

EDITH YORKE.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

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His case was desperate, he knew; but he made an effort to recover. "I forgot myself," he said; "but I assure you I meant no harm."

A few weeks after came a peremptory letter from Miss Clinton. She wanted Carl to come up to see her. What was he burying himself in the country for?

He consented rather reluctantly, protesting that he would only stay a week. But when he got there, it was not so easy to tear himself away.

"What newspaper is that?" cried the old lady. "What signifies a newspaper in a little country town? Nobody ever reads it."

"Not when I edit it," says Carl with a laugh. He found the old lady amusing. "N—, not even then, Master Vandy," she replies.

"It must be comfortable to believe so," she went on, after two or three gasping breaths. "I envy the fools who can. But I can't. My head is too clear for that."

Carl shrank from the wild appeal in that frightened old face; shrank yet more from the horrible task assigned him. Unbeliever, as he had contemplated it, looked gallant, noble, and aspiring; but this unbelieved seemed like a glimpse into that perdition which he had denied.

"Perhaps it would be better for us both to look for arguments against than for our theories," he said gravely. "Anything, so that he did not leave her, she insisted. Indeed, she wanted his masculine strength more than anything else."

CHAPTER XIII.

Dick Rowan came home in the spring of '52 to begin a new life. In the first place, he was to have a ship of his own. Mr. Williams had a beautiful ship almost ready to launch, and he was to be the master of it.

would, whether she was willing to be his wife. Perhaps something said to him by Captain Cary had hardened his decision. The captain had seen what his studies were, and been vexed by them.

"You are going too far, Dick," she expostulated. "A man never should change his religion for a girl's sake." She went like you say better for it. Besides, Dick I can't help saying it, you are making a fool of yourself. She will marry Carl Yorke."

Dick stared, reddened, then grew pale. "I think not," he said decidedly. "Don't say that again, captain." The first thing to be attended to, then, was his religion. He must be a Catholic when he met Edith. Besides, if religion gives strength, he would feel better prepared to put his fortune to the test.

"You are right," the priest said. "What you saw in their faces was faith, a pure gift of God. But you believe baptism necessary to salvation?" "I am inclined to think so, but not sure," was the reply.

Dick paused a minute, rested his head on his hand, then raised his bright, clear eyes. "What I say to priest goes no further?" he asked interrogatively.

"Edith said that I should tell you everything," Dick muttered, half to himself, and for moment his dreamy eyes seemed to contemplate the picture his mind held of her saying so. A smile just stirred his lips, and he went on. "I was born an outlaw, sir. The conventionalities which keep many people straight had nothing to do with me."

"Who is this Edith?" "She is a little Catholic girl who was brought up with me, sir. I'm going to ask her to marry me, and I think she will. She is the only person in the world whom I depend on, or who has any influence over me. I believe in her. She is as true as steel. And she believes in me. I can't fall her, but that thought has kept me from harm so far."

"It is a poor reason for being a Catholic," the father said in a dissatisfied tone. "It is a weak hold on virtue when your motive is an affection like this." "The young man smiled with a sudden recollection. "When we were at St. Michael's, last winter, there was a great storm, and a vessel was wrecked close to the coast. We went down to the shore to see, but nothing could be done. One man swam or was washed to a little rock not far from the shore. There he lay clinging, with the waves breaking over him. He couldn't have held on long, and we could not get to him any way. But Captain Cary brought out a big bow and arrow of his that always reminded me of Ulysses, for no one but the captain, I believe, could bend it, and, in a lull of the wind, he shot a little cord over to the man, and the man drew it out. Hope revived his strength, I suppose, and it seemed as if the tempest waited for him. We tied a rope to the cord, and a larger rope to that, and he drew it out, and tied it to the rock, and we saved him."

The priest smiled. "Very true, we rise, we are saved sometimes by degrees, and this little hold may be tied to a stronger. Go out into the church, and make the prayer of the blind man. 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' To-morrow morning I will baptize you. I find you sufficiently instructed."

