

**Plot That Failed;  
—OR—  
Love That Would  
Not Be Denied.**

CHAPTER II.

Her aunt, with another little start—she started on the average twice in every ten minutes when her niece was near—looked up with mild nervousness at the tall, graceful figure, her gaze gradually changing to one of affectionate admiration.

And who could withhold admiration?

There was beauty in the cleanly cut, oval face, with its clear, brunette skin and deep brown eyes; there were youth, strength, grace in the undulating charm about the girl, her figure, voice, and gesture, which enthralled young and old of both sexes and demanded admiration rather than won it.

"My poor dress," she said, with a laughing pout. "He was—is a dress a he or she, auntie?—I'll say 'it' was so clean and stately only this morning, and now! Look, that is water. The fish leaped out of the fountain and Tray has pawed me with his wet feet. It's no use my trying to be good, you see, dear, circumstances are too strong for me," and, with a musical, rippling laugh, the light-hearted girl ran to the open piano.

The old lady sighed, but with a smile.

"I am almost beginning to think they are, Violet," she said, in her low-pitched voice, so great a contrast to the full, melodious one of the girl.

"No; you will never make me anything better than an untutored savage, auntie. You've tried so hard, so very hard, to teach me how to enter a room, steal from chair to chair, lower my voice, and smile properly. But all in vain, I can't be a model young lady, and I am always making you jump."

"Not jump, my dear."

"Well, start, then? It is all the same, auntie. Fancy you jumping! Now, I can jump. I jumped over the brook. No, not quite," and here the laugh rang out again, "but almost quite. Poor Marie, she has had hard times with me. Do you know, I shouldn't like to be a lady's-maid to Miss Violet Mildmay; no, not for all the mines of Peru—or is it Patagonia?"

Without waiting for an answer, she struck a chord, and dashed into a waltz.

That came to an end, however, as suddenly as it commenced, and the graceful figure was on its feet.

"It is too hot to play, is it not? How can you knit such weather as this? It makes me boil, yes, actually boil, to watch you!"

"Don't watch me, then, my dear," suggested the old lady, mildly. "Go and sit in the arbor. It will be cool there in the shade."

"Well, I will. But I warn you, auntie, I shan't sit long. I never can sit still long. I'll try the arbor, though," and, catching up her rustic hat, which for the nonce had fallen from her lovely young head to a little rest on the floor, the restless girl swept in a wave of muslin and tulle from the room.

Mrs. Mildmay rose, folded her knitting into a neat little ball, stored it away in a neat little basket, and was about to quit the room, but before she could open the door Violet had run through the conservatory again.

"Well, my dear?" said the old lady, patiently.

"Too hot in the arbor, auntie," said the girl, with a charming and decisive shake of her head. "The lawn is absolutely shimmering. I shall go on the cliffs."

"My dear, you will be roasted! Come and sit in the shade here, in my chair."

"Oh! then I should be suffocated. No, I'll try the cliffs. What is the time? Just time for a quiet stroll. Good-by."

"Stop, my dear Violet. Pray don't go without your sunshade! You will be burned up!"

"Right. I'd forgotten that stupid old thing. Where is it? Let me see—where did I throw it?"

And she stood in the middle of the room, swinging her hat to and fro, and fanning herself.

"Is that it under the piano?" said Mrs. Mildmay, pointing to the sunshade where it lay, ignominiously entangled with the legs of the instrument.

"Yes, that is it. What dear, sharp eyes you have, auntie. Come along, sunshade! It's rather hard that you, being so much the weaker, should be burned to save me."

And with another happy nod and smile away she floated again, her long, diaphanous skirt whisking a current of cool air through the room and just escaping the overturning of a table of bric-a-brac by an inch.

The cliffs to which Miss Mildmay bent her steps were within five minutes' walk of the lawn, and were one of the young lady's favorite promenades.

