

was upstairs, with the colonel to play propriety, sponging the dominie's face and hands, and brushing his hair, as if he were her own son. Every now and again Colonel Morton came up to the bedside, saying: "Be kind to him, my dear Tehesa, and remember that he saved the life of yohah poah sistah Cecilia's widowah." So the stately Spanish lady shook up the wounded man's pillows, while the colonel put his arm around him and held him up; and then, as he sank back again, she asked: "Are you strong enough to have Cecile come up and read to you?" Wilkinson, sly dog, as the Captain called him, said it was too much trouble to put Miss Du Plessis to; but his objections were overruled. Soon a beatific vision came once more on the scene, and Wordsworth was enthroned as the king of poets. Miss Halbert and Mr. Perrowne were in the garden, and the clergyman had a rose in his button hole which he had not plucked himself. If he had not been in holy orders, he would have thought Miss Fanny was awfully jolly. Then he said to himself, that holy orders don't hinder a man being a man, and Miss Fanny was, really was, awfully jolly, and boarding in the houses of uncultivated farmers was an awful bore. But this was nothing to what was going on in the studiously avoided work room. The lawyer's hands were being washed, because a voice from an arch-looking face said that he was a big baby, and didn't know how to wash himself. It was quite a big baby in size and aspect that was soaped and glycerined, and had some other stuff rubbed into his hands by other pretty hands, one of which wore the victim's ring. Corry felt that he could stand it, even to the putting on of the minister's gloves. When she had finished her work, the hospital nurse said, "that silly little Marjorie, angry because Cecile would not allow her to read fairy stories to Mr. Wilkinson, surrendered you to me."

"O Marjorie, my darlin', and would you throw your lovely self away on a poor, stupid, worthless thing like me?"

CHAPTER XV.

Miss Carmichael Snubs and Thinks—The Constable and the Prisoner—Matilda and the Doctor—The Children Botanize—Pressing Specimens—Nomenclature—The Colonel Makes a Discovery—Miss Carmichael Does Not Fancy Wilks—Mr. Newberry Takes Matilda—Mr. Pawkins Makes Mischief and is Punished—Rounds on Sylvanus—Preparations for Inquest.

"MR. CRISTINE, I never gave you permission to call me by my Christian name, much less to think that I accepted Marjorie's foolish little charge. I am sorry if I have led you to believe that I acted so bold, so shameless a part."

"Oh, Miss Carmichael, forgive me. I'm stupid, as I said, but, as the Bible has, I'll try and keep a watch on the door of my lips in future. And you such an angel of mercy, too! Please, Miss Carmichael, pardon a blundering Irishman."

"Nonsense," she answered. "I have nothing to pardon; only, I did not want you to misunderstand me." The gloves were on, and she shook hands with him, and laughed a comical little insincere laugh in his face, and ran away to her own room to have a foolish little cry. She heard her friend Cecile reading poetry to the wounded Wilkinson, and, looking out of her window, saw Mr. Perrowne helping her uncle to lift the doctor's chair out into the garden, and her mother, freed from conversation with the madwoman, plucking a flower for Mr. Errol's coat. There, too, was a young man, his hands encased in black kid gloves, sitting down on a bench with Mr. Terry, and with difficulty filling a meerschaum pipe. She thought he had a quiet, disappointed look, like a man's whose warm, generous impulses have been checked, and she felt guilty. It was true they had not known one another long, but what was she, a teacher in a common school, that was what people called them, to put on airs before such a man as that? If it had been Mr. Wilkinson, now; but, no; she was afraid of Mr. Wilkinson, the distant, the irreproachable, the autocratic great Mogul. She looked down again, through the blinds of course. Marjorie Thomas was on the lawyer's knee, and Marjorie Carruthers on the veteran's. The Captain's daughter was combing Cristine's brown hair with her fingers, and pointing the ends of his moustache, much to the other Marjorie's amusement and the lawyer's evident satisfaction. Miss Carmichael inwardly called her cousin a saucy little minx, resenting her familiarities with a man who was, of course, nothing to her, in a way that startled herself. Why had he not saved somebody's life and been wounded, instead of that poetic fossil of a Wilkinson? But, no; it was better not, for, had he saved the colonel's life, Cecile would have been with him, and that she could not bear to think of. Then, she remembered what Corry had told her of the advertisement to the next of kin. Perhaps she would be wealthy yet, and more than his equal socially, and then she could condescend, as a great lady, and put a treasure in those poor gloved hands. Where would they all have been without these hands, all scarred and blistered to save them from death? Everybody was very unkind to little Marjorie's Eugene, and failed to recognize his claims upon their gratitude. Oh, that saucy little minx, with her grand assumptions of proprietorship, as if she owned him, forsooth!

