

A FATAL RESEMBLANCE

BY CHRISTIAN FABRE.

XXXVIII.

In the second month of the spring Ned was to be married; a quiet ceremony performed in Rahandabed, followed by a wedding breakfast, after which the young couple were to take a brief trip to New York, Washington, and a few other prominent cities. In deference to his aunt, to whom Carnew was especially grateful for her kind treatment of his betrothed, he had agreed to make the trip this short, but he intended to take his bride to Europe the ensuing winter.

And Dyke and Meg must be at the wedding; Ned sent the most loving letters to them, letters with affectionate postscripts appended by Carnew, entreating them to be present. But Meg was confined to bed from an attack of rheumatism that the doctor said would render her unable to travel for three months to come, and Dyke wrote in his tender, loving way that he could give no decided answer yet. She did not dream that his indecision came from the cowardice he felt of his love for her. He doubted if his heart could bear to see her given to another; whether his very manhood would not forsake him at the sight. He kissed her letter and put it away, but not with the packet of her former letters; those in some sense were more precious, more his own.

It became incumbent upon Ned to write at last to Edna, from whom she had not received a single line in all those months, in order to apprise her of her approaching wedding, and to write also to Mr. Edgar, which she did in her kindly way, thanking him for all that he had done for her, and asking him to forgive any annoyance or displeasure she had ever caused him.

What was her amazement to receive from Edna the following reply: "MY DEAREST NED:—Can you imagine anything more singular? At the very instant I received your letter, I was about to write to you to apprise you of my approaching wedding. Only I shall be married at an earlier date, three weeks from now; yours will be three weeks later. My engagement has been very brief, and the ceremony will be quiet and hurried. We are going to Europe immediately after my husband's return, and I shall be well enough to accompany you. I am sure I shall be able to do so. I have not told you who is to be the bridegroom. No less than our old friend, Mr. Brekbell."

Ned could read no further, for a moment, from astonishment. Brekbell, who had been the butt of Rahandabed, had only departed a month before; whose insipid conversation she had heard Edna frequently ridicule. Who had his wealth, and Edna surely had no need of that; could it be possible that she was about to give her heart and hand to that man? And how had her father's consent been won to such a union? She resumed the letter, but it explained nothing that so puzzled, and in some sense shocked her. It only said:

"You know how devoted the poor fellow used to be to me. I felt I must reward him. As our wedding is to be so quiet and hurried, I cannot invite you to be present as it is; and as I shall leave in such haste, there will be no time to see you; but I know, my dear Ned, that you will give me your very best wishes, as I give you mine. Yours lovingly, EDNA."

A postscript stated that Mrs. Stafford had gone to England to make her permanent home there.

She also received an answer from Mr. Edgar, an answer that chilled her to the very soul—it was so coldly courteous. Miss Edgar having chosen to remove herself so completely from his authority or advice, he knew not why she should deem it necessary to ask his forgiveness for anything, or even to apprise him of her intended change in life. There was not the most remote allusion to his daughter's marriage, nor the slightest wish for Ned's happiness.

She crushed the letter in her hand, and thrust into her pocket, with an uncontrollable feeling of anger and disappointment. This cold, aggravating man might surely, at such a time, have given her one kind word.

Edna's letter she showed to Carnew. He read it through without a word, and then he looked at her—a peculiarly amused and lingering look. For once, masculine wisdom had been greater than feminine astuteness; he divined, or imagined that he divined, the motives which prompted Edna's hurried and ill-matched marriage—pique at her disappointment in securing a more eligible offer, and ambition to be married before Ned should be. But seeing that his guileless companion had no such thoughts, he did not tell her what his own were, but returned the letter to her with a broader smile still, and a hope that Edna would be happy. She was on the point of showing him Mr. Edgar's letter also, but she refrained, thinking that, if she did, it would make Carnew dislike him; and since she owed her education and her home, for a part of her life, to the gentleman, she could not bear, in common gratitude, to diminish any friendship he might have won.

That same afternoon, Magillivray brought a message to her from Josephine. "She's so sorely at there," said the honest, sympathizing fellow, who had to do with putting that her mind was not right," and the doctor says she'll die this last fall morning. She's ails tribled, Miss Ned, an' ails cad aaw many times for you. Perhaps you wad aaw min' gang to the pair creature."