"That evening Dick made a request of the priest. "When men were to be knighted, in olden times," he said, "they used to keep a vigil in the church. Now, if by baptism I am to be made fit to enter heaven at once, changed from a child of the devil to a child of God, why, it is worth thinking about. It is a great thing to happen in a man's life, and it happens but once. I would like to keep a vigil in the church. I could think there better than anywhere else."

"Besides," the young man added, "you say that Christ is one night. It seems to me to waste to leave him alone there now, when he is to do so much for me to-morrow."

Here he fell. His eyes were struck dead, he was nailed to the cross. "There was in this darkness and silence such a vacuum of the earth, that the heavenly seemed to break through the thin veil of sense and flow around the soul."

When the priest came in at daybreak, he found his penitent prostrate before the altar. After Mass was over, the bishop took place. The father was struck by the countenance of his convert. It wore a wondrous and exalted expression, and he appeared to see nothing of what was visibly before his eyes.

CHAPTER XIV. BREAKING THE ICE. Shortly after Mr. Rowan's baptism, a miniature avalanche of letters reached the Yorke family. Mrs. Rowan-Williams wrote to Edith, in a very scrawling hand, lines that sloped down, in a depressing manner, toward the south-eastern corner of the page.

Dick wrote: "Which is Mohammed, and which is the mountain? I must see you, and if you cannot come here, I shall go to Seaton, though that would not be easy for me to do. Besides, I want you to see your namesake. I have not long to stay, for the ship is about ready to start, and we take our cargo in at New York. It would be almost like a soldier deserting his army on the eve of battle for me to go away now. Do come if you can. It seems to me that you must wish to."

This young man, we may remark, has got quite beyond the model letter-writer, and the practice of penmanship. He writes quite in his own way, and is a very creditable writer, too. He has also a fair education, and can converse more intelligently on more subjects of general interest than many a young man for whom education has done its best.

He looked on them with a sort of wonder, a fitting expression of disgust, then forgot all about them. His time had been too much occupied, his mind too busy for trifling. He had studied constantly and methodically, and the little library in his cabin on board ship was a treasury of science, art and letters. So far as it went, it was the library of a man of cultivated mind. His life, too, had educated him, and there or reflection of his books. The phenomena of the sea he had studied not merely as a sailor, but as a student of natural history. Whatever culture can be derived from the intelligent visiting of foreign countries, without going into society there, that he had. He had not spent his time about wharves, and ships, and sailors' boarding houses. Aside from his own tastes, he never forgot that he was springing toward a girl who, if she should visit these lands, would walk in palaces. Therefore, whatever was famous in nature or art in those places, he sought and examined. Many a traveler who fancied himself perfectly cultivated brought away less pleasant and valuable information than this sailor from the cities they had both visited. Moreover, Dick had studied hard to acquire something of the language of every port he stopped at and was already able to speak French and Italian with ease, if not with elegance. The elegance he did his best to improve by reading the best authors in those languages, and by a few lessons in pronunciation, when he could find time. Therefore, Miss Edith Yorke's friend and correspondent was by no means one whom she had reason to be ashamed of.

But the Rowans were not the only ones who insisted on Edith's visiting Boston at this time. Miss Clinton dictated a letter to Mr. Yorke, and Carl, suppressing his laughter, wrote it. "I have sent three lines for that girl, and this is my last invitation to her. Willing she not allowed to come? Has she anything to wear? I enclose a check for a gown and a pair of shoes. When she reaches here, I will give her what she may need to make her decent. Or is it that my York is jealous because her own daughters are not invited? If one of them must come as company for Edith, I will pay her passage up, but I don't want her here. She can go to Hester's or Alice Mills'. Malcontent has too ridiculous an idea of her own consequence, and Clara is too sharp and impudent. Bird has read me her book, and I think it a very disagreeable book. She had better learn to cook and mend her stockings, and let writing alone."

"Have you finished?" the old lady asked, as Carl, with pen suspended, looked up from his writing. "Yes!" "Then sign my name." "Shall I write 'yours respectfully' or 'yours affectionately'?" Carl asked, with perfect gravity. "Neither!" she replied curtly. "Sign my name without any compliment."

