

DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

CHAPTER XIX.—(Cont'd)

"Then you married Margaret Swayne?"

"Yes; and came home to change my name of Cullen, under which she knew me. So she had no suspicion when she heard of Dulcie's engagement, nor until she saw me in the church to-day, and I turned my face. Then she knew me for the scoundrel who deserted her."

"You deserted her?"

"I recovered my memory and turned into another man, the man I was before, with that five months effaced. I came to myself with six thousand francs in my pocket, and the possession has weighed on me ever since. It seems it was her money. Desertion, you see, and robbery. I may have committed all the crimes in the calendar during that last summer, and not know! She made my acquaintance as a working photographer, and I was going to set up in Paris; the money was for that. I seem to have been as much detached from my past and my English prospects during that period, as I am now from all that happened to me between May and October."

"And do I understand that you remember nothing? That you did not know—Miss Swayne—when you came face to face?"

"I did not know her—I cannot remember. It is all a blank. And yet, somehow, her face seems familiar. Like something I have dreamed of."

"There is some likeness between the sisters."

"No; not a real likeness; they have different eyes. It is not that—I scarcely know what it is." He stopped abruptly, as if trying to recall.

"And what of—the bride that was to have been?"

"My poor little Dulcie! You will think me the greater brute that I do not know. Colonel Swayne said it was better—for her as well as for me—that there should be no last meeting or farewell. And then I felt as if my presence was nothing but an insult to them all, and I came away. And now tell me, you who are impartial, am I to blame?"

"Did you do nothing, on coming to yourself, to try and clear up the mystery? It seems to me you should have done this."

"I advertised the money, and could get no answer. This seemed the only tangible point. It is easy to blame oneself after, knowing what hung on it. I used to hope the thing would clear up—that something accidental would happen to give me the clue. I did not get really uneasy till about a fortnight ago, and then I went to see a doctor in London—Sir Luke Morden. He advised me to do nothing, and let the thing slide. I told Colonel Swayne, and he was of the same opinion."

"Colonel Swayne knew?"

"Yes, but not till last week. I told Dulcie, too. I don't defend myself. I ought to have made a clean breast of it earlier, when first we were engaged. But who could have foreseen?"

"You cannot undo the past; and I suppose it is too soon yet to ask what will be the future?"

"Whatever my future is, I shall be fitly punished. People are punished for misfortunes, sometimes more heavily than for crimes. I have deserved ill, and for myself I must bear the consequences. The heaviest weight on my heart is that poor child, and the injury she has suffered at my hands. What can I be but a scoundrel, to have deceived her, won her love, when all the while I was another woman's husband! She is well rid of me, and she will think so by-and-by, even if she does not now. God grant she may find her happiness in the future with some better man, who will be good to her—And here the culprit's voice choked with what in a woman would have been a sob."

The prayer was echoed with a difference in the breast of the man who listened. "God grant that I may make her happiness," was his variant. He put out his hand across the table, and Gower took it. Gower was sometimes visited with inspirations, and one touched him now as he looked up into the other's face. "I could find it in my heart," he said, "to wish that you might be the man."

Hungerford did not speak, but the silent hand-clasp dwelt in the memory of both.

"If only I could, I should like to do something for her, to atone," Gower went on presently, "but I could say nothing of this to-day. I could not propose to solve such a wound with money. But I thought in my own mind that I might be permitted—later—when there had been time to forget, and she should marry a poor man—to do something—to make things more even. And then there is the other sister, my wife. There, too,

I could say nothing. Of the two wrongs, it seems to me her wrong is the deeper. And to her face to-day, with all that had come and gone, I dared offer nothing. Hungerford, will you take Colonel Swayne a message?"

"Most assuredly I will—anything you wish."

"Tell him that exactly what he dictated for Dulcie shall be done for Margaret. And that Grendon is hers, if she will go to live there. I shall be forced to come and go about matters concerning the estate, but I will not intrude on her. Or, if she would rather live elsewhere, she shall have ample funds."

"My dear fellow, I hope for both your sakes it will be no question of living apart. Surely you will be reconciled?"

"I cannot think of that yet; I cannot insult her by proposing it. You see, I am another man. Tell the Colonel I shall see my lawyer first thing to-morrow."

"You are going up to town?"

"Yes, as soon as I have changed. I'll go up and change now, Hungerford. I shall see you when I come down."