Mr. Bangs called the justices to business. There was a prisoner to examine, and two charred masses of humanity for the coroner to sit upon. So a messenger was sent off to summon the long-suffering Johnson, Newberry, and Pawkins, for the coroner's inquest, and the doctor was car-

ried back into the office for the examination of the prisoner, Mark Davis. The two Squires sat in appropriate chairs behind an official table, at one side of which Mr. Bangs took his seat as clerk. Constable Rigby produced his prisoner, loaded with fetters. "Has this man had his breakfast, Rigby?" asked the Squire. "Certainly not, Squire," replied the constable. "Then take him at once to the kitchen, take off these chains and handcuffs, and let him have all that he can eat," replied the J. P., sternly. The corporal's sense of rectitude was offended. The idea of feeding criminals and releasing them from irons! The next thing would be to present them with a medal and a clasp for each new offence against society. But, orders were orders, and, however iniquitous, had to be obeyed; so Davis was allowed to stretch his limbs, and partake of a bountiful, if somewhat late, morning meal. "To trespass upon your kindness, Miss Hill, with such as this," said the apologetic constable, pointing to his prisoner, "is no act of mine; Squire Carruthers, who, no doubt, thinks he knows best, has given orders that it has to be, and my duty is to carry out his orders to the letter." Breakfast seemed to infuse courage into the dissipated farmer. When it was over, he arose, and, without a note of warning, doubled up the stiff guardian of the peace, and made for the door, where he fell into the arms of the incoming Serlizer. She evidently thought that Mark Davis, smitten with her charms, was about to salute her, for, with the words "Scuse me!" and a double turn of her powerful wrists, she deposited the assailant upon the floor. Sadly, but officially, the constable crawled over and sat upon the prostrate form of the would-be fugitive from justice. The prisoner squirmed, and even struck the doubled-up corporal, but the entrance of Ben Toner put an end to that nonsense, so that, handcuffed and chained once more, the desperate villain was hauled into the presence of the magistrates. In dignified, but subordinate, language, Mr. Rigby related the prisoner's escapade, and, by implication, more than by actual statement, gave the J. P.s to understand that they knew nothing about the management of offenders against the law. They were, therefore, compelled to allow the handcuffs to remain, but summoned sufficient courage to insist on the removal of the stable chains.

"What is your name, prisoner?" asked Squire Carruthers.

"Samuel Wilson," answered the man.

"Oh! kem now," interposed Mr. Bangs, "that's a lie, you know; yore name is Merk Davis, end yore a brether of Metthew Devis of the Peskiwenchow tavern, end you were Rawdon's right hend men. We know you, my led, so down't you try any alias games on us."

"Ef you know my name so mighty well, what do you want askin' for't?"

"To see if you can speak the truth," replied Carruthers.

"What other prisoners hev you got asides me?"

"That is none of your business," said the Squire.

"If I might be allowed to suggest, Squire," whispered the detective, "I think I'd tell him. Whet do you say?"

"Go on, Mr. Bangs."

"Well, my fine fellow, the Squire allows me to say that the others are Newcome, the stowne kettlers, and the women."

The name of Newcome disconcerted Mark, but he asked, "Whar's Rawdon and old Flower?"

"Didn't you see?" asked Mr. Bangs.

"I seen the fire all right, but they wasn't such blame fools as to stay there when there was a way out up atop."

"The epper wey wes clowded," said the detective.

"Was they burned alive then?"

"Yes, they were burned to ashes."

"O Lord!" ejaculated the prisoner, and then, wildly:

"What do you want along of me anyway?"

The magistrates and Mr. Bangs consulted, after which the doctor answered: "We want information from you on three points: first, as to the attempt of Rawdon's gang to burn this house; second, as to the murder of Detective Nash; and, third, as to the whole secret of Rawdon's business at the Select Encampment. You are not bound to incriminate yourself, as every word of this preliminary examination may be used against you, but, on the other hand, if you make a clean breast of what you know on these questions, your confession will go a long way in your favour with judge and jury."

"Suppose'n I don't confess not a syllabub?"

"Then, we shall commit you, all the same, to the County Gaol, to stand your trial at the assizes."

"That's all right, I'll stand my durned trile. You don't get nawthin out'n me, you misable, interferin', ornary, bushwhackin' judges!"

"Don't strike him, Rigby!" commanded Carruthers; for the constable, shocked and outraged by such indecorous language in a court of justice, was about to club his man. Then he added: "The colonel's servant, Maguffin, is going to town on business, and will drive you so far, and help to guard your prisoner. You can tie him up as tight as you like, without being cruel or doing him an injury. We shall have to do without you at the inquest."

Accordingly, while Mr. Maguffin brought round a suitable vehicle, and received his commissions from the colonel, the commitment papers were made out, and Constable Rigby securely fastened the worst criminal that had ever come into his hands. The said criminal did a little hard swearing, which called the long unused baton into active service. Davis was quiet and sullen when the buggy, under the pensioner's command, wheeled away in search of connections for the County Gaol.

