

Fate and Marriage

(By Clara Mulholland.)

(Continued from last week)

"Where should we be?" passionately "That's what I ask myself over and over again. He was a man, a rich man, when our father was killed. Why did he persuade my mother to keep quiet? Why did he force her almost to hide herself, and do nothing to clear my father's name, and allow him to go to his grave with such a slur upon him?"

"Oh! John, you are unjust. Jerry could prove nothing, knew nothing. Fate was against poor father and us. The best—the only way was to keep quiet! So why blame Jerry?"

"Why blame Jerry?" John kicked a stone, and tried to stifle a feeling of intense irritation. "That's a question asked so often. And yet—Oh! Beryl, why was I but a child in those days? Why was I not a man fit to battle with the world, and fight with all my heart and strength to prove the truth, and vindicate my father's character?"

CHAPTER VI.

Beryl's color went and came, and her eyelids fluttered. John's excitement upon this subject always alarmed and troubled her. She had her own ideas upon the subject, and often wished something could be done to clear up the mystery that lay behind her father's visit to London, and his sudden death in the railway accident. But, unlike John, she was inclined to take things easy and let well enough alone. She had implicit belief in her stepfather, Jerry Otway, and was sure that he had always acted for the best. His marriage with her mother, when she had been some two years a widow, had pleased her, and brought a good deal of sunshine into her life. True, he had insisted on taking them all back to New Zealand, and keeping them there much longer than they wished. But that was over, and now that they were back in England, comfortably settled in their pretty cottage, Jerry would have preferred to forget the past, and enjoy himself completely and entirely. But John and his mother made this extremely difficult. The sight of their old home and the beautiful country round Sturry revived sad memories and bitter regrets, and for some days after their arrival there they were weebegone and miserable. Of the state of affairs Beryl complained openly to her step-

"I knew, love, it would be," said John. "But they would come. Your mother has been so frail and delicate of late that I feared to oppose her any longer. However, don't fret. Things will improve. John will see there is not, and never was, anything to be done, and he'll settle down. Your mother will follow his example. But you must give them time."

"I suppose so. But it's very dismal, and can do no good, to mope and fret as they do."

"I agree. The first thing to cure John would be occupation. It's a pity he can't make up his mind as to what he'd like to be. At five-and-twenty a man ought to know his own mind."

"He's only fit for farming, and should have stayed in New Zealand," said Beryl, with a shrug of her shoulders. "Over here he'll do no good, dreaming as he does of impossible things."

Jerry Otway drew a deep breath, and strode up and down the room. Fifteen years had made little difference in him. He was somewhat stout, and his hair was slightly grey. But despite all this, he looked a young man for his years, and gave the impression of great strength and vigor.

"There's a good deal in John," he said, after a time. "But he certainly knows more about farming than anything else. And, as you say, he ought to have stayed in New Zealand instead of coming here on his present wild-goose chase. However, he'll soon find out it and let us go home in rags."

"Now we are here I'd like to see," Beryl told herself as she ran upstairs. "In my ignorance I was content over there. But I'd like to go to see and I would. If John's dreams only last long enough, I can settle myself here for life. I don't know whether Malcolm Fairfax, my mother, and admire me as much as she expects—well," smiling, "I'm so knowing what might happen. Sturry is quiet, the cottage is a little dull, but still it would be delightful if these good people, mother and John, would only cheer up."

For some weeks after the return of the family to England there were few cheerful moments in Northover Cottage. John and Mrs. Otway talked together continually in low whispers. Beryl went over and over the story of those last happy hours before Archibald's departure for London, and wept again and again, as she recalled her grief and horror at his sudden death, and the terrible revelations made to her soon after by Jerry and the papers.

"You should not have believed them, Jerry, but have faced the world,

and stood up for your children's birthright," John would say, with firm, set lips. "Knowing my father as you did, how could you believe it possible?"

"I never believed that my beloved had done any wrong," she sobbed out. "But there was no denying the plain facts—Madeline Delorme his first wife. Oh, John, I need not go over it again. You know everything. I was helpless—could do nothing."

"Poor little mother," John kissed her tenderly. "And so you married Jerry Otway and ran away. Well, no one can blame you—I least of all."

