

Haunted.

All last night the ghostly roof tree Creaked without my lattice pane, And I heard athwart the pauses Of the wild October rain, Voices as of souls appealing From the darkness unto light; Or of children lost and wandering In the dismal woods at night.

And my spirits, demon haunted By the memories of the past, Leaned across the gloom to listen To the voices of the blast; Striving vainly to interpret The wild passion of the rain, And the ghostly moan and murmur, Of the roof-tree at the pane.

'Neath my casement, tempest beaten, White chrysanthemums trailed and bowed; Odeorous woodbine wept above them, Like a silvery April cloud; On the sward the crimson kalmias Showered their ruddy bloom like wine, Waving up their bitter fragrance Like the incense of a shrine;

And their subtle perfumes stealing Vague and spectral, through the gloom Wove their Circean spells around me, In that memory-haunted room— Stirred the tender love and longing That my dead heart used to know; Woke the dry pain whose passion Burned to ashes long ago *

In the East a tremulous glory Fires the sombre woods with gold; Crystal clear the flawless morning Round the kindling World is rolled; As the wild hordes of the tempest Fly before the rising day, So the haunting ghosts that vexed me Melt in silver mist away.

SELECT STORY.

Bought With a Price.

[CONTINUED.]

Chapter XII.

THE SQUIRE'S COMPANIONS.

APTAIN, I leave him in your hands, he had said to his coadjutor, in many a scheme of infamy. Our dupe is now fairly in our power. See you that the plunder is equally divided, but let there be no 'esclandre.'

My scheme for bringing la belle Estelle into my power looks promising, he said to himself. There was no hope of luring her from her husband whilst he was the possessor of the gold, which, peerless as she is, she would bear his brutal treatment rather than lose. But this gold is in a fair way to become mine—or, at least, a large share of it. La belle Estelle will not prove so difficult to win when her husband announces himself a ruined man. Now that I can safely trust the dupe to ruin himself, I must see more to my priceless treasure. Strange, how I long to call her mine. The very difficulty of the chase has given a zest to my love for her. Win her I must, I have never yet failed. Already she looks gratefully upon me for relieving her life of the hated society of her husband. I wonder would she be so content did she know the companions who now occupy his time?

Chapter XIII.

THE PRIORY AND ITS GUESTS.

LILLY had seen very little of Estelle towards the end of the season. Estelle appeared to be anxious to lose no time.

She plunged even more eagerly than ever into every scene of gaiety.

Lilly had called on Estelle, but found she had joined a water party to Twickenham.

Then she had received a short note from Estelle saying how vexed she was to have missed her cousin, especially as she was leaving London for a round of visits at various country houses.

How strange! thought Lilly. Why does she avoid her own beautiful home at Ashton? Then, too she does not say whether her husband will be of her party I am sadly afraid that marriage has proved a very unhappy one. I am sure I could not bear Lawrence to leave me so much at liberty after we are married. I should not enjoy much pleasure without him.

Lilly was not sorry to return to Worthing Priory. The season had been very delightful, and it had been pleasant to her to be the successful debutante.

Lilly was not vain, but she was glad she was beautiful, because that by it she gave pleasure to others.

Lawrence was pleased at the admiration his lovely 'fiancee' received wherever she went, and Mrs. Hamilton also was gratified that her charge had made so brilliant a 'debut.'

In fact, Mrs. Hamilton had introduced that season the two most charming of all the pretty 'debutantes.'

Edith's success had also been great.

Though Lilly's beauty had carried the palm, yet Edith had received much homage.

Lilly's engagement precluded all hope of others winning her, therefore it was Edith who received offers of marriage.

But Edith refused all so determinedly that her mother began to think her daughter especially difficult to please.

Edith, are you sure you know your own mind? she had asked, as her daughter refused one of the most eligible 'parties' of the season, and one, too, whom Mrs. Hamilton would gladly have welcomed as a son-in-law. Sir Horace Holmes is, in every respect, so estimable, that, unless your affections were already engaged, I can scarcely understand his failing to win your love. You know well, my love, I allow you full liberty of will on this point, but I cannot forbear from pointing out to you how desirable would be this alliance.

Sir Horace, I am sure, loves you, and the love of such a man is not to be lightly esteemed. Besides which, your establishment in such a home as the Court would give me unfeigned pleasure. You know how generous Lawrence is, but we must not impose too much on him.