Of course, Ned did not mind; she even gave up her afternoon ride with Alan, leaving a little note of excuse for him left, did she tell him, he might object to her visiting Josephine just then. He had already disapproved at the frequency of her visits to the unfortunate creature in every other way than in allowing her any of the society of his intended. He could not bear the thought of his pure, lovely betrothed sitting at the bedside of that erring woman. But the erring woman was soothed and benefited by Ned's visit to such a degree that the old Scotch wife, with whom she stayed, regarded the young lady as little less than an angel; and Ned's own tender charity disposed her to minister, in whatever way she could, to the comfort of Josephine, even to the verge of offending Carnew. But, generally her plea for the poor girl was so good, and so far yielded as not to forbid her visit.

The secret that the poor French girl so well kept, not even telling it to Ned, preyed upon her with bitter effect. It made her ill, and sent her to her bed before even the birth of her child. For days she lay there, silent and uncomplaining, but the strain went to her brain, and she was 'not a there,' as Magillivray

had expressed it. Then she called for "Mademoiselle Ned"; it was the one name upon her lips all that night and all the next morning, and the Scotch wife watched for Magillivray when he drove to the village, which he did every day, either with or for guests, in order to ask him to tell the young lady.

When Ned arrived at the little cottage, she found all in commotion. Josephine's baby had been born two hours before, but still-born, and the young mother would hardly live through the night, the doctor said. But she was quite herself, with a consciousness of and a resignation to her circumstances almost touching. She asked for "Mademoiselle," begging that she might be sent for, and when informed that Magillivray had promised to tell the young lady, tears of gladness and relief came into her eyes. When Ned came, she extended both of her thin hands to greet her:

"The doctor has told me that I will not live," she said, "and I would be so glad, only for my poor little sister—she has no one to care for her, and when informed that Magillivray had promised to tell the young lady, tears of gladness and relief came into her eyes. When Ned came, she extended both of her thin hands to greet her:

"I shall see to her," said Ned, "always see to her; only yesterday Mr. Carnew paid her school bill a year in advance, and he has told the managers of the institute to draw upon him for all her expenses."

"O mademoiselle, how can I thank you? What have you not done for me; you are an angel. If the blessing of a poor, sinful creature like me can be of any use, you have it; but God will bless you. She covered Ned's hands with kisses, and shed her happy tears upon them.

"They told you about my baby," she resumed, "didn't they? And how glad I am that it is dead; for poor little Ned, mademoiselle, for I want to say something very secret. I want to tell you, you who have been so good to me, and now that I am dying, who the father of my child is; but you must promise me not to tell any one, for I love him, and I want to show my love of him by going down to his grave without giving his name to any body. It is—'with a sort of gasp in uttering the words, 'Harry Brekbell.'"

Ned gave a violent start, and for a moment she became as pale as the poor sick creature beneath her.

"You are surprised, mademoiselle; you did not dream of him, for he never looked at me before anybody; but we were many times when there was no one to see, and he told me how he loved me from the first time I came to the house; and I grew to love him, until now, mademoiselle, even now, I love him so much I cannot say one word against him."

"But he has wronged you so," burst from Ned; "he has deserted you when it was his duty to marry you."

"I shall be dead, mademoiselle, and as my child is gone it makes no difference."

"Oh, no, mademoiselle!" and she tried to raise herself in the bed in order to make her entreaty more effectual, "I could not die if his name were told."

There was but one course for Ned to pursue; to tell the dying girl that Brekbell was about to be married, and that it would be criminal not to reveal his character to the lady he would marry. Her very soul shrank from the task, for she feared the shock it would give to her who "loved too well"; but it was the only way to save her from the revelation of his name. And in the interest of justice, for the sake of Edna, whom she imagined as having full trust, at least in Brekbell's upright character, it seemed to be her duty to do so. She stepped down and told it as gently as she could.

But all her gentleness did not temper the shock. Josephine could bear his heartless desertion in her hour of trouble, his cruel forgetfulness, for she was still buoyed with the hope that her devotion to him in the matter of not revealing his name would touch him, and that her very death would cause him to have a tender memory of her; but to hear that he was about to marry, proved so conclusively that he no longer cared in the least for her; indeed, that he had flung away all recollection of her, that every vestige of the slender hope that had animated her, fled.

"O mademoiselle!" she said, taking in her hot grasp both of Ned's hands, "that is the last pain. You can tell the lady his name, for my heart has broken now."

It seemed so, for relinquishing Ned's hands she turned her face to the wall with a great sigh, and she did not speak again. The young lady waited a long time, and the old Scotch wife came in and leaned over her.

"She's ails awa'!" she said, nodding her head at Ned. "She'll noo bide till night."

Her words came true, for, even as she spoke, there was a motion of the head on the pillow, a swift, upward opening of the eyes for a second, a gasp, and all was over.

be most unwise for me even to hint that I had heard of his folly. Was the heart that she had written to me, a deeper wisdom in the future, I remain, Yours, EDNA."

