

Sidney, however, was not deceived, and though she said no more, her resolve deepened and strengthened to come at the secret of Deville's sudden change.

"There's one comfort," she said, "Archie doesn't seem to be much grieved. Has he told you anything about it yet, Olla?"

"No," answered Olla, thoughtfully; "but he seems quite cheerful. I daresay he will mention it in time."

Sidney and Dolly were soon asleep in the white curtained beds at the other side of the room, but for hours Olla sat beside the dying fire thinking and suffering, and making her grief familiar to herself. She heard the clock strike two before she prepared to seek her couch, and she roused herself to find her limbs stiff with cold, and to hear a dull rain beating drearily against the windows.

The house was quiet as the grave, but her long vigil had left the girl in a state of trembling nervousness. No matter how mentally and physically courageous one is, there are times that a black horror of what we know not what seizes us, and we rise and flee from the spot we are in, although the sunlight may be pouring its cheerful tide over us. A sudden terror, inexplicable and fearful, of solitude, seizes us, and we rush to seek the presence of our kind, to laugh and wonder at our sudden fear of nothing.

The regular breathing of the sleepers made the loneliness more intolerable, and with bearing strained to the utmost, as though expectant of some ghostly sound to break the stillness, Olla, hastily and shivering, prepared to seek her couch.

It seemed to her as though through the rain there came faint sounds, rather suggestions of noise than the thing itself, and sitting on the side of her bed, she listened intently. If any there had been, it was not repeated, and convincing herself that she had been mistaken, she crept into bed, and worn out with emotion and fatigue, was soon asleep.

In the meantime a very different scene was taking place in a distant part of the house.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WINONA'S DEPARTURE.

The silvery chime of the drawing-room clock rang through the silent house, dropping one mellow peal through the quiet. The dismal sound of quiet, monotonous rain beating against the windows and dripping from the eaves and verandas, and the faint rustling of the bare branches were the only sounds audible after the prolonged reverberation of the sounding hour had died away. A faint, ghostly light from the lobby windows stole greyly in, for there was a moon, though hidden by a pall of sombre clouds. The illumination was, however, sufficient to guide Winona, who, a few moments after the hour had struck, softly opened the door of her apartment, and after listening intently, emerged from the room, closing the door softly behind her. Like a black shadow in the uncertain light, she glided along the narrow passage and laid her hand softly on the door of the chamber occupied by Androsia, and which adjoined her own.

She turned it softly, and pushing the door slightly open, peered in through the gloom, and, satisfied that Androsia was buried in profound sleep, glided into the apartment. The window curtains were not closed, and the room was full of a shadowy light, by which every object was dimly visible.

Closing the door behind her, the Indian girl glided to the bedside of her foster-sister, which stood directly in the light falling across the floor from the window, and stood motionless, gazing down upon the sleeper, whose face was plainly discernible. Winona was completely dressed in her European costume, and she carried on her arm a long mantle and a hat with a veil attached to it. Her long hair fell unbound nearly to her knees, and the spectral light fell weirdly on her dusky face and burning eyes.

For nearly half an hour she stood motionless, gazing down at the lovely face smiling in sleep, the ruby lips parted and showing the dainty white teeth, and the mass of short curls streaming out over the pillow. The face expressed perfect happiness and repose; and as Winona looked a lofty satisfaction stole over her dark face. She knew that Androsia was happy, and her residence of a few days under the roof of her foster-sister's guardian had convinced her that she need not fear for the continuance and growth of Androsia's pleasure and content. Had it been otherwise she would almost have persecuted herself to relinquish her present design in order to keep watch and ward over one whom she was about taking a last farewell of. She knew as she stood in the melancholy midnight gloom that she would never look upon her face again in this world; and her religion did not teach her to hope for a meeting with a daughter of the pale-faces in a future state. She might look back, but it was not given her to look forward in this case. Androsia's life and hers had been so closely interwoven that an earthly future that did not hold the girl for her was simply a blank, a void, a darkness from which her soul recoiled, but which contained in its black bosom one mighty thing that was powerful enough to lure her on her present path, one lurid fire that lightened with its burning light the horrid blackness.

She felt that the success she hazarded for in her present plan would place an insurmountable barrier between herself and the Indian girl she loved, but she was content that it should be so. Androsia's life would be no more.

less blank now, of that she felt assured, for she had read Archie's heart with keen eyes and found him worthy, and she knew that Androsia loved him.

