

Literature.

THE LADY OF ABERNATHY HALL

OR THE MILLINER'S FORTUNE

CHAPTER XIII

(Continued.)

It was night, but she knew the way well—every spot in the vicinity was familiar to her, for it was the haunt of her happy childhood. Like a wild deer she flew on and reached the mouth of the great passage without molestation. The great stone swung back at her touch on the hidden spring, and gave her ready progress to the passage. She ascended to their recess, and, removing the sliding panel, gained Winifred's chamber. Mother and child were both sleeping, and both would have fallen a sacrifice to the rage of the demon but for Winifred's sudden and providential awakening. Once again, on a succeeding night, was her design frustrated in the same manner.

The third time she had been partially successful. The presence of Rosy had prevented her from murdering the mistress; so she contented herself with stealing little Willie.

The child she purposed to carry to the lodge, and kill at her leisure; but the poor innocent cries for its mother were so piteous, and its struggling rendered it such a burden, that her patience gave out. She strangled it, and it fell dead on the banks of the river, where the unhappy father had subsequently discovered the remains.

Mellicent succeeded in reaching the lodge without discovery and then with a singularity that went far to establish the fact of her insanity, she released the two negroes, whom she had constantly fed during their incarceration, told them what she had done, and gave herself up to them at once.

The extraordinary exertions which she had made, and the exposure that she had undergone, threw the miserable woman into a raging fever, which lasted three weeks.

At the expiration of that time, her disease took a favorable turn, and for more than a month it was expected that she would ultimately recover. But a relapse occurred, and her fate was decided.

Mr. Wintrop saw her decently interred by the side of her parents, gave the negroes who had served him so faithfully their freedom, shut up Belemonte, and returned to Maplewood, to find his home desolate.

He had remembered Winifred's words at the time she had brought home the dead child, and he had fulfilled her threat, and would return to him no more. Suspecting also, that she had heard rumors of his baseness, he had double reason to believe that it would be useless to prolong his stay at Maplewood in expectation of her appearance; and leaving the house in charge of his servants, he returned to Washington without seeking for her rest.

Three weeks before the fatal deed, Brandon Lawrence, the cousin of Mellicent, had arrived in America. An accidental meeting had taken place at Washington between the former friends, and some bantering words were exchanged. Mr. Lawrence, on being told, in what would be the topic of time, he had thought of Mr. Wintrop to mortal combat.

This was the substance of his confession. Winifred could only compassionately before her, and commit him, with many prayers, to the mercy of God.

Mr. Wintrop grew wiser. His wounds healed faster—his inflammation set in, and for six miserable days he suffered unexpressed agony.

With vain longing for a little more of the fever called life, and clinging closely to the hand of his wife as though she could keep him back, the spirit of Milford Wintrop passed into the bar of his Judge.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PAINS OF SICKNESS.

Winifred accompanied the remains of her husband, in a splendid coffin, to the burial-place at Maplewood. It was a duty that she owed to the cold form beneath those rich rosewood carvings, and she would not shrink from it.

Directly after the performance of the pious funeral rites, the will of the deceased was read—the will which had been drawn up while the testator lay on his death-bed—and it was found that his wife, Winifred Wintrop, was made so heir of all the rich man's possessions.

The widow remained a few days at Maplewood, to weep over the grave of her little Willie, and then she set out for Atherton Hall. The old servants there received her with wild demonstrations of joy, and again she roamed through the spacious rooms, and indulged in melancholy reveries of the dim past.

Every tree and shrub—every flower and tuft of grass, was a dear souvenir a link between the now and then; a tender reminder of the happy life which was gone forever.

She visited the tomb of her parents, at Mount Auburn, and plucked from the green enclosure the first blue violet of spring.

Then bidding farewell to the faithful domestics at Atherton Hall, she returned to Boston, where she placed the complicated affairs of her late husband in the hands of an eminent lawyer for settlement, and herself adjourning for a few days with her old friend, Mrs. Marchmont.

This good lady was exceedingly anxious to keep Winifred with her permanently, and used every argument to that effect, but Winifred, while she felt deeply her kindness, considered herself bound to return to Castle Hill, and fulfil her engagement.

Sometimes she thought she would write and explain the turn affairs had taken, and be excused from performing her agreement. But she owed the Vernon's much for their kindness to her, and she would go back, if only to testify her gratitude.

And so, one bright April morning, she set forth on her return to Castle Hill. It was the middle of the month when she reached Columbia—wet, rainy, and extremely muddy.

She took a stage-coach to a little village some ten miles from Castle Hill, and owing to the wretched state of the roads washed by recent heavy rains, her progress was exceedingly slow.

There was a poor woman, with a blue-eyed little girl, passenger in the coach, and the child seemed suffering from some unknown disease. Winifred compassion-

ately the stranger, sought her acquaintance, and divided with her the task of holding the child. The mother thought it best the measles, as it had been exposed to them and the skin had something of that appearance.

About half-way to the village before mentioned, the woman child left the coach—the latter being unable to ride further. Winifred performed the remainder of the journey, which occupied a week alone. Arrived at the terminus of her stage journey, she rested two days at the hotel, and then engaged a private conveyance to take her to Castle Hill.