Next year I shall have to introduce Madeline, and my hope was to secure your future before bringing her out. After Lawrence's marriage, I shall remove to the Dover House, though Lilly is eager that we shall all remain at the Priory. But this would not be fair to the young couple, and I shall adhere to my plan of a separate establishment. I tell you all this my love, that you may well consider whether it was utterly impossible that you should receive more favourably the proposal of Sir Horace. The Dover House, picturesque as it is, will be a great change to you after the Priory. I would not urge you even so far, did I not know your affections were free.

Poor Edith knew not what to say. Her nature was so guileless, that to hide anything from her mother was painful beyond measure.

But how could she tell her that she was wrong in supposing her heart disengaged?

How could she confess the humiliating fact that her heart had been given where it had not been sought.

No, she could not confess so degrading a fact.

She should never marry she knew, for Edith was not the girl to bestow her hand without her heart.

She was very sorry that she must appear so self-willed to her mother, especially as she knew that all she had said of Sir Horace was true.

Had her heart been untouched, she felt she could have willingly loved him. He was, she knew, one of the kindest and best of men, besides being remarkably handsome and the possessor of a large fortune.

Edith knew that his marked preference for her, had led to her being envied by many a fair girl who would fain have been in her place.

She was sorry, too, for the disappointment of her mother.

It was so desirable in every way that she should comply with her mother's wishes.

She and his sister were quite portionless, and she knew that her duty was to relieve her mother's anxiety about the future as much as possible, still she shrank from confessing how impossible it was for her to accept of this offer of marriage.

Mamma, she said, seeing she was expected to make some answer, I know all you say is true. Yet as I do not love Sir Horace, I am sure you are the last who would urge my accepting him.

I certainly would not, Edith. I only want to make sure you are certain of your want of love for him. If this is so, I will say no more about it.

Mamma, I am sure I shall never love Sir Horace.

Then I will tell him so. I am glad to know this, as Lawrence has proposed his being our guest at the Priory. Under present circumstances, I think the invitation had best be deferred.

Lilly was secretly delighted—even though it was a great disappointment to both Mrs. Hamilton and Lawrence. Lilly felt sure that Edith must love Neville.

How blind she thought the others must be, not to see it.

She knew that Mrs. Hamilton would even more gladly welcome Neville than Sir Horace.

But Lilly was a discreet little maiden; and therefore kept her own counsel. Lilly had been disappointed that Neville had not been able to return to London before the close of the season.

They were again at the Priory before he was with them.

So, Lilly I find you have had quite a triumphant debut! How comes it the simple little country mouse has developed into a London belle.

I hardly know, myself, Neville. I believe it was chiefly owing to my having such a popular personage as Mrs. Hamilton for my chaperone. But you must not forget, that I was only a sharer in the triumphs. Edith was quite as much a belle as I was. You should have seen what notices she attracted. She has, too, I fear, left many a broken heart behind her.

Mrs. Hamilton has just been bewailing to me Edith's obduracy with regard to her lovers. She is seriously afraid she never intends to marry, but there I do not agree with her. Edith is not one to give her affections lightly, but when they are given, they will be of priceless value to the favoured individual. I predict that Edith will one day find the man whom she can love. Till then, I know she will never marry. She is not to be bought for any Price, short of pure love!

You are puzzling me, 'mon frere,' thought Lilly, as her brother left her. You do not speak as if you were yourself in love with Edith. Can I have been mistaken?

But Lilly had too much just now to occupy her thoughts to ponder much on Edith's love affairs.

Mrs. Hamilton had filled the Priory with guests, and a continual round of entertainments was in progress.

Her heart was set on her son entering Parliament.

She longed for him to take his standing in the world, and to do away with the last of that morbid sensitiveness regarding his uncle's murder.

Surely no candidate ever had such zealous partisans!

Not only Edith and his own fair fiancee undertook to canvass for him. But many other of his mother's guests.

Lilly, I shall be unseated for bribery, Lawrence would say as his betrothed related to him the number of wives of voters whom she had made promise to be on their side.

How could he do that, Lawrence? I assure you I give them no bribe. I only ask them to coax their husbands bands to vote for you instead of that horrid candidate who is promising the Worthing people to do so much for them and, I am sure, does not mean to trouble about them when once returned.

Nevertheless, you bribe them, my darling. Who could refuse a request made by such a bewitching little fairy as you are? You are the most successful canvasser of us all. If I am returned, I shall owe my victory most assuredly to you.

