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THE DAVENANTS.

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CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

Indescribably wretched, scarcely thankful for her preservation—for what happiness had life in store for her now?—Emily Lascelles sat upon the river bank looking out upon that scene where her fellow passengers were still struggling for life, seen distinctly in the red brilliant light from the burning steamer. Her father and Clara, if they only were saved, what a relief to her great anxiety it would be! And in this hour of intense solicitude did she feel no painful apprehensions about Lascelles? What had become of him? Would she be glad if he as well as others had sunk in the deep waters? She shivered as this thought crossed her mind bringing with it no pain and then a feeling of guilt rolled in upon her soul, and bowing her head upon her hands she lifted up her heart in voiceless prayer for strength from above to enable her to fulfil the sacred duties she had imposed upon herself, and to aid her to subdue her strong attachment to Avenell, which this unexpected meeting with him had revived in its former intensity.

Nearly half an hour elapsed while she watched for the return of Walter. At length a swimmer was seen approaching the bank where she waited and prayed. It was Eugene Lascelles, and spite of Emily's prayers and good intentions she felt no wifely joy at seeing him again. Something very like disappointment did thrill her heart, to be instantly followed however by a feeling of profound self-reproach. In the storm of anguish and regret which was sweeping over her soul, religion for the time ceased to exert its potent sway. It was a fearful crisis in her life; this trial seemed too severe, and her rebellious will rose against it.

With a cry of joy Lascelles recognised his wife in the lonely watcher on the river bank, sitting there so motionless apart from others.

"Heaven be praised for this great mercy, Emily! you are safe!" he exclaimed, flinging himself down beside her exhausted, for he had been some time in the water swimming about in search of her.

"Where are papa and Clara?" she asked wildly, "have you left them to perish unaided?"

"You grieve me by such a suspicion, Emily. Mr. Davenant said he could take care of himself and Clara, he had no fears for their safety. He left you to my charge, knowing that to save your life was my chief concern. In the terrible confusion that prevailed I sought you in vain. At last I received the joyful information that you had been rescued from the burning steamer. A merchant from Montreal who was on board said he had seen a gentleman swim with you to the shore. Who is he, Emily?"

Lascelles received no answer. Avenell was seen approaching the bank of the river, but he was alone, and Emily grew faint with apprehension.

"I cannot find them," he said despondently, as he came up wet and dripping out of the water, and sat down wearily near her, eyeing her companion with some curiosity. "I was almost the last person to leave the burning wreck," he continued, "and they were not there. I thought, perhaps, they had reached the shore."

Emily sprang up at these words with renewed hope.

"Let us search for them!" she cried wildly. "If they have perished," she murmured bitterly. "I have sacrificed my happiness in vain."

"Remain here, dearest, I will look for them," said Lascelles, who had been viewing with some interest his wife's new acquaintance—the gentleman who had rescued her, he supposed.

Walter's eyes turned with a look of eager inquiry towards her, startled at hearing her so tenderly addressed.

The time had come when explanation was necessary; the revelation she so much dreaded must now be made. With the energy of despair she nerved herself for the painful task as Eugene left her alone with Walter.

"Who is that gentleman, Emily?" he asked in sharp, impatient tones, a sentiment of jealousy aroused within him, as the thought that this stranger was an admirer, a lover perhaps, flashed through his mind—the stern truth never dawned upon him; Emily never could forget him, he knew that!

"Who is he?" he repeated still more irritably, as she remained silent.

"My husband!" she stammered, in a choking voice.

Avenell sprang to his feet with a sharp, indignant cry, then staggered as if struck by a heavy blow. Emily shared his anguish.

"Do not condemn me, Walter," she said,

imploringly. "For two years I mourned you as dead with bitter anguish, then—"

"You forgot me, Emily!" he interrupted with frantic vehemence, "while I—I have only lived in the hope of seeing you again. And this is woman's constancy," he added, with a scornful laugh and a gleam of bitter mockery in the look he turned on the wretched Emily.

