"Flatterers"

—OR—

The Shadow of the Future.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MISS HURST ARRANGES EVERYTHING FOR EVERY ONE.

When Sydney woke after that strange night of over-wrought emotions, the sun high in the heavens, and sounds about the house, told her usual hour long past.

As she fully roused to realization of what crimsoned her cheeks and smote her with a pain she could not have parted from for worlds, a light tap sounded at the door, and Miss Jean's head was cautiously intruded. "Oh, awake this time!" she exclaimed, advancing cheerfully. "I looked in twice before, but I wouldn't allow Fanny to disturb you. 'No, Fanny,' I said; 'when people sleep so heavily, it is a sign they require it;' though if I reasoned like that for myself I should rarely be up before noon. I am sure the birds were twittering and it was getting quite dawn to-day before I had had a single doze!"

This was a general delusion of Miss Jean's, a harmless hallucination, never gainsaid in her household. But this morning the martyr-like boast carried with it singular dread. Nervously determining to hear the worst at once, Sydney lifted her head to ask, "Did anything disturb you, then, so very much last night?" And the suave self-delusion of the reply—"Oh, nothing fresh! Only, as you may imagine, after such an agitating talk with my poor brother I was not able to close my eyes for hours!"—was a relief beyond expression. The new mystery of her own life, ineffable folly, sweet, miserable as it might be, she could keep safe from outside cognizance. To have had the other phase of the late hours' brief drama suspected, known, would have been terrible. Miss Jean's shocked investigations, their inevitable sequence, Mr. Babbington's officially scandalized upbraidings, these Mr. Hurst was spared. Immeasurably grateful she felt that this was so.

While Sydney rapidly thought, Miss Jean chattered on: wondered Miss Grey could sleep with undrawn curtains; it was bad for her eyes; she always told Gilbert it was bad for his. Yes, she never neglected any trifle that might give him a chance, poor fellow, though long since she had lost all hope for him. She quite imagined he had done as much for himself, but going off as he had this morning to Dr. Legh showed her mistaken."

"Gone!" Sydney echoed, sitting up, her fears for him all starting to the fore again. "When? Had Mr. Hurst left Wynstone that morning?"

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Hurst. "Do you sleep in a dressing-gown, Miss Grey? Haven't you sufficient blankets? Would you like Cousin Priscilla's knitted quilt? Why didn't you tell me you were cold?"

"I am not, indeed," Sydney stammered, "only—my head ached. I fell asleep with this on. And you said—Mr. Hurst——"

"Is gone to the same place he was coming from when you met him last July: to James Legh's, an old friend of our family. He told poor Gilbert last year if anything could ever benefit him it would be total cessation from work, absolute freedom from anxiety; and that I know he has had. 'Try those,' said Dr. Legh, 'and come again next summer;' so he is gone, much to my surprise. I thought he had given up the notion, but this morning it appeared to have taken hold of him, so I would not vex him by saying 'no' to it; I merely remarked: "I'm afraid it's a waste of money, Gilbert dear, and with quarter-day near I am short, as usual; nevertheless, here are two sovereigns, and I know you'll give me any change you bring back.' But really, Miss Grey, you look as if you had a headache: how glad you will be of a quiet day with me alone. While you are getting up I'll go down and make you some strong tea. You'll enjoy that!" and with a pleasant glow of self-appreciation off trotted Miss Hurst.

In half an hour Sydney descended too: the stairs, the hall, the very sunshine, all looked strange, as if she had had some illness since noticing them last. The gleaming river beyond the garden set her shuddering. The house seemed curiously, eloquently empty. The absence of one pervaded every room, every minute.

At the end of the breakfast-table Miss Hurst sorted and dusted sundry inherited treasures of crockery. While Sydney made the best feint of a meal she could, the industrious lady proceeded with her Crown Derby, explaining:

"I take the opportunity of doing this while Gilbert is away. I am so careful not to hurt his feelings; I always try to avoid saying, 'Mind where you are going or what you are doing;' and I'm sure the way he moves about is extraordinary; but I tell him prevention is better than cure; so I put cups and saucers like these out of his reach, for he would be sorry to do me an injury in anything, little or large, as I'm sure he proved last night." Then, after ostentatious pause:

"You will like to hear how I got on with him, Miss Grey?"

