

word of thanks to Maer, who drew back with a bow and smile to his former position, while Archie handed her into the cab.

"Wait a moment, Donville," he called out as he closed the door; "I'll walk up town with you. Drive to the Rossin," he said to the cabman; "and, Mike, remember there are rooms taken there for Miss Howard and Winona. I'll be there directly myself."

"Divil a doubt of that same!" replied Mike, clambering to a seat beside the cabman, with a broad grin of contentment, and the vehicle whirled off, leaving the three men on the wharf.

Archie slipped his arm through Donville's. "You look as cheerful as a Scotch mist," he said, regarding the latter laughingly. "Who's your friend?" he inquired, as, lifting his wide felt hat, Maer strolled slowly away, evidently surmising that he might be de trop.

"He's a mere acquaintance I picked up yesterday," replied Donville. "But how is it that you're in by the steamer? I heard you were up at the Manitoulin, and Miss Bertrand told me something of a dangerous wound you received, and some knight-errantry that you were engaged in."

Archie's face fell just a shade at mention of Cecil's name.

"I was beyond the Manitoulin," he said, "but I was obliged to come all the way down by water on account of my companions, who did not like the idea of land-travel. We have been a considerable time on the way, as they had to stop at one of the lake towns to make some purchases. I had to stop at headquarters to get an extension of leave, or we should have gone straight on to my father's at once. By the way, how is it you are up here just now?"

Donville saw that he did not care to be questioned about his adventures, and indeed the former was too much engrossed with his own troubles to feel much interest in anything else.

"I had business affairs in Toronto," he said, unwillingly, "and I accompanied Miss Bertrand's party up from Murray Bay. I am going down again to-morrow."

"Come with us," said Archie, who had a dim idea that Olla and Donville rather liked each other, "and I daresay that the girls can spare time from making wedding finery to amuse you for a few days."

Donville nearly choked with jealous rage, and his dark face grew so strangely lowering that Archie was perplexed inexpressibly.

"Thank you," he answered stiffly, "but it's quite impossible."

"I feel as though I had been out of the world for years," said Archie, after a moment's silence, "and come back to find things strangely unfamiliar. You are changed, and it would hardly surprise me to find Spooner with a moustache, and Frazer with flowing locks of silver. I can fancy myself almost a modern Rip Van Winkle. Where are you staying?"

"Here," they were opposite the Rossin. "By the way, I think I'll leave for Montreal to-day. I sail for Europe next week, and there are some little matters I must see to before I leave. So I'll bid you good-bye, old fellow."

"I hope nothing unpleasant has occurred," said Archie, concernedly. "You are changed, and in a way I don't like."

"I was up all night," answered Donville, looking away from Captain Frazer's searching, kindly dark eyes, "and found the champagne rather too heady, that's all."

Twenty-four hours had made a startling change in his appearance. His dark face looked old, worn and haggard in the morning light, and his eyes were fiery and bloodshot. If Archie could only have guessed the cause!

They parted with mutual promises of writing, and in the course of a couple of hours Donville was on his way to Montreal.

As Archie passed into the reading-room, he ran against Mr. Maer, who was coming out. He apologized, and was answered in Mr. Maer's most urbane manner. As the latter walked away, whistling softly, Archie turned and stared after him.

"I could almost swear that I have seen that fellow before; but, on my life, I can't recall the time or place. Fortunately, it's not of much consequence."

Archie's time was fully occupied during his brief stay in Toronto, and as he did not see Mr. Maer again, the remembrance of him slipped completely from his memory.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### KING BERTRAND MAKES A MISTAKE.

Cecil put her handkerchief to her eyes, and as a faint sob issued from behind his filmy folds, it was only fair to suppose that she was crying. The scene was a pretty little chintz drawing-room, in a tiny, fantastically-gabled villa beyond the Asylum, smothered earlier in the year in the milky bloom of acacias.

Archie Frazer, with a countenance in which anger, embarrassment, and a faint flicker of amusement struggled for mastery, leaned over the back of a prie-Dieu and watched the golden head so prettily lighted by a stray flock of quivering sunlight, and the nymph-like grace of the slender form bending slightly, as though Cecil were overcome with poignant grief.

Archie had conscientiously endeavored, according to the advice of the old saying, "To be off with the old love before he was on with the new," but he had just sufficient of the older sentiment lingering in his heart to make his daily increasing adoration of Androsia exquisite; painful to him. There was, too, the faint dread

that perhaps Cecil was really sincere in her affection for him, in which case he would have relentlessly trampled his own chance of happiness under foot and fulfilled his engagement to her. Fortunately, Fate and Cecil were determined that he should not be called upon to make so tremendous a sacrifice.

