

STORY OF THE WEDDING RING.

By BERTHA M. CLAY.

Author of "A Queen Among Women," "How Will it End," "The Burden of a Secret," Etc.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"You have the privilege of speaking plainly," he said, "do not abuse it. Do not institute comparisons; there can be none between such a man and myself. It is absurd to suppose that he would have sensitive or refined feelings. I have no doubt that a goodly sum of money will make ample amends to him for the loss of his wife. What did you say, Mr. Ford?"

"I said may Heaven pardon you, my lord," said the lawyer, "but you were saying, 'You have the privilege of speaking plainly.'"

"You sully it far more by seeking to part those whom God has joined. My lord," continued the lawyer, with passionate eloquence, "I no longer wonder at the French revolution—I shall wonder no more at the revolt of the poor against the rich—if these be the ways in which the great men of the world treat the humble ones. If you had two doves—two tender birds—you would hesitate before you parted them; but this man, with a man's heart, full of deep affections, you will torture, and not even own that the torture is pain."

Lord Carlswood smiled, and no great anger darkened his face.

"I like you none the less, Ford, for your frank speaking; there are few who dare say so much to me. My opinion is still unchanged. I shall receive my grandchild Ismay and her son only on those conditions. I will leave you to consider the matter. If you decline the further management of my affairs, so be it—if not, I will authorize you to make all arrangements."

Left by himself, the lawyer thought the matter over.

"If I refuse, some one else will do it," he said, "some one who has no influence over him, and who can never do anything for their good; I have some little influence, and I will use it for their benefit. Let him have Ismay and her son; his heart will soften in time, and then I shall be able to persuade him to receive the husband, too."

When, afterward, Lord Carlswood came for his answer, Mr. Ford said: "I will undertake the affair, my lord; but let me tell you first that I do so under protest. In my opinion the whole thing is cruel and wicked. That same day he returned to Ashburnham. He tried to comfort himself by saying that it would all come right in time; but his heart was heavy within him, he did not like his commission."

"I must see Mrs. Waldron alone," he thought. "It will not be fair to her if I tell her before her husband. She must have time to think it over alone."

Once more at Ashburnham he watched Paul Waldron leave his home, and then he went to the cottage and asked for his wife. She was looking more beautiful than ever, he thought. She had been out in the garden tying up the roses; the perfume of the crimson blossoms seemed to linger about her, her face was exquisite in its dainty bloom. She smiled graciously when she saw her visitor.

"You have returned to make the sketch," she said; but there was no answering smile on his face.

"I have returned," he replied, "because I want to speak to you, Mrs. Waldron. I have something most important to say to you. Can you spare me a little time, now, at once?"

Her beautiful face grew pale with apprehension.

"It is nothing that need frighten you," he said, "some people would perhaps call it good news, shall leave you to think of it as you will. I should like to see you alone," he continued, and Ismay led the way to the pretty seat under the elm tree.

"This is my drawing-room," she said, with a bright smile; "but I do not know that I have received a visitor here before."

She had gathered some roses as they walked down the path, and while he talked to her she pulled the fragrant leaves from the stems. Long years afterwards the perfume of a rose vividly recalled the scene to her—so vividly that she could not endure the flowers. Nor did he ever forget it—the garden with its fragrant blossoms, the tall elm-tree, the cool, spreading shade, the bright, lovely face framed in the bright brown hair, the white hands playing with the crimson buds—a picture so beautiful that Mr. Ford looked on in admiration too great for words.

He was silent for some little time, his heart troubled within him at what he had to say. He looked at Mrs. Waldron, and while he owned to himself that he had never seen any woman one half so fair, he thought how much better and happier she would be living here in the midst of beauty and peace than tossed about on the waves of the great world.

Ismay wondered what he was thinking of, why he looked so grave, what anxious thoughts brought so stern an expression to his face, and why he was glancing at her with so strange a mingling of wonder, fear, regret, and admiration. Her face grew crimson, under his lingering gaze.

"I have no need to fear him," she thought to herself, with some little impatience. "He must have something important to say, or he never would have asked me to come out here."

"What have you to tell me?" she asked at length, with a coquettish smile.

"And then the grave look returned to his face, and he sighed deeply."

