At the Eleventh Hour!

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ANGRY SCHEMER.

The woman flounced out angrily, and Vita followed in her haste, eager to escape Miss Dare's society and to nurse her wrath in the seclusion of her own room.

"It is fortunate for all that Aunt Gillian entered at the moment she did, for I was so beside myself with rage that I was actually about to strike both those grinning girls! I felt I wanted to kill them both!" she mused fiercely, adding: "But I shall get even with them all for their scorn of me. Yes, I will, for I will leave no stone unturned for the sake of revenge."

And flinging herself down at the window, the humiliated beauty stared gloomily at the swirling river and the dreary autumn landscape, while she brooded fiercely over her schemes for revenge. On the bed and chairs lay spread out the elegant gowns just arrived from New York by express that morning; but her joy in them was obscured now by her keen humiliation.

Oh, how she hated Stephen Belcourt for betraying her deceitful wiles to his women folk, no tongue could tell!

Vida had nurtured a forlorn hope of catching Stephen's heart in the rebound. She did not believe him guilty, and had strong faith that he would be cleared at the trial, and that he would afterward win his election. What a triumph it would be to win his heart now while it was turned against Lynette by her supposed unfaithfulness—to win him now and marry him as soon as he became governor! Lynette would be married and gone, so there would be nothing to prevent the success of her crafty schemes.

So, while Vida pretended at home to believe that Stephen Belcourt was a monster, she was secretly writing him sweet little notes of sympathy. She had never received any reply to them, but she cherished a secret hope that the notes were gradually softening his heart, and would eventually bring her an answer.

To find out so suddenly that he saw through her plans and despised her, was maddening. Worse still, to be exposed to the contempt of such women as the Belcourts, Miss Dare, and Lynette, was humiliation unbearable.

Now indeed her love for Stephen Belcourt turned to genuine hate—the cruel hatred of a woman scorned. The flash of her blue eyes boded ill to Belcourt and the girl he loved—ill, if she could but accomplish it.

Meanwhile, Lynette and Myrtle were left alone together, and the former exclaimed:

"Is it possible that Vida can have acted such a deceitful part?"

Myrtle laughed, and replied:

"It is entirely true, for I have seen her letters to Belcourt, and the guilt on her face was too plain to be mistaken. You see, she's in love with Mr. Belcourt herself, and took that way to win him, while pretending to you that she believed him a monster."

"How could anyone be so wicked and deceitful?" cried Lynette indignantly.

Myrtle smiled again at her surprise, and answered truthfully:

"There are plenty of people in the world as bad and even worse than Vida Halliburton. Girls often employ deceit, like Vida, to win the man they love, and, more's the pity, they often succeed in their designs. Fortunately, Stephen Belcourt is not weak and easily flattered, like some men, so he did not fall into the cunning net Vida spread for his affections."

"How glad I am that she has failed!" exclaimed Lynette; then she murmured, half to herself, while a rosy glow overspread her face and neck: "I would give the world to know if—he cares for me still!"

"What does it matter, since you are going to marry another?" replied Myrtle reproachfully.

"But, Myrtle, I am not married to him yet, you know, and I pray every night to God to let something happen so that I can break my promise to Graham Prentiss. Still, perhaps, Stephen Belcourt does not care for me now—has learned to despise me, believing me a heartless coquette!"

And Lynette clasped her dimpled white hands despairingly, and looked at her friend with a mute question in her starry brown eyes.

Myrtle shook her head, and answered:

"I don't know what his feelings are toward you, dear, for of course he never speaks of you—he nor any of them—for the Belcourts are so proud, and you gave them a cruel blow, you know. I have been with them to see him several times, but he never mentioned your name."

"He hates me too bitterly. Who can blame him?" cried Lynette, in keen despair; and the anguish of the thought made her very lip turn white. "I would go to see him in prison only—only—Uncle Jack and Aunt Jill would kill me for it!" she whispered fearfully.

"Yes, they would be very angry, no doubt, so you had better not take any decisive steps until you hear from Edgar," advised Myrtle, blushing rosy pink as she uttered the beloved name.