During the last few days, a strange languor of spirits, and lassitude of body, had oppressed her; and now her temples throbbing hotly with a raging headache. The jolting of the carriage increased the pain almost beyond endurance, and she feared that her strength would not sustain her through the tansit. She became incredibly anxious to get on—the horses went a snail's pace, and the bold driver of Castle Hill was so long in breaking up her way!

From the parlor windows forsoke Vernon saw the approaching carriage—his heart told him who was its occupant; and he hurried out, bareheaded, into the driving rain to welcome her. Winifred had just strength enough left to murmur: "Take me to the house!" when she fell back unconscious, for the first time in her life.

Her eyes were open, and she looked at the lodge, and clapping the armlets from his arms, bore her into the parlor, and laid her down on a sofa by the fire. With all haste, he despatched a servant for a physician, who was visiting their next neighbor, and in a few moments might be expected at Castle Hill.

With singular foresight, Horace did not remove his mother, who was taking her afternoon nap in her chamber and the children, who were spending the day with their aunt on the other side of the river, were not there to disturb the dear wanderer.

In a brief space Dr. Urphan arrived. He examined the patient critically; made some singular inquiries, and shook his head ominously.

"She has the small-pox; of the most violent type, I should judge by the fever. I have seldom felt so high a pulse. She has had three weeks' work before her—poor girl!"

In this time of trial, Horace Vernon's strong decision of character led him to act quickly. He called his mother, gathered together his servants, and bade them prepare for an immediate journey. His mother objected to this plan—but he was firm, and in two hours from the time of Winifred's arrival, the entire household (with the exception of Horace and an old negro, who had had the disease) were on the way to a small plantation belonging to the family, and situated six or seven miles further up the river.

Horace Vernon never felt a more intense, thrill of satisfaction than at the moment when he knew that Winifred was to be his charge; that to him she was to owe all the careful tenderness that a sick one requires.

And never had a sufferer a more assiduous and gentle nurse. His whole life seemed bound in the effort to make her comfortable. All that tenderness and most thoughtful mother could have done for her sick child, he did for the helpless girl.

His illness was long and tedious; the nature of the disease, combined with the excess of fatigue, and the continual use of the most powerful remedies, had rendered her system so debilitated, that she could not be brought to mortal combat.

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delicacy had good enough for her, in her own opinion. As soon as Winifred was strong enough to talk, she confided her whole history to those excellent friends—keeping back only the portion relating to Gerard Middleton. That she could not bring herself to reveal.

And when she had finished, Horace Vernon longed inexpressibly to take the sweet hand to his bosom, and kiss all tears from the pallid cheeks save those of joy.

To the surprise and infinite distress of her friends, Winifred's sense of vision continued to grow less and less, until, in a few weeks, total blindness came upon her!

Physicians, without number, were consulted—they all prophesied that return to health would restore the power of sight; but time passed, and brought no favorable issue.

Horace, in a frenzy of doubt and apprehension, besought her to consent to a journey to Paris, where she might have the advice of eminent oculists, but she steadily refused. She felt, she said, that it would only be a useless attempt—and if hope was once re-awakened, it would be doubly hard to crush it out again. And after a time he ceased to urge her.

It was a terrible trial to this proud, beautiful woman; but, in passing through the deep waters of affliction, she learned to put faith in the goodness of a gracious God. All pride, and scorn, and bitterness, went out from her heart—she became humble and trustful as a little child. It was good for her to be afflicted.

Her very helplessness endeared her a thousand fold to Horace Vernon. It was his privilege to be her about in his arms, to describe to her the sunset skies; paint to her blinded vision the glory of the summer landscape; to soothe and comfort her as a mother does her well beloved child.

His happiest hours were spent with her when, leaning trustfully on his arm, together they took long walks in the glowing calm of the evening, and sat down together on the grassy river-banks. She was gentle and quiet—yet she laid little by way of thanks—yet her love and her eyes were eloquent of gratitude.

But it is a hard fate to be shut out forever from the beautiful things of earth! To be blind—groping in darkness—stranded in a night which never breaks into morning!

God help thee, Winifred! It is hard for thee to realize it! (Concluded next week.)

LUCKY NUMBERS.

Superstition dies hard, and of all superstitions a belief in lucky numbers is by no means the least remarkable for vitality. It is almost as old as the hills, and it seems likely to survive even the blow it received in the case of the Atlantic Lottery, whose apparent luck in the lottery at Naples has been explained on ordinary principles of deliberate cheating and confederacy. However that may be, it is certain that lotteries, more than anything else, tend to foster the popular superstition concerning numbers and the luck attendant on them.

At an early date, it is asserted, that "There was a lady of no name," but the rotaries of the lottery—may, the majority of all who pin their faith to numerical influences, have little or no preference for odd numbers or evenness. They attribute the most potent to a very different source.

