

# STORY OF THE WEDDING RING.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Once more Mr. Ford and Lord Carlswood sat together; the lawyer looked puzzled, the master of Bralyn unhappy.

"So you give up all hope?" he said to the solicitor. "You think there is no chance?"

"I have done all that man could do and have failed," he replied, drearily; "if there had been one resource left, I should not have come to your lordship. It is almost useless perhaps to ask the question—I suppose none of your daughter's letters have been kept?"

"I have never seen any of them," said Lord Carlswood.

"You did not notice the postmark on the envelopes?" pursued Mr. Ford.

"I have never seen the letters at all; I gave orders to Thorpe to destroy them as soon as they came and never to allow them to be brought to me. I thought she would be sure to write, but I have never asked if she has done so."

"Do you think it probable that Thorpe may have noticed the postmarks?" asked Mr. Ford.

"I cannot tell, but you can ask him." The bell was rung, and the butler was sent for, Ford repeated the question, and wondered at the change that came over the man's face.

"I should like to ask one question before I answer," he replied, respectfully. "Your lordship has been pleased to make me a confidential servant; permit me to inquire do you want information about my young mistress?"

"I do," said Lord Carlswood, "I want, not her, but her child or children, if she has any, living."

"They would hardly be children now," observed Mr. Ford; and then, turning to the butler, he added, "Tell me, Thorpe—when did the last letter come, and did you notice the postmark on it?"

The man looked at his master.

"I hope your lordship will not be angry with me," he said; "I have disobeyed you. You told me to destroy all Miss Carlswood's letters; but I did not do so. I have kept them, thinking and hoping that some day they would be useful. I have them every one by me now."

A sudden light came into Lord Carlswood's face.

"That is good news," he said; "I am indebted to you for your sense and prudence, Thorpe."

He tried to speak calmly, but it was easy to see that he was terribly excited. Mr. Ford was more demonstrative.

"You have done the wisest and most sensible thing you ever did in your life," he cried.

"Let us see the letters, Thorpe, at once."

The man hastened from the room, and returned with a bundle of letters in his hands. He laid them before Lord Carlswood.

"They are all in order, my lord," he said, "just as I received them; they have never been touched. This was the first and that was the last."

And then, discreetly, Thorpe withdrew. Mr. Ford went over to the table where Lord Carlswood sat.

"You must open them, Ford—I cannot," he said. His face was white, his hands trembled. "My daughter—on my daughter!" he said to himself, and Mr. Ford opened the letters.

It was a hard man, a cool, shrewd, calculating lawyer, whose life had been spent among deeds and parchments; but as he read the tears rose to his eyes, and more than one deep sigh came to his lips. Katrine's first letter was a girlish, gay composition, treating the whole matter of her elopement and marriage as a jest, asking her father if he would not be well pleased to find his daughter married without any trouble to himself. Yet at the end there was a little prayer for pardon. She asked him to forgive her, and not to feel annoyed. She had done that which would make her father happy all her life. She would write again from London, she said.

The second letter was full of praise of her husband. He was so kind, so good, so clever; there was no one like him. The next contained an imploring prayer that her father would write. She had not meant to anger him so deeply, and she would not believe that he intended to cast her off.

Then came despairing letters, telling him how hard the world was using them, but always speaking well of her husband, and always praying for pardon. The next letter came from Liverpool, and told Lord Carlswood of the birth of a little granddaughter.

"We shall call her Ismay," wrote the hapless young mother; "and I am sure that you would love her if you saw her. She has my face and my hair. Dearest papa, forgive me for my little daughter's sake."

Then came a most despairing letter, written from Chester. They were starving. Mrs. Hope said, and her husband was ill. The lawyer's strong voice trembled as he read the heart-broken supplication that followed. If Lord Carlswood would only send them bread to eat—if he would but give them the crumbs from his table—the alms that he would throw to the poorest beggar.

"She must indeed have changed," said the Lord of Bralyn. "She—a Carlswood—to beg for bread!" Another letter told him that her husband was dead, and prayed him to let her come home to die.

