

Her Happy Hour.

When the busy day is over,
And the twilight folds the tower,
O how happy are the children,

LADY JANE.

CHAPTER IV.
AN INTERRUPTED JOURNEY.

For a moment, madame debated on what was best to be done; then, finding herself equal to the emergency, she gently laid the unconscious woman on the bed, unfastened her dress, and slowly and softly removed her clothing.

Madame Jozain, watching the child's movements, caught a glimpse of the silver fittings of the bag, and of a bulging pocketbook within it, and, while the little girl was hanging over her mother, she quietly removed the valuables to the drawer of her armoire.

For some time madame bent over the stranger, using every remedy she knew to restore her to consciousness, while the child assisted her with thoughtfulness and self-control, really surprising in one of her age.

At length, with a shiver and a convulsive groan, the mother partly opened her eyes, but there was no recognition in their dull gaze.

"Mama, dear, dear mama, are you better?" implored the child, as she hung over her and kissed her passionately.

"You see she's opened her eyes, so she must be better; but she's sleepy," said madame gently. "Now, my little dear, all she needs is rest, and you mustn't disturb her. You must be very quiet, and let her sleep. Here's some nice, fresh milk the milkman has just brought.

"If you'll please to let me sit by the bed close to mama and eat the rice and milk, I'll take it, for I'm very hungry."

sound within the basket. "Why, it's something alive!"
"Yes, it's alive," said Lady Jane, with a faint smile. "It's a bird, a blue heron. Such a nice boy gave it to me on the cars."

"No, it wouldn't have been polite," repeated madame. "But what are you going to do with this long-legged thing?"

"It's not a thing. It's a blue heron, and they're very rare," returned the child stoutly.

"Oh, I know what we'll do with him," said madame, alertly—she was prepared for every emergency. "I've a fine large cage. It was my parrot's cage; he was too clever to live, so he died a while ago, and his empty cage is hanging in the kitchen. I'll get it, and you can put your bird in it for tonight, and we'll feed him and give him water; he'll be quite safe, so you needn't worry about him."

"Thank you very much," said Lady Jane, with more politeness than warmth. "My mama will thank you, too, when she wakes."

After seeing Tony safely put in the cage, with a saucer of rice for his supper, and a cup of water to wash it down, Lady Jane climbed up on the bed, and not daring to kiss her mother good-night lest she might disturb her, she nestled close to her. Worn out with fatigue, she was soon sleeping soundly and peacefully.

For some time madame Jozain sat by the bed, watching the sick stranger, and wondering who she was, and whether her sudden illness was likely to be long and serious.

"If I could keep her here, and nurse her," she thought, "no doubt she would pay me well. I'd rather nurse than do lace; and if she's very bad she'd better not be moved. I'd take good care of her, and make her comfortable; and if she's no friends about here to look after her, she'd be better off with me than in the hospital. Yes, it would be cruel to send her to the hospital. Ladies don't like to go there. It looks to me as if she's going to have a fever," and madame laid her fingers on the burning hand and fluttering pulse of the sleeper.

"This isn't healthy, natural sleep. I've nursed too many with fever, not to know. I doubt if she'll come to her senses again. If she doesn't no one will ever know who she is, and I may as well have the benefit of nursing her as any one else; but I must be careful, I mustn't let her lie here and die without a doctor. That would never do. If she's not better in the morning I'll send for Doctor Debrot; I know he'll be glad to come, for he never has any practice to speak of now, he's so old and stupid; he's a good doctor, and I'd feel safe to have him."

rolling song. So she got up, and huddled toward him, for he feared he might waken the sleepers. He was a great overgrown, red-faced, black-eyed fellow, coarse and strong, with a loud, dashing kind of beauty, and he was very observing, and very shrewd. She often said he had all his father's cunning and penetration, therefore she must disguise her plans carefully.

"Hullo, mum," he said, as he saw her limping toward him, her manner eager, her face rather pale and excited; "What's up now?" It was unusual for her to meet him in that way.

"Oh, Raste, Raste; as if I searched her pockets! She's got a fine watch and chain, and when I opened her bag to get the child's nightgown, I saw that it was fitted up with silver."

