been silent as the grave for so long, was once more brought to light, and to life also, for Patty's deft fingers swept the forgotten chords and made musicence again.

Miriam felt at first that it was almost sacrilege, but the sober second thought prompted a saner view of the matter. But the tears would come in spite of her efforts to be cheerful, for now she had not even a home. It was Patty's, and she—well, she was welcome, may, dreed to make it her home with them, and Hollis Montcalm, in his genial, cordial way, had reiterated her to do so. But it wasn't home notwithstanding, yet Patricia made it pleasant for her, very pleasant, and next to the beloved dead, she loved Patricia.

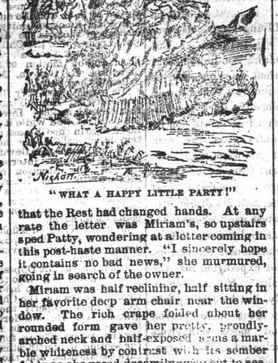
They had been sitting in the cosy little parlor upstairs, which commanded a lovely bit of sea view, Miriam and Patty, in the bright, sweet evening of a late autumn, busy with their needles, while Hollis intended to take down the names for his father-in-law's [illegible] brought in.

"Yes, [illegible] the name of the house" demanded [illegible] of the porter who answered [illegible] that ring. "He was to give this [illegible] into my own hands," he added, before the polite servant could make an answer. Forthwith the porter tendered him into the waiting room and sent for Patricia.

"Here, [illegible] of important news, missus, [illegible] express has answer right [illegible] communicated the sad, rising with cap in hand as Patricia came forward.

"Please to wait a moment, then," said Patricia, scanning the superscription in the dim light.

As a glance she saw that it was for Miriam; doubtless the sender did not know



"WHAT A HAPPY LITTLE PARTY!"

that the Rest had changed hands. At any rate the letter was Miriam's, so upstairs sped Patty, wondering at a letter coming in this post-haste manner. "I sincerely hope it contains no bad news," she murmured, going in search of the owner.

Miriam was half reclining, half sitting in her favorite deep arm chair near the window. The rich crape folded about her rounded form gave her pretty, proudly-arched neck and half-exposed arms a marble whiteness by contrast with its sombre folds as she gazed dreamily away out to sea. The jewel at her throat gleaming in its bed of shadowy black lace seemed to light up her pale, proud face with a cheerfulness it did not possess. The pallor of her sorrowful countenance was not so noticeable in the light of the window as when she turned in the shadows and you met the yearning look of her sad eyes.

"The letter is for you, Miriam dear," said Patricia, entering the parlor softly and dropping the letter with a strange-looking seal in her lap.

"For me?" and a little surprised look came over the fine features. Perhaps father had written, and—and—but no; a—yes, wasn't that the Percival seal? Yes, the handwriting was strange; it wasn't Sir Rupert's.

"The bearer waits for an answer; waiting below now," said Patty, almost forgetting the pompous carrier in the waiting-room in the strange, anxious light flitting over Miriam's questioning countenance.

"Indeed!" and Miriam broke the seal excitedly. Her face lost its questioning and grew drawn and white, so white that Patty knelt by her side in alarm.

"Suddenly she sprang to her feet. "I will go! I will go!" she exclaimed, almost wildly. "Tell him so; no, stay. Write it. Write that I shall come if it be the last thing I do. Now I know why I have lived. Poor Allan! Poor Allan's son! My relative in sorrow, as well as name."

An unwonted light burned in the depths of her fine eyes, and an expression of sympathetic pleasure flashed into her face as she took an excited turn about the room.

Although Patricia knew in part, she could hardly fathom the spell the letter had thrown over Miriam. She guessed, however, that the legend and malediction of the Percivals had a part to play in the excitement of her sister.

"Pen and paper," said Miriam, sinking exhausted into her chair again.

Patty produced them, and Miriam, seizing the pen, hastily wrote a reply.

"That is right," she ejaculated, hurriedly. "Take it to the post-boy; I am so glad—so glad."