"I have parted with everything I had in the world," she wrote, "except the little gold locket that you gave me, with your portrait and the little ring that you took from my mother's finger for me; I shall have those buried with me."

The last letter but one said she was about to start from Chester, and would walk to the town of Ashburnham,

where she would wait and rest for a few days. The last letter of all came from Ashburnham, and was dated July the ninth. Surely there was never a more pitiful petition presented; there was an appeal that would have touched the hardest heart, and Lord Carlswood covered his face with his hands as he listened. Katrine wrote from a small stationer's shop, and the last penny she had in the world was to pay for the postage of the letter. She besought him, for her dead mother's sake for the love of Heaven, to send her a little money—to save her from starvation and death—"ever so little," or she must take her child in her arms and lie down by the roadside and die.

That was the last—there the tragedy ended.

If you had received that letter," asked Mr. Ford, "would you have refused her help?"

"May Heaven be merciful to me," he said, with a deep sigh, "I believe that I should have done so."

"What can have happened?" questioned Mr. Ford, musingly. "She never wrote another letter. Did she die in Ashburnham, I wonder?"

Lord Carlswood's face grew white as with the pallor of death.

"Die," he said—"die of starvation? Do not even hint at anything so terrible. For Heaven's sake, let us see about it at once! Shall we go? I shall never rest again."

The lawyer was just as anxious, but he pressed difficulties. He knew how hard it would be to discover what had happened to a poor and lonely woman so many years ago.

"I will go to Ashburnham myself," said Mr. Ford; "I will lose no time. I will go at once; and the moment I discover anything I will send a telegram to you."

Lord Carlswood could hardly control his impatience.

"You think it better," he said, "that I should not go?"

"Decidedly," replied Mr. Ford. "I can act more quickly, more promptly, and more energetically if I go alone. He went that same day, and the result of his journey was more satisfactory than he had ventured to hope it would be. He took up his residence—not at the principal hotel—that was not a likely place to obtain such information as he sought—but at an old-fashioned inn; and at night, when he had invited the landlord to join him over a glass of wine, he cleverly turned the conversation on the subject of strange and sudden deaths.

Then he heard the whole story—how a certain poor lady that had come to the town had died without telling her name or saying to whom she belonged, or anything that could throw any light upon her history.

"She really died in that strange way?" questioned Mr. Ford, breathlessly, and the landlord, all unconscious of the great interest at stake, answered, "yes—that was how she died."

"And the child," pursued the lawyer, "what became of the child?"

"He could hardly bear the moments of suspense before the landlord answered him.

"I—hopes adopted her, and she is the prettiest girl in the whole county-side. Ismay Hope they called her."

The lawyer started as the familiar name fell upon his ear.

"Ismay," he repeated—"that is a strange name."

"Her mother called her by it before she died, and she has kept it ever since."

"She is beautiful, you say, and what age may she be?"

"That I cannot tell—she was quite young when she married."

Mr. Ford interrupted him somewhat rudely.

"When she was married—whom did she marry?"

"Paul Waldron, who is the steward of Squire Schofield; but if the matter interests you, sir, you can see Mrs. Hope. She is a great friend of my wife's, and she is never tired of telling the story."

It so happened that on this evening Mrs. Hope came to take tea with the landlord's wife, and Mr. Ford, although a bachelor himself, understood the fair sex sufficiently to feel sure that if a woman was more communicative at one time than another, it was during the time spent over a dish of tea.

He asked permission of the landlord to join the little party—a favor which was most willingly accorded him, although the landlady felt some slight embarrassment. The landlord smiled to himself as though he would have said:

"There is some deeper motive here than appears on the surface."

Mr. Ford was shown into the little parlor where the tea drinking was to take place. He could not help thinking of the strange aspects of life. Who would have thought the interests of the noble house of Carlswood would bring him to the quiet, humble village inn? Who would have dreamed that the fortunes of the only daughter of that illustrious race were to be discussed there? He spent the evening in conversation, and that was how Mr. Ford came to know the history so well.

