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"Flatterers"

The Shadow of the Future.

CHAPTER XXII.
THE FRIENDS SHE LEFT BEHIND.

He, a true old Darby, worried for his Joan. Those few years of rest that the animal part of humanity so long for are it falls finally asleep, seemed likely to be denied these two, and Mary sorrowed silently for them both. Ah! if Sydney had been there now, with her bright, fearless power of lifting them out of their troubles, her happy insistence, baseless though it might seem, that there were better times coming, what a ray of gladness she would have been among their dark domestic clouds! How Mary could have soled her own tormented nerves on that lost companion's trustful buoyancy, and, oh, what a rest it would have been!

But that source of sympathy was inaccessible. Even a letter was impracticable, for Mrs. Alwyn, when forwarding Sydney's last tender but sadly uncommunicative little note to Miss Dacie from Zurich, had by accident or design omitted to inclose her own address, and thereby cut off response for a time at least. So, alone with her grinding daily anxieties, Mary spent July and August unable to get much of their sunniness into her own system, since all their fair gifts seemed beset with ever-present cares; a file of unpaid bills tormented her, week in, week out, and the very roses on the house-walls seemed to shake their fragrant heads at her, and say reproachfully, "Now, don't presume to enjoy the sight of us, Miss Mary! If you must think of something sweet, think of all those groceries you owe for, and find a way to settle Mr. Tabor's account, do!"

Over the road to that desirable end she puzzled, till two upright puckers established themselves permanently between her brown eyebrows, and not till nearly Michaelmas did the faintest solution of the difficulty present itself. Then it was only of the stop-gap description, but, being better than none, she stuffed quills over it, and adopted the device which till now story-books only had made her acquainted with. It happened that on one September afternoon a stranger to Hedyngham arrived there by rail, and going through the principal street, drew out his watch by the post-office, to see if his and local time tallied. It was just five o'clock, a fact proclaimed additionally by an outburst from a building hard by of national schoolboys, one of whom, with a joyful yelp of freedom, backed on the traveler's elbow, jerked the watch on to a wall in the opposite hand, and smashed the crystal face to fragments. Before the owner

understood the accident the originator had bolted, so nothing remained but to look up a shop where the damage might be repaired. Some score of yards off, gilt letters on a shop door blazoned forth that "W. D. Samuels" had for fifty years traded at that spot as goldsmith, optician, etc., and smaller type made known that old gold or silver could be there purchased or taken in exchange. Here the stranger then entered, and handed his watch over the counter for treatment, announcing that he would wait while a new glass was put in.

"That," said Mr. Samuels, screwing the trade badge into one sharp eye, and examining the dial carefully, "wouldn't take me two minutes, sir; but I'm sorry to say the rim is injured. I can't put that right under a day. You—see, sir?"

The gentleman did see, with considerable disgust. The injured chattel was an old favorite. The notion of trusting it to an unknown tradesman was unpalatable. He hesitated, mentally objugating the littleascal he had caused him the annoyance, then made up his mind.

"I'll have it attended to in town," he said. "Just put it up in a box for me; and have you any silver concern—second-hand will do—that will keep time the few days I'm down here?"

Mr. Samuels' amour-propre, ruffled at the first sentence, was soothed at the second. He had many of the articles requested in stock. Might he trouble the gentleman to step behind his desk? Here were fifty hanging up, extraordinarily reasonable, from which he could make choice. So round the tall rail-topped desk went the customer, and was there enduring Mr. Samuels' alternate eulogiums upon an ancient specimen of the turnip tribe and a superlative fort-lated-back Geneva, when another individual entered the shop; and with a muttered "Excuse, sir," Mr. Samuels returned to his counter.

