



WE never know for what God is preparing us in His schools—for what work on earth, for what work in the hereafter. Our business is to do our work well in the present place, whatever that may be.

—Dr. Lyman Abbott.

An Unconventional Visit

(Concluded from last week.)

"I know my sister will be distressed at missing you," he said in the courtliest way imaginable, "but I fear she is not likely to return for some days." He did not ask me who I was nor how I came there, but he looked those enquiries very plainly. And I thought the best way was to make a clean breast of it, so far as my share in the affair was concerned. It seemed to me that he was having a lucid interval; either that, or he was doubly cunning, and I had better try to amuse him, entertain him, anything to ward off a sudden attack.

"I am making my first visit to your sister, and incidentally to Frattsburg, under rather unusual conditions," I said, "but it was her own suggestion that we should come here and wait for her return, when she found that she was obliged to be away for a short time."

"We?"

"Oh, yes; my sister is with me. She is up-stairs, shampooing her hair."

"I ought to have told you," I hurried on, "that I am Edith Chlore. You are Mr. James of course?"

He gave me a rather odd, amused look, but there was nothing vicious about it.

"Yes, my name is James," he said. "—so you are Edith Chlore? And you have a sister Early?"

"Strange that he should remember hearing of us!" I thought; but I knew I must get him switched off from anything in the nature of reminiscence. So I commenced to tell him about every foolish thing that had happened, even to the search for the key.

He listened with the most flattering interest; then he said, "Won't you sit down?"

So I did; I was determined that I would keep him in a good humor though the skies fell. When I saw how pleased and amused he seemed to be, I said to myself, "Edith Chlore, you have mistaken your vocation. Instead of giving piano lessons, you ought to have a position as attendant in an insane asylum."

It was surprising how easy he was to talk to, and how responsive he seemed. I suppose it was because his sad condition removed us both from the ordinary level of conventionality, and made everything seem different. It grew late; I didn't know what to do. I couldn't think of any way to terminate the interview safely.

"Won't you play something?" he said quite abruptly. I started; I was deathly afraid to go and sit at the piano with him behind me, because I knew he was likely to jump at me at any minute. Still I remembered how potent a factor music is in the treatment of the mentally diseased. I did

not know what to do. Then I had a bright idea. There was an alcove right at the end of the piano. My eye fell upon it, and I saw my way clear. I smiled my very sweetest. "I'll play," I said, "if you will promise to sit in the alcove all the while. I can



"Won't You Please Play Something?"

tell by your face that you have temperament; I want the inspiration of watching you as I play!"

He looked at me queerly for a minute.

"Heavens!" I thought, "is he going to jump now?"

But he only laughed.

"I will do as you request," he said, "and thank you for granting to me a privilege which I might not have dared to ask for."

So I went to the piano and ran softly over the keys. I decided to play Raff's "Fleuse," first, because I thought it would be more likely to soothe him than anything else I knew; secondly, because I was so familiar with it that I could play it without watching my fingers, thus being free to concentrate my attention upon my dangerous guest. So there we sat and glared at each other. That is, I glared. I was faintly conscious of it at the time, and I realized it most

distinctly afterward. He didn't glare, but he looked at me in a strange, intent way. When I finished, he stood up, and slipped round behind the table.

"If it comes to a tussle," I thought recklessly, "I'll try to brain him with this brass candlestick. Why didn't I think of it before!"

To my relief, however, he took out a handsome watch, which he looked at he said, "I cannot tell you, Miss Chlore, how much I have enjoyed meeting you. I feel that I ought to apologize for staying so long; but I did not realize that it was so late. I am very glad that I called here to-night, and it was the merest accident that brought me, too. I was passing the house, and happened to remember that my sister had asked me to look at an article in one of her magazines, so I thought I would stop and get it. When I found that the key was not in its usual place I tried the door, which was unlocked. By the way, Miss Chlore, I believe, as you and your sister sit alone here, strangers in a strange land, you had better keep in the door fastened while you are in the back part of the house, or up-stairs. Now let me thank you again for quite the pleasantest evening that I have ever spent. And, if I have your permission, I will call for a moment to-morrow to see how you are enjoying your experiment in house-keeping." He reached out his hand with a smile, and I gave him mine—it had to.