"I do not like my mission," he said. "You must always remember that I undertook it solely against my will, but that my motive for acting as I do is that I may be of use to you in time to come."

His grave voice, his earnest manner, surprised her. She raised her lovely face to him, and on it was the simple wonder of a startled child.

"Only Heaven knows," continued the grave voice, "whether what I have to say to you is for your good, whether evil will come of it. Listen, Mrs. Waldron, and decide as you will."

Slowly, gravely, deliberately, weighing each word, Mr. Ford told her the whole story, omitting no single grain of evidence, dwelling on her mother's folly as lightly as possible, yet making it quite apparent. As she listened, the dainty wildrose bloom faded from her face, her eyes dilated with wonder that was almost fear. Her whole figure trembled as a leaf sways in the wind. He finished, and his last words sounded to her as though they came from the clouds. A red mist swam before her eyes, and then she recovered herself with a great, gasping sigh.

"You must be brave," he said "you have worse to hear."

"And I," she said, "am really that great lord's grandchild?"

"There is not a legal doubt of it," he replied. "Listen yet, Mrs. Waldron. You are undoubtedly the daughter of Katrine Ismay Carlswood, who ran away from home with Thornton Cameron. You are the grandchild of Lord Carlswood, the Master of Bralyn, and its rich dependencies. The child playing there may one day be Lionel, Lord Carlswood; you yourself may be a wealthy heiress. But there is one condition attaching to all this—a condition I am ashamed to lay before you, and one that I cannot advise you to accept. The option rests entirely with yourself."

"A condition!" she repeated, her face recovering its color, her eyes flashing with light. "You do not know how I have always longed to be rich. I cannot believe that my longing is gratified; there will be no condition too difficult for me to accept."

"I am not so sure of that," said the man of law. "Lord Carlswood is a very proud man—I should say no man living is prouder; he has the greatest reverence for what he calls the honor of his house; he would, I believe, rather die any death than tarnish it. Think how he values it when he treats his only daughter as one dead because she married beneath her. I will be brief for the subject pains me. Lord Carlswood will receive you as his grandchild—will give you a large fortune—will make your little son his heir—all upon condition that you leave your husband, whom he considers low-born, and promise never to see him again."

It was wonderful to see the light that flashed into her face, the indignant gleam of her eyes, the scorn of the proud lips.

"Leave my husband—promise never to see him again! I would not do it to be a queen! Paul loves me—I will not break his heart."

"You have answered just as I thought you would. I shall not attempt to influence you. I am bound to tell you that, if you refuse, Lord Carlswood will find another heir, and you will hear no more of the matter. Perhaps you had better take time before you decide."

"Leave my husband!" she repeated, with a burst of passionate tears. "He must be wicked to think I would do so. I could not. Paul loves me so. He sat in silence, while the burst of passionate tears lasted. Presently she turned angrily to him.

"You should not have presented such an offer to me," she cried. "How dare you tempt me so?"

"Madam," he replied, gravely, "I have but followed my instructions—neither more nor less."

"Tell him, this proud lord, from me," cried Mrs. Waldron, "that I will never leave my husband—that I would not break his true, tender, loving heart for all the wealth in the world. Tell him that from me. You have made me ill. My brain seems turning. Go—leave me. Let me forget how you have tempted me, if I can."

Mr. Ford arose. She turned away with a low, passionate cry, and then looked at him again, and spoke with a ring of passionate grief in her voice.

"I was trying to be happy," she said, "learning to be content; and now you have come to spoil it all."

She looked so lovely in her pride, her anger, and her tears, that the lawyer wished his employer could have seen her.

"Bar witness," he said, "that I have not tempted you. I have simply done as I was told to do. I will bid you farewell."

She looked as though inclined to detain him.

"Will you take time to think over it?" he asked. "Shall I go away, and return in one month from now?"

"Yes," she replied, almost inaudibly.

"And will you take my advice?" he concluded. "Do not say one word of this to your husband until I have seen you again."

CHAPTER X.

There came an evening when Paul Waldron sat in the beautiful garden, a prey to most anxious thoughts. The sun was setting, the birds were singing in the green depths of the shady trees. He had returned home early that evening, and had found his wife, with a sad, pale face, standing listlessly at the cottage window. No tea was prepared for him, and the smile that usually greeted him was absent from her beautiful lips. He loved her too dearly to offer any remonstrance to her weeping to her and kissed her.

