

The New Man at Rossmere

CHAPTER XI.

The Tievina family grouped about the gallery presented a cozy contrast to the home the major had just left, and about which he had been ruminating so uncomfortably.

"One would think there was no such thing as loves, or booming rivers, or possible inundations, if one's impressions were to be gathered in this serene presence," he said, sending his cheerful voice ahead of him by a few steps; then, mounting the steps, and waiving the ceremony of a general hand-shaking, he took a vacant chair by Mrs. Ralston's side.

"These presence, more correctly!" says Mr. Southmead, assuming an uneasy sitting posture in the swaying hammock as a concession to his guest. "This is my hour, Denny. The supremacy of the feminine element in this household does not permit me to make very frequent use of that little possessive pronoun in the singular number. But I repeat, this is my hour. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy wife, nor the niece, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. Have a cigar! Carl, you rascal, bring the major a match."

"If the entire decolouring consulted human fallibility to the extent the command for rest does, we should approach nearer perfection than we are like to do at our present rate of progress," the major answers, scratching the match Carl has brought him on the floor, and illuminating his face for a second as he applies it to his cigar.

"You will let Carl take your hat and whip, Major Denny, and remain to tea with us, I hope. I am quite sure Mr. Southmead desires it."

Mrs. Southmead's hospitality was extended in that voice of cool dignity she reserved especially for intercourse with the new man at Rossmere. She had not yet quite gained free absolution from herself for being on such apparently friendly terms with their mortal foe. She performed reserving to herself the privilege of saying, "I told you so," in case he should suddenly develop any of those vicious tendencies which she was morally sure must be latent in every Yankee breast.

"I hope you won't consider it a hardship to keep Uncle George in countenance during his lazy hour. You must find your duties of general supervision of all the levee forces tiresome in the extreme. We expend a great deal of pity on you here at Tievina."

"I should like extremely to retain your sympathy by pleading exhaustion," he said, "but I am afraid I can't conscientiously. I really enjoy the life of constant activity I am forced to lead. I do not feel in the least fatigued, and if it were not for the grave uncertainty of our situation I should even enjoy the *saupou* of danger that flays our daily experiences just at present."

your friend. Can't say that I see any. Why didn't you fetch him along? The friends of our friends are our friends, you know. Hope he isn't waiting for a special invitation. Carl, go hurry up supper, you rascal."

Mr. Southmead's habit of saying his say out without any pause or reference to questions to be answered proved of inestimable service in the present instance. The major's face flushed painfully. Fortunately, the darkness concealed that. He abhorred deceit in any and every one of its manifold manifestations. Manton had once been in imminent danger of going to the penitentiary of New York state as a defaulter. He, Stirling, had imprisoned himself to ward off the disgrace and to send him to Europe, which was really his name with the Denny dropped. If Stirling could have had his way, his brother would never have come back. As it was, no good could come of stripping off his disguise, and much harm might accrue. Mrs. Southmead, with that keenness of observation which is so often a marked characteristic in women whose minds never soar into the realm of abstract justice, took note of the unusual delay in the major's response and the constraint in his voice when it finally came.

I left him at Squire Thorn's. The old gentleman seemed really in need of assistance this afternoon, and asked Craycraft to stay. I was drawing a contrast, he continued, rather hurriedly, "as I came up the walk there, between this home and that one. You all looked so cozy and united, and like a family in short. There was found the old man asleep on an iron lounge, which seemed scarcely more rigid than his own features in slumber. The house was silent and dark, and presently, when Mrs. Thorn did come out, she was so white and still and sad and grave, that without much effort of imagination, one could fancy her slowly petrifying, to be in keeping with the rigid condition of her life."

"Yes; she is very handsome. There can scarcely be two opinions about that."

A sudden inspiration seized upon Major Denny. Why should he not make this sweet woman by his side, to whom his own heart went out with more tender appreciation every time they came in contact, an unconscious confidant in his self-constituted guardianship of the squire's wife from a nameless vague danger? There was a chivalric determination in his heart to ward off from that lonely woman at Thorndale the possibility of more trouble. In spite of him Manton had established himself at Thorndale. There Stirling was quite sure he would cling. The gossiping proclivities of a small country neighborhood were something to be dreaded and guarded off vigorously. He turned to 'Sula with the eagerness of a suddenly conceived desire in his voice:

"She is also a very lonely woman. It would be in keeping with your reputation for charity, Mrs. Ralston, if you would bestow as much time and attention on her as possible. I am sure she is appreciative. She speaks gratefully of the efforts you and Mrs. Southmead have already made in her behalf."

"She may well call it an effort," Mrs. Southmead says, grinning at memory of that ride to Thorndale. "My back aches yet from it."

"Sula seemed strangely unresponsive for her. He asked, bluntly: 'Do you not like what you have seen of her?'"

"If you think I can be of any service to Mrs. Thorn, I will gladly exert myself in her behalf. You know she does not invite intimacy. Then, more warmly: 'I would like her very much if she would let me. I confess her union with Squire Thorn has something absolutely repulsive in it for me. But she knows best why she married him.'"

horse now and Uncle George keeps him constantly under the saddle." "I think I can give you a better mount than Roxy." "What's that about Roxy?" Mr. Southmead turns on him in warm defense of his pet animal, and the talk branches from that horse to horses in general, which is a never-failing topic with a Southern man.

"Sula," says Mrs. Southmead mysteriously, as soon after tea, the major takes his leave and Mr. Southmead walks down to the gate to see him off hospitably. "I hope some of these days to get a little credit for discrimination. Did you notice that man's embarrassment in talking about his friend Craycraft?"

