

shadow of the hanging alders that one sees most clearly into the bosom of the laughing rivulet.

Captain Frazer listened with astonishment, dismay and grief to the tale Mike proceeded to relate, emotions in which Mrs. Frazer and her daughters fully shared.

That the search for Androsia had proved utterly unavailing, though prosecuted with the utmost vigor and skill by Lumber Pete and Bill, with a strong party to assist, was a matter of the most serious moment, as it left her fate in terrible uncertainty.

The old Captain's face flushed deeply with emotion, as he listened to Mike's simple account of the death of his old commanding officer and early friend. He had lingered for a couple of days after the disappearance of Androsia, busily employed in writing during most of the time, and on the evening of the third day had slept, and sleeping, died.

"The last words he sez to me, wor, 'Mike if ye wants me to stay wherever I be's goin' to, take that writin' down to the settlements to me old friend Captain Frazer, an' don't be afther givin' it into any one's hands bud his own, do ye hear me!' 'Och, wirra, Colonel darlin' sez I, 'it wouldn't be for the likes of me to be wantin' ye to stay anywheres ye mightn't be comfortable, but hopin' an' trustin' it'll be other-ways wid ye, I'll take the papers. An' a good man to the poor an' a heart o' gold to them as wanted ye've ever had. God be good to ye, sur, this day!' Wid that he took my hand in them long, white claws o' his, wid a shadowy kind o' smile. 'Good-bye, my good friend Mike,' he said, 'the night is fallin' that there is no mornin' to. Look for my daughter.' He turned his head round on the pillow and lay lookin' at the sunset until he fell off asleep, but he never waked."

Mike was so affected by the remembrance, that he lifted the coon-skin cap suddenly by the tail and applied it to his eyes. After a pause he proceeded to give an account of Archie's unlucky rencontre with Hawk-eye and its disastrous results, and it is needless to say that he was listened to with breathless interest by the little group. As he concluded, Mrs. Frazer rose and walked quietly into the house. She was too much overcome with emotions of gratitude and a sickening sense of what might have been, to remain. Olla and Sidney followed her, and Captain Frazer and Mike were left t-e-a-t-t-e.

"Have you the papers left by my old friend?" inquired the former, after a pause of painful meditation.

"Yis, sur," responded Mike, proceeding to open the before-mentioned leathern wallet. "Here they is. Och! bud it's a wake scrawl anyways."

The package he handed Captain Frazer was indeed directed in a hardly legible hand, to "My old friend and fellow-officer, Captain Richard Frazer, of the Blues."

"Here, Mike," said Captain Frazer, "push open that door at the end of the veranda, and wheel me into the library. Thank you. That will do. Go back to the kitchen and tell them to make you comfortable. I shall have much to say to you in the morning. Tell them also, that I do not wish to be disturbed for some hours."

Mike glanced in awed admiration round the pretty room, only a library by mere courtesy, with its chintz lounging chairs, pearl and rose carpet, covered with tangled bronze reeds and moss, its book-shelves of bird's-eye maple, and gleaming busts, and its pretty little organ, the pipes gleaming mellowly in the cool shadows, and withdrew, leaving the Captain to a solitude he seldom coveted.

CHAPTER VII.

NEWS OF ARCHIE.

In the unusual solitude of the library Captain Frazer opened the dying communication of his old friend. There was a long letter addressed to himself, and a smaller package labelled "my last will and testament," unsealed in order that Captain Frazer might peruse its contents, which he proceeded to do, not, however, until he had made himself acquainted thoroughly with the accompanying epistle.

The letter, written in a faint but legible hand, commenced by recalling their olden friendship to mind. It touched on Archie's arrival, and then on the subject of Androsia's disappearance, and here it seemed to warm into the expression of something like love for the missing girl; but above all there ran a current of bitter self-upbraiding for the fatal mistake he had made in secluding her so completely from the world. It then went on to give an account of the arrival of Farmer on the scene, and the unsuspected influence he had gained over his entertainer. "Where I was weakest I boasted of my strength," went on the letter. "I deemed myself so completely removed from danger by a total disregard of all kindly interest in mankind, and an impregnable armor of Timonism, that I suffered him to abide in my lovely home day after day. Hour by hour he read my thoughts, and built himself a fictitious character on the basis afforded by them. Where I gathered man and their vices in one strong hatred, he towered over me from the Divine height that can abhor the sin and love the sinner. In all ways he showed himself above and altogether beyond me in generosity of soul, in greatness of heart. I hated the world, he would purify and ennoble it. I could not fall of gradually admiring a character so uncommon, and I began to observe his growing love for Androsia with pleasure. When he begged her of me I readily consented to their betrothal. 'Take her,' I said, 'her

