

...a despairing gesture of his wife's. 'I don't say, if things stood with us as they did in old times, I'd listen to such a proposal as this; but, Nellie, if Maude could make up her mind to it, Glinn would remain ours, and that would lighten the remainder of my time in this world, and yours too, wife mine.'

'Not unless Maude were happy,' murmured the poor mother.

I can fancy the contempt with which a Prussian matron might regard Mrs. Denison's last remark. A penniless girl offered wealth, country-house, etc., and her mother musing about her happiness. Oh, it is too absurd! But, you see, this poor, simple country-bred lady had not yet mastered the two great dogmas of our present civilization: 'Thou shalt believe in gold, jewels, lands, miniver, and ermine; but from love, limited income, a struggle with the world, or a scarcity of silk dresses, good Lord, deliver us!'

'Look, here, Nellie,' said the anna at length, 'you don't imagine for one instant that I have any intention of coercing Maude on the point. Only give it a trial. Be reasonable. You say she cares for no one else at present. Let her see young Pearman, and like him if she can. If not, there's an end of it, but if she could fancy him it would be well for all of us. Ruin stares us in the face—this would avert it. She, poor girl, will be left but indifferently off should anything happen to me; this insures her position and luxuries. I don't see why it shouldn't be,' and Denison shot a keen glance at the pale face opposite.

'I will do what you would have me, Harold,' returned his wife, quietly. 'I don't think that I have ever seen Mr. Pearman, but I had formed such high hopes for Maude! I never crossed you yet, it is not likely I should begin now when you're in such trouble. But, oh, I do wish Glinn could be saved in any other way.'

'You have been a good wife to me, Nellie dear,' said the squire, as he rose, and pressed his lips to Mrs. Denison's fair cheek. 'You don't see this in the right light, but you will when you think it over. Meanwhile, you will will do what I want—eh?'

'I will tell Maude when you deem it necessary, returned the soft voice of his wife, 'but, Harold, I can't think it right, though you know best.'

'You have not thought it over as I have. I do, and you will change your mind, said Denison, as he left his wife's boudoir.

Sadly mused the wife over her husband's communication. Quiet, undemonstrative woman as she was, yet Elinor Denison had been brought up from her cradle a thorough believer in the dogma of caste, and even her gentle nature rebelled at the idea that a daughter of hers should wed the son of a low-born attorney. We know her passionate idolatry of Maude, surpassing even a mother's love. It is easy to picture the bitter tears she shed after that morning's interview. She was a woman naturally given to weeping. In trouble

Her grand recourse  
Was to sit down and cry, of course."

A passionate storm of lamentation, but a gentle shower of mourning. As Harold Denison's wife, she had had manifold opportunities of practising her vocation, yet I doubt whether he ever left saltier tears running down her cheeks than he did that bright spring afternoon.

## CHAPTER V.

### MAUDE IN TROUBLE.

Seldom did eye rest on a prettier picture than was made by bonnie Maud Denison the early April morning, as she stands at the entrance of those glassy Glinn vistas, fondling a black-and-tan setter, her own especial pet. The close-fitting French gray merino dress with the plain linen collar and

and then plunged moodily into his correspondence. He found nothing there apparently to raise his spirits. At length, thrusting his letters into his pockets, he rose:

'Well,' he said, 'things look blacker and blacker. It's no use struggling; the sooner my scheme is tried the better. Do what you promised yesterday. Delay is useless.'

'But, Harold!' pleaded his wife, as the ever-ready tears rose to her eyes.

'Don't be foolish. It's our only chance. Understand,' he said, crossing over to his wife's chair, and lowering his voice so that his laughter could not catch his words—'just put it before her in a common-sense way this morning. How can you tell she will object? She can do as she likes about it. I have no wish to coerce her in any way; but, mine, tell her the whole truth. It is only fair the proposal should be laid before her. I'll come up to your room after luncheon, and you can tell me how she takes it,' and, turning on his heel, Harold Denison left the room.

