

"You'll receive her kindly, Sylvia, for my sake."
 "I would do anything for your sake," said the girl fondly. She was swifter in her changes of mood than an April sky.
 "And you will be constant, Sylvia?"
 "I cannot help being constant. I never loved any one but you, and to the end of my life I shall love you and you only." And she meant it.

CHAPTER X.

A HUMILIATING REJECTION.

Edmund Standen's interview with Mr. Carew was far from satisfactory. His candour evoked no responsive generosity from the schoolmaster.

"If your mother means to disinherit you and you have to begin the world without a sixpence, I can't see that my daughter will better her position by marrying you," said James Carew, dryly.

He had left his rough gang of scholars to their own devices, and come into the parlour, whither Sylvia had summoned him, and whence she had fled, leaving her lover to fight his battle as best he might.

"We love each other," pleaded Edmund.

"That's a boy and girl reason. But I cannot see that mutual affection is sufficient ground for mutual starvation. To talk about marriage now, with your way to make in the world, is a sheer absurdity. Come to me by-and-bye when you are able to keep a wife, and I may be able to give you a more favourable answer."

"I don't ask your consent to an immediate marriage," replied Edmund. "I am willing to wait a few months. By the end of that time I hope to have won a secure income and a home for my wife. She has not been accustomed to splendour or luxury," he added, with a glance at the homely parlour, "and she will know how to manage matters upon a moderate income."

"She has been accustomed to the sharpest poverty," answered Mr. Carew, "but that is no reason why she should endure its stings to the end of her days. So lovely a girl as my daughter ought to improve her position by marriage."

"Which means that you would sell her to the highest bidder," said Edmund, bitterly.

"Nothing of the kind, it only means that I will never give my consent to her marriage with a man who has less than a thousand a year of fixed income. That is little enough for the wants of modern life," added Mr. Carew, with as grand an air as if he had never existed upon smaller means.

"Then I am to understand that you refuse your consent," said Edmund, pale with anger.

"Absolutely."

"And whatever influence you have with your daughter will be used to prevent her marrying me."

"Decidedly."

"Very well, Mr. Carew. I am bound, however, to inform you that I do not believe your daughter will abide by your decision in this matter."

"There she must please herself," answered the schoolmaster, coolly. "I can only try to prevent her throwing herself away, but if she has set her heart, or her mind, whichever it is that governs a woman's impulses, upon marrying a beggar, I cannot help it. I can only forbid you my house," he concluded, as loftily as if the low ceiled parlour had been a mansion.

"You need not trouble yourself to do that," replied Edmund. "This is the first time I have crossed your threshold, and it shall be the last. I only came here to-day because I had a duty to perform."

"Oh? It was your duty to tell me, after you had stolen my daughter's heart," said the schoolmaster, icily.

Edmund did not reply to the taunt, though it wounded him. It was Sylvia's fault that he had not made this communication sooner. He could not tell her father that.

"I am going to leave England for some time on family business," he said quietly, "will you allow me to bid Sylvia good-bye?"

"I will allow nothing of the kind. I will countenance no manner of communication between you. If she choose to disobey me, let her take the consequences of her own act, and do penance for her folly in a garret or a gutter. I shall not pity her."

"And I shall think I do a good action in removing her from the custody of such a father," exclaimed Edmund, angrily.

"Good-morning, sir," said the schoolmaster, opening the door; "my pupils are clamorous, and I must return to them."

Edmund gave him a haughty bow and went out, his bosom swelling with indignation. What would be said in Hedingham should it be known that he had sued for the schoolmaster's daughter, and been contemptuously refused. His heart beat high with wounded pride.

He was sufficiently provincial to consider himself of some importance, lightly as he might affect to regard the difference between his rank and Sylvia's when he pleaded love's cause with Mrs. Standen. He felt that in his person the respectability of the Standen family had been outraged.

In this little burst of resentment he almost forgot Sylvia and love. He was crossing the churchyard, and had just reached a spot where the shade of cypress and yew was deepest, an unfrequented nook by the ivy-mantled tomb of the Bossinys, when a light step sounded behind him, and presently two little hands were clasped upon his arm.

"Edmund would you leave me without saying good-bye?"

Anger fled at the sound of that voice. He looked down at her with the old loving look, mingled with sadness.

"My dearest, it would have half broken my heart to part thus, but I had no time for lingering, and your father forbade my seeing you."

"My father. I don't care a straw for my father's commands where you are concerned. I think I should have run all the way to Monkhampton, under the hot sun, to catch you at the station, if I hadn't overtaken you here. But I have caught you, stop a minute, Edmund, in this dark shade, and give me one more kiss before you go; and tell me once more, one little once, that you love me."

The kiss and the assurance of affection were repeated a good many times, "my sweet wife in the dear days to come," said Edmund tenderly.

The words startled Sylvia, and she looked up at him curiously. It was the first time he had ever called her by that endearing name.