## CHAPTER IX.

It seemed almost incredible to Mr. Ford that such wonderful success should have attended him. True, Lord Carlswood's daughter was dead, but his granddaughter was living. The love he would not give to Katrine might, and in all probability would go to Ismay; he would be willing to do for his grandchild that which pride and anger would not allow him to do for his daughter.

Mr. Ford lamented that Ismay was married—that was the only drawback to his content; yet much, of course, would depend on the man she had mar-

ried. The lawyer sighed as he thought of the great grief between Squire Schofield's steward and the proud Lord Carlswood—a grief that it seemed impossible to bridge. He could form no proper estimate until he had seen Ismay. If she was hopelessly vulgar, if she had contracted such habits as could not be cured, if she was a country-bred peasant, without taste or refinement, then he must leave the matter entirely to Lord Carlswood's discretion—he would not urge him to adopt her.

He must see her, and then form his judgment; it would be more prudent to see her as a stranger, and not to give her the least idea of what errand he had come upon. He had taken a cup of tea with Mrs. Hope, who implicitly believed that he was what he represented himself to be, a traveling artist; at the same time she thought him a very curious gentleman, he asked so many questions, and he seemed so deeply interested in what she had to say of the unfortunate woman.

He cleverly drew from her a description of Ismay's home, and then said he should like to make a drawing of it.

"Nothing can be easier," she told him. "Mrs. Waldron is very amiable and sweet-tempered; she will be pleased to give you permission."

He went, and was more charmed with Ismay than he could have anticipated; her wondrous beauty, her grace, her charming manner, all delighted him. And then, too, she had a son, the lovely, laughing boy he had held in his arms, a child of whom even the proud Lord Carlswood might be proud. He was surprised as well as delighted.

She spoke with some refinement, there was no vulgarity in her accent; and yet, despite the presence of the beautiful boy, he was tempted to wish again and again that she had not been married.

"What a sensation she would have created! She would have made one of the best matches in England, with that face and figure she would have created a perfect furor."

Still, though he was so marvelously impressed by her, he could not tell how the Master of Bralyn would receive the news of her marriage. He decided that he would trust to no letter, but would go to Bralyn himself and then he could tell Lord Carlswood all.

There was missing only one link in the evidence; he wanted to see the locket and the ring. There was no course open to him save to tell the vicar what was his real errand, and he did so under promise of secrecy. Then Mr. Kirdell showed him the locket. Although he was prepared for it, still the sight of Lord Carlswood's well-known features did startle him—it was the sure confirmation of all other evidence.

Mr. Ford hastened back to Bralyn. Lord Carlswood was greatly agitated.

"You say she is beautiful—so like her mother? What were they thinking of let her marry so young? If that could be undone! What is her husband like?"

"He is a true son of the people—handsome, strong, with a fine face and a manly figure—industrious and very clever, they say, at all kinds of mechanism. His mania is inventions. He is a complete radical in politics, believing in the rights of the workman, and is eloquent after a grand, rugged fashion of his own—for he makes speeches, and is looked upon as a leader in his own small circle."

Lord Carlswood held up his hands with a gesture of horror.

"Enough!" he cried. "And what do you say his calling is?"

Mr. Ford looked half puzzled.

"I can hardly tell you," he replied. "Some people called him the equire's steward, others his gamekeeper—to me he seemed to hold both offices."

"Does his wife seem warmly attached to him?" was the next question.

The lawyer smiled.

"I am a better judge, my lord, of the merits of a law case than of a lady's affection. I suppose she loves him. All wives love their husbands—do they not?"

"By no means," was the cynical reply. "You say the boy is healthy, and likely to live?"

"I am no judge of children, either; but I never saw a more beautiful child. He looked strong and well."

Then there was a silence for some minutes; the old lord seemed engrossed in thought. His brows were knit, his lips tightly closed and his hands tightly clasped. Once a deep sigh came from him, and then he was silent again. He raised his eyes at last, and looked in the lawyer's face. By the strangeness of the glance, Mr. Ford felt sure that some difficult proposition was coming.