"You are not looking well to-day," Ismay, he said, gently.

He was almost startled when she flung her arms round his neck with a

low, passionate cry, and hid her face on his breast.

"You are not well, Ismay," he repeated. "Never mind tea for me. Come out and I will try to cheer you. The room is warm—come into the fresh air, and, oh, my darling, give me one bright look, or all the world will be dark to me!"

As they walked along he said to her:

"I cannot understand you, Ismay. You are so changeable you are so variable, my darling, so unlike your sweet, bright self. One moment you are here, and with your arms clasped round my neck—loving, tender, all that my heart desires; the next moment you are cool and haughty, and though you were a princess and I your slave. At times you seem to love me, then again you seem to hate me. One day I think you are perfectly happy—you smile and sing and your face is more beautiful than ever in its sweet content; the next you are silent, sad, engrossed with melancholy thoughts. I cannot understand you. Are you withholding any secret from me, Ismay?"

She clasped her arms round his neck and drew his face down to hers. She said that he was the truest, the dearest, the best of husbands and that she loved him, and ended with passionate tears.

He sighed deeply as he soothed her. What had come to this lovely young wife of his? He little dreamed of the terrible struggle going on in the heart he believed to be all his own.

It seemed to her that her very soul was rent in twain; she longed with an intensity of longing for wealth, the rank, the position, the grandeur that had been described to her.

She was not surprised at what she had heard; she had always been in her mind a kind of intuitive knowledge that her mother was a lady, and that she herself was not in her right place. It seemed so cruel that she should be deprived of all the glories and advantages she had longed for, because she loved her husband and would not leave him.

How happy she would have been, installed at Bralyn, mistress of that grand mansion! How the great people of the great world would have admired her! What jewels, what dresses she would have had! No wonder that when she thought of all she had lost she grew sad, silent and unhappy; the little cottage became unbearable then, the needful economies most painful, the husband for whom she had sacrificed so much, a source of aversion.

Then a sudden fit of remorse would seize her; she would prove her love for him by the most loving words, the most tender caresses; she would laugh and sing all to show him that she was happy; she would utter a thousand extravagances, about their little home and her affection for it. And then would follow the reaction, and she would be intensely wretched again. So matters went on for three long weeks, until her health began to fail.

A noble woman, having once made the sacrifice, would have abided by it. She wavered even while she believed herself to be most firm. She looked ill, her face was always either flushed or white, her hands trembled; she was nervous, hysterical, unlike herself. In vain her husband tried every device to please her; he was, if possible, more unhappy than herself.

It had been such a glimpse of Paradise to her; now the gates were shut, and she was debarred from entering. She had not said one word to Paul; he was still in utter ignorance. So the fourth week dawned, and she knew that before it had ended she must be either rich without her husband, or poor with him.

In the meantime Mr. Ford had told the old lord all; he had painted the girl's beauty in vivid colors; he had described her anger, her indignation, her resolve never to leave her husband, never to break his heart; he had delivered the message word for word. Lord Carlswood smiled grimly.

"I like that," he said; "it is the true Carlswood spirit. But she will give in. She seemed to waver at the last, you say? She will give in. I have thought of a plan," he added. "You shall wait a month, so as to give her time to think over all she has lost, and then you shall go again, and this time you shall invite her to Bralyn, and escort her here. You shall bring the boy, too, for a month's visit—not her husband, mind. He cannot refuse my grandchild permission to visit me; and if she comes, I will undertake to say that she will never go back. Let her once taste such a life as she will lead here and she is mine."

Sorely against his will, Mr. Ford consented. He went once more to Ashburnham and found his way to the pretty cottage in the wood. Ismay's face flushed deepest crimson when she saw him. She held out her hand with a gesture almost sublime in its despair.

"You must not come to tempt me again!" she cried. "I am not strong. Pray leave me."

"I am here only to invite you and your son to Bralyn," he returned.

"Lord Carlswood will let the question of adoption rest for a time; but he wants to see you and your little Lionel."

"Not my husband?" she asked, with whitening lips.

"No, he will not receive Mr. Waldron. You can please yourself of course as to accepting the invitation or not."