"Oh, dear me!" sobbed Cecil, in quivering tones of intense anguish. "I didn't think you could have been so false! But it's just the way women are sure to be treated! Ma always said you didn't, didn't care for me," and Cecil's sobs grew louder.

"Will you hear reason, Cecil?" exclaimed Archie. "How could I avoid taking care of a helpless girl suddenly and cruelly orphaned, and thrown on my protection? Surely, Cecil, you are fearfully unreasonable."

"Yes, now abuse me like a savage," moaned Cecil. "I won't submit to it! Didn't you say she is the loveliest woman you ever saw? Was that because she is an orphan, ah?"

Archie looked excessively uncomfortable. He dreaded giving his pretty betrothed the faintest hint of the change in his sentiments towards her, and he felt like some crime-dyed monster, as he watched Cecil sobbing in her chintz nest. That she had ever cared particularly for him, he had not fooled himself into believing, but he had thought his own love strong, deep, wide enough to fill the chasm between them. Now he was slowly awakening to the disagreeable fact that while his love had vanished, she appeared to be very much in earnest.

"Now, Cecil," he began; but with a pathetic shake of the bright head Miss Bertrand whispered from behind the handkerchief, through which she was quietly watching every speaking change of his dark, expressive face.

"No, don't, it's no use. You've behaved shamefully, but I mean to forgive you all the same. Go and marry your white swan, and when I'm dead or married or something, you'll be quite happy! I wouldn't marry you now, not if you were Prince Arthur, and asked me on your knees with your crown in your hands. No, I wouldn't, you great deceitful thing!"

"All this because I was obliged to take charge for a few days of a lady left as a solemn charge to my father," ejaculated Archie, in a tone of injured innocence, but nevertheless feeling horribly guilty. "Dear Cecil, think how unjust you are to—think I could behave so badly towards you."

It was well the room was dark, or the hue of Archie's tall-tale countenance as he spoke would have betrayed him.

"My heart is broken," wailed Cecil, "and my eyes will be so red that I will be a perfect fright to-night at the Brignoll concert, and my nose swollen perhaps. But I know my duty, and I won't submit to being treated badly. You never cared for me!"

"Cecil, you know that I did!" And indeed he did.

"No! Insult me because I've no one but me and Lisa to take my part, and say I tell stories, do," sobbed Cecil. "Oh, it's just what ma said I might expect."

To do Mrs. Bertrand justice, she never even hinted at such a possibility.

Had Archie still continued to care for Cecil, this scene would have driven him through twenty different moods of anger, resentment, wounded affection and so on; but feeling guiltily that she was partially right, he was very patient with her childish display of jealousy. His cheeks burned at her last words, but he came and sat down beside her, and tried to take her snow-flake of a hand in his.

"My dear girl," he said, "what has made you take this fancy into that little head of yours?"

"Let my hand go, and there, take your ring back, perhaps it'll fit your Miss Howard; and I wish I were dead! And there's Madame Frimmoor's girl coming in at the gate with my new dress, and my eyes in such a state. It's all over between us, you cruel, cruel, strong-hearted thing!" and Cecil buried her head in the great pillow of her sleepy-bellow chair, and looked like a crushed lily.

"Cecil," said Archie, in a very low tone, "look at me and say whether you are truly in earnest or not."

"I won't look at you, and I'm quite in earnest, and I wish you'd go away," returned Cecil, in a tone that left no doubt as to her intention on the subject.

Archie turned his face away for a second, and a great change passed over his face. He saw plainly that his dread of crushing Cecil's affection was quite unnecessary, and that she had seized on the most flimsy pretext for breaking off their engagement. He experienced a sudden and delicious sense of freedom, and for the first time his heart answered with a joyful bound of hope as the soul-lit face of Androsia Howard rose before him. He stood up and took his hat and gloves, and then looked down with sparkling eyes at the little figure that had truly once been very dear to him.

"Good-bye, Cecil," he said, "let us part friends."

"Oh, I've no objection," murmured Cecil, still from the pillow, and stretching out her hand, which Archie held for a moment in his. "I'm sure I'll try and get over it, and if I don't—There, go away, please, I can't keep the girl waiting, and Frimmoor is so funny. Good-bye."

And so Archie Frazer strode out through the leafless acacias, a free man, with a happy light in his honest eyes, and a heart on which there lingered no shadow of self-reproach.

Cecil listened until she gave swing to behind her retreating form, and then bounded into the

middle of the room, where she executed an airy pirouette of triumph, and then darted to the mirror, supported by gilt Cupids.