Lynette flung her arms about her friend and whispered entreatingly:

"But tell me—tell me—for my heart aches to know the truth—do you believe that—that—Stephen hates me now? Was his love too weak to bear such a strain as it had to encounter? If—if—he found out that I was true after all, could he love me again?"

Trembling and sobbing, her wild heart leaping into her throat, Lynette waited for her friend to reply.

"Oh, what can I tell you?" cried Myrtle bashfully, then added: "But love is not easily turned aside. It can be constant even when cruelly tried, and even inconstancy is often powerless to kill it."

There was a pause, then Myrtle said:

'Suppose, dear Lynette, that you go home with me to-morrow for a week.'

'Agreed, if Uncle Jack will give me leave,' answered Lynette, to whom the prospect was very welcome.

So at supper Uncle Jack was attacked by the united persuasions of the two girls, and yielded a reluctant consent, coerced into it by Lynette's laughing threat:

'If you don't consent, I shall run off, Uncle Jack.'

Perhaps he feared she would carry out her threat, perhaps he had already been as harsh with her as he dared to be, and feared the disapproval of gossiping neighbors. At any rate, he permitted the visit, against the remonstrances of his better half.

'You'll repent this, John Henry Lewis!' she cried angrily, when they were all alone that night.

'Do hush your clatter, he returned peevishly.

Mrs. Lewis tied the strings of her nightcap with a vicious jerk, and hissed:

'Don't blame me when you hear of Lynette's riding all over the country with that bold Miss Dare, begging all the men for votes for Stephen Belcourt!

The farmer broke into one of his jovial laughs, and exclaimed carelessly:

'Lynette wouldn't be suck a fool!'

'She wouldn't, eh? Well, if she showed much sense, she wouldn't be kin to you! And it's what a big lot of the silly woman folks are doing, anyway—riding around and trying to create a sentiment in his favor, so as to get him elected. The Belcourts and Dares are at the top of the whole thing, and no doubt they'll drag Lynette into the mess—perhaps marry her to him out of hand!'

'Well, I kain't help it ef they do, Jill, so, for mercy's sake, stop your jawing, and let a fellow get some rest! You seen for yourself as I couldn't deny Lynette's going. The Dare girl would have spread it, and the hull neighborhood would have jined in to find fault with me! But if I hear of any goings-on like you say—not that I b'lieve a word on't—I'll up and write to Edgar Lewis to come home and manage his stster.'

So it happened that Edgar Lewis received two letters within one week—the first from Myrtle Dare; the second, four days later, from his uncle.

The first one thrilled him with pleasure, because it came from his bonny sweetheart, though it also aroused in him keen dissatisfaction, because Myrtle openly and warmly espoused the cause of Stephen Belcourt.

'Stephen Belcourt is no more guilty of the crime imputed to him than you are, Edgar,' she wrote warmly. 'There are many who do not believe that Madge McDonald was murdered at all — everything points to suicide—but I need not dwell on that, for, of course, you have read the evidence. I can only say that all my sympathies are with Stephen Belcourt, and his people are my friends. He is innocent, and, though appearances are against him now, I believe that ere long he will be triumphantly vindicated.

'True, he is in prison on a terrible charge. But—who is his accuser?

'Only one person, and he a man of such low moral character that his word can scarcely be taken on oath!

'Is a man like Stephen Belcourt, a gentleman always, sans peur et sans reproache, to have his life sworn away by this crawling snake in the grass, Jason Ball? I tell you no, it cannot be! Truth is mighty, and will prevail! Stephen Belcourt's friends—and I can assure you he has many left—suspect that the accusation against him is based on a political conspiracy to defeat his election and secure the gubernatorial chair for his opponent.

'Will the scheme succeed? Not if the noble friends who have rallied to his cause can prevent it! Why, some of the noblest and best of the women of Greenbrier Country have been aroused to sympathy with this wronged man, and are doing what they can to help on his canvass. They cannot vote, you may say—but remember, they can influence voters! His lawyers are among the best men in Lewisburg—Price and Preston—and they are working up a splendid case for him. He is almost certain to be cleared, even if he loses his election through this foul conspiracy.