"I should like to go," she said, eagerly. "I have longed to see a little of the beautiful, great world. Tell me—tell me all about Bralyn."

He described the place to her; he hid from her no details of her grandfather's wealth, position and grandeur.

"I must go," she cried again. "Paul will not object to my going there when he knows."

"You have not told your husband?" questioned Mr. Ford.

"Not one word," she replied. "Do you think he will be unwilling for me to go?"

"I cannot tell. You must be the permission."

She sat for some minutes in thoughtful silence, and then with a grave, pale face, looked at the lawyer.

"I should like to go to Bralyn," she said. "I should like to see just once what the grand world is like. Of course I shall come back again. Considering the great sacrifice I have to make, I think I may allow myself this pleasure, but I am afraid, if Paul knew what my grandfather has proposed he would never let me go. I have been thinking that you might tell him the story of Lord Carlswood's invitation without saying anything about his conditions for adopting my boy and myself."

To be Continued.

A ROMANTIC CAREER.

The names of Josephine and Marie Louise are connected with Napoleon and his fortunes, but who stops to remember that of Desirée Clary, to whom he was first betrothed? She was the daughter of a rich silk merchant of Marseilles, and the Bonapartes, who living there in the years just preceding their aggrandizement, became acquainted with her family. Joseph Bonaparte fell in love with her, and obtained her promise to marry him when she would be twenty-one; but Napoleon, appearing on the scene, acted with his customary emphasis, and declared that Desirée must belong to him. The family were used to falling in with his decisions, and they promptly agreed, Julie, the other daughter, who had long had a liking for Joseph, agreeing to marry him in her sister's place.

Desirée was a light-hearted, pretty young creature, with a gay manner and a merry wit. Napoleon, according to the testimony of the Clary family, was not overattractive. One who knew him at that time thus describes him:

"He wears threadbare garments and bad, cleaned, broken-down boots. In character, he is brusque, prone to fits of abstraction. He is born for mediocrity."

But Desirée was satisfied with him. She found him all that heart could wish. To be sure, he was poor, but that was a disability which could be amended.

In May, 1795, Napoleon left Marseilles for Paris, whence he wrote peremptorily to Madame Clary, urging her to follow, buy a house, and live there with Desirée. The country-bred mother and daughter were aghast. Paris seemed to them the very centre of bloodshed and tyranny. They did not accede to the proposition, and a second letter from Napoleon was left unanswered.

He was now at the lowest ebb of his fortune, and it could hardly help seeming to him that his betrothed had abandoned him. As for her, she had heard that he had, in his poverty, accepted money obligations from Madame Tallien, and that he was courting, at her house, a rich and noble lady, named Madame de Beauharnais. All appeared to be over between them.

Soon Napoleon himself declared that the relations between them must be ended; his feelings had altered. Desirée wept, and owned that she loved him still; but on the advice of her family, she released him from his promise. In 1796 he married Josephine de Beauharnais, and then began the brilliant march of his rising fortune.

Desirée also drifted to Paris, where she became immensely popular, and in 1793 she married General Barnadotte, then minister of war.

The upward steps of her husband are well known. He accepted the rank of Prince Royal of Sweden, and in 1818 he became king. Desirée had preferred living in Paris, and when she heard the news of her husband's accession to the throne, she was at the piano practising a piece by Gretry. She rose, and sadly closed the instrument.

"However much I practise now," she said, "I shall always be told that I play like a queen."

She died in Sweden, an old lady of eighty-three. Her life had been one of varying fortunes. Monsieur Housaye says of her:

"She is intended for earthly honors. She is betrothed to Joseph, then to Napoleon, then to Duple. She refuses Junot, and would be glad to accept Marmont. At last she married Bernadotte. With Joseph she would have been an empress, with Napoleon, Empress of the French; with Duple, probably marchale and duchess; with Junot, Duchesse d'Abrantes; with Marmont, Marchale and Duchess of Ragusa. Bernadotte, the former sergeant of marines, placed the crown of Sweden on the head of this little bourgeoisie of Marseilles."

NO WOMEN AT FUNERALS.