"It was for your sake, John—yours and Beryl's. We were poor, lonely, wretched Jerry was my only friend. He was willing to do everything for us. And during all these years he has kept his word. He has been both kind and generous to us all."

"Yes," John clenched his fists and ground his teeth. "That I can't deny, and yet, and yet, mother, I sometimes think Jerry knows more than he will admit."

"You are wrong, John, quite wrong and unfair to Jerry."

"Perhaps so, but he might have set inquiry on foot, if only to make the thing absolutely certain, instead of folding his hands and believing all that the papers said."

"It was impossible to doubt it. Everything was plainly stated. Your father had been deceived, and must have suffered, oh! such anguish, for he loved me, loved you, his children, dearly, dearly. We must only submit and bear our sorrow."

"That I refuse to do without a struggle. Since I was an age to understand this wretched business my dream has been to clear up the mystery," John said with set teeth. "The lapse of time will make it difficult, but I'll do it. Of that I am certain. How to begin, that is the difficulty. Shall I present myself to Lord Linton and tell him that I am the rightful heir, Archibald, Lord Linton's only son?"

"Useless, dear, useless. You would only be scorned and laughed at."

"Then I'll go to a lawyer, lay the plain facts before him, and ask his advice."

Mrs. Otway sighed heavily. "It will be a waste of time and money, John, I fear, I fear."

"Nothing venture, nothing win, little mother. And this is worth fighting for."

"Undoubtedly it is. To whom will you go, John? To Laing, in Canterbury?"

"No, no. I must have the best opinion I can get. From all I can hear, Sir Peter Goldsmid, of Fenton Court, is the man for a case of this kind. So I'll run up to London and see him to-morrow."

"It will take money, John. All your savings will go."

"And in a good cause. You know that was my one great idea in saving money. The shears of Fate have cut and hacked my beloved father's character, torn it in shreds, I, his son, will prove that he has been misjudged, and restore him to the honorable place he once occupied before the world."

"God bless and help you, dear, but, oh, John, it is an impossible task."

"Time will tell. In my heart I believe that it is not impossible. I will go to London and see Sir Peter at once."

"Take Beryl with you, John, and let her see the Park and the theatres. It is dull for the child here. The change will do her good."

"I will take her with pleasure. But it will be only a short visit this time, mother."

"No matter. Even a couple of days will do her good. The child is sadly moped here, John."

And so it was arranged, and the brother and sister went to London together. John set out at once to interview the great lawyer. He stated his case with accuracy and decision, but received little encouragement.

"From what you tell me," Sir Peter Goldsmid said, looking over his spectacles into the young man's earnest face, "I cannot see that you have any case. It would be useless to torment and worry Linton about the matter. That your father acted in all good faith, and believed his first wife to be dead when he married your mother, is, I am sure, true. But that does not alter facts or make this marriage legal since Madeline Delorme still lived."

"But, supposing, is it not possible that this woman was another actress of the same name?" asked John as with a sudden inspiration.

Sir Peter started, and glanced sharply at his client. "A good idea, an excellent idea." He swayed himself backwards and forwards in his chair. "But the facts are against it. From the accounts given in the papers of his visit to the dead woman's room it is evident that he recognized her as his wife."

"I don't see that," said John, bluntly.

"Yet he cried out, and fainted away on seeing her. Why should he have done that had he looked upon a stranger?"

"His nerves must have been unstrung by the anxiety and horror of the whole thing, and on looking on the dead woman his emotion would have been terrible, whether he saw that she was a stranger or not. I do not think his fainting proves anything."

"I'm afraid I can't agree. To me it is proof positive. He must have known it was the woman he had married and deserted when he went into the room that night. The shock of seeing her, though dead, caused him to faint."

"I cannot believe it," said John in a husky voice. "And you will not—"

"My poor fellow, I am really sorry for you, but unless this woman communicated with your father and let him know where she lived, why did he go to her house that night? Why did he leave his home in Sturry so hastily, and, according to the evidence of your servant, in such deep agitation?"

"That is the mystery."