"What luck!" exclaimed Raste brightly. "Then she's a swell, and to-morrow when she goes away she'll give you as much as a fiver."

"I don't believe she'll be able to go to-morrow. I think she's down for a long sickness. If she's no better in the morning, I want you to cross and find Dr. Debrot."

"Old Debrot? That's fun! Why, he's no good—he'll kill her."

"Nonsense; you know he's one of the best doctors in the city."

"Sometimes, yes. But you can't keep the woman here, if she's sick; you'll have to send her to the hospital. And you didn't find out her name, nor where she belongs? Suppose she dies on your hands? What then?"

"If I take care of her and she dies, I can't help it; and I may as well have her things as any one else."

woman lying there in a stupor was any other than the relative from Texas madame represented her to be. And she was very ill, of that there could be no doubt; so ill as to awaken all the doctor's long dormant professional ambition. There were new features in the case; the fever was peculiar. It might have been produced by certain conditions and localities. It might be contagious, it might not be, he could not say; but of one thing he was certain, there would be no protracted struggle, the crisis would arrive very soon. She would either be better or beyond help in a few days, and it was more than likely that she would never recover consciousness. He would do all he could to save her, and he knew Madame Jozain was an excellent nurse; she had nursed with him through an epidemic. The invalid could not be in better hands. Then he wrote a prescription, and while he was giving madame some general directions, he patted kindly the golden head of the lovely child, who leaned over the bed with her large, solemn eyes fixed on her mother's face, while her little hands caressed the tangled hair and burning cheeks.

"Her child?" he asked, looking sadly at the little creature.

"Yes, the only one. She takes it hard. I really don't know what to do with her."

"Poor lamb, poor lamb!" he muttered, as madame hurried him to the door.

Shortly after the doctor left, there was a little ripple of excitement, which entered even into the sick-room—the sound of wheels, and Raste giving orders in a subdued voice, while two large, handsome trunks were brought in and placed in the corner of the back apartment. These two immense boxes looked strangely out of place amid their humble surroundings; and when madame looked at them she almost trembled, thinking of the difficulty of getting rid of such witnesses should a day of reckoning ever come. When the little green door closed on them, it seemed as if the small house had swallowed up every trace of the mother and child, and that their identity was lost forever.

For several days the doctor continued his visits, in a more or less lucid condition, and every day he departed with a more dejected expression on his haggard face. He saw almost from the first that the case was hopeless; and his heart (for he still had one) ached for the child, whose wide eyes seemed to haunt him with their intense misery. Every day he saw her sitting by her mother's side, pale and quiet, with such a painful look of age on her little face, such an expression as she watched him for some gleam of hope, that the thought of it tortured him and forced him to affect a cheerfulness and confidence which he did not feel. But, in spite of every effort to deceive her, she was not comforted. She seemed to see deeper than the surface. Her mother had never recognized her, never spoken to her, since that dreadful night, and in one respect, she seemed already dead to her. Sometimes she seemed unable to control herself, and would break out into sharp, passionate cries, and implore her mother, with kisses and caresses, to speak to her—to her darling, her baby. "Wake up, mama, wake up! It's Lady Jane! It's darling! Oh, mama, wake up and speak to me!" she would cry almost fiercely.

Then, when madame would tell her that she must be quiet, or her mother would never get well, it was touching to witness her efforts at self-control. She would sit for hours silent and passive, with her mother's hand clasped in hers, and her lips pressed to the feeble fingers that had no power to return her tender caresses.

Whatever was good in Madame Jozain showed itself in compassion for the suffering little one, and no one could have been more faithful than she in her care of both the mother and child; she felt such pity for them, that she soon began to think she was acting in a noble and disinterested spirit by keeping them with her, and nursing the unfortunate mother so faithfully. She even began to identify herself with them; they were hers by virtue of their friendliness; they belonged to her; and, in her self-satisfaction, she imagined that she was not influenced by any unworthy motive in her treatment of them.

One day, only a little more than a week after the arrival of the strangers, a modest funeral wended its way through the narrow streets of Greta toward the ferry, and the passers stopped to stare at Adriette Jozain, dressed in her best suit, sitting with much dignity beside Dr. Debrot in the only carriage that followed the hearse.

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