The new customer was a lady this time, and her business not to buy, but to sell. To Mr. Samuels' credit be it said, however, this in no way lessened his civility. On the contrary, he was politeness itself; but he spread courtesy as soft as down over a bargain as hard as adamant. No one could be so polite as he that lovers of this class had gone out of use, and reduced the watch, nervously submitted to him, to just the worth of the gold in its case. And no doubt it did seem strange to any one not in the trade that chains should drop to a quarter their first value after less than twenty years wear; but that was the unfortunate truth. He hadn't made it, and he couldn't mend it, or, he was sure, to oblige Miss Dacie he would. And these seals? Oh, out of date; only fit for melting! A spade guinea? Diamonds? (The old dealer's eyes would have glistered if long habit had not made him careful.) "Why, it was sparkling, no doubt, and"—twisting it on the end of his thick thumb—"good;

but the stones—oh, they were small, and the setting antiquated."

"It was a great-unt's," she left it to me, and the watch too," poor Mary Dacie faltered. "We always thought them valuable."

"And they are," agreed ready Mr. Samuels; "very—valuable, indeed, from a—a-association; but as a matter of business I couldn't give more for the lot, Miss Dacie, than—"

Than about a third of what she had humbly hoped! Pained chagrin nearly unburied her. But if she turned back from the half-completed ordeal, those wretched bills would gal her worse than ever. So she did her best to answer lightly, though all the shop looked blurred and misty for a minute.

"Then, if you can give no more, Mr. Samuels, I suppose I can get no more. I have another watch at home" (a schoolgirl treasure, price forty shillings sixteen years before); "and I scarcely ever wear rings, so these are of little use to me. I must take what you offer, give me guineas, did you not?"

Mr. Samuels had, indeed, used that magnificent term, but he fully intended slipping through the transaction in five-per-cent. lower form. But there was an anxiety about the question that overrode his cupidity; also, he perceived that one of the seals was worth more than he at first suspected. So with an air of generosity he conceded the odd shillings, unlocked his cash-box, paid out the sum, and, with the sincere assurance that he should be pleased to do similar business with her at any time, bowed Miss Dacie forth. Five minutes later he, with a deeper reverence, let out the stranger, who had emerged from behind the desk as soon as the lady left.

"It's an odd thing—very," said the old jeweler to himself, peeping after the gentleman as he strode off out-of-townwards; "I don't know his face, nor his name, but I do know he's the right sort to deal with. Thirty per cent. with no waiting and no higgling, isn't to be sneezed at in these times!"

An hour after this episode Mr. Vaughan was roused from his coffee and the "Vigil" that served as scholarly sauce to his plain fare by an unexpected guest, and got up to welcome Richard Drayton right heartily.

"Dropper from the clouds!" he cried. "I'm glad enough to see you; but why this sudden appearance after months of never a line? Come—explain."

"Work, sir—work," said Mr. Drayton, giving up baggage and overcoat to the rectory housekeeper, and taking the seat and coffee his host pushed toward him. "I think I may boast I've not passed a lazy day since I left you twelve months ago."

"So! That sounds well. But"—when they were alone—"what has come of your labor? A certain person got out of my sight once for high twelve years, and came back no better off than when he set out. Eh?"

"True, sir, so far as cash goes; and I've not much more to show for my industry this time."

"Ah!" the rector looked disappointed. He knew his old pupil a worthy, and would fain see him a successful man.

"But, unless I'm much mistaken, I shall have before long. I used to get chaffed abroad by men cleverer and bolder than myself for missing opportunities of fortune by waiting too long to make sure of my way; and the habit sticks, I suppose. I must make sure of good foundations before I set to building."

"Well, then, let me hear about your foundation, Drayton;" on which invitation the younger man discussed with his old tutor the particular paths which had opened out since they met, seeming to disclose, at no great distance of time, means of property in comparison with which his inherited income was a mere bagatelle.

(To be continued)

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The Pearl and Romance.

Rulers of great domains and poets have made the pearl something to conjure with in that great portion of the world which seeks high value in small things. The queens of Egypt, Julius Caesar and the late Czar of Russia were its idolaters, while lines are to be found in the works of Shakespeare, Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning, not to mention the names of a vast array of lesser writers, extolling its beauty and its wealth.