"To me there is no mystery," remarked the lawyer. "It is all as clear as day and if you would look at and see things as I do it would be equally clear to you. This woman supposed to have been killed in the collapse of the hotel in Italy escaped, and after a time—a good many years, it would appear—discovered that her husband had returned to England. She felt herself ill and dying, and, wishing to see him once more, wrote and begged him to come to her. He did so, and found her dead. That, as far as we know, is the simple truth. Had your father survived he might have told a different story; but I doubt it. And remember, had it not been for the fact that he was recognized as Lord Linton instead of plain Archibald Fane at the time that he was killed in the railway accident, neither you nor anyone else would have heard a word of this strange history. The whole thing would have been buried in his grave."

"Would that it had been so buried," moaned John. "But since it has come to our knowledge we must fight to the bitter end. I cannot relinquish my birthright without a struggle, and I shall never be happy till I clear my father's name."

"The fight is a hopeless one, believe me. You have no evidence on which to support your claim, and Lord Linton will not give in easily. He has everything on his side—possession, money, knowledge of the world. You are a nobody. To establish your right to the name and estates would be impossible, believe me."

John felt his heart go sick within him, and his head fell forward on his breast. For a few moments he sat in agonized silence, his hands clasped, his eyes upon the floor. The bronze clock ticked loudly on the mantelpiece, chimed the quarter, and struck the hour, and still he remained motionless, and never uttered a word.

Sir Peter sank back in his chair and stared at the ceiling. "It's absurd—absurd and I must not encourage him," he murmured. "He's a nice lad, and Lord Linton a brute; but he has no case. Even his looks, though they don't count for much, are against him. He's not like any Fane ever I saw. These newspaper accounts," he sat up and turned over the various cuttings that John had brought with him, "are rarely to be trusted, and, of course, there is a good deal of penny-a-lining in this graphic description of the dead man's joy at the thought of meeting his wife once more, and his anguish on hearing that she had just died. Still, whether true or not, exaggerated or not, they are all we have to go by, and every word in them is distinctly against this poor fellow's claim."

He folded the papers and tied them together with a piece of pink tape, then, taking out his gold snuff-box, took a long pinch of snuff, coughed, and rose from his chair.

"Take my advice," he said, not unkindly. "Put all thoughts of this business out of your head, and settle down to some steady and absorbing occupation. It is useless to waste your youth and any little money that you may have in trying to prove the impossible."

John started to his feet. "Thank you," he cried, grasping the papers. "I will trouble you no more. I see all the difficulties that you have pointed out; but I don't despair. Some day or other the mystery will be solved. I'll wish you good-day, Sir Peter," and he hurried away.

That night he took Beryl to the theatre, but though he sat by her side all through the piece the girl found that he knew but little of what was going on on the stage. He was absent-minded and absorbed, and paid no attention either to her or the acting.

"It's dull work going about with John," she thought crossly. "And I shall be almost glad to get back to Sturry again. I do hope Enid will soon follow up her invitation. It will be an absolute relief to get away from my people for a while."

So when next morning John told his sister to meet him at Charing Cross in time for the 3.38 train Beryl was not sorry. She spent hours shopping in Regent Street on her way to the station, the result being the numerous small parcels that caused John to remonstrate with her on their arrival in Sturry. But Beryl only laughed at him. He had been bright and pleasant on the journey home, and, notwithstanding the presence of the tall, good-looking young lady in the far corner of the carriage,

age, had talked most sociably the whole way down.

"He has had good news, and has made up his mind to forget this old story, and turn his attention to something else," thought Beryl, joyfully. "I am glad!" And as she followed John up the platform she felt in better spirits than she had done for some time.

But her tranquillity was soon disturbed. The sight of Margaret Fane, the thought of the place she occupied, the recollection that her father had usurped the name and position that should be his, had roused and excited John once more, and Beryl found to her dismay that he was more determined than ever to carry on the struggle, and waste time and money in endeavoring to prove what to her and everyone else seemed the impossible.

CHAPTER XVI

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"You are marvellously pertinacious, John," Isabel answered with a sigh. "But all these difficulties will show you that Jerry was not to blame, after all. Our case was as hard to prove in the old days as now. We had no proof of anything. Your father went away without a word, and died without a word. No letter or paper could be found to tell why he went to London in such a hurry. That it was something sudden and unexpected—one of those letters that Harriet told me were waiting for him on his return from the river called him off I am sure. But what became of it I have no idea."