She talked incoherently; Patty felt no little alarm concerning Miriam. She had grown so strangely different, metamorphosed, as it were, within the last half hour that she was scarcely recognizable in little bodily frame in regard to her.

Patty took the reply down herself and gave it to the waiting carrier, who bowed himself out in haste.

When she returned to Miriam she found her crying softly, her face buried in the letter she had received an hour before.

"Cousin Allan is very ill and wants me," explained Miriam, drying her tears and looking up with a smile. "I never knew where uncle went to after after his marriage, but Cousin Allan is now in London, and Uncle and Aunt Percival are both dead. I shall go to him at once, Patty. It seemed good to have some one care for me at last."

"Why, Miriam dear, I love you as an own sister; you must know that, certainly," answered Patricia, in a pained voice, looking at her with brimming eyes.

Miriam threw her arms impulsively around Patty's neck and sobbed out: "Not that, Patty; not that. I mean to have one of my own house to speak to me, to care for; a real Percival, Patty."

"Oh!" exclaimed Patricia, enlightened; "there, there, do not weep in that heart-broken way, Miriam," and she soothed her as she would a child.

"You will make yourself ill," warned Patricia, "and you may not be able to visit that dear cousin who, of course, would give worlds to see you."

Miriam unclasped her hands at this, and calmed herself as much as she was able, considering the unusual news she had received. Never in all her life had she heard from a real relative; and this one wanted her to come.

With a nervous eagerness Miriam set about her preparations for leaving for London on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Miriam alighted from the comfortable railway compartment at Charing Cross Station, it was raining in little, disagreeable gusts. The pleasant weather had put on sulkier and colder phase aside from the dampness, and she shivered as she drew her wraps about her.

Hollis and Patty had come down with her, having an excuse to visit Mme. Montcalm a few days, in order to accompany her. They were kind and thoughtful, Miriam knew, and as Hollis bundled her into an omnibus and gave the driver his directions, she moved her lips in prayerful thanks.

Between the drizzling rain and the foggy, smoky outlook, Miriam scarcely recognized the number and place, as described in the letter, when Hollis helped her up the steps of the second-rate establishment in middle London, with a shop on either side.

"I will never be any better," the sick man said, holding Miriam's hand in his thin, almost transparent fingers. "I sent for you because I wanted some one of my kin near me when I died. I am aware of the shadow which has cursed your life and mine. I had the revelation from my father; he said it was as much his duty to give me the Percival legend as it was to live a Christian, but I have never yet seen any good come of my knowing it."

"No good to either of us," said Miriam, with stony face.

The past came up in all its terrible menacing vengeance before her, and she shut her teeth to keep back the imprecation about to be uttered; not because of her own wrongs; no, she could suffer with all the calmness of a stoic, but this pale, fragile cousin had also been smitten. Prone on a sick bed he lay, the picture of his handsome father, her Uncle Allan, whose name he bore.

"Uncle Allan was disinherited," said Miriam, savagely, "and so was I, for the same reason."

The dark eyes of the patient man on the pillow sought hers inquiringly. "They were all disinherited for marrying in opposition to paternal wishes, if I understood it aright?"

"Yes," assented Miriam, "and married better companions than the petted children who staid at Heatherleigh and courted society swells."

Allan smiled at the show of hatred in tone and manner, a strange, wan, pitying smile.

Cousin Miriam's tone was the very counterpart of his father's, he remembered. To be a Percival was to have a soul fitted for hatred, he verily believed. In this he was not a Percival, then; his mother's milder blood warmed a heart fitted for forgiveness. He was only a Percival in name.

"Ah! me," and he sighed audibly.

"Do not grieve, I beg," said Miriam, softening, "the hopelessness of it is enough without grieving to make it worse. Where did uncle die?" she asked, changing the drift of conversation.

"In Trouville, France; my mother, also, is buried there. After their demise I came back to London to—be near you."

"Me?" asked Miriam. "How did you know I was even in England?"