As to the prose of the pearl scientists have discovered that its nucleus is a worm parasite. To protect itself from harm and irritation the mollusk covers the intruder with a secretion, commonly known as nacre. It applies the nacre again and again as if it feared the organism would escape from the prison. Because of these successive coats defective pearls can be peeled by skillful workers and their value often greatly enhanced; but, if the operator's knife slips, the gem may be damaged beyond repair.

In the old days pearls were regarded as living objects which would die if not properly cared for. Gems that had lost their lustre were classified as diseased, and remedies were prescribed for them. Usually the fair owner was advised to wear the ornament next the skin, as it was held that the jewels pine away when neglected.

Recent a California judge ordered a \$100,000 pearl necklace "turned back to head." He had conferred with layidaries who pronounced the gems "fick." They told him the ornament needed light and air and, more than anything else, the vitalizing contact with the soft warm neck of a woman. The experts predicted that the necklace would continue to "starve" unless it received the suggested treatment. The judge then ordered the piece to be worn throughout one month each year, and added:

"After the hearing of said petition many requests to wear the pearls have come to the court from trained nurses and other women claiming to be in such perfect health that they would be able to preserve the lustre. These requests have been fully considered by the court, but, after seeing the petitioner's wife, Mrs. James B. Blum, I am convinced she is sufficiently sound in body and health to wear this necklace and preserve the lustre of these pearls."

The divers for pearls have a hard life. Those of Ceylon and the Persian Gulf grease their bodies, stuff cotton in their ears, close their nostrils with a clip, and go down with a basket or net at the waist. They remain beneath the surface from sixty to eighty seconds. If attacked by a sword fish, they must hide and outstay him. Sharks, devil-fish and rock-cod are other enemies; the last lies with his mouth wide open and grimly waits for his victim to step in. Divers do not welcome the use of a suit supplied with an air-line, and the majority of pearls are obtained in the old-fashioned way by nude or semi-nude men.

The largest known gem-to-day lies in the Berezford Hope collection in the South Kensington Museum of London. It has a length of two and a circumference of four and one-half inches, and weighs three ounces. The finest pearl, "La Perlegrina," has its home in a museum at Moscow, though it was born off the coast of the East Indies. Insignificant in size, it is perfectly round and possesses a lustre which causes it to seem transparent. The transparent jewel is a birthstone, a comparative newcomer as it were. The older generation of June children wore agates; but a few years ago the American National Retail Jewelers' Association endeavored to overcome some of the confusion that existed at that time, rearranged the list of birthstones, and replaced the agate with the pearl.

Pete favored a young farmer who, on a certain summer day, went "pearling" on a tributary of the Mississippi River. It led him to make a momentous decision that changed his style of living.

He had dredged and dredged. Hundreds of nigger-head mussels, scientifically known as unio, had closed tightly upon the spider hooks. In mid-afternoon he had taken his catch ashore and proceeded to open the shells by hand. If he had boiled them for ten minutes, as most of the other fishers did, they would have burst open, but the process would have damaged any pearls they contained. The sun sank lower and lower. The cows on his lonesome farm were waiting to be fed and milked; the horses, pigs and chickens were hungry, too. He looked at the pile of niggerheads yet to be opened. Feeding by lantern light was no joy. He saw a man lounging nearby.

"Hey, pard," he called, "I'll take fifty cents for this bunch here. I got to be gone."

The man approached and eyed the shells. "They ain't wuth more'n forty," he said.

They bantored back and forth, but both were obstinate. The would-be seller refused to come down in his price and the would-be buyers refused to increase his offer. Soon the man walked away. The next shell the farmer opened contained a pearl which he sold for a thousand dollars. The farmer never knew that the buyer disposed of it for two thousand or that a jeweler made it into a pendant for which he received five. He would not have cared much anyhow, for the small fortune from the sale of the pearl meant that he could soon claim his sweetheart as his bride.

Eat Mrs. Stewart's Home-made Bread.—April 8, 1905

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