"May I add a few lines for myself?" the young man asked, when he had signed the name as directed. "There is a whole page left." "Yes." The answer was given very softly, and a smile of singular sweetness flitted across the old lady's face as she looked at the writer. Miss Clinton was very fond of Carl, in a tyrannical, tormenting, selfish way, and liked nothing so much as to have him ask favors of her.

He wrote rapidly a few minutes, and was about closing the letter, when she stopped him. "Read me what you have written," she said. Carl blushed slightly, and hesitated. "It was not written to read to you," he answered. "No matter, it will be all the more interesting," she persisted. "Read it! You read mine."

Carl hesitated yet a moment longer, then, casting his eyes up to the ceiling, read, as if he saw it written, in the painting there, a preposterous eulogy of Miss Clinton, with a minute account of her cat's health. "I won't have it!" she cried out. "Read what you have written there, or give it to me, and Bird shall come and read it. If you were a decent writer, I should have eyes enough left to read it myself."

"I am not sure that is the best way to keep the peace with her," Mrs. Yorke remarked. "It would do with some, but she grows more overbearing with indulgence. If she were touched by sweetness and unobtrusiveness, it would be different. I have thought of late years that such persons are benefited by a firm resistance."

Hester also wrote: "Let mamma come with Edith, and stay at my house, of course. It is really a shame that she has never visited me in the city yet. Come light away, and we will all go back to Seaton together. You should come for poor Carl's sake, to cheer him up a little, if for nothing else, for he must lead a miserable life with that awful old woman. You would not have believed he could be so patient. Indeed, he would have left long ago, if it had not been for the hope of bringing you all back here again. If he were the only one in question, he would not stay a day."

Miss Mills also wrote in the same strain, and the result of it all was that the invitations were accepted, with a difference. "I will stop at Miss Clinton's, since you think it better," Edith said to her aunt. "But I must see a good deal of the Rowans."

Her invitation accepted, Miss Clinton began to look at the dark side. "Are you sure that the girl is not very green, Carl?" she asked. "I detect country manners."

Carl sat looking out into the garden, unconscious that his companion was observing him curiously. "Are you in love with that girl?" she asked after a moment. Bold and hardened as she was, she started and shrank at the glance he gave her. No words could have been more haughty and repelling.

No one but himself knew what a price Carl Yorke was paying for his expected inheritance. The ceaseless irritation and annoyance, the enforced giving up of his studies, and those literary labors which now seemed to him his vocation, and the constant confinement, were almost more than he could bear. But one thought supported him, and that was that he should some day be able to restore his family to their lost home, and to pursue those plans of his own which their reverses had interrupted.

He was also, not quite unconsciously, gaining something better than gold. He was seeing all the deformity of selfishness, and the unloveliness of that with whose obsequy power is to wound. In asking the bitter questions: "What is this woman living for? what good does her life do the world? echo had repeated the same questions in his own soul—what are you living for? what good does the world derive from your being in it? What in him and in others had been vice or faults, veiled with a certain decorum so as to look almost like virtues, in this woman's character were stripped of the veil, and showed in all their native baseness. Here, too, were free thinking and atheism *à la mode*, without the crown on their brows, the lustre of her faded face radiated, and with her head bowed she saw a devil. He had not the consolation of thinking her really worse than himself, for he could not shut his eyes to the fact that the difference between them had been in manner, not in essence. He had shown more good taste and delicacy, that was all.

"After all," he thought as he sat there that day, looking out the window, "however it may be with men, women need religion. I would not trust a woman without it. I will not retract my saying that religion is a strait jacket, and intended only for those who cannot stand straight without it, but I begin to think that we are all of us partial lunatics."

"I have heard say that parlor means a place to parle in," remarked Miss Clinton presently. "The ortoles are building in this tree," Carl said, quite as though nothing had happened. She tossed her head. What did she care about ortoles? "How-blood will show, both good blood and bad," she said with the air of one who has just discovered a great truth. "Wealth, associates, travel, occupations, education, neither will efface the signature. The original stamp remains in spite of circumstances."

