

Selected Story.

Escher Chillingworth's Ring.

SUCH a queer old ring! I picked it out of the old lacquered cabinet where Aunt Lucinda's odds and ends of family relics—memorabilia, antique trinkets, and souvenirs of the past; but that seemed so very, very old for she was my mother's aunt, not mine, were stored away in rows of drawers, packed in soft jewels' cot on and smelling sweet and strong of T. A. beans. It was of old, yellow gold, curiously dressed with the jacinth cut crescentwise and set in tiny seed-pearls; and the jewel and the setting, as in many old rings, opened at the coating of a finger, and showed a wee space for hair—where?

I asked Aunt Lucinda, but she was hurrying to shut up the cabinet, and only said:

"Remind me to tell you about it in the morning, child; for I was late, and she wanted to send me off to bed."

"Can't I keep this, too, to wear while I'm here—it is so pretty—and I'll take such good care of it, Auntie?"

"Well, put it on," said Aunt Lucinda, "and then run away, for it's past 11 o'clock. To think of your keeping me up talking until this late hour!"

So I went away to bed, slipping the narrow band of fretted, carved, curved, carved from my first finger, and watching the rich, warm flame of light in the heart of the jacinth—like a drop of clear honey.

I slept alone at Aunt Lucinda's, in a queer old room, with an open fireplace and brass andirons, with a great, high-backed bed, dark, with flowered curtains, and a high and almost inaccessible mountain of feathers, into which I usually leaped with the aid of a chair when I had blown the candle out. I always went to sleep drowsily speculating upon the ancestral personage who had reposed in this old ark of a bed, under that ancient red silk quilt, and wondering if any of their forgotten dreams lurked round those flowered curtains, to creep into my brain when sleep set its gates ajar.

I did not dream that night, at any rate; I am sure of it, for I had not slept ten minutes by the old alabaster clock on the mantelpiece when I was awakened by the pressure of a hand.

It was not Aunt Lucinda's hand; even in sleep I knew the difference of the touch. They were young fingers that told cold over mine—soft, round tips, that left a damp chill upon my flesh where they crept along. As my senses awoke gradually, I felt these fingers working at the ring on my left hand, and felt a cold breath on my forehead like a little puff of night air.

I tried to strike away the hand, but it fastened clingingly on mine, and a musing voice said passionately, and yet pitifully like a heart child:

"Let me have it—let me have it!"

"Who are you? Where are you? What is it?" I gasped, struggling to sit upright in the deep trough of the feathered bed. "Aunt Lucinda?"

The dark, still fold of the curtains waved and moved, the streak of light between them widened, and then they were pushed quite apart. Then I saw the moon shining on the floor, and the feet of a young girl, like a breath from a daisy vault, blowing straight from my motionless figure.

It was a woman, and I saw her so plainly as I see this moment the words written by the pen in my hand. I could tell you every item of dress she wore, even to the edging of the skirt, the light sleeves that reached her elbows, and the little blue damask figure on her gray gown. Her face was very pale and quiet, and there was no light in her eyes; they were heavy and dark, and the lids were reddened as if with crying and waking; but she was beautiful for all that, beautiful as some old, dim pictures with a story in it. There she stood, with her face and neck gleaming dull-white, like old marble, above the gray gown, and one look of her black hair twisted round her throat, like a soft necklace, and her little, damp, cold hand lying on mine, and her lips moved yet, as if she were saying over again:

"Let me have it!"

"Who are you? I cried, trembling and hardly breathing. 'What do you want?' My ring—mine and Roger's. No other name can wear my ring. Look! I don't you see the blood on it?"

Aunt Lucinda's ring! There was no stain on it when she took it out of the old casket, but I saw the blood in the light—a disk of ugly red among the creased crumple. I tore it off my finger, and flung it away as if it were a coal of fire.

"Who are you?" I cried once more. And the answer came softly and slow, like a sigh:

"Escher Chillingworth."

I started up at her breathless. "Look at me," she murmured. "This is the face that Roger Vane loved long two hundred years ago; this is the hand that wore his ring—that sent it back to him from Salem jail when he cared no longer to remember how he slipped it on with kisses. They said I was very fair in those days. Look at me. Am I comely now?"

She swept back her long hair from her face, but without displacing the lock that curled like a snake around her throat; and then, as I looked at her, she broke into a low, wailing cry:

"I had the fairest face in Salem—old Chillingworth's daughter? The grass withered, the flower faded. The parson used to tell me it was but a rain cloud, and I laughed him to scorn. For in the woods beyond Salem, when I was picking May flowers, and rustling aside the dewy leaves to find their pink and white clustered stars, I met Roger Vane, and he told me a sweeter tale than the preacher knew. And I let him kiss my mouth, for he called it 'sweet sweet—yes, altogether lovely—sweeter than the breath of May flowers. O, the Salem woods! O, my love, Roger, Roger!"

