

GOING TO THE BATH.

CHAPTER IV. What Minnie Adams found herself alone, she fell into a deep and pleasant reverie...

In telling Sir Frederick Randall that she had fallen in love with him at first sight, she had spoken nothing but the truth, and she might have added that she had never loved before...

No other human being! Well, she confessed to herself during her reverie she certainly had seen very fond of Henry Willamette, but that was years ago...

How silly it was of her and Harry, she thought, "ever to have talked of love! They were but two children, who ought to have been punished for their profligacy..."

She recollected how her heart had throbbled within her when she read of his deeds of daring in the war, when she heard him everywhere extolled for his personal bravery in the field, and the clearness of his intellect at the council fire...

On the card was printed, "Colonel Henry D. Willamette, Esq., Military and Naval Engineer, and Chief Engineer of the Navy..."

Colonel Willamette entered the room with a somewhat embarrassed air—so different, Minnie thought, from Sir Frederick's easy manner—and bowed to her politely but somewhat frigidly.

"This is a very unexpected, but very welcome visit, Colonel Willamette," said Minnie, advancing towards him with her hand on her forehead, as if she were holding out her hand.

"She pointed to a more distant chair, but the colonel, apparently incoherent of the gesture, dropped into the seat recently occupied by Sir Frederick."

"I had no idea you were in England," she continued. "When did you arrive?"

"But a day or two since," he replied. "I have been loitering at Vienna until I have nearly outlasted the holiday I had allotted to myself, and now I am on my way home."

"Home to New York?" she asked. "To New York first," he replied with a grave smile, "then to my old home on the Hudson, which I have so often described to you."

"And which is so close to the Catskills that I even pictured you as a youthful Rip Van Winkle in his gloomy recesses," said Minnie, laughing. "Why do you not take some one with you to witness the solitude of that gloomy old house, colonel?"

"Take some one with me," repeated the colonel. "Yes; did you see no Viennese maiden with bright blue eyes, and a silver arrow stuck through her abundant black hair, with whom you could have fallen in love, and whom you could have persuaded to become the mistress of Crown's Nest?"

Colonel Willamette's expression was even more than usually grave, as he said: "I am sufficiently American to prefer my own countrywomen to foreigners, Miss Adams. If I can get no American lady to share my lot, I guess Crown's Nest will remain without a mistress during my lifetime."

"I would advise you not to lay down any strict rule, colonel," said Minnie, playfully, "as you will, no doubt, depart from it. Why not, for instance, delay your return, and remain here; our English cousins are very lovely and very domestic, and I should think you would not have much difficulty in finding one exactly suited to your tastes."

"Do you know what you are doing?" said Colonel Willamette, suddenly rising from his chair and approaching her. "Do you understand the amount of fortune you are thus heedlessly investing on me? No," he said, after a pause, "you do not, for you are still a mere child, and too good, and too pure, willingly to hurt any one."

"I am very sorry," said Minnie Adams, looking at him in surprise. "I assure you that it was merely jesting, that I had no idea of wounding your feelings."

"Of course you would not, how should you," said the colonel shaking his head, "and yet, child as you were, as you are even now, you have sufficient womanly penetration to enable you to guess my secret. Miss Adams, I was bred a soldier, and nothing, I suppose, will ever rid me of the bluntness and outspokenness of my profession, hence my visit to you to-day. Years ago, when you and I played together as children, though I was much the elder, I conceived an affection for you which I have never been able to shake off; it has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, despite the utmost efforts which, not knowing it to be acceptable to you, I made to stifle it; but all was in vain. I thought at one time I had conquered it, for by lay dormant for months, until I met you last summer at Hamburg, then I burst forth with renewed fury. There—there are circumstances about that meeting which made me particularly desirous to forget you, but it was not to be, your image haunted me ever since, and now, before I return home, I have come to ask you whether there is any chance of that which was the dream of my whole life, being accomplished?"

He paused and looked eagerly at her, with earnest, strained gaze, and quivering lips. Minnie met that gaze firmly, though her voice was tremulous in its tone, as she replied:

"Harry, for I must call you by the old familiar name, I am deeply pained to hear the words you have just spoken; believe me, I had no idea of this, but I teased you just now, but I have never had an idea of the existence of any such feeling on your part; we were childish friends. The feeling I entertained for you in those days, Harry, I entertain for you now, and I would be to you as your sister—but nothing more!"

"Nothing more!" he repeated, with a hollow voice. "Nothing more," she said. "Believe me, dear Harry, it pains me to say this to you, seeing the effect it has on you, but it would be worse than idle to tell you hopes which could never be realized."

Instantly the colonel's face grew black as night. "Is there," he exclaimed, passionately, "is there any one else who is preferred—I beg your pardon, Miss Adams," he added, stopping himself by a violent effort, "I have no right to ask you any questions."

"I quite agree with you, Colonel Willamette," said Minnie, with dignity, "it is time that this painful interview was brought to an end."