It was not to engage in a mental struggle with herself that she now sought Androsia's side. Her plans were fixed; the conflict with herself was over, and it was merely to satisfy her lonely soul with a last glance at the sleeping face that she had come.

"I must leave her a gift to remember Winona by," she muttered softly, and gliding to a little stand in the window she lifted from it a pair of scissors, and in a couple of moments her magnificent hair lay in a black mass at her feet. She lifted it, and without a change of countenance, tore a strip from the crepe veil attached to the hat she carried, and tying it round the heavy raven tresses laid them on the white quilt beside her foster-sister. Then she lifted one of the sleeping girl's bright curls, and cautiously severing it from her head, thrust it into her bosom. Her countenance during all this never varied by so much as the quiver of an eyelid. She was showing all the haughty stolidity of her race.

She leant closely over Androsia as though to embrace her, but the girl stirred slightly and she slipped back into the shadow, and waited until she had sunken again into profound slumber.

The wind was rising, sobbing in low dismal wallings round the house, and the intense chill that preceded dawn increased the coldness of the atmosphere.

With a footstep as noiseless as a thistle-down Winona stole from the room without venturing a second time to approach the bed. As she closed the door her footstep faltered for a second, and her hand lingered on the handle, as though at the last moment her resolution was giving way, but in a moment she had risen triumphant over the passing weakness, and shutting the door softly stole down the passage.

At the head of the stairs she paused and looked over the balustrade into the hall beneath. It was empty and ghostly in the deadened light that forced itself through the stained glass that surrounded the hall door, and filtering down the stairs that barely creaked under her feet. Winona reached the large square hall and paused for a second glancing into the drawing-room, the door of which stood open.

The Venetian blinds were closed; but she knew where to lay her hand on what she wanted, and disappearing into the intense gloom of the room, she reappeared almost instantly with something that glittered bluely in the uncertain light of the hall, in her hand. She thrust it into the bosom of her dress and reascended the stairs as noiselessly as she had descended, gaining her own chamber without having disturbed any of the sleeping household. Once in its shelter she locked and bolted the door, and approaching the window, raised the sash cautiously. The window opened on the roof of a side veranda, and without a moment's hesitation she sprang out into the driving rain, and with the agility of a panther slipped down the lattice-work and reached the soaked ground as easily as she would have run along a level path. She crept cautiously under the dripping trees, until she found herself on the front lawn, and then for a moment she paused and looked steadily back at the dark outlines of the house she was leaving, taking care to remain under the dark shadows of the maples that were railing their skeleton arms in the sobbing wind, lest any one should chance to look from the windows and catch a glimpse of the desolate figure standing in the driving rain.

The wind, in its rising strength, had torn the smitten clouds into great rifts, edged with silver by the still hidden moon, and as she stood looking back, like a shining bark parting from a clinging mist, the moon rode suddenly into a narrow space of star-gemmed blue, and threw a lovely, but melancholy, light over the whole scene. It paled, faded, and died, as the fleecy edges of a hurrying bank of clouds received her, and all was darker than before.

Neither moon or stars or the eye of man looked on Winona, as, with a mute gesture of farewell, she turned and fled into the black shadows of the pine-grove, where the white angel guarded with folded plumes the memorial stone of Colonel Howard and the unfortunate Farmer.

For a few moments she paused, looking earnestly at the face gleaming whitely on her from the darkness. It was a delicate and spiritual likeness of him who had won all the love of her wild heart, and vowed her his in return. It was one of the strangest anomalies of this strange nature that, though Farmer had turned from her dusky beauty to win and wear, if possible, her fairer sister, that though her feelings towards him had changed to unfathomable hate, unquenched even by his death, her love for Androsia had never for an instant wavered in its strength and fidelity. Androsia was to her a purer, brighter, brighter self. Part of Androsia's seeming, unconfessed dislike of the husband chosen for her by her father was owing to a vague consciousness of the hidden treachery of his conduct towards Winona, who, however, had declined to lay bare the cruel wound to any human eye. She could suffer this as, in the same way, she would have channeled her own death-song at the stake, and smiled defiance as the flames licked her tender skin; but a woman can feel where she cannot plainly see, and Androsia's nature was singularly sympathetic.

The great drops fell through the pine to the sodden ground in a continuous patter, and a stronger wind began to sway their dark crests.