"Oh! I knew," replied Allan, brightening visibly. "The Montcalms are old friends of my relatives on my mother's side, and Hollis' engagement to Miss Fairfax led the way to several other connecting links, whereby I traced you to the Rest, that lovely home by the sea. By inquiry I found that you were my cousin, Uncle Rupert's daughter. I wrote to you because I counted it a heavenly privilege if haply I might see face to face a genuine relative once more."

He reached out his hand and touched her sleeve significantly. "Mourning," he said, sadly; "mourning for Aunt Percival—sweet Lady Percival, as I have heard, and your husband, Arthur Fairfax. Ah! well, wear a little knot of crape for me, after awhile, won't you?"

His dark, serious eyes turned with pleading look wistfully on the handsome face of his cousin for a reply.

"Yes," she said, tearfully. Then a deep silence reigned in that gloomy apartment where death and despair were preying relentlessly each upon their respective victim.

Outside the rain came in gusty dashes against the pane, and in the corners of the room the deep shadows were already gathering.

It was evening. Hollis had taken his leave and was now with Patricia, enjoying the luxurious warmth and elegance of the Montcalm residence in the aristocratic West End.

She, with her proud soul almost rent in twain, was sitting there in the close, unpleasant rooms of a dingy establishment in the busy, restless central part of the city by the bedside of her only living relative, excepting her unnatural father, who would not recognize their relationship.

The sick man shut his eyes and remained quiet; he felt contented to find he had a friend with him at the last. The physician had said he could not last many days now, and she, Miriam, his regal cousin, would remain until the end came. He had not asked this of her, but he knew by the deep, grieved expression on her beautiful face that she would grant him this priceless boon.

The attendant brought in lights and, understanding that this woman was the expected relative, showed her to her rooms in the adjoining suite. Miriam's rich apparel and costly belongings set the servant to wondering why she had not come before and helped her relative financially before he lay down to die.

The next day Miriam set about in earnest to make the sick-room as cheerful as possible. "He did not dare to be moved," the physician had said when she suggested living in pleasanter apartments. That be-

PRONE ON A SICK BED HE LAY.

ing so he should have all the comforts and luxuries money could bring into this stuffy place, Miriam decided, and forthwith the changes became so numerous and so happy that the servant who felt that the fine lady had been neglecting this sick relative began to believe she had a heart after all.

But after a feeble protest from Allan, that "it wasn't necessary to waste so much attention on a dying man," that very thankful fellow looked on in silent wonder to see such blissful transformation.

"I believe," said Allan one afternoon as Miriam sat by him, "I believe that I—feel better. There is a change for the better, I am sure, although I can not explain it exactly. I feel as if I wanted to live now; before I only wished to die, with a friend near me."

He sought her face again with those wistful, magnetic eyes for an affirmative. Allan had wonderful, clear, expressive eyes, and now they were continually filled with a happy thankfulness toward this refined and cultured woman who had flashed the glorious light of loving care over his dark day.

Miriam looked at him, a hope kindling within her bosom. If he only could live. She had wealth enough for both, and to spare. She would lighten any financial burden he might have and send him on his way rejoicing.

"I believe you will recover," she made answer, assuringly, while a pleased expression came into her white face. "Only live, Cousin Allan, and we will at least have each other. We can each say 'I have a cousin,' which to me will be great happiness, knowing that we will always be friends."

A mist obscured her vision, and she put out her hand toward Allan with a gesture of deep emotion. His thin, trembling fingers closed over it in silence. Neither of them were able to speak for some minutes. Then Miriam spoke.

"I am glad," she said, "so glad to have found you in time. When I was bowed down with grief and sorrow for the dead; when my heart ached because of the cruel decree, separating me from my house; when I prayed for a friend, I found one! Henceforth we are friends, inseparable, whether you live a week or a lifetime."

"Amen! amen!" responded Allan. "And now I shall live," he continued, in assuring tones; "instinctively I feel that I shall outlive my long, troublous existence and enjoy life. I am only thirty years old, cousin, and it seems as if I ought not to give up life so soon, especially with a sworn friend at my side, and she a Percival."