"Your wife!" she repeated. "Do you think it ever will be, Edmund?"

"What, sweetest?"

"Our marriage. You see there are two people to hinder it, Mrs. Standen and Papa. Perhaps they will put their heads together and plot against us."

"My mother plot. For shame, Sylvia!"

"You needn't be offended. I said Papa, too, I'm sure he's not above plotting. Everything seems against us, this voyage to Demerara for instance, as sudden as if you had received a summons from some one in the moon. Do you honestly think we shall ever be married, Edmund?"

"Yes, my own love. If we are but true to each other."

He kissed her once again, and this time it was verily the parting kiss, for the great hoarse bell of the church clock, boomed out twelve heavy strokes, till the air round them seemed to tremble, the mighty cypress to shiver.

"Be true to me, darling," he cried, with almost despairing fondness, "be true to me, as God knows I shall be true to you." Then with a desperate wrench he put her from him, and hurried away, blinded by tears his manhood was ashamed of. Good-bye was a word he had not courage to utter, and so he left her leaning despondently upon the tomb of the Bossinys; not weeping—tears with Sylvia were rare—but breathing languid sighs for the loss of so true a lover.

"How dull the place will seem without him," she thought, dejectedly.

To be continued.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

SONNET.

BY C. L. CLEVELAND.

As in the forest glides a moonbeam white
 Along drooping branches and the unpruned limbs.
 What time the angels sing their vesper hymns.
 And loose the pendent curtains of the night:
 So doth my Lady tread the shadowy ways
 Of lowly life, dispensing kindly cheer
 From her large love, that scatters doubt and fear.
 She speaks but little in rebuke or praise:
 Yet the persuasion of her look and word
 Hath on her people such inspiring spells
 That each good feeling of the heart is stirred
 To aspiration for the Faith that dwells
 In her sweet soul, whose outward-shining grace
 Makes a bright heaven of her bending face.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

THE DOCTOR'S SECRET.

A young physician, poor and without practice, was standing one afternoon at the window of his small and scantily-furnished bed-room. He looked into a yard which was common to his own tenement and to the low tumble-down residence of his landlord. This landlord was an old miser who had formerly been bailiff and whose only companion was an orphan girl named Rose. He had adopted the child at an early age, and while he was not unkind to her, he treated her as a servant without wages. A sort of mute friendship had sprung up between the young doctor and the girl, and he rather liked to watch her from his window going about her domestic avocations.

On this afternoon he suddenly noticed her leaving the house and coming in the direction of his pavilion. As she approached nearer, she made a sign to him and he immediately hastened to run down to open the door for her.

"What is the matter?" said he.

She appeared embarrassed and replied:

"Beg pardon—I would have wished—I came to ask you a favour—a great favour."

"Speak," said the doctor, "in what can I assist you?"

"It is not I but my uncle. He is suffering and growing weak. This morning he was able to rise, but a moment ago he fainted away."

"I will go and see him," said the doctor, making a step forward.

Rose retained him by a gesture.

"Excuse me," she said hesitatingly,—"but my uncle has always refused to call physicians."

"I will go as a neighbour."

"And under some pretext, if you please. You might perhaps inquire of him about the price of stable and shed hire—you will need both, you know, when you get your gig."

"Very well," said the doctor; and he followed the young girl to her uncle's door.

Rose asked him to wait there a few moments and let her go in first, so as not to rouse the suspicions of the invalid.

He paused on the threshold and heard the old man ask the girl whether the garden was closed, whether she had put out the fire, whether the bucket had not been left in the well. The broken wheezing voice struck the physician. He made up his mind to ascend the step, and open noisily as a visitor who wished to announce himself, but he was suddenly stopped by the darkness of the room. Indeed the apartment had no other light but that of the lamp which shone in the street, but even by its uncertain light the sick man recognized his young tenant. He rose on his elbow and said with effort:

"The doctor! I hope he does not come for me. I did not ask for him. I am well."

"It is not a doctor's but a tenant's visit," said the physician gradually approaching the bed, and adding something about the rent of stables and barn.

"Very well," said the old man. "Please sit down, neighbour—We need no candle, Rose; give me my potion."

The girl brought him a large cup which he drained with the panting avidity which fever induces.

"My usual remedy, doctor," said he. "It is worth all your drugs and costs only the trouble of gathering the plants."

"And you drink it cold?"

"To save fuel. Fire incommodes me, and wood is dear."

The doctor did not argue with his patient, but approached nearer. His eyes, now used to the gloom, observed that the face of the old man was marbled with red blotches indicative of the force of the fever. Continuing to speak to him, he took up one of his burning hands, listened to his laboured breathing and was not slow in concluding that the malady was very serious.

Withdrawing from the bed, he took Rose aside and informed her of the fact. He likewise had an understanding with her that under plausible pretext the old miser should be persuaded to take some remedies which the doctor would send him gratis,

as the offerings of a neighbour and friend. The stratagem succeeded, but the remedies came too late, and the sick man gradually grew worse.

