

"Well, Willie, my dear, you're more to me than the old sword. But I wouldn't have had it handled with disrespect for all that the place is worth. However I don't suppose they can —. What made them do it, child? They've not taken it down from the wall?"

"Yes, grannie. I think it was because I was staring at it too much, grannie. Perhaps they were afraid I would take it down and hurt myself with it. But I was only going to ask you about it. Tell me a story about it, grannie."

All my notion was some story, I did not think whether true or false, like one of Nannie's stories.

"That I will, my child—all about it—all about it. Let me see."

Her eyes went wandering a little and she looked perplexed.

"And they took it from you, did they, then? Poor child! Poor child!"

"They didn't take it from me, grannie. I never had it in my hands."

"Wouldn't give it you, then? Oh dear! Oh dear!"

I began to feel uncomfortable—grannie looked so strange and lost. The old feeling that she ought to be buried because she was dead returned upon me; but I overcame it so far as to be able to say:

"Won't you tell me about it then, grannie? I want so much to hear about the battle."

"What battle, child? Oh yes! I'll tell you about it some day, but I've forgot now, I've forgot it all now."

She pressed her hand to her forehead, and sat thus for some time, while I grew very frightened. I would gladly have left the room and crept down stairs, but I stood fascinated, gazing at the withered face half-hidden by the withered hand. I longed to be anywhere else, but my will had deserted me, and there I must remain. At length grannie took her hand from her eyes, and seeing me, started.

"Ah, my dear!" she said, "I had forgotten you. You wanted me to do something for you: what was it?"

"I wanted you to tell me about the sword, grannie."

"Oh yes, the sword!" she returned, putting her hand again to her forehead. "They took it away from you, did they? Well, never mind. I will give you something else—though I don't say it's as good as the sword."

She rose, and taking an ivory-headed stick which leaned against the side of the chimney-piece, walked with tottering steps towards the bureau. There she took from her pocket a small bunch of keys, and having, with some difficulty from the trembling of her hands, chosen one, and unlocked the sloping cover, she opened a little drawer inside, and took out a gold watch with a bunch of seals hanging from it. Never shall I forget the thrill that went through my frame. Did she mean to let me hold it in my own hand? Might I have it as often as I came to see her? Imagine my ecstasy when she put it carefully in the two hands I held up to receive it, and said:

"There, my dear! You must take good care of it, and never give it away for love or money. Don't you open it—there's a good boy, till you're a man like your father. He was a man! He gave it to me the day we were married, for he had nothing else, he said, to offer me. But I would not take it, my dear. I liked better to see him with it than have it myself. And when he left me, I kept it for you. But you must take care of it, you know."

"Oh, thank you, grannie!" I cried, in an agony of pleasure. "I will take care of it—indeed I will. Is it a real watch, grannie—as real as uncle's?"

"It's worth ten of your uncle's, my dear. Don't show it him though. He might take that away too. Your uncle's a very good man, my dear, but you mustn't mind everything he says to you. He forgets things. I never forget anything. I have plenty of time to think about things. I never forget."

"Will it go, grannie?" I asked, for my uncle was a much less interesting subject than the watch.

"It won't go without being wound up; but you might break it. Besides, it may want cleaning. It's several years since it was cleaned last. Where will you put it now?"

"Oh! I know where to hide it safe enough, grannie."

The old lady turned, and with difficulty tottered to her seat. I remained where I was, fixed in contemplation of my treasure. She called me. I went and stood by her knee.

"My child, there is something I want very much to tell you, but you know old people forget things —"

"But you said just now that you never forgot anything, grannie."

"No more I do, my dear; only I can't always lay my hands upon a thing when I want it."

"It was about the sword, grannie," I said, thinking to refresh her memory.

"No, my dear; I don't think it was about the sword exactly—though that had something to do with it. I shall remember it all by-and-by. It will come again. And so must you, my dear. Don't leave your old mother so long alone. It's weary, weary work, waiting."

