

A MYSTERIOUS QUEST.

CHAPTER XLII.
THE LAST HOPE.
(Concluded.)

"She will love you," the artist pursued. "One of the first thoughts I ever had in connection with our marriage was this. For my mother is not a selfish woman, and she will see the sweet spirit that informs this beautiful face. I do not know that I can bring her back with me to the ceremony. She is wedded to her own hearthstone, and is out of place within any walls but her own. But I will, at least, fetch back her blessing upon our union, and when we are married, we will go to see her, and I shall have the happiness of beholding the two beings I love most in the world brought into one embrace within my childhood's home."

Ab, with what a wistful air Jenny looked up. If this might only be! If she could but feel a mother's arms about her—how it would change and purify her heart. How worthy she would be of that mother-love! How her nature would expand and ripen under such bold influences! But she felt that it would never be. For he would not now escape from receiving that letter, and if he did receive it and read it, she knew him well enough to know that she would never be his wife.

"Go to her," she murmured, faintly. "I dare not ask you to remember my wishes in preference to hers."

He stopped to kiss her.

"And I dare not do so, Jenny. I idolize you. I love every hair of your head; every glance of your eye. Indeed, indeed, my love, I have no life without you; but the more I feel for you the more I must feel for your mother, since you two are the only beings in the world that have ever made me forget my art. Some day you will be the only one to consider; till that day comes let me pay my duty to both."

She sobbed, but attempted no further remonstrance. Virginia Rogers was a modest woman. She never thought of contending with him unduly, or of exercising the power of her beauty beyond its proper limits. Though she felt the ground giving way under her feet, though she knew or thought she knew, that if she let him go she would never see him at her side again, she resorted to no means beyond those of her visible distress, either to retain or delay him. She was too anxious to be worthy of him, and the mother that he loved.

A spark of goodness had been lit in her soul which she sought to cherish. Rather than see it go out, she was ready, as she had said upon a different occasion, to beg, to starve, to die. And so her sobs alone showed the grief that was devouring her—a grief he could not understand nor appreciate, but which finally made him ask:

"Why do you weep, Jenny? I shall come back very soon. You surely can wait in patience for three days."

"Not if you go back to the studio! I have a most unreasonable fear of

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the studio!" she cried. "Ever since you have been here I have a premonition of danger connected with that place. I may not be fully myself; but if I thought you were going from here to fourteenth street, I should fall in a faint at your feet. What does it mean? That some evil menaces you or our love?"

"No! no! my darling. You are tired and start at every shadow. I can forgive you for it. You have had a wretched week."

"But if you would only go to your mother without returning to the studio! If I could see you without the shadow of danger lowering over your head, I could be happy; then, I could even sleep."

"My darling!"

"It may be only a whim," she went on more urgently, as she saw that he was touched rather than annoyed by this seeming folly, "but is it not one that you can humor? I may be only nervous, but— Her attitude and gesture finished her appeal. Both were irresistible, and she smiled indulgently.

"It is a child's notion," said he; "but the child is very dear to me and shall be listened to. I can take the midnight train as well as any other. I have money with me, and though I shall have to go without my usual convenience, I will make it a flying trip or buy in Waterbury what I think I need. Does that relieve your fears, my darling, or persuade you that I am willing to do any reasonable or unreasonable thing that I conscientiously can please you?"

She kissed his hand, and her face grew eloquent. She was a great actress, but there was no acting in this; she felt all and more than she expressed. But the magnetism that would have made her a power on the stage, lent her her least look and action a force of meaning that would have overcome a weak man, and which, as it was, well-nigh intoxicated Degraw, lost in his first dream of love.

"Was ever a woman more beautiful?" he cried, and showed his tenderness upon her. A thought of Hilary soon came, however, to cut these demonstrations short. He gave his betrothed a final embrace, and urged her to complete her preparations for returning with Miss Aspinwall. Jenny hesitated to do his bidding, and ere long both found themselves in the carriage with Hilary, who was much gratified at the success of Mr. Degraw's undertaking.