'What's the matter, my mother?' said Maude, as she stole to Mrs. Denison's side, and, passing her arms round her neck, laid her fair, fresh young cheek against the pale, worn, troubled face. 'More of these money-miseries, I suppose; but don't look so tearful over it. Papa looks so gloomy and you so sad, it's enough to frighten poor me. Even if he has lost some more money, I suppose we shall always have enough to live upon; and if you and I, mother, can't have new dresses for ever so long, that is nothing to be very sad about.'

I am afraid Maude Denison is displaying an ignorance of the world, and disregard to the vanities and gew-gaws thereof, that may seem a little high-strained; but recollect that she is but eighteen, that the Xminster was her first ball, and that, owing to her father's pride and straitened circumstances, she had lived a very secluded life. I do not mean to say that Maude was quite what our neighbors describe as an *ingenue*, but she was far removed from the conventional young lady of these days.

Few were the strangers that came within the gates of Glinn of late years. Harold Denison scorned to entertain unless he could do so with all the old lavish profusion—that prodigal hospitality of former times which had entailed such bitterness in his present daily bread. His wife, naturally an extremely sensitive woman, shrunk also from mixing in society in a much more humble and modest way than she had been wont to do. She was not of the temperament to face the half-whispered comments and upraised eyebrows of her country neighbors: 'Poor thing! I hear he has run through every thing; even the carriage-horses have to be put down.' Remarks of this kind were past her endurance, and so it was that since she left school, some two years ago, Maude had led a very secluded life.

True, many an old friend of the Denisons had offered to take care of the girl to various gayeties in the county, even if they could not induce Mrs. Denison to come to their houses and chaperone her own daughter, but all such invitations had been met with a brief though courteous refusal. Poor lady, she had more than once pleaded in her darling's behalf; but, wrapped in his own selfish pride, Harold Denison said fiercely he would be patronized by no one.

And so Maude grew up like some wild-flower, though not 'born to bloom and blush unseen.' For are there not already two who would fair pluck the wild-flower and gather it to their bosoms if they may?

Did Maude know she was handsome? Of course she did. She wanted no Xminster to tell her that. What girl over fifteen, in the most primitive of nations, having beauty, is unaware of it? If there are no looking-glasses, are there not deep, pellucid waters that will serve as such?—Nature's mirror,

pite the daily proof they 'have as to what miserable potter's-ware they are composed of! 'Help me in my unbelief!' ought to be their prayer. But they go on, even when bruised and beaten, still firmly believing in their old romantic ideal. Oh, yes, women will shut their eyes to many things sooner than give up that dream of their girlhood. They would sooner remain blind than awake to find themselves utterly bankrupt, and their account far overdrawn at Cupid & Company's. A woman will forgive the man she loves every thing but inconstancy, and only cling the closer to him through crime and trouble. But there must never have arisen a doubt in her mind that she is not still sole mistress of his heart; and with all his faults, Harold Denison had never brought the tears to his wife's eyes in this wise.

But I am wandering far away from the mistress of Glinn, still musing on her unwelcome task. Like her, I am loath to begin, though the miserable story must be told for the furtherance of this narrative. It is stealing the bloom off the girlhood of such a maiden as Maude when you first break to her that she is put up to auction, as veritably as if she stood in the Constantinople slave-market. The Turk has suppressed it; but in the West the trade goes on merrily, and Lord Penzance finds it quite as much as he can do to rectify the mistakes that occur from ignoring natural feeling in the contract matrimonial.

'Misde, dear,' at last observes Mrs. Denison, 'whom do you like best of all your partners at the Xminster ball?'

'Like best? and Maude's great gray eyes opened wide as she uncoiled herself from the sofa upon which she lounged, intent on the last novel Mudie had furnished. 'What makes you ask that, mother?'

'Never mind! tell me.'