mind is an empty page yet to be written upon. It is to such a man as you I would entrust the task. I had never hoped to meet a heart and soul like yours, and I feel assured that together, in this wilderness, you will found a purer and loftier life. Take her and write your mind upon her soul.' Thus I betrothed them careless that Androsia, with what appeared to me senseless obstinacy, rebelled and struggled against the yoke I imposed upon her. I made a will in which I left Androsia my sole heiress on condition that she married Farmer, and this ill-advised testament I committed to his keeping. He must have concealed it with jealous care, for after his death the strictest search failed to discover it amongst his effects. Gradually, after I had placed such a tie between us, I began to feel rather than see a change in him. The lovely mirage of his assumed character began imperceptibly to fade away, and the bare, repulsive, true nature revealed itself instead. Hardly in perceptible signs, but, perhaps, as I began to lose my hold on earth, my mental vision became clearer. It was then I wrote to you, old friend, hoping in your counsels to find some means of escape from the toils I had so carefully spun round myself and my child, but a higher ordinance than that of the human will interfered. I have as you will see, left your son Archie my sole legatee, should he recover from his wound and no trace of Androsia be discovered. I pray, if the burning longing of a soul can be called prayer, that she is dead, but something tells me that it is not so. Farmer is dead, and therein is a gleam of comfort. He had a powerful mind and some of those minor virtues, which frequently float like a bridge of cobwebs over the poisonous and remorseless current of natures such as his. Wo to the foot that is betrayed to such a foothold." There was much more, and the letter closed with an earnest commendation of Androsia to the care of his old friends, if she should ever be discovered. On reading the will Captain Frazer found that Colonel Howard had died worth some five hundred thousand dollars, invested principally in English securities, all of which Archie was to possess if Androsia remained undiscovered for a term of five years. The will was clearly and succinctly worded, and was witnessed by Mike and Lumber Pete, so that its legality was unimpeachable. Curiously enough there was not the least clue in either of the documents to show what or whom Farmer had really been, and when the old Captain applied to Mike Murphy for information on the subject, Mike pleaded profound ignorance.

"He kem one day wid a couple of guides, on a hunting tower, he called it, and got a night's lodging at the ould place, an' it fell out that the ould master took a mighty fancy to him, an' he stayed on an' on, bud luck to him, a matter of three years come October. Och! he wor the bad sight to the house, he wor."

"Did he never send or receive letters?" inquired the Captain, who wished if possible to obtain some clue to his friends, if he possessed any, in order to communicate to them the tidings of his untimely end.

"Divil a wan, yer honor. It's my belafe, savin' yer presence, sur, that he'd no need to write to his friends. Sure what med him aqual to throwin' dust in the ould master's eyes in the ways he did, if he hadn't his best friend at his elbow ever an' always? Bud it's not me as'll make bowld to put a name to the gentleman. The saluts be bewane us an' harum, this day! an' thin Winona, the poor darlin'!"

"What of her, and who is she?" inquired the Captain.

"Miss Drosia's foster-sister, sur. They wor as fond of alich other as two wild doves, but fond as she was of Miss Drosia, she worshipped the flure undhur the feet of Farmer, she'd have drawn a knife across her purty brown throat any day he told her."

"Did he make love to her, then?" asked the Captain.

"Bedad, yer honor, ther's coortin' and coortin', an' in his way he did it strong enough, but quiet an' sly so as not to come round to the Colonel an' Miss Drosia; but it's meself ever an' always had uncommon foine eyesight where anything of that sort wor bandy. When I wor a bye in Connaught sure the girls-ens christened me 'Mike the Mouser,' considerin' the scent of me for that sort. Och! bud that's a long time ago. It is."

Here Mike sighed retrospectively and shook his red head mournfully. He felt at the back of his neck for the coon tail, but it was not there, and this brought him back to the present.

Captain Frazer shook his head gravely. "I am afraid that the man was altogether bad," he said. "Where is the girl now?"

"In the bosom of the saluts if ever a craythur wor," responded Mike, with emotion, and he proceeded to give the Captain an account of her heroic death, to which the old soldier listened with a kind of reverent admiration. "The heroism of Jeanne d'Arc had the enthusiasm of wondering thousands of friends and foes to sustain it," he mused, "but this simple act of self-denying devotion, has a finer courage in it, than that of the woman warrior of France. What a noble nature the poor creature must have had!"

During this brief reverie Mr. Murphy was searching diligently in the capacious pockets or pouches of his doeskin jerkin, from one of which he presently produced a small package, wrapped in birch-bark and tied round with thongs of fawn skin. This he proceeded to open, and having done so handed it to Captain Frazer.

