

face, if any more disappointments were in store for me.

"Thank you, Lady Clarinda, I was only a little too near the fire. I shall do admirably here. You surprise me about Mrs. Beauty. From what Mr. Dexter said to me, I had imagined—"

"Oh, you must not believe anything Dexter tells you," interrupted Lady Clarinda. "He delights in mystifying people, and he purposely misled you, I have no doubt. If all that I hear is true, he ought to know more of Helena Beauty's strange freaks and fancies than most people. He all but discovered her, in one of her adventures (down in Scotland), which reminds me of the story in Auber's charming opera—what is it called? I shall forget my own name next. I mean the opera in which the two nuns slip out of the convent and go to the ball. Listen—how very odd! That vulgar girl is singing the castanet song in the second act at this moment. Major, what opera is the young lady singing from?"

The Major was scandalised at the interruption. He bustled into the back room, whispered, "Hush, hush, my dear lady! The 'Domino Noir'!"—and bustled back again to the piano.

"Of course," said Lady Clarinda. "How stupid of me—the 'Domino Noir'! And how strange that you should forget it too!"

I had remembered it perfectly, but I could not trust myself to speak. If, as I believed, the "adventure" mentioned by Lady Clarinda was connected, in some way, with Mrs. Beauty's mysterious proceedings on the morning of the twenty-first of October, I was on the brink of the very discovery which it was the one interest of my life to make! I held the screen so as to hide my face, and I said, in the steadiest voice I could command at the moment—

"Pray go on—pray tell me what the adventure was?"

Lady Clarinda was quite flattered by my eager desire to hear the coming narrative.

"I hope my story will be worthy of the interest which you are so good as to feel in it," she said. "If you only knew Helena—it is so like her! I have it, you must know, from her maid. She has taken a woman who speaks foreign languages with her to Hungary, and she has left the maid with me. A perfect treasure. I should only be too glad if I could keep her in my service; she has but one defect, a name I hate—Phoebe. Well, Phoebe and her mistress were staying at a place near Edinburgh, called, I think, Gleninch. The house belonged to that Mr. Macallan who was afterwards tried—you remember it, of course?—for poisoning his wife. A dreadful case; but don't be alarmed—my story has nothing to do with it; my story has to do with Helena Beauty. One evening, while she was staying at Gleninch, she was engaged to dine with some English friends visiting Edinburgh. The same night—also in Edinburgh—there was a masked ball, given by somebody whose name I forget. The ball—almost an unparalleled event in Scotland—was reported to be not at all a reputable affair. All sorts of amusing people were to be there. Ladies of doubtful virtue, you know, and gentlemen on the outlying limits of society, and so on. Helena's friends had contrived to get cards, and were going, in spite of the objections; in the strictest incognito, of course, trusting to their masks. And Helena herself was bent on going with them, if she could only manage it without being discovered at Gleninch. Mr. Macallan was one of the strict-faced people who disapproved of the ball. No lady, he said, could show herself at such an entertainment without compromising her reputation. What stuff! Well, Helena, to one of her wildest moments, bit on a way of going to the ball without discovery, which was really as ingenious as a plot in a French play. She went to the dinner in the carriage from Gleninch, having sent Phoebe to Edinburgh before her. It was not a grand dinner—a little friendly gathering; no evening dress. When the time came for going back to Gleninch, what do you think Helena did? She sent her maid back in the carriage instead of herself. Phoebe was dressed in her mistress's cloak and bonnet and veil. She was instructed to run upstairs the moment she got to the house, leaving on the hall-table a little note of apology (written by Helena, of course), pleading fatigue as an excuse for not saying good night to her host. The mistress and the maid were about the same height, and the servants naturally never discovered the trick. Phoebe got up to her mistress's room safely enough. There, her instructions were to wait until the house was quiet for the night, and then to steal up to her own room. While she was waiting the girl fell asleep. She only woke at two in the morning, or later. It didn't much matter, as she thought. She stole out on tiptoe, and closed the door behind her. Before she was at the end of the corridor she fancied she heard something. She waited till she was safe on the upper story, and then she looked over the banisters. There was Dexter—so like him—hopping about on his hands (did you ever see it? the most grotesquely-horrible exhibition you can imagine)—there was Dexter, hopping about, and looking through keyholes, evidently in search of the person who had left her room at two in the morning; and no doubt taking Phoebe for her mistress, seeing that she had forgotten to take her mistress's cloak off her shoulders. The next morning early Helena came back in a hired carriage from Edinburgh, with a hat and mantle borrowed from her English friends. She left the carriage in the road, and got into the house by way of the garden, without being discovered this time by Dexter or by anybody. Clever and daring, wasn't it? And, as I said just now, quite a new version of the 'Domino Noir.' You will wonder, as I did, how it was that Dexter didn't make mischief in the morning? He would have done it, no doubt; but even he was silenced—Phoebe told me—by the dreadful event that happened in the house on the same day—My dear Mrs. Woodville, the heat of this room is certainly

too much for you. Take my smelling-bottle. Let me open the window."