"Sula reluctantly admitted that she had noticed a slight hesitation about his reply. 'But what then?' she asks, tartly, for her. 'There is something wrong,' Mrs. Southmead says, exultingly -- 'a mystery somewhere. I've never felt quite sure of him. He is a Yankee' -- which was quite as if she had said, 'no good thing can abide therein.'"

Sula turned away coldly. She had no patience with nor words for such an unreasoning and unreasonable spirit as this. It was not to be combated. It was simply to be ignored.

CHAPTER XII. A HIT IN THE DARK. Squire Thorn's prediction that it would likely blow "big guns" that night seemed destined to literal fulfillment, and, as they sat around the supper-table, which, out of compliment to "white folks company," Aunt Lucy had sadly overladen with badly cooked and indigestible dishes, with the wind whistling in through the unceasing weather-boards, setting the lamp flame all a-flutter, Manton Craycraft complimented him on his weather wisdom.

"All the more reason," says the squire, hospitably piling a poached egg on top of the heap of fried Irish potatoes he had rather autocratically fortified yourself well before facing the blizzard. "You've got to do something at the big ditch by my gin tonight. The levee 'cross it is pretty well soaked now. Them devils on 't'other side of the lake are just like as not to pick out to-night for cuttin' the levee."

"I should think it would take an unusually fearless person to venture across the lake in a skiff to-night. The waves are white-capped and furious," Agnes says, studiously glancing away from Manton's plate after having caught his look of amused dismay at the task set him by the squire.

"I s'pose it does look sort of scary to a woman, but if I had a ill turn to serve any body I'd as soon, and a little sooner, cross the lake now as any other time." The squire finished his coffee audibly, and turned his attention paternally upon Manton.

"Make out your supper, man, don't eat like a bird. You've got a jolly rough night ahead of you. I think after this experience you're likely to beg off. But you are in for it if you feel that."

slippin' over and takin' a slice out of my levee to-night. Rowan ain't none too good to do it himself, only he'd be feared of ketchin' cold, so he'd send some of his folks."

"Is Jim armed?" Craycraft asked, pulling the collar of his rubber coat well up about his ears.

"With nothin' but a good stout club. I'd as soon think of armin' a mule with a pistol as Jim. He'd blow his own brains out by way of practicin' the use of it."

"Then he'd only be dangerous at close range. Pretty dark out yonder, isn't it?" Manton laughed and boldly led the way out into the wet and blustering night. The squire, bracing himself against the plunge by pulling down the soft brim of his felt hat, and making sure of all his buttons on his mackintosh, followed with a step quite as determined, if not so springy. Agnes could hear them sloppily making their way through the rain-drenched yard; could hear them speak to each other in voices raised high to suit the uproar of the storm and the dismal swish-swash of the wind-lashed waves as they broke against the resisting levee. She knew when they reached the road by the glimmer of Manton's cigar as he turned to latch the gate behind them. Then her husband's voice came harshly back to her through the turbulent night.

"If you get scared while Jim's out o' sight, Agnes, there's a loaded pistol in the writin'-desk drawer that may sorter comfort you."

The true way to love our neighbors is to love them in God and for God; we must love the good things with which God has endowed them; and we must, for His sake, submit to the privation of those things which He has denied them. When we love them with reference to self, our self-love makes us impatient, sensitive, jealous, demanding much and deserving little. But the love of God, loving friends apart from self, knows how to love them patiently with all their faults, and does not insist upon finding in our friends what God has not placed there.

A novel idea for the suppression of intemperance was started recently in Pittsburg by Rev. Father Sheedy, of St. Mary of Mercy Church. It is called the Lenten Association, in honor of the sacred thirst and agony of Christ. It is inspired by the exclamation made by the Redeemer on the cross, "I thirst, I thirst." In reading the regulations for Lent Father Sheedy said that Catholics could fast if they wanted to, even though the Bishop had dispensed them from doing so. In place of this dispensation we are asked by the Bishop to practice "self-denial," said Father Sheedy, especially in those luxuries which are neither necessary nor conducive to the preservation of the bodily health and strength; for instance, the use of intoxicating liquors.

Parents should be careful in the selection of sponsors for their children, says Archbishop Janssens. For should parents neglect the religious instruction of their children while still young it becomes the duty of the sponsors to take, if possible, the parents' place and to see that their god-children be raised in the fear and love of God and the knowledge of religion. The Church forbids to take as sponsors any one not a Catholic, or to select any one who belongs to ex-communicated societies, or who leads a publicly scandalous and sinful life; for such persons are not able to fulfill the duties which may be expected of them.

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"My residence mon with its city, and apology for the apology for 'I have 'T' Hon. D. 'Providing the Reverend Father of the Society able force to keep who, besides the greater part, drunkenness and In consequence Lieutenant Student were sent to preserve order.

The Government consisting of Debec, R. L. McDermont, of Montreal, of amount of sick adopted at Gross dissemination, such changes of per. In the event Dr. Douglas stand keep up the healthy, as of carrying out the healthy at being about a easy of access, wood available suited for tents.

He was also emaciated being weakened by his without covering were of everyth covered them, while by remon, baths, cooking water for wash open the low p timber trade opening the stock-bulls heads at current of air whitewashing of building and gers would be Cliff Island impossible to of the soil re in fact the lake were, was eit lished in w into which o As for Dr. I found that the greater than o The Commis very well adapt affords ample erected upon perfect isolat emigrants.

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