A faint smile lighted up his wan face and his fine eyes shone like stars. "God be thanked!" he said, fervently. "I know what it is to be hopeful and happy at last. I believe I have groped out from under the curse, Cousin Miriam, and I trust it will lift from both lives as well; it *must*."

"I have no hope for myself," said Miriam; "but if you are only from under the malediction I am content."

"Don't, don't!" pleaded the sick man, visibly distressed, and he turned away his head so that the eyes resting on him might not detect the gathering tears.

The physician came in and noticed the change. "Much better, much better!" he said, encouragingly. "I am hardly prepared to say why or for what reason this happy change has taken place; but I could shrewdly guess," and the little old man glanced meaningly about the room, and then at Miriam, who was looking out of the window.

"Yes," nodded Allan, with a happy smile, "she has come and wrought the transformation. The tonic of her presence and kindness of her care have helped you, doctor, to effect this marvelous change."

"Certainly, certainly," fussed the little old physician, spreading out and counting the powders he had been dealing. "There no doubt now but that you are on the mend, finely, sir, finely. Now have a little care, a little care," emphasized the precise doctor, with his hand on the door, "or you may have a relapse. Don't get too ambitious, sir; remember you have been very ill, very ill, sir."

The little nervous physician nodded in emphasis, little jerky nods, meant to convey authority, and the convalescent listened respectfully, although he knew the better physician of the two was over there by the window, where the dim sunlight sifted over her becoming coiffure.

"When I am able to be about, cousin, will you go back to the Rest?"

"Most likely, for awhile, at least."

"And then?"

"Allan, I have a favor to ask of you; will you grant it?"

"Certainly, if possible I will be glad to, Cousin Miriam." His eyes held in their depths such a glad light of anticipation now that he might do something to reward and please one who had done so much for him.

"It isn't much," she said, half in apology, coming near and taking a seat by the couch. "But as yet you know nothing of my plans. You have asked me (where then, or words meaning the same. If I should tell you that in a very short time I will leave for America, would you say?"

"To live there; make the Western continent your home, Miriam?" asked Allan, all the eagerness dying out of his face beclouded by gravest apprehension. "Was he so soon to lose her, his regal cousin?"

"To reside there," answered she, an odd little shadow passing over her countenance.

"Oh, I should say, place or no place, what earthly good can there be in that, Miriam?"

"I want to forget," she answered, sadly. "I have a friend over there, at least a friend of my dear dead mother's, who has written me to come. I should have been gone ere this had it not been for a severe illness directly after the receipt of her letter."

"Then I would have missed finding you and—died!" He turned his head away once more to hide his tears.

"I am glad I did not go," she replied.

"And you will be glad a second time if you give up your plan now," he ventured.

"Oh! not when you get well and strong, and do not need me."

"There never will be a day again that I will *not need* you. Oh! Miriam!" Then as if shocked at his untimely confession, he buried his face in the pillows and lay quite still. Miriam went back to the window, without gainsaying this outburst of her cousin's. Poor, lonely, sick man, she thought, he hardly knows what he is saying. I will not chide him. When he will have fully recovered this thought will have passed. No; she will not say any thing now to hurt him. Doubtless her kindness had almost turned his brain, in his weak state, and as he convalesced he would forget. The attendant came and thinking the sick man asleep, went quietly out again. The silence was growing irksome. Miriam looked at her watch and then glanced furtively toward the couch. Allan Percival had not stirred.

"Allan," she said, softly; "it is time for another powder, I believe. Jack would have given it to you, but he thought you were asleep. Shall I give it to you?"

Her cousin took his face from among the pillows and looked up. "Yes, if you please."

His face was very pale; all the vivacity of hopeful convalescence had fled, and even his lips were white and trembling with emotion.

Miriam thought best not to notice it, and gave him a powder in a little wine glass of Maderia. It will strengthen him, she thought. Then she drew her chair near him and sat down.

"Allan," she began, "what I wish you to do for me is this. When I am gone please forget that you know of my whereabouts should any inquiry come to your ears from Heatherleigh. Will you do this?"

