

TOLD ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

CHAPTER I. (Continued.)

"Oh, come," said Charlie, much agitated at the tone, "what with you and my father, I shall begin to wish I were dead. I'll go for a sailor!"

"Will you?" said Violet, I care for you as though you were my sister; and you turn me into ridicule without mercy! If I had a huge black mustache like some people, it would be different!" he added significantly. "I know, I have seen."

Violet turned very pale in the moonlight. She sank down on the edge of the fountain beside her cousin, and taking his hand between her soft palms laid her pretty cheek against it.

"Charlie, dear," she said softly, "you have just said you are fond of me."

"Yes," said Charlie, considerably mollified, "I am fonder of you than any one in the world—Daisy excepted."

"Then you must promise never, never, never to—to allude to that again. I think of the face there'd be! Be quiet, Charlie! you must not turn against me. I'll tell you what and Daisy if you do."

"You may, my dear, and I'm sure I may have mine. Promise—until I give you leave."

"Promise," said Charlie, who was the patient, patient fellow in the world. "But, Violet, do you think it's just the thing to meet him the way you do? Nobody knows the man."

"Violet turned to Carlos, and so did not brighten at all. "You may be sure," she said, "I will never tell a soul."

"Very well. Then, as I say, you may be at rest. Go in and play your evening game as usual with Daisy, there's a good girl. If we both stay out, they may miss us. Oh, Charlie," she added, with impressive, almost solemn earnestness, as she took both his hands, "you do not know all the interests that are at stake. Papa and Uncle Ape are most anxious about you."

"I don't like mysteries," returned Charlie. "But I suppose I must depend upon you, Violet."

"You may," was the emphatic answer. And Violet once more laid her hand on Charlie's neck, while the fawn gazed around, shaking its peaks from the silver veil.

Charlie Silver, throwing away the end of his cigar, returned to his home. He pushed back the lace draperies of the drawing room window, and stood at the elbow of a tiny little creature, a girl of eighteen, with a Zingaree like face, and great, melancholy dark eyes.

She was sitting on a low cushion, gazing blankly at the opposite wall, her slender brown hands clasped in her lap, a pair of glowing roses, which she had been pulling from a silver vase on a marble stand at her side. This was Daisy Silver.

She was in deep mourning, and looked a pathetic, dark little phantom in the glow and brightness of the pretty room. On the death of her father she had come to the house of her guardian, Mr. Armstrong Silver. That was only three months ago; and she and Charlie had employed the winter falling in love with each other, which would have been regarded as high treason by the authorities, and the young people knew it.

She heard Charlie's step, and a light quiver ran through her slender frame, and a dusky rose crept into her lovely face, but she did not turn until he touched her arm very lightly. "Then she slowly moved her eyes to his handsome young face. He was very like Violet, only that the brow was hardly so wide, or the outline of the chin at once so firm and delicate. It was a pleasant, lovable face, however, frank and bright, as the face of the young should be; but a shadow darkened it as Daisy's lightning eyes met his. He drew back a little from her, her face was so full of fire, such a tempest of passion was lightened her startled eyes. The fact was, things had been all as cross-purposes lately, and Daisy had caught up the idea that Charlie had been only playing with her—that he had deserted her for his cousin.

Daisy rose, letting the roses fall in a mass to the carpet. She flung out her little hand, as though appealing against him.

"Traitor!" she said, between her little white teeth, "you and traitor! I saw you with her by the fountain."

Charlie's dark blue eyes assumed a look of mingled anger and perplexity. "Upon my word, Daisy!" he said in a low tone, "what next? I am quite tired of these fits of temper. It is jealousy of Violet? What a silly child you are!"

She looked at him with a singular smile, her dark face paling to the very lips. Charlie took her hands tenderly in his, he stooped until his brow laid touched hers. There could be no mistake where his true love was given.

And, unfortunately, there was a spectator. His father had entered silently, and stood there in the shade of the large room, looking on.

Aurelius Silver was a stern looking man, with a face such as one sees in an old Roman medal, and thick masses of sparkling silver hair clustering round his lofty brow. One could imagine him that Roman who gave his son, fresh from a glorious victory, to the sword of the executioner. His eagle eyes took in the agitation of Charlie and Daisy as a glance; he saw how it was; and in his bitter agony, suppressing his furious passion, he stole forward, to give vent to that passion out of doors, and to think the lovers had not perceived him. Charlie, indeed, was wholly taken up with Daisy. Never had he seen her like this before—and he resented it—resented her want of confidence in him. It is true that he could not speak to any purpose, for he was not sure how events might turn out, or that Daisy could ever be his, and he was not one to fly in the face of a father's mandate. All that kept him from speaking. A sharp quarrel ensued.

"Listen to me, Daisy," he said at length. "I cannot help myself just now—I am not my own master; but you may be sure—"

No, she would not listen. Passion overmastered her. She tore her little brown fingers from his grasp, and with an inarticulate cry of emotional rage sprang through the open window and fled into the moonlight.

Charlie would not go after. His first thought was of Violet.

"I hope they'll not meet," he said to himself, as he stood outside the glass door. "They might come to an issue if they did, in Daisy's present temper. What in the world possesses her?"

At that moment, as he looked across the moonlit lawn, it seemed to him as though a cry came to his ears from the direction of the lake. He listened, but it was not repeated. And just then Violet came swiftly toward him from an opposite direction, tall and white as a spirit in her fluttering, misty dress.

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Very well. Then, as I say, you may be at rest. Go in and play your evening game as usual with Daisy, there's a good girl. If we both stay out, they may miss us.

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BRIDGE CONTRACT.

TENDERS will be received at the Office of Public Works, Fredericton, until THURSDAY, 25th day of February, next, at noon, for the erection of a new BRIDGE over the Annapolis River, in the County of Annapolis, in the Parish of St. John, N.B.

The plans and specifications for the same are to be seen at said office and at the store of G. B. DORRIS, at Annapolis, by tender to be marked "Tender for Annapolis Bridge," and to be deposited with the undersigned on or before the 21st day of February, next, at noon. The Commission is given to the lowest bidder, who will be required to execute the contract within the time specified in the conditions.

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The subscribers have to stock a full supply of Groceries, which will guarantee the lowest prices in the market. We are now receiving a large quantity of Groceries, which will guarantee the lowest prices in the market.

W. M. KELLY, Commissioner of Public Works, Fredericton, N.B.

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