"Indeed I won't, grannie," I said. "I will come the very first time I can. Only I mustn't let auntie see me, you know.—You don't want to be buried now, do you, grannie?" I added; for I had begun to love her, and the love had cast out the fear, and I did not want her to wish to be buried.

"I am very, very old; much too old to live, my dear. But I must do you justice before I can go to my grave. Now I know what I wanted to say. It's gone again. Oh dear! Oh dear! If I had you in the middle of the night, when everything comes back as if it had been only yesterday, I could tell you all about it from beginning to end, with all the ins and outs of it. But I can't now—I can't now."

She moaned and rocked herself to and fro. "Never mind, grannie," I said cheerfully, for I was happy enough for all eternity with my gold watch; "I will come and see you again as soon as ever I can." And I kissed her on the white cheek.

"Thank you, my dear. I think you had better go now. They may miss you, and then I should never see you again—to talk to, I mean."

"Why won't they let me come and see you, grannie?" I asked.

"That's what I wanted to tell you, if I could only see a little better," she answered, once more putting her hand to her forehead. "Perhaps I shall be able to tell you next time. Go now, my dear."

I left the room, nothing loath, for I longed to be alone with my treasure. I could not get enough of it in grannie's presence even. Noiseless as a bat I crept down the stair. When I reached the door at the foot I stood and listened. The kitchen was quite silent. I stepped out. There was no one there. I scudded across and up the other stair to my own room, carefully shutting the door behind me. Then I sat down on the floor on the other side of the bed, so that it was between me and the door, and I could run into the closet with my treasure before any one entering should see me.

The watch was a very thick round one. The back of it was crowded with raised figures in the kind of work called *repoussé*. I pored over these for a long time, and then turned to the face. It was set all round with shining stones—diamonds, though I knew nothing of diamonds then. The enamel was cracked, and I followed every crack as well as every figure of the hours. Then I began to wonder what I could do with it next. I was not satisfied. Possession I found was not bliss; it had not rendered me content. But it was as yet imperfect: I had not seen the inside. Grannie had told me not to open it: I began to think it hard that I should be denied thorough possession of what had been given to me. I believed I should be quite satisfied if I once saw what made it go. I turned it over and over, thinking I might at least find how it was opened. I have little doubt if I had discovered the secret of it, my virtue would have failed me. All I did find, however, was the head of a curious animal engraved on the handle. This was something. I examined it as carefully as the rest, and then finding I had for the time exhausted the pleasures of the watch, I turned to the seals. On one of them was engraved what looked like letters, but I could not read them. I did not know what they were turned the wrong way. One of them was like a W. On the other seal—there were but two and a curiously-contrived key—I found the same head as was engraved on the handle—turned the other way of course. Wearied at length, I took the precious thing into the dark closet, and laid it in a little box which formed one of my few possessions. I then wandered out into the field, and went straying about until dinner-time, during which I believe I never once lifted my eyes to the place where the sword had hung, lest even that action should betray the watch.

From that day, my head, and as much of my heart as might be, were filled with the watch. And, alas! I soon found that my book-mending had grown distasteful to me, and for the satisfaction of employment, possession was a poor substitute. As often as I made the attempt to resume it, I got weary, and wandered almost involuntarily to the closet to feel for my treasure in the dark, handle it once more, and bring it out into the light. Already I began to dread the doom of riches, in the vain attempt to live by that which was not bread. Nor was this all. A certain weight began to gather over my spirit—a sense almost of wrong. For although the watch had been given me by my grandmother, and I never doubted either her right to dispose of it or my right to possess it, I could not look my uncle in the face, partly from a vague fear lest he should read my secret in my eyes, partly from a sense of something out of joint between him and me. I began to fancy, and I believe I was right, that he looked at me sometimes with a wistfulness I had never seen in his face before. This made me so uncomfortable that I began to avoid his presence as much as possible. And although I tried to please him with my lessons, I could not learn them as hitherto.

One day he asked me to bring him the book I had been repairing.