From them, looking seaward, she could feast her eyes upon the ocean, ever restless and sportful, like herself; turning landward there jutted far a fair stretch of well-wooded scenery, with Mildmay House in the foreground, and the sparkling Tivoli, where it ran in a semi-circle toward the sea as a belt to inclose the whole.

On a part of this there stood another house, larger even and more pretentious than Mildmay's. This was the Cedars, a modern residence of yellow brick and stucco erected at enormous cost by a certain Jabez Dodson, who had amassed a large fortune by the melting and manufacturing of tallow.

The Cedars and its inhabitants were the objects of Mrs. Mildmay's supreme detestation. Loving good birth and high breeding as she did, it was only natural that tallow should be detestable to her, and that the large

and altogether hideous house which the retired tradesman had erected should be a perpetual eyesore to her.

Often as the sunset lit up the yellow edifice, bringing out all its ugly points with unmerciful distinctness, the good old lady had spoken from her heart, and, with a sigh that shook the bugles in her cap, she had regretted that Providence had not been kind or considerate enough to allure Mr. Dodson's fancy to a more distant spot.

"That house spoils the view and gives me the horrors, my dear," she would often say, but never meeting with any further sympathy from Violet than expressed by a laugh.

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"It is ugly, I'll admit," she would remark, "but you need not look at it so often."

"I can't help it, my dear," the old lady would avow, "I am fascinated by it. I am so glad that the dreadful man did not build his monstrosity during your poor father's lifetime. It would have been a cruel blow to him. I can't think why he didn't secure all the land around. Then you would have been safe from such a visitation. Fancy a tallow chandler or melter, or whatever he calls himself, setting up a habitation within a stone's throw of your drawing-room window."

Violet would laugh again, with pleasant enjoyment of her aunt's pet aversion.

"It doesn't very much matter, that I can see, aunt, after all," she had once urged. "Of course, it would be better without the Cedars, but to give Mr. Dodson his due, the family have never annoyed us. I have never seen them, even. I scarcely know how many there are of them; do you?"

Mrs. Mildmay shook her head in the negative, but a nod in the affirmative showed she was doubtful.

"I think there are only the father, mother, and one son. But I have never seen them, at least, I think not."

"Nor I," said Violet. "So, you see, they are not such dreadful characters, after all. Poor people, I dare say, they are constantly deploring the nearness of the park, and declaring that we spoil their view—which we certainly do."

"How absurd!" said Mrs. Mildmay. "Violet, I really believe you do not dislike them half so much as one would expect."

"Wicked as I am, I can't hate people I have never seen," Violet here laughingly replied.

And in like manner she always turned her aunt's disparagement of the Cedars aside, and contrived to say a word for the obnoxious individuals whom she had never seen.

This morning as she stood on the edge of the cliff, looking first out to sea and then at the sweet landscape, a smile rested for a moment upon her face, and her lips murmured:

"Poor auntie, if she could see the Cedars now! It looks as if the fellow which built it had caught fire. It makes me hotter than ever to look at it!"

And, with a little flutter of her

dainty handkerchief, she seated herself upon the dried-up grass and turned her eyes seaward again.

As she sat thus she formed a picture beautiful enough to gladden the eyes of a Veronese in her glorious youth and loveliness, standing out in its cloud of airy muslin against the vividness of the summer sky.

Perhaps an individual slowly climbing the steep path behind her was of the same opinion, for he stopped in his laborious ascent, and, baring his well-shaped head to the slight breeze, stood, lost in an admiring reverie.

How long he would have indulged in his admiring observations it would be difficult to say, but his reverie was suddenly disturbed and his fixed regard turned aside in some confusion by the movement of Violet's head.

She had been watching a seagull, and following the bird's progress with her eyes, and had suddenly become aware of the proximity of the stranger and of the fixed and admiring regard of his two dark eyes.

Almost too suddenly, for, with something that nearly approached a start, she half rose.

Regretting the movement before it was complete, she reseated herself, and in so doing loosed her hold of the sunshade, which, with the perversity of such things, instantly took advantage of its freedom to sail over the cliff.