'Well, I don't know; I never thought about it. Gus Briden was nice, and Charlie Tollemache—he's a dragoon of some kind, you know—he was great fun, and valued very well. Then there was Mr. Handley, not very young, but I got on very well with him. I think, though, I liked dancing with Gren best; he can valse, and then we had such laughing over other people; but he got sulky toward the finish, I'm sure I don't know why. I'm very fond of Gren, you know, mother, but he bullies me, and can be very nasty at times, and the finish of that ball happened to be one of those times. I don't know why,' continued the girl, meditatively, 'unless it was my dancing with that Mr. Pearman; what could that matter to him?'

'And did you and Gren part on bad terms?'

'No; I came down and gave him his coffee before he went away, and he—kissed me—and so we parted friends.'

I think, had I been Grenville Rose, I should have preferred Maud being a little more reticent about the kiss. Still, the slight hesitation in her speech, the slight flush that crossed her cheek as she alluded to it, were favorable signs to an astute observer. He had kissed her as his cousin all his life—why should the recollection make her blush and hesitate now? Young people situated in this way may like each other for years: the explosion of some æsthetic force suddenly awakens love. More often than not the train is lit through the precautions taken to prevent it. The doctrine of separation is in high favor among chaperones for producing an *éclaircissement*, but they often forget that when using it with a view to a contrary result.

'But you don't say anything about Mr. Pearman, Maude; did you like him?'

'Well, he was pleasant and amusing enough. I only had one dance with him, you know. But Gren—did so about my dancing with him at the ball, and said he wasn't 'form,' or 'bad form,' or something or other—meaning, in short, that I ought not to have stood up with him. If he wasn't fit to

'No, love; but it's true for all that.'

'Well, mother, I can hardly believe it; but somebody had better introduce that song Gren's so fond of humming to Mr. Pearman's notice; and then, with an expression of mock-demureness irresistibly arch, Maude broke out with—

'Don't be too sure, for hearts just caught  
Are seldom now to market brought;  
The best, they say, are given away,  
Not kept to be sold on market-day.'

On my word, I'm obliged to Mr. Pearman. I presume he thinks girls, like hot-house fruit, are a mere question of what you will give for them. Best let him know, mother mine, that your daughter is neither to be wooed nor won in that fashion.'

'But, Maude, my darling—'

'Yes, and intend to remain so,' laughed the girl, merrily.

'My heart is free,  
And ever will be,  
Till my destiny's lord comes a-wooing of me.'

And the sooner the fact is broken to Mr. Pearman that he is not 'my destiny's lord,' the better.

'Stop child—listen to me,' and the nervous tremor in her mother's voice arrested Maude's madcap humor instantly. She knew every inflection of that dearly-loved voice, and her quick ear detected coming trouble, much as the sailor foresees the storm in that peculiar sobbing sound the wind sometimes gives forth shortly before the tempest bursts.

In a second she dropped quietly on her knees by Mrs. Denison's side, and, leaning on the arm of her chair, said: 'There's more to come, mother, you haven't told me all yet.'

'No, my dearest; I had hoped so differently, I mean—I told your father in short—' and here Mrs. Denison fairly broke down and wept copiously.

Maude petted, soothed and coaxed, as she had done on many a previous occasion, and between the showers of tears learned how much they were in the hands of the Pearmans; how that their remaining at Glinn was an impossibility, unless the Pearmans came to their assistance; and how her hand was the price they placed on standing in the breach between Harold Denison and his creditors. About the foregoing of their own claims the poor lady wisely said nothing. Better Maude should think her future husband stood chivalrously forward in her father's support, with the prospect of her fair self as his guerdon, than she should know that her hand was the sole bribe which induced him to forbear seizing upon Glinn.

The saucy smile had left the girl's lips by the time she comprehended the sad story. It was replaced by a pale, anxious look, such as had never been seen before on Maude Denison's face.