At the end of a fortnight, as the physician made his usual visit, he found the old man at the last extremity.

"Ah, doctor, I am ill—very ill. Is there any danger. Tell me if there is. Before dying, I have a secret to tell."

"Then tell it," answered the young man.

"It is then true. There is no hope. I must die. I must renounce all that I have hoarded; leave all to others—all—"

The physician tried to calm him by speaking of Rose, who had just stepped out of the room.

"Yes, I want to see her, poor girl. They will try to rob her. But she has her share, only she will have to hunt"—He stopped.

"Hunt where?" asked the doctor bending over the bed.

"Open the window," exclaimed the dying man, staring with glassy eyes. "I want to see the light. Go to the garden—yonder—behind the well—the top stone"

The voice faded away. The young physician saw the lips move a moment, then a convulsive thrill agitated the features and all was over. The old landlord was dead.

Rose entered soon after. Her grief on learning the truth was silent but sincere. She prayed long and fervently at the bedside. After she had composed herself, she made all the modest preparations for the funeral, and when the day of burial came, was the only one, besides the physician, who followed the remains to the grave.

A couple of hours after their return from the churchyard, the doctor went over to the house. To his surprise he found Rose sitting on a stone bench outside the door and weeping bitterly. He essayed to console her. "Pardon me, sir," said Rose, in a low voice, "it is not to soften my grief that I sit here, but if I were to go in, I should trouble the relatives of my poor uncle who are there."

"What, there already?" asked the young man.

"Yes, with a notary."

The doctor looked in the interior and saw a cousin of the dead man, his wife and a notary, emptying the cupboards and shelves.

"Good gracious! they are taking everything," he exclaimed.

"They have the right to do so," said Rose softly.

"That remains to be seen," replied the Doctor crossing the threshold.

The notary, who had a parcel of papers in his hands, turned round abruptly.

"Stop, sir," cried the young man.

"Why so?" demanded the notary.

"Because the will must first be produced."

"There is no will, and everything goes to this man and his wife, sole relatives of the deceased."

The doctor tried to remonstrate, but in vain. High words followed, in which the woman joined, threatening the young man and shaking her fists at Rose, who stood trembling at the open door. The altercation terminated by the physician leaving the house in disgust, and Rose taking refuge for the night with a neighbour.

That evening the youth paced his little room in a fever of excitement. What could he do for Rose? Was she to lose everything? Was she to be the victim of harpies? With his forehead leaning on the window pane, he looked out into the darkness, revolving in his mind all the contingencies by which he might assist the poor friendless girl. For a long time he could find no clue, and was about throwing himself upon his bed in despair when suddenly he remembered the last words of the old man: "In the garden,"—"behind the well,"—"the topstone." This was to him a flash of lightning. That was the secret of the dead! He seized his hat, descended rapidly the stairs, crossed the court yard, opened the garden gate, and hurried forward to the well.

The curbing, partially crumbled, revealed large fissures in the wall. He sounded the depths, but could discover nothing. The rear of the well, under the fragment of the top stone, which had formerly sustained the cornice, was precisely the only spot which presented no hiatus; the block of cut stone, solidly mortared, was fixed and immovable. After turning round it two or three times and bent down to examine it inside and out, he grew ashamed of his credulity. He shrugged his shoulders, threw a last look of disappointment at the well and directed his steps homeward.

But after all a doubt still lingered in his mind. When on the point of leaving the garden, he looked back again at the well, the wall, and the topstone.

"That was certainly the spot indicated by the dying man," thought he.

He stopped and reflected.

"But stop! Why should the top stone be the only one that is solidly mortared?"

This simple thought made him retrace his steps. He examined once more, and with greater attention, the block of stone, and noticed that it had recently been surrounded by a number of small boulders. He tried to shake it by removing these obstacles. He succeeded in moving it a little and finally rolled it out of its bed. A cavity appeared in the masonry, and after violent efforts he drew forth a small casket circled with iron. In raising it he let it slip from his hands and it resounded with the jingle of coin. Seized with a kind of vertigo, the youth filled the aperture with earth and stones, replaced the curb as well as he could, and ran to his room with the precious box.

On reaching his apartment he laid it on the floor and tried to open it, but it was closed by a tight lock of which he had not the key. After several useless attempts he sat down with his eyes fixed on the casket, and spent the night in reflection.

Morning came and he had not yet decided what to do with his treasure-trove, when he heard a timid knock at the door.

He opened; it was Rose.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, standing at the door. "I came only to bid you good-bye."

"You are going?"

"Yes, to town, where I am promised employment."

"You."

"I must. I have no one to care for me now. Only I could not leave without coming to thank you, doctor."

There was something in the voice and in the manner of the girl, so full of ingenuous pathos, that the young man's eyes filled with tears. He seized Rose's hands within his.

"What would you say if I made you suddenly richer than you ever dreamed to become?"

"Me!"