As Mr. Degraw had promised not to return to his studio, he remained with the ladies' till eleven o'clock. Then he left for the depot, but before he said "Good-bye," Jenny drew him aside, and whispered:

"You will think I do not trust you, but for all that I am going to ask you for the loan of your studio key till your return. I will keep it

like a talisman under my pillow, and when I feel it there, I shall know that our love is safe, and our wedding day at hand. Can you understand such nonsense?"

And he, thinking that she meditated some surprise for him, gave her the key, and never suspected that in the trembling of the small white hand which took it, he saw the evidences of a relief, such as the prisoner experiences when he receives the commutation of a sentence which had hitherto doomed him to death.

CHAPTER XLIII. Fate Triumphant.

It had been decided during the hour Mr. Degraw had spent with these ladies, that if he found his mother well and submissive to his wishes, that the marriage should take place immediately upon his return. As he expected to be back by Thursday noon, this would leave them little over two days in which to prepare the minds of their friends for the event, and to make such arrangements for the quiet ceremony they contemplated, as would prevent undue gossip, and insure comfort to the dainty and sensitive bride.

But Hilary was a power when his faculties were fully aroused. He did all, managed all, with consummate tact and judgement, and though she could not hope to save Jenny or the two Degraws from criticism, she at least managed to make it perfect, understood in their own circle, that it was the artist whom Miss Rogers was to marry, and not his namesake from Cleveland, to whom she had been reported to be engaged. For many this was enough, for others it was not; but these she left to Mr. Bodwell, who had been the first to spread the unfortunate report of that brief betrothal she was now so anxious to have forgotten. And he for the very love of gossip, did what he could, and while not denying that Miss Rogers had received attentions from both gentlemen, managed to throw such a veil of mystery over the whole affair as to leave those who listened to him impressed rather by the romance than the peculiarities of the affair.

Jenny, meanwhile, kept herself

secret. There was one task before her, but that she kept for the last moment. Till that moment came, she could neither busy herself nor lend aid to Hilary in her thousand and one duties. The only person she saw at all, or allowed to be admitted to her presence was the lawyer who represented the interests of the Cleveland Dgraw. Him she did see, as well as such witnesses as were necessary to make the signing of her name legal. All other persons were excluded, and wisely for she was very much worn by anxiety, and quite feverish from the long suspense. These symptoms of nervousness, however, vanished completely on Thursday noon, when a telegram came from her absent lover, telling her to expect him by three o'clock. Hilary was out, but this was a satisfaction to Jenny, who felt that the time had come for her to perform the one act which might insure her future peace and happiness. So leaving the telegram with Miss Aspinwall's maid, she dressed herself and went out, leaving no word behind her, save that she expected to be home before three.

She went direct to the building which contained her lover's studio. She mounted the stairs and stood before his door, palpitating and anxious it was fastened, but she held the key and bearing no one in the hall or on the stairs, she hastily unlocked the door, swung it open, and passed in. Three letters were lying on the floor before her. Lifting them with a trembling hand, she glanced at their several post-marks. They were all city letters. Tearing them open one after the other, she looked at their contents. One only interested her. In you read these words as she read them, you will see to what a degree:

"37 East—Street.

"Mr. Hamilton Degraw—Sir: This afternoon, it was my fortune to pick up, at the corner of Fourth avenue and Sixteenth street, an unsealed letter addressed to Mr. Hamilton Degraw. As it is a name well known in this city, I was about to venture upon taking it at once to your studio when a friend suggested that I should write first and inquire if you had lost such a letter. It is signed 'Jenny,' and seems to be of importance. If it is your property, you can easily regain it by calling at the above address.

"Respectfully yours,

"George Vandecker.

"To Mr. Hamilton Degraw, Artist."

Ah! what a narrow escape! If this gentleman had carried out his first intention and taken this letter to the studio, she would not have seen her lover at her feet that night. And they lost! Lost at a point beyond the Westminster. What did it mean? Who had lost it? And how came Mr. Vandecker to be the one to pick it up? Questions impossible to answer, unnecessary perhaps to have answered, since the letter itself was all she needed, and this note told her where she was to go to obtain it.

(To be continued.)

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UNCLAIMED LETTERS, REMAINING IN G. P. to Jan. 18th, 1912.