There was no doubt Lawrence was right.

Lilly was the most popular personage at Worthing.

Her sweet face obtained more votes to Lawrence than all the grand promises of the opposition side.

Lawrence began to throw off him the continual dread of that painful epoch in his life being referred to, as the canvassing went on without any allusion to it.

He was more his natural self than he had been since that time.

The day of the poll arrived, and the Priory party, wearing Lawrence's colours, mustered in strong force on seats erected for them just opposite the polling booth.

Neville remained with Lawrence to give him his support, and great was the joy, when, on the closing of the poll, Lawrence was found to be greatly in the majority.

Invitations for a ball were at once sent out to commemorate the event.

But this return of Lawrence as an M.P. bore other fruit than merely restoring his confidence in the good feeling of his fellow-men. Little did either of the family know what happy result was to spring from it.

Lawrence was gratified and pleased at the distinction, but more than this, he could now turn his thoughts to a prospect far more important to him—his marriage!

This was to take place at once, and so give the young couple time to enjoy their wedding tour before Lawrence was required to take his seat in the House.

Lilly had returned home to spend the last few weeks with Neville and her faithful Margery. Neville often laughingly said that the most of Lawrence's time was spent on the road between the Priory and their home.

But suppose we leave this interesting pair of lovers to themselves for a while, and with the even-leagued boots of our imagination, pay a visit to an apartment in a Venetian palazzo. In a magnificently furnished room were a lady and gentleman. At a glance we discover them to be English. The lady is busy reading a packet of letters, which the post had just brought, and the gentleman is just as busy with his "Times."

Any news, Hugh? My letters are singularly stupid. There seems to have been a brilliant season, and some wonderful beauties introduced.

The speaker, though past forty, was a strikingly lovely woman.

Her companion bore a sufficient resemblance to her, in the clearly cut, delicately moulded features, to denote the relationship between them—viz mother and son.

Plenty, "ma mere." The paper is full of this general election. By Jove! I am so glad. Mother, your pardon—I could not help the expression. I am so delighted.

Perhaps I shall be, too, Hugh, if you will tell me what has so pleased you. That I am sure you will, mother mine.

Laurence Hamilton is in parliament—returned by an overwhelming majority for Worthing.

You astonish me! I thought they would never hold up their heads in society again.

There is something more about him, I see. Lucky dog! he is to be married to one of surpassing loveliness—whose beauty was the theme of admiration on her presentation last session.

I wish you would follow his example, Hugh. It is quite time you married. I would gladly resign the estate into your keeping, if you would only choose a mistress for the Court.

I have already chosen the only woman I could ever marry, but whether I shall even win her remains to be proved. If I fail, then I shall remain a bachelor.

You forget, Hugh, that, in that event the estate will be lost to you. I owe it to your father's memory, to leave it to one who will be likely to perpetuate the family.

It does not seem likely to be mine, in either case, "ma mere," since you object to my wedding the only one I ever loved. But, of one thing, I am resolved. Directly Clarice is married, I will go to Australia, and see if I can find a fortune. Men have made them. I was weak enough to listen to your objections to my allying myself to a family whose name we feared was tainted with crime. That others have not been so uncharitable, is proved by the return of Lawrence.

Hugh, I am sorry if I made an error there. I had hoped the wound had not been so deep. Do you still love this Edith Hamilton?

More than my own life, mother mine. My love for her is part of my being. I know not the time when she was not dear to me.

But how know you that she is still unmarried?

Because I could stake my life that Edith would never consent to give her hand where she did not give her heart, and that that heart was mine I know well, though no words of love ever passed between us. Edith is not one to bestow her love more than once.

You have great faith in her, my son. Suppose, instead of this hair-brained chase for fortune in the wilds of Australia, you go to England, and ascertain whether or not you have formed a right estimation of Edith Hamilton?

Mother, do you mean you withdraw your objection?

Just so, Hugh; I never demurred at Edith herself. She is all that I should desire in your wife. But your father gave in my charge a sacred trust, when he made me promise only to make the estate over to you, in the event of your marrying one on whom no shadow of reproach fell. That there remains no reproach is proved by Lawrence no representing his country.

Edith, an old acquaintance of yours is waiting your pleasure in Lilly's sanctum.

Edith, as usual, had come to spend a day or two with Lilly.

Neville declared that his sister had drawn all the Priory inmates in her wake.