The two bodies were still lying in their shells, with ice about them, in the unfinished annex of the post office. It was, therefore, decided to hold the new inquest in the Bridesdale coach-house, as also more convenient for the doctor, whose sprain might have been aggravated by driving. While Ben Toner was sent with a waggon to the Richards, to bring the ghastly remains snatched from the flames out of the punt, and to convey three members of that family to the coroner's jury, Mr. Bangs explained to Doctor Halbert his and the lawyer's thought regarding Matilda Nagle. The doctor consented, and the detective went to find the patient, who was busy and cheerful in the sewing-room with Mrs. Carruthers. He told her that she was not looking well, and had better come with him to see the doctor; but, with all the cunning of insanity, she refused to go. He had to go after Cristine in the garden, and take him away from Marjorie. With the lawyer she went at once, identifying him, as she did not the detective, with her brother Stevy. Mechanically, she sat down by the kind doctor's chair, and seemed to recognize him, although he did not remember her. After a few enquiries as to her health, he took one of her hands in his, and, with the other, made passes over her face, until she fell into the mesmeric sleep. "Your husband, Mr. Rawdon, is dead," he said; "you remember that he died by his own hand, and left you free." The woman gave a start, and seemed to listen more intently. "You will kill nobody, hurt nobody, not even a fly," he continued. "Do you remember?" Another start of comprehension was made, but nothing more; so he went on: "You will read your Bible and go to church on Sundays, and take care of your boy, and be just the same to everybody as you were in the old days." Then, with a few counter passes, he released her hand, and the poor woman told him all that he had enjoined upon her, as if they were the resolutions of her own will. She was not sane, but she was free from the vile slavery in which her inhuman keeper had held her. Moreover, she understood perfectly that Rawdon was dead, yet without manifesting either joy or grief in the knowledge. The lawyer led her back to the work-room, where she confided her new state of mind to Mrs. Carruthers, greatly to that tender-hearted lady's delight. The doctor did not think it necessary to practise his art upon the lad Monty, in whom the power of Rawdon's will was already broken, and upon whom his changed mother would, doubtless, exert a salutary influence.

Cristine had nothing to do, and almost dreaded meeting Miss Carmichael, which he probably would do if he remained about the house and grounds. Therefore he got out the improvised vasculum, and invited Marjorie and the older Carruthers children to come with him down to the brook to look for wild flowers. This met with the full approval of the young people, and they prepared at once for the botanizing party. The Captain saw Marjorie putting on her broad-brimmed straw hat, and enquired where she was going. She answered that she was going buttonizing with Eugene, and he said that he guessed he would button too, whatever that was. A very merry little group frisked about the steps of the two seniors, one of whom was explaining to the older, nautical party that he was on the hunt for wild flowers.

"Is it yarbs you're after?" asked the Captain.

"Well, not exactly, although I want to get a specimen of every kind of plant."

"You don't want to make medicine of 'em, Mandrake, Snakeroot, Wild Sassyperilly, Ginseng, Bearberry, Gentian, Cohosh and all that sort o' stuff, eh?"

"No; I want to find out their names, dry and mount them, and classify them according to their kinds."

"What good are they agoin' to do you?"

"They will help me to know Nature better and to admire God's works and His plan."

"Keep on there, mate; fair sailin' and a good wind to you. No pay in it, though?"

"Not a cent in money, but lots of pleasure and health."

"Like collectin' post stamps and old pennies, and butterflies, and bugs?"

"Something, but you see scenery and get healthy exercise, which you don't in stamp and coin collecting, and you inflict no suffering, as you do in entomologizing."

"I can tell trees when they're growin' and timber when its cut, but I don't know the name of one flower from another, except it's garden ones and common at that. Hullo, little puss, what have you got there?"

Marjorie, who had run on in advance and was not by any means ignorant of the flora of the neighbourhood, had secured three specimens, a late Valerian, an early spotted Touch-me-not, and a little bunch of Blue-eyed-grass. Cristine took them from her with thanks, told her their names and stowed them away in his candle box. The zeal to discover and add to the collection grew upon all the party, the Captain included. Near the water, where the Valerian and the Touch-me-not grew, Marjorie Carruthers found the Snake-head, with its large white flowers on a spike. Another little Carruthers brought to the botanist the purple Monkey-flower, but the Captain excelled his youthful nephew by adding to the collection the rarer and smaller yellow one. Then the lawyer himself discovered another yellow flower, the Gratiola or Hedge Hyssop, at the moment when Marjorie rejoiced in the modest little Speedwell. Once more, the Captain distinguished himself by finding in the grass the yellow Wood-Sorrel, with its Shamrock leaves, which, when Marjorie saw, she seemed to recognize in part. Then, crossing the stepping stones of the brook, she ran, far up the hill on the other side, to a patch of shady bush, from which