"It's not finished yet, uncle," I said. "Will you bring it me, just as it is? I want to look for something in it."

I went and brought it with shame. He took it, and having found the passage he wanted, turned the volume once over in his hands, and gave it me back without a word.

Next day I restored it to him finished and tidy. He thanked me, looked it over again, and put it in its place. But I fairly encountered an enquiring and somewhat anxious gaze. I believe he had a talk with my aunt about me that night.

The next morning, I was seated by the bedside, with my secret in my hand, when I thought I heard the sound of the door-handle, and glided at once into the closet. When I came out in a flutter of anxiety, there was no one there. But I had been too much startled to return to what I had grown to feel almost a guilty pleasure.

The next morning after breakfast, I crept into the closet, put my hand unerringly into the one corner of the box, found no watch, and after an unavailing search, sat down in the dark on a bundle of rags, with the sensations of a ruined man. My world was withered up and gone. How the day passed, I cannot tell. How I got through my meals, I cannot even imagine. When I look back and attempt to recall the time, I see but a cloudy waste of misery crossed by the lightning-streaks of a sense of injury. All that was left me now was a cat-like watching for the chance of going to my grandmother. Into her ear I would pour the tale of my wrong. She who had been as a haunting discomfort to me, had grown to be my one consolation.

My lessons went on as usual. A certain pride enabled me to learn them tolerably for a day or two; but when that faded, my whole being began to flag. For some time my existence was a kind of life in death. At length one evening my uncle said to me, as we finished my lessons far from satisfactorily—

"Willie, your aunt and I think it better you should go to school. We shall be very sorry to part with you, but it will be better. You will then have companions of your own age. You have not enough to amuse you at home."

He did not allude by a single word to the affair of the watch. Could my aunt have taken it, and never told him? It was not likely.

I was delighted at the idea of any change, for my life had grown irksome to me.

"O, thank you, uncle!" I cried, with genuine expression.

I think he looked a little sad; but he uttered no reproach.

My aunt and he had already arranged everything. The next day but one, I saw, for the first time, a carriage drive up to the door of the house. I was waiting for it impatiently. My new clothes had all been packed in a little box. I had not put in a single toy: I cared for nothing I had now. The box was put up beside the driver. My aunt came to the door where I was waiting for my uncle.

"Mayn't I go and say good-bye to grannie?" I asked.

"She's not very well to-day," said my aunt. "I think you had better not. You will be back at Christmas, you know."

I was not so much grieved as I ought to have been. The loss of my watch had made the thought of grannie painful again.

"Your uncle will meet you at the road," continued my aunt, seeing me still hesitate. "Good-bye."

I received her cold embrace without emotion, clambered into the chaise, and looking out as the driver shut the door, wondered what my aunt was holding her apron to her eyes for, as she turned away into the house. My uncle met us and got in, and away the chaise rattled, bearing me towards an utterly new experience; for hardly could the strangest region in foreign lands be more unknown to the wandering mariner than the faces and ways of even my own kind were to me. I had never played for one half-hour with boy or girl. I knew nothing of their playthings or their games. I hardly knew what boys were like, except, outwardly, from the dim reflex of myself in the broken mirror in my bed-room, whose lustre was more of the ice than the pool, and, inwardly, from the partly exceptional experiences of my own nature, with even which I was poorly enough acquainted.

[To be continued.]

The testimony of a very cautious witness during a murder trial in San Francisco is thus given by a journal of that city, which vouches for its exact fidelity: "A gentleman came up there; I forget the name; I think his name is Renwick; I think this gentleman is the man; I think he was; I am not sure; I think he was; I am not sure; I guess this was the man; I think so; I would not be certain; yes, I guess—well, I think so; I believe that he is the man; I believe that is the man; I guess that is the man; that looks like him; I guess that is the man; yes, I think that is him; I believe that is the man; I said I thought it was him, didn't I? Well, so far as I can recollect." He evidently had the fear of perjury before his eyes.