With the step of her race, long, panther-like and noiseless, Winona glided to the river's edge, and disappeared among the darkness. A desolate phantom-like form, fitting into the mystic mists that rose from the mighty stream that flowed, silent in its vastness, through leagues of shadows, like some gigantic vision of a solemn and inexplicable dream.

It was Archie's last morning at home, and the household was early astir in order that he might catch the early train for Toronto at the next town, which we will call Brampton.

It was intensely cold, with icicles half-a-yard long hanging, like crystal spears in an enchanted armory, from the eaves, and the trees glistening in a coat of ice like warriors arrayed in mail of diamonds. The sun was brilliant, and the sky that unapproachable blue seen alone in American skies, especially during the winter.

A great fire of dry beech and maple roared on the hearth of the breakfast room, for winter was truly laying his icy claw on the land, and Mrs. Frazer, with a look of gravity that her face of late had constantly worn, was making breakfast. Two table gleamed in the sunlight and bright with heavy, old-fashioned silver, and the flower-stands were banks of bloom and perfume. Brown-eyed Olla, serene and graceful, like Waverley's Charlotte, was cutting bread and butter, and Dolly was looking out of the window, twining her white fingers in the cord of her white morning-dress. Sidney, like a household Flora, was busy amongst the plants, her lovely head rising from the flowers radiant in the glancing sunlight.

Archie was in the library with his father, and Androsia and Winona had not yet appeared.

They were unusually silent, and for once Sidney forgot to sing at her fragrant task, which, I must confess, was the only household industry that ever threw its chains round her.

"Ah, here's Androsia, mamma," she said, as the door opened and Miss Howard came in, looking anxiously round the apartment as she paused on the threshold. Her tall, willowy figure showed to great advantage in her new style of dress, and she had not lost that shy grace that had distinguished her always. Her color varied as she looked from one to another.

"Where is Winona?" she said abruptly. "See what I found on my bed this morning! Where is Winona?" There was a ring of alarm in her voice, and the color came and went like a flame blown by the wind. The sunlight flashed in her deep eyes as they glanced from one to the other of the group.

Sid came from amongst the flowers and Dolly turned from the window.

"My dear," said Mrs. Frazer, turning very pale, "what is that, and what do you mean?" She laid her hand on the table as though to steady herself, and looked at Androsia with some underlying terror in her eyes. Androsia's eyes, shining and dilated, turned and held hers.

She tried to speak, but the cords of her tongue seemed stiffened, and she stood looking dumbly at Mrs. Frazer.

Olla went to her and drew her into the room. She quietly opened her clenched hand, and took from it the object that had drawn Mrs. Frazer's attention.

"Mamma," she said, in a tone of surprise and alarm, "what can this mean? This is a mass of long black hair tied with a torn piece of crepe."

"I think I can guess what it means," ejaculated Sidney. "Winona's gone! She was like a caged creature while she was here."

Her words electrified Androsia. Her temples crimsoned. Her eyes became dark and stormy.

"Winona gone!" she said with superb disdain. "No, Sidney speaks foolishness. Why should Winona leave her sister? She is abroad, but she will return."

Even as she spoke, the inborn knowledge that her words were merely words broke her voice into a low wail of terror. She slipped on her knees, and pressed the raven tresses of Winona convulsively to her heart. Then she sprang to her feet and rushed to the door, a new idea lending her a momentary hope.

"He will find her for me," she cried, with her hand on the door. Already she had learned to turn to Archie in her trouble.

Mrs. Frazer detained her with a hand that trembled.

"My child," she said, "you have not told us what is really the matter. Perhaps you are alarming yourself needlessly."

"Winona is gone," replied Androsia, shaking off the slender hand. "I must find her!"

Mrs. Frazer looked imploringly at her eldest daughter, and in a moment Olla's round arm was clasped firmly round the waist of the terrified and excited creature.

"Listen to me, dear," she said, calming her at once by her magnetic touch and gaze, "if Winona is really missing, you know her too well to doubt that she will return to you, yet whom she loves so entirely. But it is not certain that she is gone. What makes you think that she is not out for a ramble?"

Tears, like great diamonds were pouring silently down Androsia's face. She looked in Olla's face and shook her head.

"I feel it," she answered in a tone of perfect conviction. "She left me this that she might dwell in my heart, when I should see her no more."

Sidney was much distressed at Androsia's grief, and Dolly looked on with eyes like humid violets.

Mrs. Frazer had quietly left the apartment,

signing to Olla to detain Androsia. She crossed the hall quickly and entered the library, closing the door behind her.