"He put it into his pocket, of course," John replied quickly. "That is easily understood. Having read a letter a man naturally slips it into his pocket. You may be sure that it was there, with his other papers, telegrams, and letters, when he was dead. Whoever identified the body must have found it, and knows the truth."

"The present Lord Linton identified the body, John."

"Yes; so the papers said," John answered thoughtfully. "I'd give a good deal to have a few moments' conversation with that gentleman, mother."

"He would tell you nothing, dear," Isabel's lips trembled, and her color rose. "He would only laugh at your story, and scorn you as a humbug, or worse. Don't go to him, John. It would be too painful."

John kissed her. "You must trust me, and give me absolute freedom to do what I think right, mother. If I can get speech with the man who calls himself Lord Linton I will. But I must consider how it is to be done. It would be useless to present myself at his house and tell him my story. He would probably bowl me out at once, and would most certainly not believe me. For that Sir Peter Goldsmid has thoroughly prepared me."

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"I hardly know yet till I think the matter out. Did I tell you that I had seen his daughter?"

"Beryl told me that she travelled down in the carriage with you from London. What is she like, John?"

John did not reply at once, and sat gazing out of the window, his eyes fixed dreamily on the floating clouds.

"Beryl said she was tall and graceful, but not pretty," continued Isabel. "Is that your verdict also?"

John turned slowly away from the window and took a few steps across the room. "Pretty? No, she is not pretty."

"Then she's not like the Fanes. They were a very handsome family, your father always said. Is she dark or fair?"

"I hardly know. But—but I only meant that pretty did not describe her—she is more than pretty, mother. To my eyes, Margaret Fane is beautiful—pretty is too paltry a word to apply to her."

Mrs. Otway looked up in surprise. John was not often so eloquent upon the subject of women's looks. Indeed, it was a rare thing for him to notice them at all, even in a passing way.

"It is strange that this girl should attract him so much," she thought. "The daughter of the man whom at present he is inclined to look upon as an enemy." Then aloud she said: "It is curious that she should be living so near us. Why does she not live with her father, I wonder?"

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"Danvers of Riverdale, the lady who is looking for a man to act as agent, secretary, and steward, all in one. Jerry thought the place might do for you, but I—"

"With your aristocratic notions, thought not," laughed John. "But really, mother, it is worth considering. I must do something, if only to keep my mind from dwelling so perpetually on what might have been, and is not. I cannot steady myself sufficiently to think of a profession, and I do know something about farming."

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"My dear boy, of course you would, but John," with some hesitation, supposing you ever did prove the truth—supposing you were to become one day Lord Linton, would it not be just a little infra dig for you to have occupied such a position — to have been a kind of servant to Margaret Fane's aunt?"

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As Isabel sat alone these thoughts rushed into her mind, and she grew sad and depressed.

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"My dear child, I am glad. You have had but a dull time since we came here."

"Very," truthfully, "and London was not quite lively with John. But now the turn of the tide has come. Will it, oh! mother," with a comical glance, "if taken at the flood," as the poet says, "lead on to fortune?" Well, never mind," arranging some tall white daisies in a vase, and blushing a little as she spoke. "I shall see life and gain much experience. Sturry, dear mother, is well enough for a time, but it is apt to pall, I find, after the second month. Ah! here comes John across the lawn. I must go and tell him my news." And she ran singing from the room.

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I have just fallen upon the two saddest secrets of the disease which troubles the world we live in; the envious hatred of him who suffers want and the selfish forgetfulness of him who lives in affluence.—Journal of a Happy Man.

"I have had good news, and has made up his mind to forget this old story, and turn his attention to something else," thought Beryl, joyfully. "I am glad!" And as she followed John up the platform she felt in better spirits than she had done for some time.

But her tranquillity was soon disturbed. The sight of Margaret Fane, the thought of the place she occupied, the recollection that her father had usurped the name and position that should be his, had roused and excited John once more, and Beryl found to her dismay that he was more determined than ever to carry on the struggle, and waste time and money in endeavoring to prove what to her and everyone else seemed the impossible.