One of the curious social laws of Peru forbids women to attend funerals, and they do not appear at weddings unless they are very intimate friends. When a funeral procession passes through the streets the coffin is carried upon the shoulders of the pallbearers, who are followed by an empty hearse drawn by two, four or six horses according to the means of the family and friends of the deceased follow on foot, with a line of empty carriages behind them. As long as they are in the presence of the dead it is considered a proper and necessary evidence of respect to walk. After the body has been committed to the grave those who attend the funeral are brought home in the carriage.

Words From the Heart

A NOVA SCOTIAN FARMER TELLS HOW HE REGAINED HEALTH.

He Suffered for Years From Kidney Trouble, Sick Headache and Rheumatism—Although Advanced in Life He Has Found a Cure.

From the Enterprise, Bridgewater, N.S., Solomon Meldrum, Esq., of Upper Branch, Lunenburg Co., N.S., is a gentleman of Scotch descent, and well known throughout the county. He is an agriculturist of repute and is prominent in the local affairs of the Baptist denomination. Referring to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, he says: "I consider them a most wonderful and beneficent revelation in the realm of medicine. Previous to using these pills some two years ago, I had suffered for years from kidney trouble and rheumatism. Many a time had I been so bad that I could do nothing but endure the pain and pray for physical deliverance. My advanced age, being nearly 70 years old, made a cure look almost impossible, humanly considered, in a case of such long standing. But thanks to the Lord and Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, I am here to-day in excellent health with scarcely an ill feeling to remind me of past sufferings. Something over two years ago I read of the wonderful cures attending the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I thought if these testimonials are true it is possible the pills may benefit even me. I bought six boxes first, used them strictly as directed, and with the Lord's blessing they did me much good. But my ailments were chronic, deep seated, and I am an old man. The cure was not complete, and I got twelve boxes more with all faith in the result. I only had to use six boxes of the second lot when I found myself quite free from kidney troubles, rheumatism, and all other bodily ailments, except the disability incidental to persons of my advanced age, and even these were in a measure relieved. I may add that for a long time before I used the pills and when I began their use, I was the victim of the most distressing attacks of sick headache, the sensation of seasickness in extreme violence, being not a whit more distressing. These attacks came on once or twice a week. After taking the pills, the attacks became less frequent and less troublesome and finally ceased almost entirely. My son who lived at a distance took the remaining six boxes and stated to me that they did him much good. This I do know, that he looked much fresher and appeared in better spirits after their use. Believing as I do that an over-ruling power suggests to mortals all the wise and beneficial thoughts and inventions which operate to improve our race, and allay and cure our suffering, I say again that I thank the Lord and Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for my prolonged life and present good health."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. If your dealer does not keep them they will be sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

BOILING IN LIQUID AIR.

Liquid air is so cold that mercury immersed in it turns solid and can be employed to hammer a nail. Yet, when a glass tube containing liquid hydrogen is immersed in liquid air, the hydrogen gently boils, and gradually turns into vapor, like water simmering over a slow fire. The temperature of liquid air is 312 degrees Fahrenheit below zero; but that is "hot" compared with the temperature of liquid hydrogen, which is about 490 degrees below zero. Professor Dewar finds it impossible to prevent an open vessel containing liquid hydrogen from having a whitish deposit of solid air at the bottom, because the moment the air comes in contact with the liquefied hydrogen it is frozen hard and sinks through the hydrogen.

A FRANK DUELLIST.

A Frenchman who was not regarded as one of the sort of men who would seek the field of honor averred, in the presence of a group who were talking about duelling, that he had once participated in a duel.

Tell us about it, they called out. Well, you see, he said, they gave us our pistols. Mine appeared to be all right. I looked at the cap, the trigger—everything was in order. But it didn't go off! Why didn't it? Because I went off!

HE KNEW HUMAN NATURE.

Stranger—Here is a little poem which I submitted to a number of my nearest and dearest friends, and they all said it was worth printing. Editor, who has friends I myself—I am delighted to get it, sir. A thing which a man's bosom friends fail to criticize must be about perfect.

A LITTLE TOO ENGLISH.

Chum—What! You are not engaged to Miss Hightone! Well, I declared I thought surely that would be a match. Young T. smiled—I backed out. She was too much a slave of fashion—too English, you know. You amaze me. Fact. She wanted me to go by myself and ask her father's consent.