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# BOVRIL

## The Mystery of Rutledge Hall

OR

### "The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER XIX

"Will you not take it?" she asked tremulously.

"Not if you will keep it," he answered, gently and gravely; and at the tender words, spoken without a touch of reproach, the girl's composure faltered, and she burst into a passion of tears.

Without a word, and with the same tenderness in his manner which had marked his words before, Stephen put his arm round her and drew her to his side, holding her and giving her the support of his arm until the passion of tears was over and she stood leaning against him, very pale and exhausted, but calm again.

"You are better?" he said. "Yes? That is well, my child." He was holding her in his arms caressingly; he had slipped on the ring, and was keeping it in its place with his firm gentle touch. "We will leave it there, Sidney, for a few weeks yet," he added, softly; "and then I will take it off and replace it with a plainer one. Dear," he went on, bending over her tenderly, "if I could see anything in the future for you happier or better than this, I would give you your freedom; but I think you will be happier under my care than you are now; and you can trust me, Sidney."

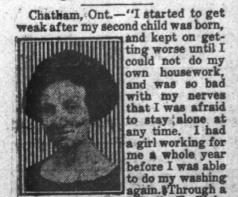
"And you will help me?" she said, eagerly, looking up at him with pleading, passionate eyes. "Stephen, you are so clever and so strong, and he is innocent. You know, and he—"

The words died away upon her lips, killed by the sudden change on his face, which had grown cold and stern and hard. Afterward Sidney remembered that sudden change, and thought that she knew its cause; now that it only pained her, she did not try to account for it.

"Dear," he said, gently still, but with coldness in his voice which had not been there before, "let us understand each other. In all things I will study your wishes, in all things, save one. You shall command me, and you shall have ample means to gratify all your fancies; but, Sidney, in that one thing I must be firm. I cannot allow my

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taking the little trembling hands in his and holding them tenderly in his strong clasp.

"What is it, dear? What is distressing you so terribly?"

Still looking up at him with her frightened eyes, and trembling very much, she stood upright, leaving the little unsteady hands in his, in the strong clasp she was about to relinquish forever.

"Stephen," she repeated, trying to speak steadily, but in a voice so low that it was almost inaudible, and Stephen had to bend his head low over hers to hear the broken words, "it is not right. I ought not let you make such a sacrifice; you will be sorry by and by when it will be too late. See—take back your promise, and—"

The faint voice died away on the pale lips, the sweet eyes still looked up to him piteously; but the expression on the face on which they rested had changed somewhat, and was brightening slowly into intense joy. Sidney, looking up and seeing the change, mistook its cause, and went on more calmly now.

"It will be better," she said, gently. "Let us be friends still. Why should you wreck all your future happiness for my sake? I know—the sweet voice was breaking now—that you will always be my friend, and I—I have no right to ask— Oh, Stephen, I hope, I hope, you will be very happy!"

"Do you want to throw me over?" he asked softly, smiling as he looked down at her with a world of passionate tenderness in his dark eyes, yet not without an air of joyful triumph.

"I want you to be happy," she whispered, the color coming into her face until it blushed like the heart of a rose.

"And you think I cannot be happy with you?" he questioned, softly, looking down at the sweet eyes which had dropped now, and over which the white lids had fallen so low that the long, dark lashes rested on the pink cheeks. "Is that so, Sidney?"

"I think—I think that you may be shutting yourself out from happier things."

"What happier things?"

"A wife whom you would love"—ah, how low and timid the pretty voice was now!—"and who would love you, and—"

The triumph was dying out of his eyes, but there was no room for it there because of the intense tenderness which dwelt in them.

"And?" he whispered softly.

"And?" he whispered softly.

"And who would make you happy," Sidney said desperately, raising her eyes to his for a moment, but dropping the white lids again immediately under his glance.

There was a minute's silence, then Stephen put both his arms tenderly round her and drew her fondly to him.

"Will you never understand?" he asked softly. "Is it so very difficult, my darling? Do you not know that I love you as I could never love any

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other woman in the whole world? Do you not know that to have you as my wife is the greatest happiness the world can hold for me, save one?—and I think—I hope—I believe that greatest happiness of all will be mine by and by—the happiness of knowing that my wife loves me in the same way—although in a lesser degree perhaps—as I love her. May I hope it, Sidney?"

There was no answer. The pretty head was resting upon his breast, the fair face hidden against his shoulder; but, though the sweet lips were silent, there was eloquence in the little clinging hands, in the soft pressure of the pretty shining head as it rested against him. Stephen Daunt's heart was beating fast as he bent his head and said, softly:

"May I, Sidney?"

"Stephen, is it true? Would it be happiness to you?"

Very shyly and sweetly the words were uttered, Stephen drew her yet more closely to his beating heart.

"Darling, I have told you," he whispered—"the greatest happiness life can hold for me!"

"Then, if you will have it, if you really care to have it, it is yours."

It was well perhaps for Stephen Daunt and for Sidney Arnold that this sunny dream of happiness should be granted them now in the short calm which preceded the storm that was so soon to burst over them. And such dreams are very pleasant, full of a golden, sunlit, gorgeous beauty, and are only bitter when the dreamers awake.

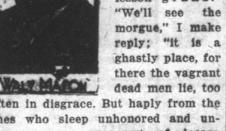
(To be continued.)

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**THE MORGUE.**

My nephews, all in brave array, before my cottage stand, and ask, "where shall we go to-day, to learn a lesson grand?" "We'll see the morgue," I make reply; "it is a ghastly place, for there the vagrant dead men lie, too often in disgrace. But happy from the ones who sleep unheeded and unused, we may some sort of lesson reap, of value to the young." Then grimly through the deathhouse gate, and down the darkling hall, I led my nephews twenty-eight, the short ones and the tall. We paused before a rough heavy slab on which a large man lay; "Oh, boys," I said, "keep careful tab on what you see this day. This man was bound to have his drinks whatever might betide, though he was warned by friendly ginks who told how others died. In every paper he perused he read how liquor's made in filthy dens, and still he boozed, and with his flagon stayed. The learned physicians and the cops all warned him he would die, and still he'd take his forty drops whenever he was dry. Though others perished or went blind, he thought he was immune; his works, he said, were copper lined, and never out of tune. But yesterday he drained a bowl, a right good willie-waught, and to this place of gloom and dole his shattered form was brought." And as we left that grisly place, where ghostly things prevail, my nephews cried, "We'll never chase along the bootleg trail!"



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