The detention above-stairs was not long. Gower came down looking at his watch.

"There is a train Londonwards from the Ferry at 4.35. I shall get it easily, I think."

"You will have to wait at Teesley, and you will fall in with people going from the Court. I will have my cart round and drive you to the junction; it will be the better way. But first you must have something to eat. It will not do for you to take the journey fasting."

Cold viands were spread in the dining-room, and to please his host Gower made an effort to eat, but appetite was lacking. Then Hungerford's cart came round, and they drove away together.

"The last of Fortune's Court," Gower said, looking back to the grey house on the hill, the roof under which Dulcie lay. "It is not likely I shall see it again."

"I would venture to forecast otherwise, and we will see which of us is the truer prophet. I suppose you have hardly yet formed any plan of what you mean to do?"

"I have one distinct intention, and you are welcome to know it. I told you I went to a doctor in London about my lost memory?"

"Yes."

"His name is Morden, and I am going back to him to-morrow. His theory was that when I obtained a clue, when I ran up against somebody belonging to that past, the broken link would join again, and I should—suddenly, as it were—be in possession of the whole. The clue is in my hand; I have seen a face out of the void; but the blank remains. I shall tell him he is wrong. There must be active treatment; I cannot afford any longer to sit down and wait."

"There is something, then, that can be done?"

"I wrung it out of him at our last interview, though he was reluctant. It seems there is a man in France, a Professor Chalmers, who experiments, and has made successes. The English practitioners set him down as a charlatan, and Morden said he would not advise me to go to him, for in these hypnotic experiments there is an element of danger. I had better wait and take my chance. That was his view. I took my chance, and look at the result. It must be Chalmers now."

"I have no fancy for hypnotism myself," said Hungerford. "There are forces in Nature and in ourselves that are better not meddled with. Where Providence has dropped a veil, it seems to me presumption to make an effort to set it aside."

"That argument would stop all progress. If Providence dropped the veil, it supplied also the power to lift it and the way beyond. And the way beyond is the only way that will lead me back to peace."

"You may think so now—"

"I cannot endure my life broken into two halves, one ignorant of the other. If Chalmers can make me whole again, he is the man for me. He is never so much a charlatan. Let him give me back my memory—show me why I married my wife—help me to feel towards her as I felt then!"

"Gower, I am afraid you are seeking the impossible."

"Possible or no, I will seek it; I do not mean to relinquish hope. And this is the only direction in which hope lies. I intend to see Morden to-morrow."

"I shall count on hearing the result. And let me know where a letter will find you after I have discharged your errand to Colonel Swayne."

"Chalmers lives at a place called Grez. I hope to go to him with Morden's introduction, but I may have to wait a vacancy if his accom-

modation for patients is limited. Write to my club in London, and I will keep you informed."

Such was the agreement between these two men of widely differing natures, whom accident had converted from rivals into friends. And it was well for Gower to find a friend in the hour of his first distress. The very effort of intercourse helped to blunt the edge of loss, to mark out a path through the perplexities of the future. Another hearty handshake was exchanged when they reached the junction. A porter came out to take Gower's baggage, and Hungerford watched the two disappear into the station before he turned away.

It was already late, the shades of evening were gathering, the lamps of the cart made two travelling spots of brightness in the gloom, but he did not hasten. The mare of her own will slackened to the hills, for the road was like a switch-back, up and down. This was a strange day on which the sun had now set, fraught with sorrow to lovers, grief to the woman he loved, but to him how great had been the lifting of his burden! When that sun rose, he was girding up the loins of his mind to put away even the memory of his passion, laying it dead in a grave, and stamping down the sods with resolution and prayer. And now, past all probability, there had been this resurrection, the hope was quick again, and its cherishing made lawful.

His man took the horse into the yard, and he went indoors. A lamp had been lighted in the study, but the rest of the house was in darkness. He lit a candle in his room for something he had to seek. And then, by an impulse hardly understood, he carried it across to the guest-chamber. He held up the light and looked round. Here his rival had slept while he kept vigil; here Gower had been visited (though this he did not know) by those visions of the night. He turned to the door again, but, as he moved, the candle gleamed on some small object lying on the toilet-table which had the glint of gold. It was the wedding-ring, the small ring bought for Dulcie, which in Gower's dream would not fit his palm; new and unworn, but hers. Was it an omen of the future, he asked himself, that it fell thus into his possession? He was fain to think it so; and that hope which had found resurrection stirred again, as he put it in safe keeping next his heart.