At the beginning, Carl scented battle, but he assumed an air of great cheerfulness. "You are quite right," he said. "That great person, Adam, and that still more frightfully new person, his wife, have left an indelible stain upon their progeny. We can see it to this day, faintly in some, more strongly marked in others. And, on the other hand, that prince of the ancient regime, Lucifer—" "Nonsense!" interrupted Miss Clinton. "I was going to say, if you can stop your most disagreeable and disrespectful mocking—I was going to say that you have some of the Bohemian lounging ways of your father, though you never saw him, and though you have been under the training of Charles Yorke since your babyhood."

"Do you think I have my father's ways?" Carl asked, with an air of delight. "How glad I am! No one else ever told me so, and I was afraid I might be all Arnold. My mother is, of course, an angelic lady; but some of her family have had traits which—really—well, I should a little rather not inherit. And so you think me like my father? Thank you!" "The Arnolds and the Clintons, sir, are families from whom you may be proud to inherit anything!" the old lady cried, beating the table with her fan. "They were among the élite of Boston and New York when this country was a British province. We had colonial governors and judges, sir, when your father's people were painting signs and door steps. It is rather late in the day, young man, for you to have to be told what my descent is!" She stopped, choked with anger. The young man seemed to be much interested in this recital. "Indeed!" he said,

"this is very delightful to know, and it makes such a difference. Though I had always understood that your descent had been very 'predilectious.' Miss Clinton glared at him, unable to utter a word, and seemed only just able to restrain herself from throwing her snuff-box at him. He rose wearily, and went out of the room, having had a mind to run away altogether. But she who met him at the door, bringing sunshine and reason in her face, holding out two sweet little hands, and scattering with a word all his annoyance. "Dear Carl," Edith said, "are you really glad to see me—really glad?" "How would you imagine such a thing?" he replied. "Then I will go back to Seaton again. Good-by!"

She took a step toward the street door, only a step, both her hands behind strongly held. "You forget, then, silver speech and golden silence," the young man said. "No," she replied. "But silver is kind better than airy gold. If people say kind things to you, then you are sure, and have something to remember; but looks fade, and you can think that you mistake, or mislook. Oh! I like silence, Carl, but it must be a silence that follows after speech. That is the sole golden silence."

"I am glad to see your face and hear your voice once more, Edith," he said seriously. "I have many a time longed for both." "Dear Carl!" she exclaimed. "But what is that I hear? Is it a parrot?" Carl laughed. "Hush! It is Miss Clinton. She is calling out to you who has come. We will go in and see her."

Miss Clinton had one pleasant expression, and that was a smile, when she was so delighted by something out of herself to forget herself. This smile brightened her face as she watched the young couple approach her, hand in hand. She leaned back in her chair, and contemplated Edith, without thinking of returning her greeting. "I'm sure that is a golden silence," Carl said, laughing. "But what do you think of her aunt? She likes to have people speak first and look afterward."

"You are welcome, dear!" the old lady said softly, and extended her hand, but without leaning forward. To take it, therefore, Edith had to come very near, and was drawn gently down to the footstool by Miss Clinton's chair. The old lady took off the girl's hat, and dropped it on to the carpet, then studied her face with delight. She loosened one of the braids of hair wound around her head, and held it out to a sunbeam to see the sparkle of it. She pushed it back from the face. "Did you ever see such ears?" she said to Carl. "They are rose leaves! There must be a large pearl hung in each. She drew her finger along the smooth curve of the brows. "A great artist and physiognomist once told me that such brows show a fine nature. Broken brows, he said, indicate eccentricities of character, brows bent toward the nose a tyrannical disposition, heavy brows reserve and silence, but this long, smooth brow versatility and grace. Read Lavater if you want to know all about eyebrows." She took the cheek, now glowing with blushes, in the hollow of her hand, and held the eyelids down to admire the lashes. "They make the eyes look three shades darker than they really are. But what color are the eyes? They are no color. Did you ever see a shaded forest spring, Carl? These eyes are as limpid."