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A
Adams, Emma, card Wills' Rrange
Adams, Mary, card, George's St.
Adams, Mrs. James, card, Pennywell Road
Ahy, Mrs. Charles
Ames, J.
Antle, Andrew, retd.
Andrews, Joseph, card
Atkins, A. H., care Post Office

B
Bragg, Mrs. George, care Post Office
Buman, Miss B.
Bennett, Miss C., card
Bennett, Miss Mollie, Cross Roads
Benson, James
Benson, Miss Belinda, George's Street
Brien, Toney, Brine St.
Byrne, S.
Boland, Mrs. J., Water St.
Bonavisky, Jos.
Brosseau, Mrs. Wm.
Brown, Miss A., card, Water St. West
Brocklehurst, George, care G. P. O.
Butler, E. J., Mount Scio Rd.
Bungey, Sarah, card
Butler, Bella, card
Blunden, James, care John Dunn
Burke, Miss Mary, retd.
Butler, Miss Annie, retd.

C
Clarke, John
Crane, Archibald, care Newman Benson
Carroll, James, Blackhead, St. John's
Carroll, Mrs. Kate, card
Campbell, Miss K., card, care P. Office
Christian, Miss Maria, Monkstown Road
Cheasson, Flora P.
Carter, Mrs., card, Mount Scio
Carew, Mrs. John, South Side
Corbin, W. A.
Conron, Tessie, Water St.
Congdon, Mrs. Ellen
Collett, Mrs. Albert, John Street
Cook, Miss Lillie, retd.
Connors, Miss Alice, LeMarchant Road
Cornell, Miss Ila M.
Coady, Mrs. J., card, Bond Street
Collins, Miss Bessie, Freshwater Road
Condon, Mrs. Ellen, LeMarchant Road
Coefield, Miss A.
Curnew, Wm.

D
Dunne, Lizzie, Cochrane Street
Dawe, John, Gower St.
Dawe, Miss, late Toronto.
Diamond, Eli, care G. P. O.
Diamond, John
Driscoll, Thomas, Monroe Street
Doody, Miss Mary
Doody, E. M., card

E
Eddy, George
Eadie, Mgt. F., card
Eldridge, Harding
English, May, No. 7 —— St.

F
Farrell, Mary, Riverhead
Farish, S. W.
Freeman, H.
French, Walter, late Gen'l Hospital
French, John, St. John's
French, Miss Mary, Water Street
Fisher, Mrs. Esther
Fitzgerald, Miss Eliza, care G. P. O.
Fitzgerald, Mrs. John, late Hopewell, N.S.
Foster, Miss Alice, Pennywell Road
Fahey, Wm., card, care G. P. O.

G
Gammon, K. H., Hamilton Street
Greene, Miss Bride, card
Greene, Eliza
Green, Louis
Gillet, Arthur, George's St.
Gossney, James, care Michael Culleton
Guild, Chaster, card

H
Hannon, Margaret, retd.
Horwood, R. G.
Hayse, Michael, Bannerman St.
Harnum, Hedley, card
Hayden, Laurence
Hancock, Florence, late Brooklyn, B.B.
Hannon, Mrs. Jas., card
Hamilton, Mrs. Joseph, P. O. Box 356
Heuradine, Miss Bella, George's Street
Hennessey, J. H.
Healey, Nicholas, Job's St.
Hepburn, Wm.
Hewitt, Stephen, late Bonavista Branch
Hiscock, Jessie, Theatre Hill
Hignes, E.
Hillyer, Wm., Power's St.
Higgins, Patience, retd.
Hiscock, Mrs. Carolina, The Village
Hinted, Thomas
Hiscock, John W.
Holloway, Eli John, care G. P. O.
House, John, Albert St.
Howey, A.
Huey, James

J
Jessen, Mrs., No. 1 —— St.
Janes, Mrs. H., Water Street West
Johnstone, Robert G.

K
Kenny, James, card, Cabot Street
Kelly, Thomas, card
Kerrivan, Wm., late Trepassey Branch
Kelloway, Miss Emily, Pennywell Road
Keating, M., card
Kenway, George
Keating, M. J.
Kelly, John J.
King, John, care Wm. J. Tilley

L
Lapp, Chas J.
LeDrew, John, Bond St.
Lee, Miss Bessie, Pleasant Street
Lyon, H. J. H.
Loveless, Miss Lizzie, LeMarchant Rd.
Lowe, Moses, Water St.

