

MONA

The Irish Bride of an English Gentleman.

Well, 'All's well that ends well,' says Captain Rodney, thoughtlessly. "If that delectable cousin of mine would only sink into the calm and silent grave now, we might even have the title back without fear of dispute, and find ourselves just where we began."

It is at this very moment the library door is suddenly flung open, and Jenkins appears upon the threshold, with his face as white as nature will permit, and his usually perfect manner much disturbed. "Sir Nicholas can I speak to you for a moment?" he says, with much excitement, growing positively apoplectic in his endeavor to be calm.

"What is it, Jenkins? Speak!" says Lady Rodney, rising from her chair, and staying him, as he would leave the room, by an imperious gesture.

"Oh, my lady, if I must speak," cries the old man, "but it is terrible news to tell without a word of warning. Mr. Paul Rodney is dying: he shot himself half an hour ago, and is lying now at Rawson's Lodge in the beech wood."

Mona grows livid, and takes a step forward.

"Shot himself! How?" she says, hoarsely, her bosom rising and falling tumultuously. "Jenkins, answer me."

"Tell us, Jenkins," says Nicholas, hastily.

"It appears he had a pocket-pistol with him, Sir Nicholas, and going house through the wood he stumbled over some roots, and it went off and injured him fatally. It is an internal wound, my lady. Dr. Bland, who is with him, says there is no hope."

"No hope!" says Mona, with terrible despair in her voice: "then I have killed him. It was I, my fault—mine. It is I have caused his death."

This thought seems to overwhelm her. She raises her hands to her head, and an expression of keenest anguish creeps into her eyes. She sways a little, and would have fallen, but that Jack Rodney, who is nearest to her at this moment, catches her in his arms.

"Mona," says Nicholas, roughly, laying his hand on her shoulder, and shaking her slightly, "I forbid you talking like that. It is nobody's fault. It is the will of God. It is morbid and sinful of you to let such a thought enter your head."

"So it is really, Mrs. Geoffrey, you know," says Molly, placing his hand on her other shoulder to give her a second shake. "Nick's quite right. Don't take it to heart; don't, now. You might as well say the gunsmith who originally sold him the fatal weapon is responsible for this unhappy event, as—as that you are."

"Besides, it may be an exaggeration," suggests Geoffrey; "he may not be as bad as they say."

"I fear there is no doubt of it, sir," says Jenkins, respectfully, who in his heart of hearts looks upon this timely accident as a direct interposition of Providence. "And the messenger who came, (and who is now in the hall, Sir Nicholas, if you would wish to question him) says Dr. Bland sent him up to let you know at once of the unfortunate occurrence."

Having said all this without a break, Jenkins feels he has outdone himself, and retires on his heels.

Nicholas, going into the outer hall, crosses the boy who has brought the melancholy tidings, and, having spoken to him for some time, goes back to the library with a face even graver than it was before.

"The poor fellow is calling for you, Mona, incessantly," he says. "It remains with you to decide whether you will go to him or not. Geoffrey, you should have a voice in this matter, and I think she ought to go."

"Oh, Mona, do go—do," entreats Dottie, who is in tears. "Poor, poor fellow! I wish now I had not been so rude to him."

"Geoffrey, will you take me to him," says Mona, rousing herself.

"Yes, hurry, darling. If you think you can bear it, you should lose no time. Minutes even, I fear, are precious in this case."

Then some one puts on her again the coat she had taken off such a short time since, and some one else puts on her seal-skin cap and wraps her black lace round her white throat, and then she turns to go on her errand mission. All their joy is turned to mourning, their laughter to tears.

Nicholas, who had left the room again, returns now, bringing with him a glass of wine, which he compels her to swallow, and then, pale and frightened, but calmer than she was before, she leaves the house, and starts with Geoffrey for the game-keeper's lodge, where lies the man they had so dreaded, impotent in the arms of death.

Night is creeping over the land. Already in the heavens the pale crescent moon just bared rises silently.

"W! the said moon in his arms."

A deep hush has fallen upon everything. The air is cold and piercing. Mona shivers and draws even closer to Geoffrey, as, mute, yet full of saddest thought, they move through the leafless wood.

As they get within view of the window of Rawson's cottage, they are met by Dr. Bland, who has seen them coming, and has hurried out to receive them.

his arm, and goes towards the lodge.

"Is there no hope?" asks Geoffrey, gravely.

"No, none. It would be useless to say otherwise. Internal hemorrhage has set in. A few hours, perhaps less, must elapse. He knows it himself, poor boy!"

"Oh! can nothing be done?" asks Mona, turning to him eyes full of entreaty.