Her wail swept like a gust of chilling wind, and the folds of the curtain stirred and trembled with it; but she never stirred—not even a hair of her head was shaken as she stood there.

"He was brave and young and handsome, and he came riding from Boston, and rode down the street of Salem that spring day, the goodliest I ever saw, in old England, or in the new black coun-

try, there was none to compare with him in his eyes; and so I loved him. He stayed in Salem, and I saw him day after day; and now know it at first, for we strayed far away in those green woods that were just putting on their leaves, and looked for May flowers, and later on, for the blue violets that crept up through the rustling dead foliage of last year.

And at last he came to my father's house; and I feared him, and I had no mother; and so we kept our secret—Roger and I. I feared nothing, asked nothing, and I drained the cup of each day, and was content with its full drist of joy, and never dreamed, with sunrise and rose around me, of winter and decay, and death, and I would not have my last sight of them so marred. It is only for a little space, sweetheart. I shall come to steal away my little Puritan maiden before the red leaves autumn have turned red by her father's door."

"Why—why will you go, Roger?" I cried, as I clung round him; and I asked it only to hear over again what I knew before quite well, for, Winthrop, whose blood relation he was, had sent him here, and now recalled him, on business of the Commonwealth, and he had no money; leaving me only for a little while—a very little while, I made him whisper over and over, with my arms about his neck. And then he pulled from his pocket that ring, with its dark yellow stone and the little bright pearls, and slipped it over mine.

"See," he said, "you shall wear this as my pledge of love and loyalty; there is a lock of my hair under the stone, and you shall give me under the stone, and you shall keep and kiss when we are parted; and in two little months I'll come to you, and I'll bring you a new ring, and you shall exchange our love gift back again, here in this very wood, my sweetheart."

"He took the lock of hair that curled by my forehead, and I took his ring, and my own hair sealed it on my finger. So we turned away from each other, and started on the long path that led our lives apart, and never drew them together again—never any more! Roger Vane, rode back into Boston town, and I stole away to my father's house to mourn and wait for him, with his ring hung round my neck, low down, by my heart.

The summer crept on, and the hot days shortened their fierce fire, and the August haze was in the sky; the golden rod stood out its plumes all along the dry, dusty road, and the ragged white daisy down blew here and there. I watched for the first change along the dark borders of the woods—for the red leaves, and for Roger; but no morning I woke up and saw the white frost glittering on some blackened drooping vine around my window, and a broad splash of scarlet, like blood dashed across the maple trees, and no lover came riding down the road, or staying through the Salem wood to find me.

"Never, never more! I had the last kiss on my lips forever," for none touched them after Roger Vane. The leaves turned crimson, and golden, and russet-brown, and withered and dropped from the bare trees; the dark November days glowed over the land, and my lover never came. No word had from him—no sign; I knew not if he were among the living or dead, until Gideon Giles, over his half century in a nation's prison, told me the story of his journey to Boston, told me, as he sat in the elbow chair by my hearth, that he had seen young Roger Vane.

"You remember him, Miss Esther? A well-favored youth, but something light-minded; and yet I saw him among goodly company, coming out of the South Church after meeting, and with a fair young lady on his arm. He had no eyes for any of the worshippers but her, and I got no speech with him, else I might have brought back a kindly message for his friends in Salem, and for you, Miss Esther."

As a signpost to children, and the distressing disease which beset the throat and chest of childhood, it is invaluable; for, by its timely use, multitudes are rescued and restored to health.

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dry goods and clothing, and the very best. I am now in a position to offer to my customers and the public generally very decided bargains in the following goods:

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with a general description of Goods usually found in a first-class Fancy Goods Store. I also beg to inform the Public that I have taken over my shop for the purpose of carrying on the

Custom Tailoring Business, and all its branches and have secured the services of Mr. J. S. Searby, whose past experience as a long and favorably known in Fredericton and adjoining country, and have purchased from best makers a fine assortment of superior Black and Blue Broadcloths, Fancy mixed and solid Coatings, West of England, Scotch and Canadian Tweeds, in all the leading styles and colors.

A good assortment of first class Trimmings, always on hand. Garments for Weddings and Funerals made up in 12 to 24 hours. My cutter having great experience in cutting Garments and which will be made up in superior style and to whom a liberal discount will be made.

Always on hand, a full line of Gent's Shirts, made to order if required. Hosiery, Trunks, Neck Ties of all kinds, Caps, Socks, &c., &c.

P. S.—Every Garment made here is a perfect Fit and the latest styles guaranteed.

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I have a large stock of Harness, Saddles, and all the latest styles of Carriage Hardware, and will be pleased to show them to my customers.

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