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CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

"You mean to be kind, Miss O'Connor," he said kindly. "Thank you." And he asked Mrs. Sherwood, whether she had read Mr. Ward McAllister's book. The line of talk changed at once.

CHAPTER XX.—Who? Mr. Sherwood did not come home. "One of his orphans," his wife said sarcastically. "Was in trouble, and he neglected everything else as usual. He was most attentive to the several wards in his care." Mrs. Sherwood and Katharine were polite to one another. There was a veiled contempt in Mrs. Sherwood's politeness. She believed that she had Katharine under her thumb, and she despised her accordingly.

To add to her triumph, Lord Marchmont, with that delicacy which characterizes certain travelling Britons, had contributed an article to a New York paper, in which he had described Katharine as the most distinguished young woman he had met. Mrs. Sherwood had kindly supplied her niece's photograph and had the article reproduced in several Philadelphia papers. Katharine had no knowledge of this until it was too late, unfortunately. Mother Ursula, to whom somebody sent a marked copy of the New York newspaper, wrote a severe and warning letter to Katharine, and Katharine rushed off to the Lady Alicia for an explanation.

"I thought you knew all about it," said Biddy. "I don't think it's a nice custom to print women's pictures in the papers, but it's the fashion in England, and I presume you Americans think nothing wrong that the English do."

"You are unjust to Americans, Biddy," cried Katharine, blushing to her ears as her friend held out the papers. "All Americans are not like the few you have met in society. I am an American, and I hate such 'immodesity,' as Mother Ursula justly calls this newspaper display."

"You have been well brought up," answered Biddy. "That makes a difference. And you have good blood in your veins. Most Americans like display. The Worth girls—but I must not criticize my hostess."

"Oh, dear, dear, what shall I do about it?" exclaimed Katharine. "Write to the editor?"

"Do, if you want more notoriety," said Biddy. "O, I wish I could see Mother Ursula and say that I could not help it."

"You might tell her that every girl in her set would give all her pocket-money for Lord Marchmont's opinion of her good looks publicly expressed."

"It must stop!"

"As you are in this mood, you had better stop certain paragraphs in the papers. There is one that appeared this morning, for instance," Biddy went to her desk and gave Katharine a paragraph, which she had cut out of a morning journal.

"The rumor that Miss Katharine

O'Connor, the heiress of Mr. Marcus Sherwood, is engaged to Mr. Wirt Percival is contradicted on good authority. It is presumed, therefore, that Lord Marchmont is in the field."

Tears came into Katharine's eyes. "This is an outrage, Biddy! Who puts such insolent things in the papers?"

"I fancy your aunt could tell."

"Do you think she knows?"

"Of course. You are very innocent, Kitty. Tell me; are you really engaged to Wirt Percival?"

"How can you ask me such a question, Biddy? You ought to know me better than anybody else."

"It is too bad, Kit," said the Irish girl, affectionately, "that we have had such little time for intimate talk. Since we've met we have been living in a whirl. There are many things in the old letters which I would like to ask you about. These letters of yours were always so kind and sweet, like a perfume. Our life was very hard on the other side," added Lady Alicia, with a sigh. "Nobody has any idea how difficult it is to have rank and little money. Papa was always careworn, always grumbling. And we hadn't a carriage or even a car sometimes, and our credit wasn't always good, for the rents don't come in as they used to. I often weaved for some new land where people didn't mind; where one could carry a package in the street, if one wanted to, and where it didn't matter whether one had a title or not. I thought from your letters that America was different, but I find it's almost the same kind of life—why, nobody is poor."

"I know it is different. I assure you there are poor people in America, and no doubt rich ones, too—very different from all those we happen to know!" exclaimed Katharine, eagerly.

"I suppose there are poor people here, but I don't want to know them. I might fall in love with one, you know, and an earl's daughter with no dowry can't marry a poor man, you know," Lady Alicia said.