"It's check, I admit, but not check-mate," said John when he had told his mother all that had occurred during his interview with Sir Peter Goldsmid. "The thing to consider now is—What shall I do next? Whom shall I consult? The old lawyer is dead against me, so I must look for some one else."

"You are marvellously pertinacious, John," Isabel answered with a sigh. "But all these difficulties will show you that Jerry was not to blame, after all. Our case was as hard to prove in the old days as now. We had no proof of anything. Your father went away without a word, and died without a word. No letter or paper could be found to tell why he went to London in such a hurry. That it was something sudden and unexpected—one of those letters that Harriet told me were waiting for him on his return from the river called him off I am sure. But what became of it I have no idea."

"He put it into his pocket, of course," John replied quickly. "That is easily understood. Having read a letter a man naturally slips it into his pocket. You may be sure that it was there, with his other papers, telegrams, and letters, when he was dead. Whoever identified the body must have found it, and knows the truth."

"The present Lord Linton identified the body, John."

"Yes; so the papers said," John answered thoughtfully. "I'd give a good deal to have a few moments' conversation with that gentleman, mother."

"He would tell you nothing, dear," Isabel's lips trembled, and her color rose. "He would only laugh at your story, and scorn you as a humbug, or worse. Don't go to him, John. It would be too painful."

John kissed her. "You must trust me, and give me absolute freedom to do what I think right, mother. If I can get speech with the man who calls himself Lord Linton I will. But I must consider how it is to be done. It would be useless to present myself at his house and tell him my story. He would probably bowl me out at once, and would most certainly not believe me. For that Sir Peter Goldsmid has thoroughly prepared me."

"Then, will you write, John?"

"I hardly know yet till I think the matter out. Did I tell you that I had seen his daughter?"

"Beryl told me that she travelled down in the carriage with you from London. What is she like, John?"

John did not reply at once, and sat gazing out of the window, his eyes fixed dreamily on the floating clouds.

"Beryl said she was tall and graceful, but not pretty," continued Isabel. "Is that your verdict also?"

John turned slowly away from the window and took a few steps across the room. "Pretty? No, she is not pretty."

"Then she's not like the Fanes. They were a very handsome family, your father always said. Is she dark or fair?"

"I hardly know. But—but I only meant that pretty did not describe her—she is more than pretty, mother. To my eyes, Margaret Fane is beautiful—pretty is too paltry a word to apply to her."

Mrs. Otway looked up in surprise. John was not often so eloquent upon the subject of women's looks. Indeed, it was a rare thing for him to notice them at all, even in a passing way.

"It is strange that this girl should attract him so much," she thought. "The daughter of the man whom at present he is inclined to look upon as an enemy." Then aloud she said: "It is curious that she should be living so near us. Why does she not live with her father, I wonder?"

"The old story," John said gloomily. "A stepmother and a second family. She is not wanted at home, and so lives with her aunt, a Mrs. Danvers."

"Danvers of Riverdale, the lady who is looking for a man to act as agent, secretary, and steward, all in one. Jerry thought the place might do for you, but I—"

"With your aristocratic notions, thought not," laughed John. "But really, mother, it is worth considering. I must do something, if only to keep my mind from dwelling so perpetually on what might have been, and is not. I cannot steady myself sufficiently to think of a profession, and I do know something about farming."

"In New Zealand, you?"

"It's different in England, of course, in many ways; but I'll have a try at it. Mrs. Danvers will probably have her own ideas, and instruct me in my duties. I flatter myself, drawing myself up, and looking at my mother inquiringly, "that I am clever enough to pick up instruction easily, and satisfy even an exacting lady before very long in the farming way. Come, what do you think, madre mia?"

"My dear boy, of course you would, but John," with some hesitation, supposing you ever did prove the truth—supposing you were to become one day Lord Linton, would it not be just a little infra dig for you to have occupied such a position — to have been a kind of servant to Margaret Fane's aunt?"

John laughed, and threw back his head with a somewhat haughty gesture.