Captain Frazer and Archie were seated at a small table, conversing with faces of considerable thoughtfulness. The former looked up quickly as his wife entered. Her eyes were fixed on him with an expression of deep tenderness and holy pity, and he was not slow to read something unusual in their glance. Archie rose from his chair as his mother entered and came gaily up to her, but his face changed as he looked down into hers. She clasped her fingers round his strong hand but gazed past him at her husband, whose rugged face looked old and care-worn in the morning light. Startled too as his eyes read hers. His lips moved as though to speak and he leant forward, his muscular hands grasping the arms of his invalid chair.

"It is as we dreaded, Richard," she said, quickly, and keeping one hand on the door as though to prevent intrusion, "Winona is gone!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of the old officer, he would not probably have shown the agitation that he now evinced. He bounded in the chair as though he were about casting aside his infirmity and spring erect, and his dark face changed to an awful ashen hue. Great drops of perspiration rolled down his forehead, and his dark eyes flashed with horror. Inexpressibly surprised and shocked at his appearance, Archie hastened to him, his mother still holding his hand as though the contact gave her strength.

"Open the window!" gasped Captain Frazer, "I am suffocating."

Archie dashed open the window, and the exhilarating, frosty air pouring in, revived the old man almost instantaneously.

"My dear Richard," said his wife in a tone of infinite compassion, laying her hand in his, which closed over it in a tense grasp.

"How do you know, when did it happen?" he said hoarsely, and in a few words Mrs. Frazer explained what had occurred.

Archie listened in amazement, not so much at the event itself, as at its reception by his father, whom he knew as a man reticent though cordial, and possessed of almost complete self-control. The slight of the Indian girl was certainly not a home-sorrow darkening their hearth, and a thing not altogether unanticipated by him. Androsia would grieve, of that there was little doubt, but on the whole he felt a somewhat selfish pleasure in her flight. Androsia would be more his very own.

"Why, father," he said, by way of suggesting something, as a dead pause followed, during which Captain Frazer leant his brow on his hands, and Mrs. Frazer stood looking at him, her hand resting on his shoulder, "she will probably return when she is tired of rambling through the woods. Recollect her race!"

"I do," murmured the old man, looking at him, "and therein lies my grief. Vindictive, revengeful, sure and swift on the trail of an enemy as a sleuth-hound. Relentless as fire or pestilence."

A new light broke on Archie and something of the old untamed spirit of his Celtic ancestors blazed in his eyes.

"By Jove, sir," he exclaimed, starting to his feet, "if you think that is her errand, I wish her every success. If I met him myself I would feel my fingers tingle to choke the life out of his cowardly carcass."

Archie's fine face fled, and his form seemed actually to dilate in his anger. He clenched his strong hands, and stretched out his long arms as though he saw an abhorred enemy standing in his path. His mother ran to him and laid her hand on his mouth.

"Hush," she cried, in a voice shaking with horror. "Oh, hush!"

Captain Frazer turned his ghastly face with a look that sent the blood in cold waves back to his son's heart.

"Do you know that you are calling for the blood of your brother?" he said, in a low intense voice. "Worthy of death he may be, but neither by your hand or will."

"My brother!" echoed Archie, and then there was a dead silence in the room, broken only by the sound of a bird singing in a cage, and the embers dropping on the hearth.

(To be continued.)

## THE ANONYMOUS LETTER.

BY ALY HANDELPH.

"There can't nobody fool me," said Squire Dapplebee, with an indescribable contortion of his parchment-colored physiognomy. "Them city chaps is full of their tricks and traps, but I guess they'll find I wasn't born yesterday. And if Henry Darrock comes here, please Deborah, I've got your father's orders to fall back upon: he shan't see you! George Dapplebee knew what he was about when he sent you here, to keep you out of the way of the ravening wolves and foxes."

"Yes; but Uncle Dapplebee—"

"No, you don't, my dear," said the Squire, slowly rolling his head round and round within a stiff white wall of shirt collar, and closing one eye in a wink. "Bats ain't no go here, as you'll find out before you've been at Dapplebee farm a week."

Deborah Dapplebee bit her lip, and bent lower over her sewing, a bit of snowy cambric rustling, without trusting herself to reply to this piece of oracular wisdom. She was a pretty, trim little brunette, with shining black hair parted across a broad, low brow, great liquid brown eyes, and