"Why not?" asked Katharine. "An earl's daughter is not different from any other woman, is she? She has a heart, and a soul to save. I sometimes think, Biddy, that you'd marry anybody that is rich."

"I must," said Biddy, shrugging her shoulders.

"Must!" cried Katharine. "Must!"

"You are a slave!—a slave!"

"Perhaps I am, my dear. The conventions of my rank in life force me to marry a man with money. Imagine Lady Alicia Bridget. St. John opening the door for people who call to ask whether her husband the clerk is at home. Fancy!"

"Well, what of it," asked Katharine sturdily. "If you did it for the glory of God and made your husband happy? Mother Ursula said many times that one should marry only that man one could respect and love—respect and love," she said.

"Oh, you don't understand," said Biddy, sadly. "I am a slave; I was born one; I can't help it. Your aunt was here yesterday, asking all sorts of questions about your father

and his family."

"Let us go away," said Katharine, taking her friend's hand. "Let us live simple, honest lives."

"As they did in the golden age," interrupted Lady Alicia, with a long sigh. "You shall be Rosalind, and I, Cecelia, and we will go into the Forest of Arden. Oh, my dear, you will not find a boudoir like this in your Forest of Arden."

Lady Alicia looked around at the appointments of the sitting room the amiable Worths had allotted to her.

"You will not find a Steinway like that, or a statuette like that, or hot-house roses or a Louis Seize desk like that in the corner, or women who know how to make gowns like the one you have on. No, Kit, the Forest of Arden would not suit me; and even if I met an Orlando, he would probably have to utilize his talent for boxing in the prize-ring. Nonsense, dear, dreams of youth!"

Katharine closed her lips tight.

"I am not afraid of poverty; I can work; I hate lies and artifices; I hate what you call 'society'; I want to be free; I don't want to become frivolous; I am not a dreamer. If my aunt has been guilty of exhibiting me in public, as you say, I shall feel myself free to go out, to make my own way in the world. Many girls do it. We are not taught in the convent to be fine ladies."

"You would make a charming shop girl!"

"I would do my duty," said Katharine, earnestly. "I imagine, though, that after all the care the nuns—thanks to my uncle—have expended on me, that I may lead a

freer life than the shop-girl leads. And even if I had to stand behind a counter all day, I should respect myself. Many gentlemen do it. Let us go away together, let us not be ashamed of poverty; let us be free."

"The prospect has temptations when I look into your face," said Lady Alicia, smiling. "I would like to be free—that is, to be rich; for only the rich are free. But I am too artificial for your Forest of Arden. Rosalind didn't care whether people ate with their forks or not; she hadn't a taste for perfumes, and dainty dishes and the right sort of perfume in her carriage cushions, and good music, and the Dublin horse-show, and the Castle balls. Ah, no, Kit; I must marry a rich man, and soon, too. Are you really not engaged to Wirt Percival?"

"No; haven't I said so?"

"Girls often say—"

"You mean girls in society; I am a woman."

Biddy laughed.

"What dignity! If he asked you, would you marry him?"

Katharine hesitated.

"If he asked me—"

"That is enough," said Lady Alicia, her brow clouding, "you do like him."

"Let me think," said Katharine, looking gravely out of the window. "No—yes. I like him because he is frank. I don't like him because he would be arrogant if he could; he has no deep feelings; he believes that because he is rich and Wirt Percival, everything ought to bend to him. No, I don't like him; but I fancy that, if he were a Catholic, I might marry him just to get away from my aunt."

Katharine put her hand hastily up to her lips. Her friend pretended not to notice the slip.