(To be continued.)

THE TEA PENALTY.

A Strong Man's Experience.
Writing from a busy railroad town the wife of an employe of one of the great roads says:

"My husband is a railroad man who has been so much benefited by the use of Postum that he wishes me to express his thanks to you for the good it has done him. His waking hours are taken up with his work, and he has no time to write himself."

"He has been a great tea drinker all his life and has always liked it strong."

"Tea has, of late years, acted on him like morphine does upon most people. At first it soothed him, but only for an hour or so, then it began to affect his nerves to such an extent that he could not sleep at night, and he would go to his work in the morning wretched and miserable from the loss of rest. This condition grew constantly worse, until his friends persuaded him, some four months ago, to quit tea and use Postum."

"At first he used Postum only for breakfast, but as he liked the taste of it, and it somehow seemed to do him good, he added it to his evening meal. Then, as he grew better, he began to drink it for his noon meal, and now he will drink nothing else at table."

"His condition is so wonderfully improved that he could not be hired to give up Postum and go back to tea. His nerves have become steady and reliable once more, and his sleep is easy, natural and refreshing."

"He owes all this to Postum, for he has taken no medicine and made no other change in his diet."

"His brother, who was very nervous from coffee-drinking, was persuaded by us to give up the coffee and use Postum, and he, also, has recovered his health and strength."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

THE FOLLY OF WORRY.

The same brain can't at the same time dwell on work and worry. You can't dare while you despair. Don't meet trouble half way—make it race after you.

There are obstacles in all roads and they are only insurmountable to cowards.

No one ever got to the top without a tussle. It isn't so much the quality of a man's mind as the quantity of his nerve, that brings him through.

So long as ruin is only a possibility, there is always a chance to escape.

SLAVE MARKETS IN TRIPOLI.

An Appalling Description of the Traffic.

Commandator Simonetti, general secretary of the Italian Anti-slavery Society, which has been working in Tripoli since 1899, gives an appalling description of the slavery still conducted there despite the efforts of the society to liberate those in bondage.

He says that the society provides the slaves with freedom papers, which the Turkish officials have disregarded derisively, calling them "papers of the second slavery."

He tells of Turkish steamers engaged in the slave traffic, and says that when the slave markets were closed in 1900 the slaves were brought within a day's march of Benghazi, from where they were secretly embarked or returned to the interior. A common trick of the Turkish officials was to declare freed slaves Ottoman subjects because they had come from Mussulmans' regions, and so keep them under an influence favorable to their return to slavery.

The greatest trade, he says, has been among the Bedouins, who sell negroes to the Senussi, who still have public markets at Abeshir, in Wadai, State of Central Africa, in the French zone of influence; and at El-Fasher, the capital of Darfur, Egyptian Sudan, under British domination.

The younger of the women slaves, he says, were sent to Tobruk and the Gulf of Solum, Tripoli, and were destined for Turkish harems. These slaves were chained at night, and acts of disobedience were punished with death. At Sliten, not far from the City of Tripoli, Simonetti says that a slave was killed in such a barbarous fashion that a woman who was present died of fright. He closes with a statement that he possesses a long list of so-called respectable Turks who indulge in the traffic of human flesh simply for sport.

INSTEAD OF SALOONS.

Temperance Clubs Taking Their Place in England.

There are in Birmingham, England, sixty-six social clubs in which no intoxicants are allowed. About forty are self-supporting. Eleven are carried on in what were formerly public houses. Twelve clubs meet only once a week, but all the others are open nightly except Sundays. Most of them are open Saturday afternoon also, says Temperance.

A social institutes' union also converts five corporation swimming baths into free social recreation halls in the winter months. These institutes are quite distinct from sporting, trade, benefit, musical and other sectional clubs. There are also thirty-five Good Templar lodges in the vicinity of the city.

The Good Templars have many lodges open weekly in Birmingham and 200 in London; others can frequent social clubs and attend free temperance concerts if they will. Sir Thomas Whittaker and others are opening large temperance billiard halls about the country with many attractions of a wholesome kind; the churchmen and the Methodists have provided great social centres, and other churches are doing the like. It is therefore not a fact that workmen go to the public house because they have nowhere else to go.

Flub—And you say you are satisfied to be making only \$15 a week! Dub—Sure. If I had more than that some girl would come along and want to marry me.

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