"Yes," he answered; "they shall never know through me. If you desire to have your voyage remain a secret."

"I wish it, most assuredly;" and then she told him of her visit to the Hall when she was waved off by Sir Rupert in his fury, dwelling tragically on the sorrowful recital. "Now you know why I wish to be buried, as it were, from sight and sound of Heatherleigh."

"I *know*," he answered. "I will promise any thing you desire; you will forgive and forget my speech of an hour ago if it grates on your heart, cousin. I—I—I am too lonely and desolate, and—well, you will forgive!"

He reached out an eager hand and Miriam took in a warm, friendly clasp the outstretched palm.

"Don't grieve," she said, generously. "You have said nothing wrong, Allan. But wait until you are well and strong and perhaps you will forget it, too."

Miriam saw a puzzled, far-away look steal into those splendid eyes; then a quiver of the pale lips, and she knew he was battling with disappointed desires. She hesitated for a moment, then passed her hand caressingly over the noble brow, and up among the dark, clustering hair. He was her cousin, all the relative she had, and—well, she would. So bending over the pitiful wan face on the pillow, she pressed her lips to his brow.

"There is nothing to forgive, Allan; you and I are the fittest, best of *friends*." Then she went to her own apartments, and the attendant came and sat out the day by Allan.

(To be Continued.)

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria

PLUCKY YOUNG STAIRS.

An Adventurous Canadian Boy Who Accompanies Stanley.

He Climbs a great African Mountain—10,677 feet Above the Sea—A Short Sketch of his Life.

Stanley, in one of his letters, says:—"We have obtained some remarkable views—one from Nyanza plain, another from Kavalli, and the third from a southern point in the altitudes above the sea. I should estimate it to be between eighteen and nineteen hundred feet. We cannot trust our triangulations, for the angles are too small. It took us sixteen marches to reach the southwest angle of the range, the Semliki Valley being below us on our right, and which, if the tedious mist had permitted, would have been exposed in every detail. That part of the valley traversed by us is generally known under the name of Awambo, while the habitable of the range is principally denominated Uknoju. The huts of the natives, the Bakonju, are seen as high as 8,000 feet above the sea. Almost all our officers had at one time a keen desire to distinguish themselves as climbers of these African Alps, but unfortunately they were in a very unfit state for such work. The Pasha only managed to get 1,000 feet higher than our camp, but Lieutenant Stairs reached a height of 10,677 feet above the sea, but he had the mortification to find two deep gulfs between him and the snowy mount proper. He brought, however, a good collection of plants, among which were giant heath, heather and bilberries. On the second march from the confines of Awavela, we entered Usangora, a grassy region as opposite in appearance from the perpetual spring of Ukonju as a droughty land could well be.

William Grant Stairs, Stanley's right hand man, was born in Halifax, in 1863, so that he is in the neighborhood of 26 years old. The young explorer is the son of the late John Stairs, of that city. Mr. John F. Stairs, ex-M. P. is his uncle. Young Stairs received a first-class education in his native city, and in September, 1878, joined the Royal Military college at Kingston. He graduated in June, 1882, with honors, and soon afterwards went to New Zealand, where he had secured a good position as an engineer on the construction of one of the railways. He worked in the New Zealand bush for three years and at the end of that time returned to Canada, accepting a commission in the Imperial service. England at that time was in want of officers and gave several commissions to past graduates of the R. M. C. Stairs was appointed to the Royal Engineers as a second lieutenant, and remained for a short time at Chatham. When Stanley called for volunteers he was among the first to answer. His career while battling for life on "Africa's burning sands" is well known to all newspaper readers.

ATROCITIES IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO.