"No," said Katharine after a short pause, "I am wronging myself. I would stand behind a counter all day before I would marry Wirt Percival, with Bolingbroke and all his riches thrown in. No; I will be free to make the best of myself, to save my soul. Biddy, I have thought a great deal about life. People think that the meditations of the Rosary are mere 'pious exercises' which have nothing to do with our daily life. Why they have been almost daily bread to me. What lessons have I not learned from them! Our Lady was a woman—the most blessed and purest of women! She was free to choose, and she chose to be the Mother of our Lord. She chose to leave her free, and we love her because she accepted His will with her will. A woman is not a mere toy of circumstances; she has her mission, which is not to sacrifice herself in order that she may live among hot-house roses and have luxuries."

"But all the good things of earth are bought with money," said Biddy, interested, in spite of her cynicism.

"Are they? Are my uncle and aunt in possession of the best things of life, though they are rich? Is Mrs. Percival happy or content? Is Ferdinand Carey happy? Are the Marquis and Marquise happy, though she has his title and he has her wealth? Our nuns, who are poor, were as happy—as human creatures could be. If riches were necessary to us, God would give them to all the world. They are a power, but a pure and loving heart is a greater power; as prayer is greater than gold."

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Biddy sighed again.

"Enough eloquence, my child! What will you wear to-night? You will, no doubt, have something sumptuous for your coming-out party."

"Oh, I hate it all!" said Katharine. "I hate it all because—because—"

"But I must not complain about my aunt."

"I understand—she makes her gifts hard to take. But what will you wear?"

"A beautiful dress, with the silver and peach-blossoms my aunt has chosen for me arranged in a new way. It is beautiful, Kit," added Katharine, with a spark of interest, "and there is the most graceful train trimmed with white feathers."

"There are no trains in Arden," said Biddy, with a twinkle in her eye.

"I like a train," said Katharine, frankly. "But a train is not much of life."

"It will be the smartest function ever given in this set," Lady Alicia said. "Your aunt has engaged Augustine for the supper, and ruffled the florists. But you really don't like Wirt Percival?"

"If I liked him, I should hesitate before I married him. I was a little doubtful, but I was afraid to face life and duty then; I am not afraid now."

Lady Alicia looked relieved; she had made up her mind. She had gauged Percival's depth, and she had only two weeks of her visit left; she must make her great stroke in a few days. She was sad; she hated her own weakness; she admired Katharine's position, but she dared not imitate it. She was about to act against her conscience to avoid going back to Dublin and dependence. "Free!" she said to herself bitterly. "Free!" She might be free, if she did not prefer slavery to poverty. No, she would be a slave rather than be poor. And society on both sides of the water would have applauded her decision.

Katharine reached Kenwood about noon. The house was in a state of disorder, out of which was to come the most beautiful dinner and cotillion party ever given in Kenwood, or any place within miles. Mrs. Sherwood had been besieged with demands for cards from all the best people, many of whom she had never met. She was having boudoir in her room when Katharine came in. Things were going well; she was excited but cheerful. She sent for her niece.

"Oh, my dear," she said, dipping into a pile of notes by her side on the spindle-legged table, "hardly a regret! Everybody will be here! And the florist has carried out a lovely idea of mine! Each guest, whether in the German or not, is to have a bouquet of orchids with your crest, done in the heraldic colors on an immense band of ribbon."

"My crest?" said Katharine.

"Lady Alicia told me all about it yesterday; your father must have been quite a gentleman in the old country."

"Aunt," said Katharine, "if you do anything so absurd, I shall stay in my room. I have been made ashamed by your—by the newspapers. I am a woman, and I have no right to a crest. My father may have cherished some remembrances of his family, and I always use his seal. Biddy knows that but surely you will not make it so ridiculous!"

Katharine, beginning to cry, left the room. She would not—she could not endure this atmosphere any longer.

"There's no doing anything with that girl; she has no social perspective," said Mrs. Sherwood; "she is like Mr. Sherwood. The crest shall appear, nevertheless. The stationer says that our coat of arms is a green shield with a man pendant, and the crest a bow and arrows with the motto 'Je prends mon bien ou je le trouve,' whatever that means; he says we're descended from Robin Hood, of Sherwood. Thank Heaven she has sense enough to know on which side her bread is buttered,—and Lord Marchmont's coming to-night!"