"Y-es. If you don't think Mr. Hurst will mind your telling me."

"Why should he? If I choose to confide in any one what need stop me? Mr.—Mr.—— Oh, dear"—with quite a juvenile simper—"I must say Horatius is gone to Hereford till this evening, and I am not one who can keep my pleasures to myself. That is"—with a tinge of offense at her grand disclosure not being more eagerly met—"if you care to hear of them, Miss Grey."

"I really do. My head makes me seem stupid. Please go on."

"Ah, the sun glares through the window. I'll let the blind down, then the pain will pass off. There!" suiting the action to the word and reshelving her precious china as she talked. "Well, you can imagine how nervous I got waiting for Gilbert last night. I could have sunk into the ground when I heard him and—and Horatius at the gate. I couldn't think what to say nor how to say it, but Horatius"—that bewitching name was as an apple of gold to Miss Jean's tongue!—"had been so good. He had entered into every particular with Gilbert. There was nothing for me to explain except"—with appropriate confusion—"how truly I am still attached to Horatius." A little pause. Then—"My poor brother! You see he has been accustomed to consider himself everything to me. I am afraid it came as a blow upon him. He looked so odd, so pale, when he came in. But I impressed on him that a wife's affection is quite different from a sister's. That I can expand to the one without robbing him of the other; and that though—or even because—he may never know a wife's, he shall never, never lose a sister's! And I told him if he thought me wicked or foolish or unfair to him to marry, just to say so candidly, and I would see if I could endeavor to give it up, though of course it would break poor Horatius' heart, and mine, and ruin the poor motherless little children's prospects forever! And when he said my happiness was the first thing, and if marrying Mr. Babbington secured that, I must put him out of the question altogether, I said 'No, nothing on earth shall make me do so!' And if he could agree to neither of our plans which Horatius named to him, why, still, as long as I lived he should always have a corner in my home!"

"Plans?" Sydney, with expectation ordered to numbness, put in. "What were the plans, Miss Hurst?"

"Well, mine that Gilbert should become a clergyman. Yes, indeed! I could teach him the prayers by heart myself. An undertaking, but for him I would attempt it. Horatius would attend to his view. I haven't a doubt Horatius could make him orthodox, though"—with fine inconsequential confusion—"I don't think he can be so much amiss, in spite of his not liking to argue on theology. But he is a most honorable man, and I'm sure no one could ever say a word against his character; and he has a good voice, and poor people always get attached to him. Davis is, Tally was, so the Church is the very thing for him."

"And he decides?" Sydney asked, Miss Hurst leaving off for breath.

"Nothing yet. He hardly said a word. And I begged him to understand I had no intention of driving him into work. 'Of course,' I said, 'dear Gilbert, if you just live with—us, you will make—er—our children your companions. They are backward now, but in a year's time Belle will be able to read to you. And you wouldn't expect me to go on paying Miss Grey to stop here, when there will be plenty of us to attend to you, and my poor little income will be wanted in fifty new ways.'"

A tremor of that coming separation turned Sydney cold.

"It is reasonable," she said, shrinking from her own words, "that I should leave you."

Miss Hurst had strayed on awkward ground. In her own embarrassment she overlooked Sydney's emotion.

"You and I will settle that by and by. But I was bound to just name it to my brother. And, dear Miss Grey, now don't mind this, but I said, too, that I thought for your own self it would be agood thing for you to leave us."

The blood rushed tingling over Sydney's face. Was her secret an open one? What had Miss Hurst guessed? What had she told her brother?

"A good thing for me to leave!" she faltered; "but—why?"