Lord Carlswood rose from his seat. He went over to the mantelpiece, above which the portrait of Jocelyn, Lord Carlswood, who had fought so bravely for the Stuart king, Charles the Second. He looked long and earnestly at the pictured face—a dark face, full of noble resolve, full of fire and valor—and then he turned slowly and looked at Mr. Ford again.

"The Carlswoods have fallen very low during my lifetime," he said; "their name is sullied, their honor tarnished. But I have not fallen so low as to allow a man of that kind to make his home here."

"A man of what kind?" asked Mr. Ford, in surprise.

"That low-born, ill-bred radical. I should expect all the dead and gone Carlswoods to rise up in wrath against me if I even thought of such a thing."

"Then what do you propose?" asked the lawyer.

His lordship paused before he replied.

"Perhaps my plans may not meet with your approbation," he said; "but I may tell you at once that I am indifferent about that. This in my fixed resolve, and neither heaven nor earth shall move me from it. I will adopt my daughter's child—this bright, beautiful Ismay. I will make her a wealthy heiress. She shall have the large fortune that was to have been divided

between my two younger boys. I will adopt her son; he shall be my heir. He shall be Lord Carlswood of Bralyn after me. But—listen to me, Ford—I do all this solely on condition that she give up this low-bred husband of hers and consents never to see him again. If she will not agree, the whole matter must end—she may remain where she is, and I will find another heir."

There was another silence, during which the singing of the birds and the whispering of the winds among the trees could be plainly heard, and then Mr. Ford's voice broke the silence.

"It is not right, my lord," he said, abruptly. "Such a separation as that is against all law human and divine—it is against the customs of men and the will of Heaven."

"Nevertheless, it must take place. I will never receive the husband here."

"Yet you would receive his child."

"He is of my own race but his father is alien to it. He has noble blood in his veins. His father has none. He has no claim on me; nor will I ever acknowledge one."

"My Lord," said the lawyer, "I will go still farther. I will speak even more strongly. What you propose to do is wicked. Pardon the word; it is simply wicked; and I will have nothing to do with it."

"That is at your option," returned Lord Carlswood, haughtily. "If you decline to manage my affairs, there are plenty who will gladly undertake the office. My resolve is made, and I shall not depart from it. If my granddaughter will give up her husband, and promise never to see him again; I will receive her here; if not, we continue strangers. Nothing will induce me to change my resolve."

The two gentlemen were now standing facing each other, each one excited and eager.

"What has the man done, my lord, that you should seek to tempt from him a wife he loves? It is not his fault that she is a Carlswood. He gave her all he had—his love, his heart, his name; he has been proud to work for her; he loves her. Why should you part them? What has he done? Why should he suffer?"

"I have suffered myself," said the old lord, tremulously—"every one suffers."

"How would you have felt, my lord, if any one had sought to tempt Lady Carlswood from you?"

The Master of Bralyn held up his fine white hands with a warning gesture.

## To Be Continued

## POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

One way to reduce rents is to sew them up.

Silence gives consent, but it doesn't give a cent.

The work of a typewriter is a sort of patent write.

Success is said to be the offspring of audacity.

The self-made man is usually proud of a very poor job.

His satanical majesty always demands more than his due.

A woman's idea of a loveable man is one who is a good listener.

The successful sprinter is seldom successful in the long run.

When a wise man lends money to a relative he gets double security.

Some politicians take more pride in their influence than in their integrity.

The majority of men who tell you how to do a thing can't do it themselves.

No wonder we hear of the angry sea when so many people persist in crossing it.

A man loses confidence in his friends when they refuse to lend him money.

Some people are like circus bills; a very little money causes them to be stuck up.

There is no greater evidence of superior intelligence than to be surprised at nothing.

Every secret society has its "don'ts," but they are not a circumstance to its dues.

If you have never been called a crank you have attracted but little attention in this world.

Wisdom is an excellent thing in its place, but its place is not in a love letter if you would make it interesting.

Some people when arrayed in fine garments are apt to remind one of a pretty label on an empty bottle.

The industrious man is apt to score several hits while the indolent man is looking around for an easier target.

It's all well enough to call things by their right names, but there are times when it should be done in a whisper.