"Forgot you, Walter! oh, no! I never could forget you! It was to save my father from poverty, nay death, I married Eugene Lascelles. You will believe me, oh, say you do, Walter!" and she gave way to a wild burst of weeping.

Every trace of resentment vanished from the face of Avenell, the deep irrepressible anguish alone remained. A perception of the true state of things flashed upon his mind, and his nature was too noble to allow him to increase her grief by reproaches that were now as vain as they were undeserved.

"I do believe you, dearest Emily. Oh, do not weep thus. I cannot bear to see those tears. To know that you still regard me with affection will comfort me in this unlooked-for, this terrible trial." He could say no more. His voice was choked with intense emotion. He walked suddenly away to indulge the wild agony he could not control.

And thus they parted after a brief re-union, these two whom a cruel destiny had separated, but whose hearts a love stronger than death still bound together for time, and for eternity. A shadowed, uninviting earth-path each was to tread alone, cheered by the thought of re-union beyond the grave, where the true life begins in the bliss of immortality.

The return of Lascelles brought the confirmation of Emily's worst fears,—her father and blind sister could not be found, and it was feared they had perished with others in this great disaster. This fearful addition to Emily's other sorrow was overwhelming, and she sunk beneath it. The scene of the steamer's wreck was near the village of ———, and thither Eugene Lascelles conveyed his unhappy wife. The next day the bodies of the drowned were recovered and among them Mr. Davenant and Clara. They were found locked in each other's arms, and it was supposed that the blind child had in her fright clung to her father so as to prevent his swimming, thus causing the drowning of both. Prostrate on a sick bed, her life for weeks in danger, Mrs. Lascelles was unable to continue her journey. A letter was forwarded by Eugene, with the painful information to Dr. Seymour, requesting him to convey the intelligence of Mr. Davenant's and Clara's death to Georgina.

CHAPTER XIV.

To return to Walter Avenell. After having transacted his employers' business in India he sailed in a small brig for home, eagerly looking forward to his meeting with his betrothed. But he was doomed to disappointment.

When within a few days' sail of the wished-for port the wind changed suddenly, and increasing in violence, drove them far out to sea. The gale lasted several hours, and the brig was so disabled by the storm after so long a voyage that she drifted about a sheer hull on the surging waters. Fortunately, a larger vessel out in the same storm seeing their danger bore down to their rescue, and taking Avenell and the crew on board carried them to the West Indies, whither she was bound. Shortly after reaching Jamaica, Walter again embarked for England, and this time succeeded in reaching Liverpool, there to meet with a great disappointment—the Davenants had gone to Canada, intending to settle in Quebec. A letter was immediately despatched to that city, which, not being called for, remained in the Dead Letter Office, and being at length opened, was sent back to Liverpool. Avenell now resolved to go himself to Canada, and sailed first for New York, in order to transact some mercantile business there. He was on his way to Canada in search of Emily when he met her so unexpectedly on board the ill-fated "Washington." After so many varied disappointments, after so much constancy on his part, cherishing his love for his betrothed all through his weary voyages across the trackless deep, how full of bitterness was the trial that awaited him in the end, to find her the wife of another. In losing her he lost all that made life pleasant. His heart could never again know the depths of affection it had cherished for her. He returned to England a changed man, broken in spirit, with the gloom of a great disappointment clouding his life.

It was the end of September before Mrs. Lascelles was sufficiently recovered from her long and dangerous illness to be able to leave the village on the Hudson, near which the steamboat disaster occurred. She did not at once return home; the physician prescribed change of scene, and Eugene took her to the principal cities in the States, with the hope that her mind would recover its healthy tone. The pleasing excitement of seeing all that was to be seen in strange places was, he thought, the best thing for her. And Emily's mind did gradually recover its tone, although not from the cause to which Eugene attributed it. The