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## TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

### LILLYMERE.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

DRESS AND BONES OF AGNES SCHOOLAR IDENTIFIED BY HER FATHER.

A PRINTED circular was laid before Lady Mortimer bearing the caption:—"Estate and Title Recovery Company. Capital, five million dollars. Shares, one thousand dollars each. Ized Bold, Chairman of the Board of Directors. Head offices, New York. Agents in Canada, the Bank of Inkle."

"What does this mean, Reuben?"

"On the face of it only the existence of a Joint Stock Company to recover lapsed titles and estates for rightful heirs. But under the face of it, my lady, it means that Ized Bold, through an alleged right of his wife, Tabitha Redwald, claims to be next heir to the Lillymere estates in England. He is selling bonds to be redeemed on his wife's accession to the property."

"But the proprietor, my dear, venerable friend Lord Royalfort, still lives; do purchasers of the bonds know that?"

"Probably they don't care. The Company is formed to contest DeLacy Lillymere's title."

"On what grounds?"

"On personal identity first. On legitimacy second. The latter presents the more serious difficulty."

"I think not. If personal identity be proved legally, as it is to us morally, the Earl becomes a powerful ally. You and Mrs. Pearly are satisfied DeLacy Lillymere is the child stolen at Ogleburn?"

"Mrs. Pearly is; and I have but small doubt, though not a certainty beyond all question. Could I discover Essel Bell, of whom Mrs. Pearly relates the incomprehensible story—appearing in guise of an itinerant Highland Piper and suddenly disappearing, the identity of DeLacy Lillymere might be settled. But every effort to trace Essel Bell has failed."

"Mr. Reuben, you have additional reasons, I think, urging to a search for Essel Bell?" said the lady, smiling.

"I have, please your ladyship, the most urgent reasons which may inspire human adventure. Years ago I travelled the American Union, Canada, Mexico, and West Indies, in search of her; but finding no trace concluded the precious being had ceased to live. The disguise of Essel as a piper in Conway and at the Rama wedding, had relation to Lillymere; small doubt of that. But knowing the hostility of other claimants, such as this Ized Bold Estate and Title Recovery Company, Essel was discreetly reticent. Beg pardon, your ladyship, for using a word of pedantic slang; it came unawares."

"If no worse than that were in use, Mr. Secretary, the language of daily literature might be held faultless."

"Your ladyship alludes to faults of the erring Secretary, doubtless?"

"No, Reuben; you are a legitimate child of nature, not guilty of the inartistic heresy of suggesting that nature imitates sculptors and painters; who at their best remotely imitate nature. You don't write that a girl of beautiful form has finely 'cut' lips, 'chiselled' nose, 'pencilled' eyebrows! These are the faults of phrase I alluded to; not that respectable word reticent, lately made a drudge."

This conversation occurred in one of the morning parlours of the Canada Hall Hotel. It was interrupted by an attendant carrying a silver tray with a letter and card. The Secretary took the tray, and bowing, placed it by Lady Mary.

"Mr. Reuben, find the Duke of Sheerness, please. His Grace should be present at this interview; you also should be present or near at hand. Mr. Schoolar has arrived from England, the senior member, as you may recollect, in the firm of Schoolar & Schoolars, Solicitors, Chancery Lane; the London agents of the Lillymere estates. You'd better summon De Lacy within call also. Bring the Duke soon as found; and hasten back, please."

This was purposely spoken in presence of the hotel attendant who awaited instructions, that he might hear, and so cause all in the house to know that the confidential agent of Earl Royalfort had arrived, to recognise DeLacy Lillymere.

"Inform the gentleman, please, that His Grace the Duke of Sheerness, and Lady Mary Mortimer, will receive Mr. Schoolar at half-past ten. It is now ten. That allows half an hour for the Duke to arrive. His Grace was on the lower fountain terrace but a minute ago."

Footsteps were heard treading with unmistakable vehemence on the matted corridor. Back and forth, passing the parlour and re-