"It's about the only thing of Andy Farmer's I brought wid me," he remarked; "indeed he

didn't lave much behind him, nothin' but this, barrin' a trifle of clothes. By the looks of things misther Andy didn't wait to come up to us to larn the meanin' of swateheart. A purty craythur, Captain dear!"

Captain Frazer opened the worn morocco case and turned his chair to the window to catch the light, and thus it was that Mike did not see the expression on the rugged face as he looked at the portrait, though he heard the slight exclamation which burst from his lips.

"What did ye plase to say, sur?" inquired Mike, stepping forward; "do ye want the blind lifted?"

"No, no," replied Captain Frazer hurriedly, "you may go now, Mike." "Stay," he continued as Mr. Murphy tip-toed towards the door, "tell me was Farmer like this portrait, in the least?"

"As like as two paze," replied Mike decidedly, "barrin' the look in the eyes. Perhaps afther all it might be a sister an' not a swateheart, yer honor?"

"Perhaps," returned the Captain absently. Mike went out closing the door, and the Captain turned his pallid face back to the picture.

He looked at it long and earnestly, his hands trembling like leaves in a strong wind, and yet it was but a girl's face that smiled up at him from the dusk. A sweet, fair face, framed in short curls of gold, with straight, grecian features, and eyes of the deepest blue. A pathetic face despite the smile, and the roses blooming on the delicately rounded cheeks. The deep eyes had a prophetic, visionary glance, and she looked like some seeress sitting in the sunshine of a complete present happiness, but looking onward to a hugely looming shadow. Though the case was worn and stained, the miniature was vividly fresh, the colors brilliant as ever.

For fully an hour, long after darkness had fallen on the room, the old officer sat motionless with the case in his hand, and then hearing some one at the door he pressed it to his lips, and thrust it into his bosom.

In the mean time Mrs. Frazer had been reading a few faintly penned lines that Archie had made almost superhuman efforts to send by Mike. They were not many, but they were all things to her.

"My darling mother: I am all right again. Will be home in October. Love to all.

ARCHIE."

"Isn't it funny, Olla," said Sidney meditatively, "that he doesn't mention Cecil?"

"No, dear, how could he? see how faintly his name is written, I do wish we had him back at once, mamma!"

"So do I, Olla," returned Mrs. Frazer anxiously, "but all in good time, my darling."

And with the echo of her words we close this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOURNING FOR THE DEAD.

Mrs. Frazer and the three girls looked at the Captain in astonishment almost too deep for words. That he should feel the death of his old friend and benefactor acutely, was to be expected; it was not altogether unreasonable that he should have ever sat up all night alone in the library with the door locked, thinking of and mourning him; but that he should request his wife and daughters to wear mourning for a man they had never seen, and one not even remotely connected with the family, was rather startling. Olla's face grew pensive as she thought of her rose-colored grenade and dark-eyed Hubert Denville, for whose especial bewitchment it had been purchased; and Sidney, who invariably did exactly as seemed best in her eyes, broke into instant mutiny.

"Now, papa, that's what I call cruel, when you know you had promised Dolly and I new blue velvetens for the winter and grebe caps and muffs, to want us to wear hideous crepe cloth and dowdy old black astrachans! Oh, papa, I'm ashamed of you, sir!"

In her moods of excitement golden-haired Sid was rather apt to be a little wild in her punctuation, and even spiritual looking Dolly, with her Clytie-like head and saintly face, seemed a little disturbed. The Captain, who was merely pretending to breakfast, pushed away his coffee cup and leant back, with a strangely worn look, in his chair.

"Well, well!" he said, "I won't press the point, but consider how warmly my poor friend must have thought of us all to leave your brother his heir."

"Oh, of course, papa," said Sidney, practically; "but then consider that Androsia may appear any day, and I'm sure, poor dear, I hope she will."

"Still, if you wish it, dear, of course I'll go into town and order our mourning at once," said Mrs. Frazer, looking at the Captain almost curiously. His present mood puzzled her. His worn face and hollow eyes spoke of a depth of emotion that she had not expected to have seen called forth by the death of one not tied to him by blood.