'You can't mean this, mother,' she said, at length. 'You surely don't wish that I should marry this man, whom I can't say I dislike, for I don't even know him enough to tell whether I do or no; but that I am to take this man for a husband without any reference to my own feelings—you don't intend that, do you?'

'I don't know what will become of us if you don't, Maude,' gasped Mrs. Denison.

'And is it not possible that we could live without Glinn?' inquired her daughter.

'What would your father do?' moaned the mother once more, truer to him even still than to the child she adored so.

'It is hard,' said Maude, and her young face grew stern in expression as she spoke. 'Do you think it quite fair that I am to throw my life's happiness away at eighteen to save Glinn? Mother, I know nothing of the world; but a man surely brings a bad introduction to a girl's heart who seeks her as Mr. Pearman would apparently seek me. I don't think I'm a romantic fool; but I never thought to leave your side in this wise. Of course, I know girls do marry for money;

Grenville Rose dwelt in the Temple. There, in a couple of pleasant rooms, he smoked pipes, read rusty law-books, the latest periodicals, *Bell's Life*, and waited for business. Though there was very far from being any asceticism about Grenville Rose, yet he stuck soberly and honestly to his trade. If the work didn't come, he couldn't help it. He was always in the way, and an assiduous attendant at the Westminster Courts. But if you are Coke or Littleton, strongly impregnated with the departed affluence of Erskine and Ellenborough, you cannot show it until you get an opening. The beginning of the legal profession is doomed to be principally observation. Attorneys are far from being speculative on the subject of undeveloped talent. It is not given to every one to have Sir Jonah Barrington's chance of a friendly judge, who insisted on his continuing the case he had begun, in consequence of his leader being temporarily out of court. So that whether Grenville Rose was a coming lawyer, or a pretentious importer, was still concealed in the womb of Time. In the meanwhile, the nothing he had to do he, at all events, did conscientiously—more, a good deal, than can be predicated of many of us.

He strolls leisurely out of his bed-room, in dressing-gown and slippers, the day after Maude's resolution, and glancing round his breakfast-table, takes little notice of the heap of letters that lie thereon. His attention, on the contrary, is arrested by the absence of some condiment he peculiarly affects. After indulging in a solo on the bell, which produces no apparent result, he opens the window and runs up the vocal scale on 'William,' terminating, crescendo, in 'Wil—li—am!' which seems to produce some slight commotion, at length, in a boy with a pewter and a companion with shoe-brushes, who are lightening the hours by pitch-and-toss. Satisfied with this result, he first opens the morning paper.

Grenville Rose is not in the least addicted to the pursuit or study of racing; still, like most men of his age about town, he very frequently hears it talked about. He knows the names of the prominent favorites for the coming great three-year-old events of the season. Has he not more than one friend who has asked him to book himself for a Greenwich dinner in the event of some Derby contingency coming off satisfactorily? He throws his eye lazily over the sporting intelligence, and under the head of 'Betting on the Two Thousand,' he perceives 'Five to two against Coriander—taken freely.'

'S'pose he'll about win. Suit Silky Dicksen down to the ground, I presume; not that I know much about it. But as he has bidden me to the consumption of claret and bait, if Coriander wins at Epsom, it is fair to presume he'd like to see him well through 'his smalls' to begin with.'

Ah! we go blundering on in our blindness and ignorance. Can even the most far-sighted of us predicate twenty-four hours ahead? What a mess Providence makes of our intricate calculations! What shallow fools we seem after all our study! I wonder what Grenville Rose would have said, if anybody had hinted to him that within ten days his destiny would be bound up with Coriander's? Can you not fancy his laughing retort, 'Good Heavens! I never race! What's Hebeus to me, or I to Hebeus?' Yet it will be so. Much as yours, my dear young lady, may be swayed by that good-looking man who offered you his Punch to read in the train last week. You don't know his name even, nor he yours, but the attraction of cohesion is wonderful, and yet got on very well together. Why is it ship near each other in a calm?

To be continued.