Violet sprang to her feet, and thoughtlessly was about to peer over the precipice in search of it, but before she had reached the extreme edge she felt a strong hand upon her arm, and, turning with some astonishment, found herself face to face with the observant stranger.

For a moment they regarded each other in silence. It is worthy of notice how much and how acutely the eye can comprehend in so short a time.

Violet saw a handsome face, tanned and mustached, a tall, lithe figure, to whose strength the grasp upon her arm bore witness, a pair of earnest, fearless eyes, and a mouth which might have been grave but for the smile which made it remarkably pleasant.

"Pray, forgive me!" said the gentleman, removing his hat with his disengaged hand. "But have you fully considered the danger which attends a downward glance from this height?"

The tone was respectful, almost reverent, but there was a dignity and a nameless music in it also that carried it even further in one's liking.

Violet blushed like a school-girl, as she would have expressed it, and, without a word, stepped back from the danger which she certainly had not considered, and which, by the light of the gentleman's question, was now fully revealed.

"I thank you very much," she said, as his strong hand dropped from her arm, and the stranger's face allowed itself to relax into a smile. "It was foolish and thoughtless, I," and she shuddered, "I might have fallen over. People have been known to, have they not?"

(To be Continued.)

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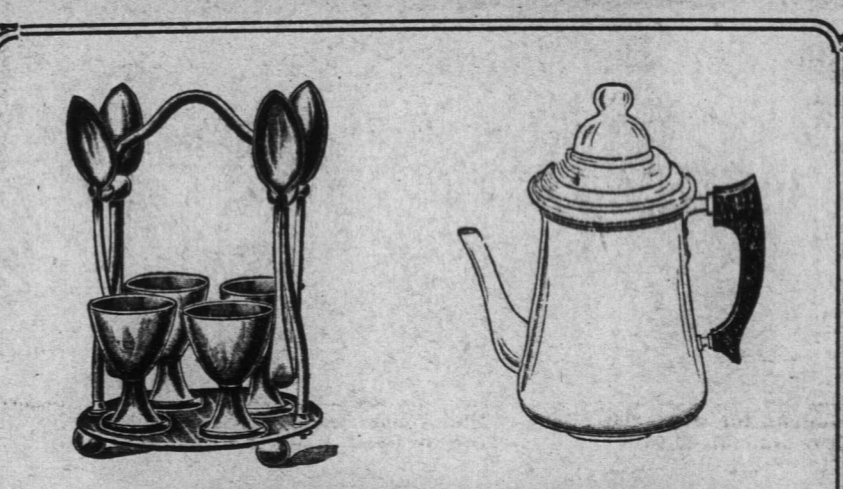
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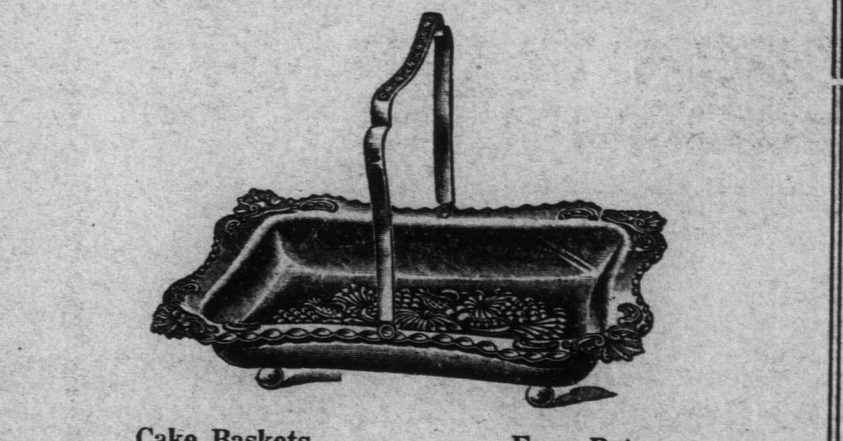
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