"Not at all, mother dear. I shall do nothing to lower my dignity, you may be sure, and I will esteem it a great blessing if this lady will engage me, and give me work to do. It will be an immense help to me, and, smiling, to you, for it will keep me at home, for I am restless, mother, and want work to steady me, and then," under his breath as he left the room, "I shall see her—meet—perhaps even speak to her. And then, in the natural way I may come across Tristram Lane, the soil-distant Lord Linton, through her. I may discover much that I wish to know."

The Rheumatic Wonder of the Age BENEDICTINE SALVE

This Salve Cures Rheumatism, Felons or Blood Poisoning
It is a Sure Remedy for Any of These Diseases
A FEW TESTIMONIALS

193 King Street East, Toronto, Nov. 11, 1902

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto:
DEAR SIR—I am deeply grateful to the friend that suggested to me when I was a cripple from Rheumatism, Benedictine Salve. I have at intervals during the last ten years been afflicted with muscular rheumatism. I have experimented with every available remedy and have consulted many of the best physicians of repute, without perceptible benefit. When I was advised to use your Benedictine Salve, I was a helpless cripple. In less than 48 hours I was in a position to resume my work that of a tinsmith. A work that requires a certain amount of bodily activity. I am thankful to my friend who advised me and I am more than gratified to be able to furnish you with this testimonial at the efficacy of Benedictine Salve. Yours truly, GEO. FOGG

Tremont House, Yonge Street, Nov. 1, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto:
DEAR SIR—It is with pleasure that I write this unsolicited testimonial, and in doing so I can say that your Benedictine Salve has done more for me in one week than anything I have done for the last five years. My ailment was muscular rheumatism. I applied the salve as directed, and I got speedy relief. I can assure you that at the present time I am free of pain. I can recommend any person afflicted with Rheumatism to give it a trial. I am, Yours truly, (Signed) S. JOHNSON

488 Victoria Street, Toronto, Oct. 31, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Nealon House, City:
DEAR SIR—I cannot speak too highly of your Benedictine Salve. It has done for me in three days what doctors and medicines have been trying to do for years. When I first used it I had been confined to my bed with a spell of rheumatism and sciatica for nine weeks, a friend recommended your salve. I tried it and it completely knocked rheumatism right out of my system. I can cheerfully recommend it as the best medicine on the market for rheumatism. I believe it has no equal.

Yours sincerely, JOHN MCGROGAN

475 Gerrard Street East Toronto, Ont., Sept. 18, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Nealon House, Toronto, Ont.
DEAR SIR—I have great pleasure in recommending the Benedictine Salve as a sure cure for lumbago. When I was taken down with it I called on my doctor, and he told me it would be a long time before I would be around again. My husband bought a box of the Benedictine Salve and applied it according to directions. In three hours I got relief, and in four days was able to do my work. I would be pleased to recommend it to any one suffering from lumbago.

I am, your truly, (MRS.) JAS. COSSGROVE

7 Laurier Avenue, Toronto, December 13, 1901

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto, Ont.
DEAR SIR—After suffering for over ten years with both forms of Piles, I was asked to try Benedictine Salve. From the first application I got instant relief, and before using one box was thoroughly cured. I can strongly recommend Benedictine Salve to any one suffering with piles.

Yours sincerely, JOS. WESTMAN

12 Bright Street, Toronto, Jan. 18, 1902

John O'Connor, Esq., Toronto:
DEAR SIR—It is with pleasure I write this word of testimony to the marvellous merits of Benedictine Salve as a certain cure for Rheumatism. There is such a multitude of alleged Rheumatic cures advertised that one is inclined to be skeptical of the merits of any new preparation. It was indeed a good thing that Benedictine Salve was advertised, as it has indeed done me good. I have been suffering for eight years from Rheumatism. It has, I believe, effected an absolute and permanent cure. It is perhaps needless to say that in the last eight years I have consulted a number of doctors and have tried a large number of other medicines advertised, without receiving any benefit.

Yours respectfully, MRS. SIMPSON

85 Carlton Street, Toronto, Feb. 1, 1902

John O'Connor, Esq., 190 King Street East:
I was a sufferer for four months from acute rheumatism in my left arm; my physician called regularly and prescribed for it but gave me