She rose from her chair as she spoke, and the colonel bowed and retreated towards the door. Then suddenly turning, he came swiftly back, and wrote to her husband, "and what is more, a perfect lady, well educated, and of excellent manners. I do not think her life is a happy one; she is laboring under some great trouble; but she does not venture any confidence, and of course I can not attempt to pry into her domestic affairs. She never speaks of her husband, and I have no doubt, from those observations, which she has unwittingly dropped, that he is a bad man. How many women have had husbands like him! Walter, how happy ought I to be in mine!"

"And that is—," "And that is, if ever you would want my assistance—no matter where you may be, or in what way you may require it—you will not hesitate to send for me."

"I promise," said Minnie, giving him her hand. He pressed it for an instant between his lips, and then respectfully raised it to his lips and went silently away.

CHAPTER V.—KITTY. The shades of evening were falling fast upon the village of Braaxholme, and the wide space of ocean which lay at its feet was blushing red in the departing rays shed by the declining sun; he ran beneath the waves. Braaxholme is a fishing village on the Devonshire coast, a cluster of houses swarming up a cliff, and overhanging the top of a huge side.

Beyond the fishermen and their families, there is little regular population, the few more pretentious cottages being occupied by the clergyman, the doctor, and some quiet-going people, mostly elderly, who have settled there, either for the sake of the seclusion or for the cheapness of the living.

No place in a civilized and densely-populated country like England, could well be more secluded. It is ten miles from any railway, and the only communication it has with the world is by means of the carrier's wagon, which three times weekly jogs over to the market-town, and three brings such letters and parcels as may be awaiting its arrival.

An event which happened during the Summer of this month seemed, however, destined to work a revolution in the fortunes of the place. A famous London physician, whose wife was in delicate health, which above all things required perfect quiet and pure fresh air for its treatment, chanced to hear of Braaxholme from one of his fashionable patients, a noble lord, whose country seat was in the neighborhood, and ran down to visit the spot.

He found it so exactly suitable for his purpose, that he determined to bring his wife thither at once. The great difficulty, that of providing her with suitable accommodation, being met by an offer on the part of the clergyman of the parish, a venerable man, whose wife had died about two years previously, and who on hearing the state of the case, was willing to place a portion of the vicarage at the disposal of the invalid.

Dr. Travers assented gratefully to this proposition. There was another objection. Mrs. Travers required careful nursing, and though the doctor's fortune

was sufficient to have enabled him to retire from practice, yet he took such interest in his profession that his wife was unwilling he should give it up for the sake of attending to her in a place so ungenial to his tastes. The old woman who acted as housekeeper and general servant at the vicarage, being stupid, as well as feeble, was clearly unfit for the task.

What then was to be done! The plan which presented so well was nearly fallen through, until the vicar behought him of Mrs. Moreton.

Who was Mrs. Moreton? Mr. Harvey, the old vicar, on being appealed to, could hardly say. She was a very nice young woman—quite a lady, very pretty, and wonderfully kind to children and to the poor. She had been in the village about eighteen months, and during that time had rendered herself beloved by all, by her kindness and sympathy.

She had some experience in nursing, too; for last year, when a case of small-pox had been brought into the village, from a foreign fishing boat which anchored there, and which was afterwards frightened to tend the poor stricken wretch, who was placed in an outhouse by himself, with only the infirmity doctor to visit him, Mrs. Moreton no sooner heard of it, than she took up her place by the sick man's bedside, and never left him until he was out of danger.

"That was bright," the doctor thought, "and showed an amount of heart and a determined will."

"Was she married?" "Oh, yes," Mr. Harvey said; "but there was something—he did not know what it was—which caused her to live by herself. Mrs. Moreton was, he believed, engaged in some business which kept him greatly from his home."

He had never visited Braaxholme since Mrs. Moreton had resided there. At all events, whatever might be between them, Mr. Harvey was perfectly certain that it was not Mrs. Moreton's fault; for a sweeter and better woman he did not breathe.

Dr. Travers was a man of the vicar's earnest simplicity, he could fully understand that Mrs. Moreton might be as good as well represented, and yet have valid reason for living apart from her husband.

Accompanied by the vicar, he walked round to the little cottage where she resided, and had an interview with the lady, the result of which, was that he gave away almost as much infatuated as his elderly companion.

When Mrs. Moreton had the circumstances of the case explained to her, she expressed herself delighted to be of any assistance in a matter in which restoration to health was concerned; but decidedly and promptly declined to take any remuneration for her trouble.

She would be amply repaid, she said if Mrs. Travers recovery was in any way due to her services; and she was so determined, and so ladylike on this point, that Dr. Travers saw it was useless to press it further.

So Mrs. Travers came to Braaxholme, and was duly tended by Mrs. Moreton, for whose sake she conceived a deep and lasting affection.

"She is the sweetest and most lovable creature in the world," the vicar wrote to her husband; "and what is more, a perfect lady, well educated, and of excellent manners. I do not think her life is a happy one; she is laboring under some great trouble; but she does not venture any confidence, and of course I can not attempt to pry into her domestic affairs. She never speaks of her husband, and I have no doubt, from those observations, which she has unwittingly dropped, that he is a bad man. How many women have had husbands like him! Walter, how happy ought I to be in mine!"

[To be Continued.]

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