I was just able to answer, "Pray say nothing let me slip out into the open air."

I made my way unobserved to the landing, and sat down on the stairs to compose myself, where nobody could see me. In a moment more I felt a hand laid gently on my shoulder, and discovered good Benjamin looking at me in dismay. Lady Clarinda had considerably spoken to him, and had assisted him in quietly making his retreat from the room, while his host's attention was still absorbed by the music.

"My dear child," he whispered, "what is the matter?"

"Take me home, and I will tell you," was all that I could say.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SPECIMEN OF MY WISDOM.

The scene must follow my erratic movements—the scene must close on London for awhile, and open in Edinburgh.

Two days had passed since Major Fitz-David's dinner-party. I was able to breathe again freely, after the utter destruction of all my plans for the future, and of all the hopes that I had founded on them. I could now see that I had been truly in the wrong—wrong in hastily and cruelly suspecting an innocent woman; wrong in communicating my suspicions (without an attempt to verify them previously) to another person; wrong in accepting the flighty inferences and conclusions of Miserrimus Dexter as if they had been solid truths. I was so ashamed of my folly, when I thought of the past; so completely discouraged, so rudely shaken in my confidence in myself, when I thought of the future, that, for once in a way, I accepted sensible advice when it was offered to me. "My dear," said good old Benjamin, after we had thoroughly talked over my discomfiture on our return from the dinner-party, "judging by what you tell me of him, I don't fancy Mr. Dexter. Promise me that you will not go back to him, until you have first consulted some person who is fitter to guide you through this dangerous business than I am."

I gave him my promise, on one condition. "If I fail to find the person," I said, "will you undertake to help me?"

Benjamin pledged himself to help me, cheerfully.

The next morning, when I was brushing my hair, and thinking over my affairs, I called to mind a forgotten resolution of mine, at the time when I first read the Report of my husband's Trial. I mean the resolution—if Miserrimus Dexter failed me—to apply to one of the two agents (or solicitors, as we should term them), who had prepared Eustace's defence, namely, Mr. Playmore. This gentleman, it may be remembered, had especially recommended himself to my confidence by his friendly interference, when the sheriff's officers were in search of my husband's papers. Referring back to the evidence of "Isaac Schoolcraft," I found that Mr. Playmore had been called in to assist and advise Eustace, by Miserrimus Dexter. He was therefore not only a friend on whom I might rely, but a friend who was personally acquainted with Dexter as well. Could there be a fitter man to apply to for enlightenment in the darkness that had now gathered round me? Benjamin, when I put the question to him, acknowledged that I had made a sensible choice on this occasion, and at once exerted himself to help me. He discovered (through his own lawyer) the address of Mr. Playmore's London agents; and from these gentlemen he obtained for me a letter of introduction to Mr. Playmore himself. I had nothing to conceal from my new adviser; and I was properly described in the letter as Eustace Macallan's second wife.

The same evening, we two set forth (Benjamin refused to let me travel alone) by the night mail for Edinburgh.

I had previously written to Miserrimus Dexter (by my old friend's advice) merely saying that I had been unexpectedly called away from London for a few days, and that I would report to him the result of my interview with Lady Clarinda on my return. A characteristic answer was brought back to the cottage by Ariel. "Mrs. Valeria, I happen to be a man of quick perceptions; and I can read the unwritten part of your letter. Lady Clarinda has shaken your confidence in me. Very good. I pledge myself to shake your confidence in Lady Clarinda. In the meantime, I am not offended. In serene composure I wait the honour and the happiness of your visit. Send me word by telegraph, whether you would like Truffles a la, or whether you would prefer something simpler and lighter—say that incomparable French dish, Pig's Eyes and Tamarinds. Believe me always your ardent and admiring, your poet and cook—DEXTER."

Arrived in Edinburgh, Benjamin and I had a little discussion. The question in dispute between us was, whether I should go with him, or go alone, to Mr. Playmore. I was all for getting alone.

"My experience of the world is not a very large one," I said. "But I have observed that, in nine cases out of ten, a man will make concessions to a woman, if she approaches him by herself, which he would hesitate ever to consider if another man was within hearing. I don't know how it is—I only know that it is so. If I find that I get on badly with Mr. Playmore, I will ask him for a second appointment, and, in that case, you shall accompany me. Don't think me self-willed. Let me try my luck alone, and let us see what comes of it."

Benjamin yielded, with his customary consideration for me. I sent my letter of introduction to Mr. Playmore's office—his private house being in the neighbourhood of Gleninch. My messenger brought back a polite answer, inviting me to visit him at an early hour in the afternoon. At the appointed time to the moment, I rang the bell at the office door.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SPECIMEN OF MY FOLLY.