M
Marsh, Miss Josie, West End
Marshall, Mrs. Wm., card
Maden, John, Cabot St.
Mayer, Lizzie, Hall's Hill
Milley, Mrs. Wm. M., Pennywell Road
Milley, Josiah, late Cape Breton
Mitchell Mrs. James
Miller, Nellie, Gilbert St.
Molloy, John T.
Moist, Mrs., Cornwall Avenue
Morris, E. H.
Moore, James, card
Moran, Mrs. John
Moore, Francis, card
Moore, Lilly, Moore St.
Murphy, Mrs. M., Young St.
Mullins, Wm., late Hospital
Murphy, Michael, Cornwall Avenue
Moore, James, card
Murphy, John, care W. H. Taylor
Mulcahey, Mrs. Mgt., Blackhead

Mc
McNally, Dan
McMinn, Miss
McCulla, Harold H., care P. Office
McInnis, Mrs. Dr.
McDonald, Wm.
McGrath, Michael, Pennywell Road
McMillan, Mr.

N
Nadeau, Jos., care P. Office
Neal, Henry
Norman, E. J., card
Noseworthy, Mrs.
Noseworthy, Miss Annie, Carter's Hill
Noel, Gipsom S.
Norris, George, care Gen'l Delivery
Norris, John
Nurce, Miss Annie, Balsam Place

O
O'Brien, Mrs. Wm., care JJ. J. McCarthy, Gower Street
Oldfield, F. B.
O'Neill, Miss Mary
O'Leary, Ellen
O'Brien, Frank, care G. P. O.

P
Parsons, Mr. & Mrs. Herb't, Monkstown Road
Palmer, Ira J.
Parsons, Mrs. A., retd.
Pratt, E. J.
Pater, Miss L.
Pheney, C. T.
Peddle, Arthur, Water St. West
Perrin, Richard, Long Pond
Penney, Wm. H., care G. P. O.
Penney, Mrs., The Parsonage
Perrin, Miss Annie
Pittman, F. J.
Pike, E. W., Pennywell Road
Pittman, Miss Francis, Prescott Street
Power, Miss Martha, LeMarchant Rd.
Power, Ed., Nagle's Hill

R
Ransom, John
Ryan, P. J., late Grand Falls
Ryan, Miss Bridget, Military Road
Ryan, Frank, card, Water Street
Ready, Bridget, Adelaide Street
Richard, N. F.
Roberts, James, Cabot St.
Rose, George F.
Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. Paul
Ross, Mrs. Chas.
Rogers, Wm. J.
Rodgers, Miss Nellie, New Gower Street
Robinson, Jennie, slip

S
Sparks, W. R.
Stanford, Benjamine
Stapleton, Patrick, Lime St.
Starks, Roland Geo.
Sparks, T. W., Water St.
Snelgrove, Patrick, Power's Street
Shea, James, New Gower Street
Seviour, Mrs., Hamilton Avenue
Steed, Miss Nellie, McFarlane St.
Smith, D. T., Long's Hill
Smith, P.
Smith, David
Simmonds, Mrs. George Hamilton Street
Scott, Miss Annie D.
Scott, Miss Provie, care Samuel Miller

T
Try, Thomas, Notre Dame St.
Tamble, Ester, Castle Ray
Taylor, Miss Ellen, Military Road
Trainer, M., card
Tuner, D., Pleasant St.
Tierney, Matthew, Water Street
Tobin, Mrs. K., Gower St.
Thomas, George
Thompson, Catherine J., card
Thomas, J. A.
Tucker, Mrs. Catherine, Cross Roads

W
Walsh, Miss K., Field St.
Walsh, J. A., card
Wagg, Albert, Queen's St.
Wallen, Ethel, card
Wakefield, Miss M. Y.
Way, Archibald
Wells, John, Murray St.
Whelan, Miss Lena, New Gower Street
Wells, Ernest, care Gen'l P. Office
Willson, Whitworth
Wiseman, Miss Julia, LeMarchant Road
White, C. J.
White, Mrs. L.
Williams, Mrs. Martha, Atlantic Avenue
Wilson, R. D.
Willson, Wm., late Millertown

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