By eight o'clock, the hour of dinner, Mrs. Sherwood's house was like a fairy palace. Half a hundred servants in green liveries stood about, ready to form in two lines under the long awning that ran down through the grounds to the gateway the moment the guests for the cotillion should begin to arrive. Two of these servants, with powdered wigs and glittering buttons, stood at each side of the staircase as Katharine came down to the drawing-room. There was soft music, as of zithers, somewhere; she could not help uttering an exclamation of pleasure at the sight before her. With flowers, lights, mirrors and hangings the big hall had been transformed.

"He seems attentive," she heard Percival whisper to her aunt in the drawing-room before they went in to dinner. "I mean Lord Marchmont."

"It is arranged," answered her aunt, with her artificial smile. "Lord Marchmont has asked my consent—in fact many letters have passed; the engagement will be announced to-morrow."

It was no wonder that Katharine answered Lord Marchmont in monosyllables. She felt every attention an insult—and he was very attentive, because Mrs. Sherwood had informed him by letter that Katharine would have a million (he had some difficulty in reducing it to pounds sterling) and that he had only to go in and win the lady, who was willing.

When the oysters and soup had been served by the twenty servants who stood each behind the chair of a guest, and Mr. Percival had praised the sherry, Katharine began to forget her indignation and to see some humor in the situation. Wirt Percival had evidently accepted the mitten with grace. Katharine heard Biddy say to him:

"I must go away in a short time, and I shall never see you again. I must go in two weeks. Lord Bolingbroke insists."

Wirt looked at Lady Alicia, and resolved to offer her the heart Katharine had refused. Bolingbroke! to be the son-in-law of Lord Bolingbroke! Yes, he could forget that Katharine was clever, pretty, rich, and good for that!

Katharine's spirits revived; she began to enjoy an entire of unknown but delicious substance; she flashed repartees at Lord Marchmont; her aunt looked at her and felt triumphant. Katharine, with a touch of malice, smiled back at her. Her aunt, forgetting her recently-acquired repose, actually winked.

After the grand flower figure of the cotillon, Lord Marchmont asked her to take a walk through the great corridor made by lighted and palmed decorated tents which radiated from the house. Katharine's time had come.

"Lord Marchmont," she said, "I heard what my aunt said a moment ago. If I went with you, the newspapers might say we were engaged to be married; and as neither you nor I care for that sort of publicity, I must decline."

She went up the stairs very quickly, her train gliding after her like a brilliant snake. Lord Marchmont stood watching her. At the top she met Biddy, who had only time to whisper, as the music for the next figure was beginning:

"Wirt has asked me and I have consented; I am going to make a marriage of reason."

"And I am not!"

(To be continued.)

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CONSTITUTION.

Although generally described as a disease, can never exist unless some of the organs are deranged, which is generally found to be the liver. It consists of an inability to regularly evacuate the bowels, and as a regular action of the bowels is absolutely essential to general health, the least irregularity should never be neglected.

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into a bower of beauty.

Katharine looked well; she had more color than usual, and there was a new light in her eyes. Her gown of white and silver and peach color, with its great train of lace and feathers, suited her admirably. As she reached the end of the staircase, one of the stately footmen gave her a note, which she took mechanically, thinking it was one of her aunt's mysterious messages. She put it into the big nosegay she carried. Her aunt would probably say what she had to say, and there was no time to read it, for Mr. and Mrs. Worth and the girls were entering.

The dinner was brilliant; Lord Marchmont took her in and was very attentive. Wirt Percival, who in the absence of Mr. Sherwood, took in the Lady Alicia, glanced towards her anxiously once or twice. Katharine did not speak much; she was righteously indignant, for at every plate was a nosegay with that wretched crest painted on the white ribbon attached to it.

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