The incomprehensible submission of Scotchmen to the ecclesiastical tyranny of their Established Church, has produced—not unnaturally as I think—a very mistaken impression of the national character in the popular mind.

Public opinion looks at the institution of "The Sabbath" in Scotland; finds it unparalleled in Christendom for its senseless and savage austerity; sees, a nation content to be deprived by its priesthood of every social privilege on one day in every week—prohibited to travel; forbidden to telegraph; forbidden to eat a hot dinner; forbidden to read a newspaper; in short, allowed the use of two liberties only, the liberty of exhibiting oneself at the Church and the liberty of secluding oneself over the bottle—public opinion sees this, and arrives at the not unreasonable conclusion that the people who submit to such social laws as these are the most stolid, stern, and joyless people on the face of the earth. Such are Scotchmen supposed to be, when viewed at a distance. But how do Scotchmen appear when they are seen under a closer light, and judged by the test of personal experience? There are no people more cheerful, more companionable, more hospitable, more liberal in their ideas, to be found on the face of the civilised globe than the very people who submit to the Scotch Sunday! On the six days of the week there is an atmosphere of quiet humour, a radiation of genial common sense, about Scotchmen in general, which is simply delightful to feel. But on the seventh day, the same men will bear one of their ministers seriously tell them that he views taking a walk on the Sabbath in the light of an act of profanity, and will be the only people in existence who can let a man talk downright nonsense without laughing at him.

I am not clever enough to be able to account for this anomaly in the national character; I can only notice it by way of necessary preparation for the appearance in my little narrative of a personage not frequently seen, in writing—a cheerful Scotchman.

In all other respects I found Mr. Playmore only negatively remarkable. He was neither old nor young, neither handsome nor ugly; he was personally not in the least like the popular idea of a lawyer; and he spoke perfectly good English, touched with only the slightest possible flavour of a Scotch accent.

"I have the honour to be an old friend of Mr. Macallan," he said, cordially shaking hands with me; "and I am honestly happy to become acquainted with Mr. Macallan's wife. Where will you sit? Near the light? You are young enough not to be afraid of the daylight, just yet. Is this your first visit to Edinburgh? Pray let me make it as pleasant to you as I can. I shall be delighted to present Mrs. Playmore to you. We are staying in Edinburgh for a little while. The Italian opera is here; and we have a box for to-night. Will you kindly waive all ceremony, and dine with us and go to the music afterwards?"

"You are very kind," I answered. "But I have some anxieties just now which will make me a very poor companion for Mrs. Playmore at the opera. My letter to you mentions, I think, that I have to ask your advice on matters which are of very serious importance to me."

"Does it?" he rejoined. "To tell you the truth I have not read the letter through. I saw your name in it, and I gathered from your message that you wished to see me here. I sent my note to your hotel—and then went on with something else. Pray pardon me. Is this a professional consultation? For your own sake, I sincerely hope not!"

(To be continued.)

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INSOLVENT ACT OF 1869.

AND ITS AMENDMENTS.

IN THE MATTER OF MALESIPPE PAQUETTE, OF THE VILLAGE OF ST. JEAN BAPTISTE, CABINET MAKER AND TRADER.

AN INSOLVENT

I, the undersigned, ANDREW B. STEWART, of the City and District of Montreal, Official Assignee, have been appointed assignee in this matter. Creditors are requested to file their claims before me within one month, and are hereby notified to meet at my office, Merchants Exchange Building, in the said City of Montreal on Wednesday the 17th day of February next (A. D. 1875) at the hour of three of the clock in the afternoon, for the public examination of the Insolvent and for the ordering of the affairs of the estate generally. The Insolvent is hereby notified to attend.

A. B. STEWART, Assignee.

Montreal, 11th January 1875. 11-32-81

INSOLVENT ACT OF 1869.

IN THE MATTER OF ALEXANDER WATSON, TRADER.

AN INSOLVENT.

I, WALTER RADFORD, of the City of Montreal, Book-keeper, have been appointed assignee in this matter.

Creditors are requested to file their claims before me within one month.

WALTER RADFORD, Assignee.

408 St. Paul Street. 11-32-82

Montreal, 23 December 1874.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IT IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE SELECT COMMITTEE of the LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY appointed to inquire into the facts connected with the Exchange of Government Property at the Tanneries will continue their sittings at the Committee Room, No. 63 ST. GABRIEL STREET, Montreal, on MONDAY, the 25th day of DECEMBER instant, at 10 o'clock A. M., and thereafter from day to day. All persons who have any Evidence or Information to give relating to the Subject Matters of the Enquiry are requested to communicate with the Chairman or any member of the Committee; or with Mr. Bishop, Q. C.; or Mr. Loranger, Advocate, or with the undersigned.

By order of the Committee.

CHS. P. LINDSAY

Clerk to Committee.

Montreal, 23rd December, 1874.

11-14-75

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