"My dear, what I could do I have done," says the little man, patting her hand in his kind fatherly fashion; "but he has gone beyond human skill. And now one thing: you have come here, I know, with the tender thought of soothing his last hours; therefore I entreat you to be calm and very quiet. Emotion will only distress him, and, if you feel too nervous, you know—perhaps—eh?"

"I shall not be too nervous," says Mona, but her face blanches afresh even as she speaks, and Geoffrey sees it.

"If it is too much for you, darling, say so," whispers he; "or shall I go with you?"

"It is better she should go alone," says Dr. Bland. "He would be quite unequal to two; and, besides, pardon me,—from what he has said to me I fear there were unpleasant passages between you and him."

"There were," confesses Geoffrey, reluctantly, and in a low tone. "I wish now from my soul it had been otherwise. I regret much that has taken place."

"We all have regrets at times, dear boy, the very best of us," says the little doctor blowing his nose: "who among us is faultless? And really the circumstances were very trying for you—very—eh? Yes, of course one understands, you know; but death heals all divisions and he is hurrying to his last account, poor lad, all too soon."

"They have entered the cottage by this time, and are standing in the tiny hall. 'Open that door, Mrs. Geoffrey,' says the doctor, pointing to his right hand. 'I saw you coming, and have prepared him for the interview. I shall be just here, or in the next room, if you should want me. But I can do little for him more than I have done.'"

"You will be near too, Geoffrey?" murmurs Mona, falteringly.

"Yes, yes; I promise for him," says Dr. Bland. "In fact, I have something to say to your husband that must be told at once."

Then Mona, opening the door indicated to her by the doctor, goes into the chamber beyond, and is lost to their view for some time.

On a low bed, with his eyes fastened eagerly upon the door, lies Paul Rodney, the dew of death already on his face.

There is no disfigurement about him to be seen, no stain of blood, no ugly mark, yet he is touched by the pale hand of the destroyer, and is sinking, dying, withering beneath it. He has aged at least ten years within the last fatal hour, while in his eyes lies an expression of full of hungry expectancy and keen longing as amounts almost to anguish.

As Mona advances to his side, through the gathering gloom of fast approaching night, pale almost as he is, and trembling in every limb, this miserable anxiety dies out of his face, leaving behind it a rest and peace unutterable.

To her it is an awful moment. Never before has she stood face to face with dissolution, to wait for the snapping of the chain,—the breaking of the bowl.

"Neither the sun nor death," says La Rocheblanc, "can be looked at steadily," and now "Death's thousand doors stand open" to receive this man that but an hour ago was full of life as she is now. His pulses throbbled, his blood coursed lightly through his veins, and he was a man; but now he is a dying man, and he is sinking, dying, withering beneath it. He has aged at least ten years within the last fatal hour, while in his eyes lies an expression of full of hungry expectancy and keen longing as amounts almost to anguish.

"You have come," he says, with a quick high that bespeaks relief. "I knew you would. I felt it; yet I feared. Oh, what comfort to see you again!"

Mona tries to say something,—anything that will be kind and sympathetic,—but words fail her. Her lips part, but no sound escapes them. The terrible reality of the moment terrifies and overcomes her.

"Do not try to make me any commonplace speeches," says Rodney, marking her hesitation. He speaks hastily, yet with evident difficulty. "I am dying. Nothing can alter that. But death has brought you to my side again, so I cannot repine."

"But to find you like this"—begins Mona. And then, overcome by grief and agitation, she covers her face with her hands, and bursts into tears.

"Mona! Are you crying for me?" says Paul Rodney, as though surprised.

"Do not. Your tears hurt me more than this wound that has done me to death."

"Oh, if I had not given you that pistol," sobs Mona, who cannot conquer the horror of the thought that she has helped him to his death, "you would be alive and strong now."

"Yes,—and miserable! you forget to add that. Now everything seems squared. In the grave neither grief nor revenge can find a place. And as for you, what have you to do with my fate?—nothing. Why should you not return to me my own? and why should I not die by the weapon I had dared to level against yourself? There is a justice in it that snatches of Sadler's Wells."

(To be Continued)

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6:50 A. M.—For Fredericton Junction, connect with train for Bangor and points West, and for St. Stephen, St. Andrew, Hamilton and Woodstock and points North.

7:30 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points East. 7:40 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, Bangor and points West, and for St. Stephen, St. Andrew, Hamilton and Woodstock.

5:00 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction, St. Stephen, St. Andrew, Hamilton, Woodstock, Pongas Lake, Grand Falls and all points North. 7:30 P. M.—Express for St. John.

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