From a letter written to one of our newspapers a few days ago, a belief appears to prevail in Venice that "in the event of a stranger dying in one of the hotels there the numbers of his rooms will be lucky numbers in the next lottery;" and the writer of the letter mentions "a singular illustration" not only of the belief, but unfortunately, of its confirmation also. It is stated by the writer that "on the death of the late Sir W. Stirling Maxwell, at Daniel's well-known hotel, the employees of the hotel immediately subscribed to take shares in the numbers in the next lottery corresponding with the numbers of the two rooms occupied by the late member for Perthshire, both of which numbers, strangely enough, were afterwards drawn prizes," to the unspeakable grief of "a person connected with the hotel," who "bitterly lamented that he had been prevented by sudden illness from taking the whole of the lucky numbers, and thus realizing a handsome fortune at one stroke." Some curious instances of the "deivity" connected with certain numbers have been selected by a French journalist from the "Histoire de la Loterie" in the "Entrees" of the younger Dumas. Here is one: "A poor working man, farrier to a regiment of cuirassiers, took it into his head to make a note of four regulation numbers branded, according to custom, on the quarters of the remounts; he chose a number, accordingly, in the Frankfort lottery, and nearly went mad with joy on winning 150,000 francs. The first thing he did was to buy as many pairs of trousers as there are days in the year, so that he was known all through the cavalry as 'the man with the 365 pairs of breeches.' Here is another: "A woman dreamed of ten numbers, wrote them down on some little bits of paper, stuck these tickets on sticks and placed them atop of some beans planted in a garden in a strip of her little garden. 'I'll take,' said she, 'the numbers of the first five that sprout, and put them in the lottery,' in due time five came out. She copied the numbers, and gave her son ten francs, all the money she had in the world, saying, 'Run and take me this sequence of five at the office round the corner.' 'All right, mother,' the son spent the money came back, and assured her that he had done as he was told. The numbers won. It is impossible to describe the grief which overwhelmed the poor woman when she learned the truth. She went mad, and, a few years afterwards, her son blew out his brains."

And here is one more: "A young sergeant of artillery took numbers 9, 18, and 21. He won. There is nothing extraordinary in that; but here is the remarkable part of the story: Condemned to death by the revolutionary tribunal, he owed his life to Thaurand; he shared the perils of general Bonaparte on Brandy 18; he was created a Marshal of the Empire, and received, together with a duke's coronet, the name of one of his victories, on the 31st of a certain month." The French appear to carry their superstition as regards numbers on to the racetrack. The betting men of our country, where lotteries are not much in vogue, are known to follow a jockey's "mounts," but the use of numbers so far as they are confined chiefly to the purposes of the advertising prophets, who indicate a particular horse by a particular number. The French, however,

according to a good authority, will ground their bets upon the most puerile and extravagant calculations. An example is drawn from what happened at the Bois de Boulogne on the 21st of April this year. It so happened that the first three races were won by the horse "numbered 7 on the card;" and of course the bettor who had "spotted" No. 7 would be much excited and induced to "back his luck" and try No. 7 again for the next race. Now, No. 7 was the favorite for that race, but he lost. His backers, therefore, would calculate, as we are assured; in this way: "7 has missed this time; that probably means that it will be doubly successful in the next race; in other words, that double 7's turn has come." So the bettor put his money on No. 14; and, lo! No. 14 won. It seems to be hardly credible that human folly should be carried on to so prodigious an extent; but we are told that "on voit des parieurs qui réalisent de très jolis bénéfices sur des combinaisons de ce genre." That such calculations should succeed now and then is, of course, not only possible or probable, but a certainty; on the other hand, the number of times they would fail to the one instance of success is quite appalling to contemplate.

If a belief in lucky numbers does really lead grown men to indulge in such absurdities, one is inclined to regret that the spirit of the times has made it impossible for us to see in our days such a Rhadamanthus-like schoolmaster as he who is famed to have addressed his assembled pupils—"Smith has been convicted of sowing among his schoolfellows the seeds of a dangerous heresy; he has inoculated many of them with a belief in lucky numbers—a mischievous, an immoral, an irreligious belief. I consider that Smith has been guilty of something worse than mere lying; and I shall punish him accordingly. Smith's 'lucky number,' it appears, is 14; well, this is the 14th day of the month, and Smith shall at once receive four-and-sixty strokes with a birch rod, and shall afterwards wear a fool's-cap during school hours for a period of four-and-six days." Smith, so treated, might grow up with unfavorable ideas of schoolmasters' justice; but he would not be likely to put his trust in "lucky numbers."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

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ABOUT \$5,000 IN PRIZES. Premium lists and blank forms of application can be procured by application to the secretary of the several Agricultural Societies, or the undersigned.

Arrangements will be made for the conveyance of stock, Produce, Manufactures, by Railways, and Steamers to Fredericton at 100 PER CENT. and the freight paid will be refunded to Exhibitors.

All entries to be made by the 20th September. A Sale of Pure Bred Cattle and Sheep, will take place during the Exhibition.

It is hoped that the liberal arrangements made will induce Farmers and Manufacturers to every exertion to make this surpass all former Exhibitions in this Province.

Any further information will be given on application to the Secretary.

JULIUS L. INCHES, Secretary for Agriculture, Fredericton, July 27th, 1878.

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