first great agony of her trial and bereavement over, religion was again exerting its powerful influence over her. She had gone down to the gates of death, she had looked through its gloomy portals, realizing the vanity of time as she thus hovered on the confines of eternity, and feeling the bitterness of earth's joys and sorrows. Struggling back from the grave, she awoke again to the outer world with the determination to accept patiently the sorrow she had brought upon herself, and to seek peace of mind in a faithful observance of her duties; happiness she did not now expect, but she would devote her life to secure it to her husband. And nobly she kept her resolution, banishing from her mind every thought of Walter Avenell, though often tortured by the remembrance of him and his anguish that miserable night on the banks of the Hudson. "Many waters cannot quench love," yet this mysterious power can be subdued, its gushing waters restreamed—pent up; and Emily's life was now one long prayer to be enabled to subdue the love she could no longer innocently indulge. For her husband's devotion and tender care of her she felt deeply grateful. Thankful that the man to whom she had given herself was so worthy of her esteem. In the delirium of her illness Eugene had learned who the stranger was that had rescued her from the "Washington." It was a severe shock to him, and a trial which few could have borne so nobly to listen to her wanderings, finding himself entirely forgotten, and another man filling all her thoughts. Her piteous appeals to Avenell for forgiveness, her protestation that it was for her father's sake she had married Lascelles—how they tortured the unhappy husband! He felt that if death did take her away it would be best for both, and yet in his strong love for her he shrank from the thought of separation. No word of reproach ever passed his lips, indeed he felt no resentment towards Emily for had she not told him of this prior attachment to Avenell, had she not plainly said she had no love, nothing but esteem to give himself. As Emily grew stronger and her mind recovered its tone, she made a point of duty never to appear melancholy in the presence of her husband. It often taxed her resolution to maintain this cheerfulness, but the happiness it afforded him was in itself a reward stimulating her to further exertions.

The news of her father's and sister's death was a great shock to Georgina, just at the time too when she was looking forward to the pleasure of seeing them again. Madame St. Hilaire sympathised with the bereaved girl in her affliction and did all in her power to make her stay at the chateau agreeable. Stephanie was a very docile pupil, for she really liked her governess, and things went on quietly in the school-room. Letters came occasionally from Saratoga, but nothing favourable was reported of Mrs. Delamare's health. It seemed to grow worse instead of better, according to her husband's accounts, and Madame St. Hilaire determined to go herself to Saratoga. She could no longer endure this painful anxiety about her daughter. She found her very ill, and judged it expedient to have the best medical advice in New York previous to taking Louise home. The city doctor disapproved of the manner in which her disease had been treated by Dr. Delamare, and pursued a different plan, which resulted beneficially to the invalid. She remained some weeks in New York under this physician's care, and about the middle of October returned to the chateau, her health much improved.

Georgina, with a well-assumed interest, expressed her happiness at seeing Mrs. Delamare so much better, but while her lips uttered her congratulations there was a feeling of intense disappointment crushing her heart in spite of the reproving voice of conscience, for between her and the coveted felicity of being Delamare's wife uprose again the barrier which she had taught herself to look upon as almost removed. Her engagement with Madame St. Hilaire was now ended, still she was obliged to remain at the chateau two or three weeks longer, as the Lascelles had not yet returned to their residence near St. John's, and for the future her home was to be with them. This lengthened abode at the chateau was very pleasing to Georgina. Glad she was to be able to remain a little longer in the same house with Delamare, to feel the pleasure of being near him, of enjoying his society daily, though it was only in the presence of the family. It was putting off for a while the dreaded separation—a separation she now feared would be for ever. What anguish there was in that thought! If she only could tear up by the roots this terrible affection which had blighted her life! but she lacked the strength of mind necessary for such an effort; she did not possess the strong religious principle which governed her sister's life.

Delamare's clouded face showed too that he was suffering deeply. More than once Louise noticed his melancholy, and asked its cause—a suspicion of the truth seeming to dawn upon her thrilling heart with intense pain.

He answered evasively that the political excitement in Canada caused him great anxiety, that there was an insurrection of the Gallic population daily expected.