"Oh! please don't" the girl begged, trying to hide her face. "My dear, I shall call you Eugenie, and shall adore you," Miss Clinton continued. "I hope they have not told you horrible stories about me, or that, if they have, you will not believe them. People are fond of saying that I am sharp, but I quote Victor Hugo to them, 'La rose du Bengale, pour être sans épines, est aussi sans parfum.' A character without any sharpness would be like an ocean without salt. Temper preserves. When any person is recommended to me as of a very mild and placid position, never getting angry, I always say, keep that person out of my sight! Yes, I shall call you Eugenie. I dislike the Edith on account of old Mrs. Yorke. She was what some have called 'intimate enemies.' But I don't mean to quarrel with her grand-daughter. You have your father's eyes and hair, Eugenie, but your mother's features. I hope you have not her disposition. She was too positive, and, besides, she ran away with another woman's beauty."

Edith drew back, and stood up, turning to Carl. "There! she is angry the first thing," the old lady cried. "No danger of anybody's thinking her *sans épines*. Take her down to get some breakfast, Carl." "Dick Rowan is here," Edith said, as the two went down stairs; "and he is a Catholic; and he has a new ship which he has named for me."

There was no reply. They were going through the shady entry, and if the young man frowned at the news, the frown was not seen. "Aunt Amy has gone to Hester's," Edith went on. "She got over the journey nicely, and wants to see you very soon. She will send Hester up to see me presently. I am too tired to go out to-day, would you believe it? You see, travel was so new to me that I could not sleep. I stayed on deck as long as I could, then I listened all night. It seemed so strange to be on the water, out of sight of land."

Later, while the young traveller was resting in the chamber assigned her, a visitor entered gently, unannounced. "I thought I might come, dear," Miss Mills said. Edith raised herself, and eagerly held out her arms. The lady embraced her tenderly, then dropped, rather than sat down, in a chair by the bed. She looked with a strange mingling of feelings on this child of her lost lover. When she recognized the tint of his hair and eyes in Edith's, she bent toward her with yearning love; but then appeared some trait of the mother—a turn of the head, a smile unconsciously proud, an exquisitely fine outline of feature; and, at sight of it, that wounded heart shrank back as from a deadly enemy. The interview was friendly, and even tender, and engagements were made for future meetings; but the lady was glad to get away. The sight of Robert Yorke's child had wakened all the sleep, past and for a time the years that had intervened since her parting with him faded like a mist. Since that day, more than one power, at first pride, later religion, had strengthened her, had raised up new hopes and new joys; but they were not the sweet human hopes and joys that every man and woman looks naturally for; they were those born of struggle and self denial. She had lived truly and nobly, but she was human; and today her humanity rose, and swept over her like a flood.

Miss Mills locked herself into her room, and for once gave herself up to regret. It was no ordinary affection which she mourned. It had entered her heart silently, had been welcomed like an angel visitor; it had

been held sacred. She had watched it with awe and delight as it grew, that strange, beautiful, terrible power! How complex it had become, entering into every feeling, every interest! How it had changed and given a new meaning to life, and a new idea and comprehension of herself! Then, when it had got to seem that she alone was not a complete being, but only about to become perfect—then destruction came.

Not when they set about their mountain-pling. But when another rock would crown their work. "If the foundation merely of an edifice be overturned, there is hope that it may be rebuilt; but destruction overtaking when the topmost height is almost attained is destruction indeed."

In the evening a knock was heard at the chamber door, which she had all day refused to open. A note was pushed under the door, and a servant waited outside for her to read it. She rose wearily, lighted the gas, and glanced over the lines. "I am sorry you have headache, sorry for you and for me. Edith is talking with Mr. Rowan, and I am, consequently, *de trop*. There is no one I care to see tonight but you. Send me word if you are better."

"Tell him to wait," she ordered, and, hastily dressing for a walk, went down. The front parlor was not lighted, but she saw him sitting by a window there. "Come out!" she said. "I wanted to go to the chapel, and you are just in time." Scarcely a word was spoken as they went through the streets together. They entered the chapel, and turned aside into a shady corner. Carl sat, and his companion, too exhausted to kneel, sat beside him. In a room near by, a choir was singing that most beautiful of hymns— "Jesus, lover of my soul."