James has escaped from the asylum, and managed to make his way here to his sister's; and for two solid hours I have been talking to him with a smile on my face, expecting every minute to have him fly at my throat!"

"How did he get in?" asked Early.

"I can't imagine," I replied. "He probably has, in some way got hold of a skeleton key, though he actually had the assurance to tell me for two solid hours I have been talking to him with a smile on my face, expecting every minute to have him fly at my throat!"

"How did he get in?" asked Early.

"I can't imagine," I replied. "He probably has, in some way got hold of a skeleton key, though he actually had the assurance to tell me for two solid hours I have been talking to him with a smile on my face, expecting every minute to have him fly at my throat!"

"Not one particle!" I asserted with great vehemence.

"Do you really suppose he is crazy?" said Early.

"There isn't a shadow of a doubt about it," I replied ruefully. "No male creature in his proper senses could be so thoroughly agreeable! Just think! He's coming back to-morrow!"

"He won't," replied Early sagely. "The authorities will catch him and lock him up again before that time. They are probably hot on his trail." I felt quite certain that I should not close my eyes all night, if I did sleep quite soundly, however, but the night was full of dreams, and my new acquaintance figured in all of them in some strange fashion of it.

"Edith," Early was saying to me when I opened my eyes, "I've been thinking about that dreadful affair last night, and I believe we ought to telegraph to Clara that he has escaped, and was here. I'm sure she would want to know about it; there is no telling what may happen."

I hadn't thought of it before, but I could see that Early was right.

"I'll go down town right after breakfast," I said, "and buy myself a belt, and send the telegram. And do keep the house locked, and try to take care of yourself until I get back."

I had discovered that we were only two blocks from a street-car line, and I judged that if I took a car I would eventually get down town. I had no trouble at all in finding my way about. In twenty minutes I had found a store and made my purchase. Then I stepped into an office to send the telegram.

I expended a great deal of care upon its wording, for I did not want to alarm Clara unnecessarily. Then I reached into my hand-bag after my purse, but it wasn't there. I remembered, then, a woman that had stood very close to my elbow at the counter where I paid for my belt, and jostled my arm a little as I opened my shopping bag; and I felt certain that she must have taken it. It was no great loss, but I couldn't pay for sending the telegram. Of course I could have sent it collect, but I didn't like to do that. So I concluded to make the best of it, and let the telegram go till afternoon. Then I commenced to debate how to get home again.

I didn't have five cents to pay my car fare, and it seemed odd of the question to walk so far, especially as I knew I should get lost. "I guess there's nothing for it," I said, "except another cab. Then I can pay for it when I get to the house."

None of the cab-men in sight looked good-natured, and they all looked as though they probably abused their horses; after all, considering their villainous physiognomies, I picked out the worst looking one of the lot.

"314 Mellison," I said as I climbed in.

"Then what did he do but lean down and commence saying: 'Mellison Street? 314 Mellison Street—or Mellison Avenue?'"

My jaw dropped, and I stared at him as if I had been turned to stone, for a long time; it seemed to me an hour. An inspiration and a mighty relief struck the thought upon me.

"Mellison Avenue," I said.

Off we went, not in all the same direction as yesterday, and not nearly

He held it for an instant; then, before I knew what he was going to do he raised it gently and kissed it.

Oh, dear! No one had ever kissed my hand before, not even a maniac, and it did feel so funny!

I blushed and stammered, and while I was trying to think of something to do or say, he bowed politely, for all the world just like a person in full possession of his faculties, and went out.

I rushed up-stairs and threw myself heavily on the side of the bed.

"What's the matter?" said Early crossly. "I thought you were never coming to bed."

"Get up. I want you to hold my head and rub me for a while."

"What do you mean?" she said, sitting up.

"Early Chlore," I said impressively, "you have my tact and courage to thank for the fact that you have not been murdered in your bed. Clarence