"I do not see how that need trouble you, Henri. You surely do not intend to take part

in the impending struggle," observed Louise, with sudden alarm.

"I may be driven to it," he answered, gloomily, and he left the apartment hastily to avoid any more conversation on the subject. But he had said enough to cause Louise the greatest anxiety, the indulgence of which had a serious effect upon her health. And this anxiety was increased daily by Delamare's frequent absence from home; she feared he was one of the secret agitators to sedition, and she dreaded the worst consequences, if the outbreak against the government should really take place.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE SURGERY.

It was the second week in November, that eventful month in Canadian history, in the year 1837. Dr. Delamare had been absent all day, and Louise, suffering from great anxiety on his account, was too ill to leave her apartment. Madame St. Hilaire was in constant attendance on her, and the governess was left to the companionship of her pupil. The day passed wearily, the constant chattering of Stephanie wearied Georgina, whose mind was pre-occupied by sad thoughts. To get rid of her, therefore, she retired early to her apartment. Glad to be alone, she sat for a long time buried in painful reflection, a prey to the deepest dejection. The next day she expected to leave the chateau; the Lascelles were to return home, and she well knew Emily would not delay an hour in removing her from under the same roof with Henri Delamare. The night was one calculated to impress the mind with gloom. The weather was tempestuous, the wind moaned dismally through the chateau or swept in gusts round its weather-stained walls. About ten o'clock a horse was heard galloping towards the house. A few minutes afterwards Dr. Delamare's voice sounded in the hall below, and his echoing steps fell upon Georgina's ear as he ascended the stairs, summoned to his wife's apartment, for as she was ill his return had been anxiously watched for. It was about half an hour later when a light knock at Georgina's door made her open it in some surprise. It was Madame St. Hilaire, come to beg Miss Davenant to go down to Dr. Delamare's surgery and ask him to send up the medicine he had gone to prepare for Louise.

"Is Mrs. Delamare worse?" asked Georgina anxiously.

"Yes, this torturing anxiety about Henri is killing her," was the angry reply. "It is really doing her a vast deal of injury. Miss Davenant! her husband is much to blame for his indifference on the subject. But what does he care!" she added bitterly. "to many husbands a wife's death is not such a crushing business as a sympathizing public suppose."

Madame seemed unusually excited; Georgina's guilty conscience made her fear she suspected Henri's attachment to herself.

"Pray tell Dr. Delamare, Miss Davenant," Madame St. Hilaire continued, "that he must be careful and prepare the powders for Louise according to the recipe given him by the New York physician. There must have been some mistake in mixing up the last he gave her, as they had not the desired effect."

The surgery was in the basement of the turret, at the top of which the school-room was situated. As Madame returned to her daughter's apartment Georgina ran lightly down stairs, and crossing the hall entered a long narrow passage leading to it. The howling of the wind prevented her light steps from being heard. The surgery-door was slightly ajar. She paused a moment to contemplate him who had so long been her heart's idol. His face was towards her; it looked haggard, and its expression startled her; she read there a cruel dark purpose. How the beauty that had captivated her died out of it beneath the withering influence of that pitiless evil look. Georgina stared at him amazed at the transformation, while he stood all unconscious of her gaze busily mixing up medicines from various little jars on the table before him. He looked up in sudden astonishment as Georgina, silently entering the room, stood unexpectedly before him. Hastily, even before addressing her, he removed the jars of medicine to a shelf, but her quick eye saw that one was labeled acouite. It was not merely the action, it was something of guilt in his look and manner that impressed her forcibly. The same terrible suspicion which had once before flashed across her mind again rolled in upon it with a more definite shape. All coloured from her face, and she trembled with emotion.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said in tones of inexpressible tenderness, a glad smile ditting over his troubled countenance, giving back to it something of its former expression.

"Are those powders for Louise?" asked Georgina abruptly; there was no light of joy in her eyes at their meeting.

"Yes, have you been sent for them? Then this visit was not intended for me," he added reproachfully, the smile suddenly dying out of his face.

(To be continued.)