Public men speak of their unworthiness, but very few of them would be willing to be taken at their publicly expressed estimation of themselves.

## AFTER EFFECTS OF FEVER.

Mrs. Angie, of Merrifton, suffered so severely that her friends feared she was likely to be a permanent invalid.

In the picturesque village of Merrifton resides Mrs. William Angle, who, after months of suffering, has found a cure from the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Mrs. Angle relates as follows the experience through which she has passed.

"Four years ago this spring, while a resident of Buffalo I had an attack of typhoid fever and the disease left me in a worn out and extremely nervous condition, so that the least noise startled me. I could not sleep at times for a week on account of terrible attacks of heart trouble. Then again my head would trouble me and I had bad dreams. I had no appetite and lost twenty-two pounds in weight and had become so very thin that my friends were alarmed. While in this condition I was treated by two physicians but with no avail. I tried everything recommended but still found no relief. Finally a relative persuaded me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. After I had taken the first box I could see a change for the better, so I continued the use of the pills until I had finished six boxes and the results were most gratifying. I now have normal sleep, there is no more twitching in my hands, the palpitations have ceased, and I have gained in weight and strength. My whole system seems toned up, and I feel entirely well. I feel grateful to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., and hope they will keep up the good work of administering to the afflicted."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A Few Paragraphs Which Will Prove Worth Reading.

About half of the ships in the world are British.

The parchment on the best banjos is made of wolfskin.

Queen Victoria wets her own tea. It is black, and costs about \$1.15 a pound.

A new photographic machine takes five different views of a person at one sitting. It is done by means of mirrors.

Think of a man shedding his skin in forty-three years, every July, J. M. Price, of Butte, Mont., has this experience. The entire skin of his body and limbs comes off.

A glass chimney, 105 feet high, built of glass bricks, conveys the smoke from a glass factory in Liverpool. The floors are also of glass, and so are the shingles on the roof.

A clergyman in English, Ind., refuses to pay a poll tax, on the ground that he belongs to the church, and is therefore church property, the same as a church or a pastoral residence.

A German oculist declares that the ordinary slates used by school children cause short-sightedness, and recommends that white slates be used, with black pencils.

The bodies of the poor in Fojardo, Porto Rico, are conveyed to the cemetery in hired coffins and there deposited in a pit devoted to general use.

A ball and chain adorned the leg of James Ralyn when he escaped from the lunatic asylum at Richmond, Ind. He did not admire this sort of jewelry, so he filed it off and sold it for enough to buy a breakfast.

During the past seven years 3,000,000,000 young lobsters have been produced in the twenty-eight hatcheries controlled by the Department of Fisheries of Newfoundland, and placed in the sea.

A fox and a hound belonging to a gentleman in Kennebec, Me., are affectionate companions, and constantly sport and sleep with each other. When both were young they were placed together, and have ever since continued frolicsome comrades.

A farmer in Colin County, Texas, amused himself on a rainy day by coating a cat with tar and setting it on fire. The blazing animal sought refuge under the barn of the cruel man, and in about an hour the barn was a heap of ashes. His sport cost him about \$200, as there was no insurance.

American shoe manufacturers are rapidly acquiring trade in Cuba and Porto Rico. Before the recent war Spain annually sent \$5,000,000 worth of shoes to those two islands. Now American shoes are selling, those of better quality, for 50 per cent. less in price.

A new snapshot camera enables the operator to take a picture of his victim without arousing suspicion as to his intent. The operator seems to be gazing in another direction, while through the side of the instrument the picture is transmitted.

The average number of children per family in European countries is lowest in France, with 3.03; Switzerland, 3.94; Austria and Belgium, 4.05; England, 4.08; Germany, 4.10; London, 4.12; Holland, 4.22; Scotland, 4.46; Italy, 4.56; Russia, 4.83; while Ireland is highest, with an average of 5.20 children in each family.

## AN INSULT TO THE DOG.

Mr. Newlywed—Why don't you call me a brute and done with it?  
Mrs. Newlywed—You forget that Fido is present!