A	Abbott, Miss Olive, Allandale Road	Edwards, F. J., Elliott, Miss Bertha	Keefe, Martin, George's Street	Piercey, John, retd Pinston, James, Hamilton Street
B	Baird, Samuel, Carter's Hill	Freak, Uriah, Fagen, Miss Mary, Pennywell Road	Kennedy, Beatrice, Cabot St	Pynn, Josiah M., late Conche
C	Beddcombe, Samuel, Allandale Road	Flemming, Miss, care Royal Stores	Kawaniagh, Miss Maggie, rd Kelly, John J., retd.	Elgrim, Thomas B., care G. P. O.
D	Brentnall, R., James St	Fitzgerald, Thomas, Boncloddy St	Lees, Wm., LeDrew, Miss Annie	Power, Master J. A., retd.
E	Bell, James, Eagle's Hill	Ford, Mrs. Albert, Colman's Lane	Lynch, John, late Trepassy railway	Ryan, Joseph, care G.P.O.
F	Boone, Michael, card, care Gen'l P. Office	Fowler, Mrs. Bridget, care Gen'l P. Office	Lefellier, J. B. E., Lush, Miss Lizzie	Ryan, James, late s.s. Ethie
G	Brown, Elijah, Oke's Factory	Fraser, Alex., retd, care Gen'l P. Office	Maddox, Miss Annie, Carter's Hill	Ryan, J. B., Raines, A. C., retd
H	Boone, Miss Emma, Spencer College	Garnier, Louis, Garret, Henry	Martin, James, Cabot St	Rennie, Mrs. C. M., retd
I	Bursell, Miss Bertha, care D. Morrison	Gillett, Mrs. A., Cabot St	Mercer, Wm. Jas., late s.s. Fiona	Riche, Nellie, New Gower Street
J	Butler, Thos. J., Crosbie Hotel	Gibbons, Miss Gertrude, care G. P. O.	Morgan, Mrs. Henry D., care Gen'l Delivery	Reid, Julia, retd.
K	Buchanan, Ralph, Bulger, Robert, care Gen'l Delivery	Gordon, J. W., care Mrs. Chaplin, Water St. West	Moore, Wm. James St	Rose, Wm., Robinson, Wm.
L	Burns, Joe, care Gen'l Delivery	Gillingham, Jessie, care Salvation Shelter	Murphy, Miss Katie, Cookstown Road	Roberts, L., Rose, John
M	Butler, J., care Bishop & Sons	Greening, Miss G., Long's Hill	Murphy, Walter P., care Gen'l Delivery	Russell, Mrs. Barter's Hill
N	Cadwell, W. T., slip	Hanlen, Mrs., care Mrs. Jack	McCarthy, Mrs. T. P., No. 7—Street	Rumsey, Harry, Barter's Hill
O	Clarke, John W., care Gen'l Delivery	Haggood, Wm., Harvey, Wm., Haddon, Aug.	McCarthy, Thos., King's Rd	Sparks, Mrs. S., Notre Dame Street
P	Clarke, Mrs. S., O'Dwyer's Cove	Heales, Mrs. Jas., Merrymount Rd	McNeill, Allan, Water St. West	Sheppard, Nathaniel, care G. P. O.
Q	Crew, Reuben, care G.P.O.	Heller, J. S., care Gen'l Delivery	McNeill, A. Water St. West	Smith, T. D., Long's Hill
R	CHIFF, Robert, care G.P.O.	Hellier, Joe, Helmens, John, LeMerchant Road	Nosworthy, Sarah, retd.	Smith, Peter, Scott, Miss Anna
S	Cole, E. J., late Grand Falls	Hickman, Miss Annie, New Gower Street	Nosworthy, J., Pleasant St	Sober, Miss Alice, Water Street
T	Cotter, D., Nagle's Hill	Hodge, Bert, care G.P.O.	Oake, Miss Agnes, Hotel Royal	Stowe, John, Summers, Wm., Water St.
U	Cooper, Samuel, late Dildo	Hodson, A., Hobbick, J. C., Holley, Alfred, LeMerchant Road	Oldford, Samson, care G. P. O.	Sullivan, Mrs. John, Gen'l Hospital
V	Cotton, Mrs. M. M., Colford, Wm.	Hutchings, Mrs. Mary, 23—Street	O'Neill, John W., tailor	Templeman, P., Cabot St.
W	Coal, Herbert, Middle Cove	Hurley, Joe, Carter's Hill	Parsons, Violet, card, Bond Street	Thistle, Edward, Wickford Street
X	Coady, Miss May A., Balsam House	Hynes, Jas., care P. Coady, Flower Hill	Parsons, Eli, Crosbie Hotel	Thistle, Ambrose, Casey's Street
Y	Collins, Miss B. M., Clearly, Miss Bride	Jaynes, Miss Nellie, Jernigan, Miss L. V., James, Gordon, British House	Pelly, R., care W. H. Jackman	Thomas, Miss Sam'l, Water Street
Z	Day, Miss D., card, Bond St	Jancion, Miss D. J., care W. H. Jackman	Pearcey, Albert, Allandale Road	Verge, Charles C., Valus, Miss R., retd.
	Davis, Mrs. John	Keohoe, Fannie, Barne's Rd	Pendergrast, Miss Maggie, Cook's St	Wrap, Mrs. Water St
	Dahal, Mrs., card	Kennedy, Miss Beatrice, 36—Street	Pellety, Jennie, Water St	Way, Heskiah, Waddleton, Wm., Duggan Street
	Dyke, Miss Sophie	Kennedy, John, New Gower Street	Perkins, W. L., Water St	West, Joseph, late Norris, Arm
	Delaney, Miss L., late Goulds		Pendergrast, Mgt., late Avondale	Wells, Mrs. Samuel, care Gen'l P. Office
	Diamond, Mrs. Wm., card, Cabot Street		Peddie, Gladys, Water St	Weir, James, Newtown Road
	Dickson, T. W., Doon, Ernest		Penny, Mrs. Mgt., care G.P.O.	Webber, A., Pennywell Road
	Dooly, Miss W. D. Woods		Petty, Chas., care G.P.O.	Windsor, Wm., St. John's
	Dyke, Miss Sophie		Pike, Miss Ethel, Alexander Street	Williams, W., Williams, Charles, Allandale Road
	Donovan, Herbert, Crosbie Hotel		Pynn, Miss Lillian	Willer, George, care Bishop & Sons
				Young, G. W., care G. P. O.
				Yetman, Dorcas, Circular Rd.
				Power, Miss Katie, Henry Street