The Captain looked at her, and meeting her clear steadfast eyes, turned his face abruptly towards the French window, which was thrown open, though a bright wood fire burned cheerfully on the hearth. One of the early frosts during the night had left a bracing keenness in the golden air, but the warmer breath of the noon was mellowing it again to a pleasant warmth. The vine rustled in the breeze, and from a musk plant on the green wire stand be-

tween the long windows of the dining room, a spicy incense floated through the room. Outside on the lawn the maples flaunted their flaming banners of fire and gold in the sun, and the knots of furbelowed dahlias and variegated chrysanthemums burned and glowed like gems from the soft green of the emerald turf. A few truant leaves fluttered like brilliant-winged birds across the lawn, and across the riversailed a stork, his long legs streaming out behind him like pennants. A peacock strutted in the sun, through the vines shot an arrow of light across the dainty table, with its old silver and brilliant china, and its central bouquet of autumn berries, gorgeous leaves, and rich mosaics of gravely tinted lichens, their cool greys dotted with infinitesimal rubies, paly browns and golds, shading into softest green, and sprays of fern from the dim shades of the woods. Captain Frazer's gaze took note of none of those things, but wandered across the St. Lawrence, and lost itself in the distance, the hazy, dreamy, unutterably lovely distance of a Canadian sky, in the fall of the year.

"Oh, mamma!" ejaculated Sidney, in dismay at her mother's words, and she looked piteously from Dolly to Olla, the latter of whom had remained silent because she wished to gratify her father in his extraordinary freak. Indeed, had he entreated her to appear in a toilet of last year's fashions, she would have braved the sarcasm of her bosom friends and done so unmurmuringly. Dolly didn't speak, because she had nothing to say; the normal condition of the pensive young beauty, whom nature had gifted with the inestimable boon of a deeply spiritual expression and a kind of rapt air, which veiled the simple fact that she possessed but one idea and was capable of but one emotion. The idea was a supreme consciousness of the beauty of her exquisite face, the emotion an intense affection for her own immediate family circle. She waltzed the slow, dreamy German waltzes to a marvel, but no one had known her during the season in which she had been in society to flash through the eddying whirls of a galop, join a snow-shoeing party, or do one thing likely to accelerate the motion of the cool ruby fluid flowing through her beautiful form or disarrange the lovely Greek coiffure that suited her Clytie head so admirably. When Roderick Armor, the clever, rising, kindly young lawyer, with a good practice and many friends, had asked her in broken tones of strong emotions of hope and fear, to grace his pretty home in Montreal, she had said "yes" very sweetly and coolly, and wondered vaguely why his voice should tremble and his dark eyes burn as he asked her. They were to be married in the coming spring, and already Mrs. Frazer and Olla were busy with dainty embroideries for the pretty trousseau, while Sid assisted the lovely bride elect in the composition of her replies to Roderick Armor's love letters; and if that hard-working young fellow, pondering over those violet-perfumed epistles in his chambers in Montreal, pounced eagerly on some tiny sentence that seemed to echo back something of the murmur of the strong tide of love that rolled through his large, honest heart, it was to Sid's imagination that he was indebted for the boon. Sid said it was "splendid practice," and Dolly was grateful for the aid, and vaguely admired Sid's powers of composition. "It's so nice," she used to say in her tender expressive voice, "for you know, mamma, I really should not know in the least what to say to Mr. Armor." He was "Roderick" to her mother and Olla, and "Roddy" to pert Sid, but to her he was "Mr. Armor," who had given her a very pretty engagement ring, and whom she was to marry in the spring. Her gaze never penetrated into the matrimonial future beyond a hazy vision of her name and his on white enamelled cards, tied together with dainty bows of white satin ribbon.

"Oh, mamma," said Sid, and at that piteous exclamation Captain Frazer wrenched his gaze from the blue distance and looked at his youngest daughter, who sat facing him, radiant as a young Flora, in a fashionable blue and white morning dress; despite her distress, faint dimples flickering round her rosy mouth and a lurking smile ready to break in her wide, bright eyes. Her young, unclouded beauty seemed to strike him with fresh force, and he said softly, "Yes, it would be a pity to cast a shadow on you, my bright Sid."

"Papa," cried Sid, suddenly repentant, and flying round the table to catch him round the neck with her slender pink-tinted arms. "I'll cut off my hair and wear a widow's cap, if you like. It was only my nonsense; and, after all, when one has a good complexion one needn't mind wearing black, and it need only be complimentary—white dresses trimmed with black until the winter sets in, you know."

Despite his evident melancholy, Captain Frazer laughed heartily.

"It was rather a grotesque piece of folly on my part to expect you to fall very readily in with the idea, you monkey," he said, pulling her long bright hair; "and for a man you had never seen. There, make your mind easy, you shan't be called upon to mourn even complementarily for him."

"I'm sure, papa," said Olla, "if you wish it we—"

"I don't wish it, dear; I see the incongruity of the thing plainly," said Captain Frazer, a little sadly. "There, Sid, be off and tell Mike I'll require to see him by-and-by."

"Sidney," said Dolly plaintively, "don't forget, dear, that you promised to think of something for me to write about to Mr. Armor to-day."

"Why you have all about poor Archie and Miss Howard to tell him, and then," continued Sid, meditatively, "you'd better say something about