"Alice," Carl whispered, "that is enough to break one's heart!" Her tears broke forth afresh. No, Carl, it is enough to heal a heart already broken. She listened, and looking toward the altar, repeated over and over, "Other refuge have I none."

The solitude and quiet were soothing to both—the sense of a divine presence more than soothing to her who had faith in it. They had not been there long when a gentleman came up the aisle with a firm, but light step, passed by without noticing them, and knelt down just before them. Carl sat and gazed at him in astonishment. That Dick Rowan should outwardly and publicly conform to the church, for Edith's sake, was not surprising, but that he should come privately to the chapel to pray was inexplicable. Could it be that a brave, manly fellow like this could sincerely believe?

Utterly unconscious of observation, the sailor knelt there motionless, with his face hidden in his hands, and when Carl's companion whispered to him, and they both went out, that figure had not stirred. Edith Yorke's friend began at once to show her what was notable in the city; but, as often happens, what they considered worth seeing disappointed the neophyte, and what they passed without notice she would fain have paused to look at. Inexperienced persons who have read much usually overestimate the magnitude of the wonders they have not seen. What young traveller, entering for the first time a city, ever found its houses so palatial, its streets so superb, its monuments so grand, as fancy had pictured them?

"Everything looks so much smaller and more shabby," Edith confessed privately to Dick Rowan. "Trees and waters are finer than any pictures of them that I have seen, and faces that speak and smile are more beautiful than any painted ones. Only some pictures of Italian scenes delight me. Now, Dick, please do not be shocked when I tell you that I quite long to stop and look at the organ grinders and their monkeys, and to gaze in at the shop windows. But I can't, you know, for that would make Carl and Hester and Miss Mills ashamed of me."

The result of this confidence was that, dressed to attract as little attention as possible, these two friends set the others aside, and went on long tramps together. They paid not much attention to the finer sights, but divided into all sorts of byways. "They looked in at shop windows, at birds and shells and jewels, and more than one shop-keeper was smilingly pleased to display his best wares at the young lady's shy request, though informed beforehand that she did not mean to buy. They watched their organ-grinders and their monkeys to their hearts' content; they amused themselves with the *gamins*, and held various conversations with them; they were bountiful to street-beggars. Bigged urchins were astonished by showers of candy that seemed to descend from heaven on their heads, poor little weeping outcasts were asked to tell their griefs, and listened with tender sympathy, tears perhaps starting into one pair of eyes that looked at them. Sometimes a wretched pauper, walking with downcast face through the streets, felt something touch his hand and leave a bit of money there, and looked up to see a lady and gentleman just passing, and one sweet face glancing momentarily back with a smile at once arch and pitying. "Shall I ruin you, Dick?" Edith asked gleefully. "I have ruined myself; but that didn't take long. My poor little money is all gone. Are you very rich?"

"Oh! immensely!" Dick replied. "I have chests of gold. Give away as much as you wish to." One blind man gone astray long remembered how a soft hand took one of his, and a firm hand the other, and his two guides led him home, inquiring into his misfortune by the way, and commiserating him more tenderly than brother and sister ever had.

"It is so sad to have all the beautiful world shut out," said the sweet voice out of the dark. "But one might, I think, see heavenly things the more plainly." The poor man never lost himself afterward, but he looked blindly, and listened to hear once more those two voices, and to feel the clasp of those two hands, one soft as charity, the other strong as faith. And since they never came to him again, to his imprisoned soul it seemed as though heavenly visitants had led him, and spoken sacred words for him to remember. These two young creatures, out of the happy world of the rich and prosperous, were not afraid of soiling their hands or their clothes, and did not look on the poor as they did on the paving stones. "O Dick!" Edith said in one of those walks. "I do not wonder that the Lord would not stay in heaven when he saw the miseries of earth, and knew that there was no comfort even in another world for it. What a trial it must have been for him to sit above there, and hear all the cries of pain there, and hear all the weeping there, and see that we were raised. Why, Dick, it seems to me that if I could see and know at once all the suffering there is today in this city, it would kill me. I wish we could do something besides play, as we do. Perhaps we ought to work all our lives for the wretched, you and I, who can tell?"

(To be continued.)