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A	Rose, Frank, schr. Arnold	Higdon, Chas. H., schr. Duchesse	H	Weathers, Nicholas, schr. Hearo	N	May, James, schr. Northern Light
B	Warren, Augustine, schr. Arnold	Agood, George H., schr. Lucy Ann	Gerhardt, Capt. Ebon St	Gerhardt, Capt. H. R. Silver	P	Bradton, Capt. R., schr. Perseverance
C	Grandy, Capt. George, schr. Arnold	Sheppard, Walter, schr. Ettamay	L	Priddle, Joseph, card	S	Parsons, Wesley, s.s. Stella Maria
D	Greene, Hugh A., s.s. Athenion	Sheppard, D., schr. Ettamay	Hanamer, Levi, schr. Leaphr	Gibbons, Thos., schr. Lady	T	Petite, Capt. Henry, schr. Tobatic
E	Chapman, Dan, s.s. Bourdeau	Batstone, Corbett, schr. Fannie W. Freeman	Butler, Samuel, schr. Lord of Avon	Kelloway, Wm., s.s. Florizel	U	Savory, Wm., schr. Tasmania
F	Martin H., schr. Rose Bella	Kelloway, Wm., s.s. Florizel	Sarty, Ermon, schr. Milfred M. Wiseman, Edgar, schr. Mary F.	James, James, schr. Ger Falcon	V	Gardner, Alex., schr. Uronick
G	Gunnery, Capt. Thos., schr. Cella	Moors, C., schr. Gertie Moors	Martin, D., schr. Minnie Strong		W	Hobbs, Capt. R. J., schr. Vandeuilla
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