The Singapore papers have frequently of late contained reports of the atrocities committed by Arab slaveowners in the island of Lombok, which lies between the two Dutch possessions in Java and Sumbawa, and which is under Dutch protection. It is one of the comparatively few places where the slave trade flourishes unchecked; people are bought and sold in the open market, and the cruelties that are from time to time perpetrated on the defenceless people by the Arab slave-owners are almost incredible. The last story of this nature which has reached the outside world tells how four young slaves, two men and two women, tried to escape from the cruelties of a notorious Arab, Sayid Abdulla. They put out to sea in a little boat with a view of getting to Java or Sumbawa, but unhappily were driven by contrary winds on the shore of a small island, where the son of Abdulla is following his father's example. The fugitives were sent back heavily chained to Ampenan, in Lombok, where Abdulla imprisoned them in part of his own house, and exhausted almost every device in torturing them. Two American gentlemen, who knew what was going on, implored Abdulla to accept a large sum of money and liberate the unfortunate creatures. They endeavoured in every possible way to induce this man to abstain from his fiendish cruelties, but in vain. As an attempt is now being made by these gentlemen and others, who know the facts connected with the slavery in Lombok, to rouse public feeling in Java, Holland, and elsewhere, with a view to putting an end to this horrible system, it is desirable that the circumstances of this particular case, revolting as they are, should be plainly stated. The two young men, who were aged respectively sixteen and twenty, were led out to the beach and stabbed by running a sword through the heart and stomach. One of the women, who is said to have been *enceinte* was lashed with rattans until she was blue, and after various other tortures her hands were fastened to her back, and she was hung from a tree, head downwards. The second girl, after being subjected to numerous indescribable tortures, had her ears cut off and her nose wrenched out by a pair of pincers. The wounds were then smeared with a maddening composition of chillies, lime, and tamarind. The writer avows that Abdulla and other members of his family have been guilty of other atrocities to their slaves, especially the women, which he dare not attempt to describe in print. An official report of these circumstances is said to have been sent to Batavia; and the European residents are trying to have Abdulla punished and the whole slave system stopped in the bud. These are not by any means the first statements that have been published on the subject, nor are they worst, and it is earnestly to be hoped that the Netherlands Government will insist on their authorities in Java putting a stop to the fiendish outrages of these Arab miscreants in Lombok and Karang Asam. There are only ninety Arabs altogether in Ampenan, the trading capital of the island, the population being composed of Chinese, Malays, and natives. These Arabs are mostly fugitives from the port of Java, Abdulla having absconded from Batavia about twenty-five years ago, and having become subsequently secretary and adviser to the Rajah of Lombok. The latter is not himself cruel to his slaves, but he does not interfere with the cruelties of the Arabs. It is said to be the custom of the latter when a slave gets clear away to murder all the members of his family.

A JAPANESE BUSINESS LETTER.

An instance of the way in which Japanese business men handle the English language is given in the following letter, recently received by a New York merchant and published in the *Times* of that city. The letter was sent from Yokohama, October 10. It ran:—"Being a trade merchant we hope to introduce myself to you upon business. Before going to do so we are very glad to send to you some sample of our Japanese picture, which is one of our printing production, as the commencement of our communication upon business. If you have a view that these picture can be appropriate to the taste of American people, and can be sold there in your country, we beg you to order me." The letter then goes to describe samples sent, one of which the Japanese merchant says is a "Complete sery of the picture of Shogun, our ancient General, marching with his army with 3 leaves; This production of Japanese industry he follows up with another, which "Makes one complete sery of the picture of our ancient royal amusement with 3 leaves." The letter ends as follows:—"If you order me, we are very glad to send you what you order me by post as fast as possible. Please answer to me hastely, and also send me your detail by convenience. We oblige you much."

OVER MOUNTAIN AND VALE.

Mails go at Lightning Speed from Coast to Coast.

Letters Posted in New York on Tuesday Night Now Reach San Francisco on the Tuesday Morning Following.

On the evening of Thursday, the 14th ult., a letter was deposited in the New York post-office, directed to the Nevada Bank, in San Francisco. At nine o'clock on the same evening it was on its way with other mail matter for the Pacific Coast, and at 9.50 o'clock on the morning of the following Tuesday it arrived in San Francisco. The distance of 3,364 miles had been accomplished in 108 hours and 50 minutes, notwithstanding a wait of three hours at Chicago and the loss of 90 minutes caused by a hot journal and a bro