"Cecil Bertrand," she soliloquized, "you're in luck, my child! He's too great a snuff to go about saying I treated him badly, and Donville's safe to pop directly. The great donkey I he did really and truly think I was crying."

"Cecil," said Lisa, a promising young coquette of sixteen, tripping into the room, "do you know what Kitty Duncan told me coming from school?"

"No, of course I don't, you little stupid. I don't suppose it's of much consequence, anyway."

"Yes, it is, my lady. She went to see her brother off by an early train, and they met Mr. Donville at the depot; and he said that he was to sail for Europe next week. He went away on the train with George Duncan to Montreal."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Cecil, turning deathly white, and sitting down trembling in every limb. Was this what she had discarded Archie Frazer for!

"It's true," said Lisa, "and I guess, miss you've been too clever by half this time. Oh, won't ma be jolly mad!"

"You spiteful, malicious, brown, mean thing!" cried Cecil, and forthwith went into unfeigned and perfectly audible hysterics.

Archie was for the present fully avenged. He reported himself at headquarters, received a short extension of leave, and the following morning found him, Androsia, Winona and Mike, en route for Captain Frazer's residence.

Few would have recognized in the queenly-looking creature in her sweeping robes of heavy black, the wild wood nymph who had first flashed on his sight some three short months before.

There was, if possible a more marked change in the appearance of Winona, and wherever they appeared the two girls attracted considerable attention and remark.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ENTERING ON A NEW LIFE.

Mr. Maer was easily cordial with his inferiors, or at least those whom fate had placed "below the salt," at the table of life. "Noblesse oblige," was the motto of his manners, and his low, carefully modulated voice and courteous polish did not vary whether he commanded "Billy," the errand boy, to call a cab for him, or whether he entered into conversation with those who were apparently his equals. He had a kind of fancy for the study of character, he amused his cynicism with the grotesque distortions that mar the symmetry of the most perfect, and had a happy knack of discovering latent vices and impalpable shadows dwelling the brilliancy of the brightest. He was one of a numerous class who believe with illimitable faith in the dominion of universal evil, but bring an overpowering force of cynicism and what they term cool, reasoning power to bear against the existence of virtue. If they discover a man whose character and virtues are of the loftiest, whose talents, guided by those bright guardians, have placed him foremost in the ranks of the great benefactors of mankind, they console themselves under the weight of evidence in his favor by shrugging their shoulders and assuming that there must needs be the skeleton of vice, though there be such a fair superstructure of seeming virtue. Alas for such cynics! Let the roses of life bloom in a perennial beauty and fragrance under their feet, for them indeed beyond all mankind—

"The trail of the serpent is over them all!"

For in faith, whether the higher Divine Faith, the special gift to the Christian, or the faith that rests secure in the virtue and love of man, is certainly the greatest happiness. Where can content be, where faith in God or man is not?

Mike's comic face and droll eyes had attracted Maer's attention on the wharf, and he whiled away an hour or two in making a study of the quaint peculiarities of the former. Mr. Murphy being of a sociable disposition was by no means loath to respond to his advances. Maer "treated" him in the bar to a sherry-cobbler that filled his soul with a mellow tide of kindness towards his new acquaintance, and loosened the strings of his nimble tongue. "Well I well!" he said, laying down the tumbler with lingering fondness, when he had drained the last drop of the golden fluid, "it's a mighty queer country this Kennedy, any ways. It's mighty tough pickin' a cobbler 'ud be in ould Ireland."

Mike grinned approvingly at the empty tumbler, and Maer ordered a second, which Mr. Murphy drank with infinite gusto, watched curiously by his companion, who stroked his long jetty beard softly with his slender brown finger.

"Cities is great places intirely," said Mike with a gentle sigh of pleasure as for the second time he set down the empty vessel; "it's not the likes of that I'd be after tastin' in the gay spot I've just showed the back samos ov me stockins to. Dada it isn't!"

"You've been travelling through the back settlements, I suppose," said Maer, smiling.

"Oh, begorra, not a wan!" replied Mike vivaciously, "unless ye call ballrooms lowin' like decent, respectable cowa, and woods as tangy as a tow-wig, settlements! No, to make minshun ov mekitties that had the grip ov a bull-dog, the rapscallions. And the sight ov a strange face as sure as a four-leafed clover in a peat-bog!"

"You're not fond of solitude, then," said Maer with one of his slow smiles.