One of those tiresome girls, I suppose, wanting to know if such a colour would not be more becoming. I will take care, when I marry, all my bridesmaids shall be of the same complexion. It is quite beyond my power to find a colour to please all the eight of your bridesmaids, "ma chere!"

Never mind, "ma seur." Your labours will soon be at an end. Now go to your visitor, and be very careful how you decide upon the right colour for the wedding!

Edith, may I hope I am not forgotten?

Very great was Edith's surprise to find, instead of one of her troublesome co-bridesmaids, a tall, handsome man, who came eagerly forward, with outstretched hand as she entered the room.

Edith was not generally lacking in self-possession, but this was such a wholly unexpected surprise, that she was quite unable to utter a word.

Only the tale-tell face showed how pleasant a one it was.

Sir Hugh Neville knew then that he was right—Edith had not forgotten him!

Edith h's Lawrence, told you what brings me here? I first sought you at the Priory, and it is with your mother's and brother's consent, I have followed you here.

I know nothing Sir Hugh. I did not know you were here till I entered this room.

Thus much Edith managed to say with tolerable composure, though the blood was coursing through her veins with the speed of lightning, and her heart was beating tumultuously.

Edith, I have a confession to make, and your pardon most earnestly to crave. Have you forgotten our last meeting at Hill Court?

Could Edith ever forget it? Had not she been hurried away by the terrible calamity that had just befallen her brother?

Pardon me for alluding to it, Edith.

I would not could it be avoided. That day I had determined to know my fate—whether or no I possessed your love. I had just contrived to find you alone, and was about to put the question to you, when a messenger hastily summoned you home. Now comes my confession: My mother discovered I had not spoken the momentous words, and, on her knees, implored me to refrain from doing so.

You know well her proud and haughty spirit, and can imagine how painful this humiliating of herself must have been to me. I know not whether I should have held out, but that, when I called on you, I was refused admittance.

And I thought you had never cared to call, murmured Edith.

Then my sister Clarice was ordered abroad for her health, and my mother urged my going with them. She declared that her consent should never be given to our marriage, and, if I disobeyed her the estate should never be mine.

How could I, then, come as a suitor to you, knowing I was penniless? But, Edith, I have loved you so long and so ardently—may I hope that you will pardon me? I come to you now, with my mother's prayer joined to mine, that you will be my wife.

Oh! Hugh, I thought you did not love me—that I had given my heart where it was unsought.

Then you do love me, darling? Whatever reply Edith may have made was rendered impossible by the position of Hugh's lips to hers. When she was at last at liberty, she said,—

Hugh, why did you wait till you had the estate? Did you think I was one to be bought with a Price?

No, my darling. I did not do your noble nature such injustice. I had made up my mind to ask you to share my fortune at some future time, even though Hill Court should never be mine. I had already planned to fight for something wherewith to find us in bread and cheese at least, when the news reached us that Lawrence was an M.P., that at once gained over my mother.

A very happy party was that which was seated that evening at dinner in Neville Campbell's house. It turned out that he and Sir Hugh were old friends. The two had met at Naples, and had been able to be of some service to each other.

Edith, he is delightful, exclaimed Lilly, as she and Edith were closetted in the latter's room for a cosy gossip, before seeking their couches. What a dear, artful darling you have been all this time, not to tell me you had a lover!

Oh, Lilly! you cannot tell how wretched I have been! I was ashamed almost to think of him, much less speak of him. I quite thought he had never loved me, and that I had been bold and forward to love him before he had sought my love.

It was his mother's doings, keeping you so long apart, was it not?

Yes: Lady Neville is a most despotical woman, though very fond of her children. Hugh is entirely dependant on his mother, as the estate was left solely at her disposal. She thought Lawrence's misfortune would be a stain on our name for ever, and therefore prayed Hugh to give up all thoughts of me.

How glad I am that Lawrence proved her wrong by consenting to become a candidate for Parliament.

I must leave you to-morrow, Lilly, Hugh is to fetch me home, as he has consented to become our guest at the Priory.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The following curious advertisement lately appeared in a contemporary:—"To be sold by private contract, a beautiful monkey, a parrot, two spaniels, and a tortoiseshell tom-cat—the property of a lady just married, who has no further occasion for the same."

"It is a sin to steal a pin," and a man in Philadelphia has been arrested for that very offence. The pin has a diamond attached to it.

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