Miss Hurst had finished her china. Now she drew her chair close to her startled companion, and patting her arm, said, with genuine kindliness:

"Because, my dear, if I may call you so—for Miss Grey sounds stiff, and whether you see Susan, or Sarah, or Sybil, you've never told us—because I really do not think this is the place for you. As Horatius himself said, being interested, you know, in every one I like, a lady so young and nice-looking ought hardly to have been put in such a post. I was conscious of it from the beginning. But I never spoke of your age or your appearance to my brother. They have been alluded to before him, but such remarks seemed simply to go in at one ear and out of the other; so I am free from trouble on that score. But other people make comments. Mrs. Preece has done so. And I think, and Horatius thinks, that another home would be more suitable for you. Besides——"

"Well—besides?" said Sydney, slowly.

"Why, I must drop concealment, and say to you as I did to my brother last night, that I feel confident—yes, quite—that you have some matrimonial project which may be brought to a happy crisis by your quitting us. Now, don't be offended," as Sydney started violently, "I will be quite frank. I have put things together which you have said, and so on, the weekly letter you are so particular over, and the one that comes for you, 'the gentleman's letters,' as that inquisitive-eyed Fanny called them, though I've never seen even the address of one—and I can quite see you have had disagreements with your family. But"—with a gust of romantic fervor—"you and your lover have been constant! So let me write to this mother and sister of yours, 'traveling in France,' you know, and tell them that you've earned a right to be rewarded. It's not that I want to lose you. If I had the means we lost really through that wretched Mr. Alwyn, why, I would say 'stop, Miss grey.' Some one, I am told, has paid that unfortunate man's actual creditors after all. But we have no legal claim; no one thinks of our marral one. So we must go injured to the end of our days, and so must others, indirectly, even you. But, as I said to Gilbert, it is my firm trust that Miss Grey, in leaving us, will gain her due—a home and a husband such as she is fit for. Now, my dear, have I not guessed right?"

(To be continued)

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Alfred Stokes,
General Secretary.

Fashion Plates.

A SMART NEW DRESS MODEL.

Pattern 3746 was employed to make this design. It is cut in 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. A 38 inch size will require 4¾ yards of 44 inch material.

Silk duvetyn, taffeta, crepe de chine, Caton crepe, velveteen, serge, and twill are good for this model. The width of the skirt at the foot is about 2¼ yards.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15 cents in silver or stamps.

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Pattern 3722 was used for this illustration. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 6, 8, 10 and 12 years. A 10 year size will require 4 yards of 38 inch material.

Gingham, seersucker, galatea, drill, linen, pongee, repp, Indian head, poplin and serge are attractive for this model. The sleeve may be made in wrist or elbow length.

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Stop! You Need a Tonic

A bottle of Brick's Tasteless is a wonderful tonic and will certainly improve your health. Brick's Tasteless is well known as an appetizer and good strengthener. All it costs is $1.20 bottle. Postage 20c. extra. Cheap enough for such a food medicine.

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Household Notes.

Pickled nasturtium seeds are an excellent substitute for capers in sauces, etc.

Small tables enameled in black and decorated in oils make delightful card tables.

Cauliflower is very appetizing when highly seasoned and baked with breadcrumbs.

Delicious cream soups can be made with water in which vegetables have been boiled.

Iron embroidered garments on the wrong side upon several thicknesses of flannel.

Every housewife should have a porcelain funnel. The action of acids on tin is poisonous.

If pearl buttons have been spoiled in the laundry, bathe them in olive oil and rub with flannel.

Open cold-storage eggs the night before using them and they will have lost their musty odor.

Round steak is good baked en casserole with tomatoes, mushrooms, pimentoes and onions.

To keep butter fresh wrap it in paper and place in brine of sufficient strength to float an egg.

Beets are excellent creamed, seasoned with salt, nutmeg and cayenne, and served with roasted veal.

Peel and halve cucumbers lengthwise. Boil in salt water, drain and serve with Hollandaise sauce.

Cucumbers may be stuffed with seasoned breadcrumbs, left-over meat and chopped olives, and baked.

Test pastry flour by holding firmly in your hand. If it retains the imprint of your fingers, it is good.

A good recipe for ice cream is as follows: 3 eggs, 1 cupful sugar, 1 pint milk, pinch of salt, 1 cupful evaporated milk, flavoring.