"Faix I'm not," responded Mr. Murphy decidedly. "If it hadn't been that Molloy McCarthy giv' me the hard word thirty years ago next Michaelmas, an' I picked up the ould master, glory be his bodi and stuck by him ever since, by rayson ov the likin' I had for him an' his, I'd have took a short stick in me hand an' gone to Australy where the very wool on the shape is glided, or close upon it."

"Surely you haven't been thirty years in the backwoods of Canada?" asked Maer curiously.

"No, it'll be nineteen next summer when the ould gentleman married his purty wife, an' took Miss Drosia, the dawny craythur, not two months old, up among them snakes an' injills, an' sorry he wor for that same on his death-bed, the poor ould gentleman," Mike heaved a tributary sigh to the memory of his master.

"Is he dead then?" inquired Maer filling his meerschaum carefully. He was a very epicure in his smoking, and had a scientific method based on profound knowledge of the subject, of oven performing that simple operation.

"As a duro nail," said Mike with a melancholy shake of his head; "bedad he only held out long enough after those spalpeens made off with Miss Drosia to write to Captain Frazer's father, (that's the young gentleman yo seed on the wharf this mornin') an' send him his will. Oh! it 'ud have been a light in his eyes if he'd seen Miss Drosia an' Winona back safe an' sound out ov the dirty paws ov them that took the colleen. The cowardly spalpeens!"

"Those are the young ladies above stairs, I presume?" said Maer, looking largely interested in the little family history Mike was treating him to. "May I ask how, and under what circumstances they were abducted, such an unusual occurrence at this time of the world, you know?"

Mike suddenly remembered that Archie had entreated him to preserve a strict silence as to the events of the last few months, and he felt a thrill of something like dismay as he reflected that he had been confiding everything to what he would have termed a "black stranger." To get out of the conversation as gracefully and speedily as possible was now his object. His eyes fell on the clock and he started melodramatically.

"Now look at that!" he exclaimed. "Och, won't Miss Drosia be in a way! There it's goin' five, and it's meself that promised to do an errand for her at four! Faix, I wouldn't be after vexin' the poor, lovely colleen for the wide waruld!"

"I suppose they are proceeding to Captain Frazer's home?" said Maer strolling beside Mike to the door, a track of pale blue smoke wreathing around and behind him as he puffed at his meerschaum.

"Where else 'ud they be goin'?" said Mike a little shortly, "relations ain't as thick as plo-stumps for Miss Drosia in this country. More betoken there's raysons that she should be taken good care ov, with the sight ov money the ould Colonel had hoarded for her."

Maer saw an acquaintance in the street, and as Mike turned up the corridor, he went out into the sunlight with the intention of joining him, but paused outside the hotel door and fell into a reverie instead. His thoughts lent no expression of themselves to his imperturbable countenance, but he was so utterly lost to the outside world in their hidden labyrinth that Spooner came up and addressed him twice by his name before, with a start, he emerged from his reverie.

At present Spooner's object in this life was the attainment of a decent skill in billiards, from which art a stern fate, leagued with a relentless grandmother and the authorities at Sandhurst, had hitherto debarred him; but now he was free, grandmother and tutors were of the shadowy past, and during the pauses of his studies of the science of the warrior, he played billiards, talked billiards and dreamt billiards. His mission now was to secure Maer for a game, but Maer was not in the humor.

"My dear fellow," he said with benign patronage, while Spooner sucked his cane, and skinned his eye-glass, "it's very natural at your time of life to be eager in the pursuit of pleasure, flee she in the shape of billiards or beauty. Men at my years require pleasure to come to them. Well-tow!"

"It's not such a dence of a journey to the billiard-room," grumbled Spooner, trying to stare at a pretty nurse-maid through the eye-glass, and giving himself something of the appearance of a weak-minded Cyclops with a glass eye in the effort, "and you play such a jolly good game." Spooner had certainly a right to know, as his "fishes" made to themselves wings," and took flight with undeviating regularity towards the pockets of Maer, when the latter was his antagonist. Maer was not to be moved.

"Can't positively," he said laughing in his low, velvety tones. "Thanks though for your compliment." He went back into the hotel, and ascended to his own eyrie. He flung himself on a chair by the window, and then got up again and locked the door. The level sunlight was rolling through the curtains, and he paced up and down the golden track it made along the carpet until it faded into dusk, into deeper blackness, and then after a brief interval reappeared in a wave of spectral silver from the crescent moon, jarringly the purple rapt. Be a man never so much a cynic, be his heart and his conscience alike torpid, there are moments when his eyes turn back on his soul, when something that is not of himself lays an iron hand on his mental volition, and he is compelled to "see himself." To dig the skeletons of past deeds of wickedness from the charnel