Ned was disgusted, and for once she fairly contemned her cousin. Was she to write letters, when Ned had depicted in strongest language the love, devotion, and snuffing of the unfortunate French girl and the heartlessness of Brekbell? But it must be so, else how could she so easily and so soon forget poor Mackay?

In little less than three weeks all preparations making for the wedding ceased. Mr. and Mrs. Brekbell, and also the bride and the heartlessness of Brekbell? But it must be so, else how could she so easily and so soon forget poor Mackay?

"That beautiful girl," said Mrs. Dolan, "to marry such a monkey; but that just proves my theory about women; they're fools from the first to the last of them," evidently forgetting that she was including in the same category herself and Ned, for whom she now professed such an ardent affection.

"And that stiff, unmanly old father of her," she resumed; "it's a wonder how his pride could ever be reconciled to such a match—why, he snubbed that fool Brekbell when he was here."

And Alan and Ned wondered also, but they were too much absorbed in the preparations making for their own wedding to give the subject over-much thought. Dyke wrote at the very last that he was not coming; and it was true that his business (he being the newest partner in the firm) claimed very close attention, but he did not say that he could not be there, for he felt now that he could not witness unremoved the marriage of Ned.

She had written that he must give her his name, that Alan said so, and that that fact contributed so much to her happiness, all of which Dyke answered in the imitatively tender way so peculiarly his own—a way that told so much, and yet that told nothing he would conceal.

Ned cried from disappointment when she received the letter. Neither Meg nor Dyke to be by her wedding! All Rahandabed could not make up for their absence, and Carnew coming upon her, still in tears, also read the letter.

"It is too bad," he said, sympathizingly; "but we shall punish him, Ned. We shall stop long enough in New York to have him call upon us, and if his driving business of his won't even let him do that, we shall call upon him, if necessary."

"O Alan, how good you are! I never thought of that," looking at him with smiles and tears.

"Well, prove your gratitude by drying your eyes at once, and permitting me to tell Ordotte that you will let him give you away. He is most anxious to have that privileged position."

"I shall be, really?" half interested and half amused.

"Why, yes; he has been talking most mysteriously about his right to do so, and if I were not familiar with his strange innuendoes and strange insinuations, put forth to excite my aunt's laughable curiosity, I would say he knew some secret about you, Ned."

"No secret about me!" she rejoined, laughing. "Everything plain as the day. I have had it from Meg a hundred times—a poor little English waif in whom Mr. Edgar became interested because I happened to bear the same name as his daughter, and he knew my parents; only for those fortunate facts, I might have grown up a poor, neglected orphan."

Alan did not answer; he loved her so well that he questioned nothing about her. She was the queen of his heart, and he wanted no more.

The wedding morning arrived, and even the weather seemed to have some nuptial design, for never had the sun shone more brightly, nor the foliage about the grounds of Rahandabed looked greener. The very birds were carolling in such a way that they woke up Ned in the morning, and he was up, and she could not sleep again, however, and she rose, as it were, to "nurse her joy." All night she had been in the little mountain home, a child again, talking to the trees in her quaint, childish language, with foud Meg, and true, tender Dyke about her; and she realized that all that was entirely gone, that on to-day she was to pass a Rubicon which would separate her forever from her maidenhood, that never in all the years to come could she ever experience any of her childhood's delights, burning tears started from her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks. Yet she did not for a moment doubt her happiness. She was only obeying the strange impulse of regret for something lost which to strong natures comes most forcibly in moments of great happiness, or perchance it was an unconscious sympathy with Dyke, the principles of second-sight and presentiments, for at that same hour, early though it was—but he had scarcely slept all night—Dyke was reading her letters, reading them for the last time while she was a maiden, he said to himself.

When Ned found the tears on her cheeks she brushed them away hurriedly, and then laughed as she did so, because of her silly superstition, for she had read somewhere that:

knissed her again and again, and then she hugged Alan, and kissed him, and after that she turned to Ordotte, and in her excitement seemed about to snuff her in the same ordeal, only he, divining her intention, slipped out of her reach.

Magillivray, honest, delighted Magillivray, drove them to the station, and as he afterwards expressed to his fellow-help:

"A bonnier bride ne'er steppit." Never having travelled, beyond her journey when a child to the Pennsylvania School, thence to Barrytown, and afterwards to Albany, the journey was a constant source of delight to Ned, and to Carnew, who had travelled so much both in the old world and in the new, her simple, unaffected enthusiasm was most refreshing. He loved to watch her silently, as with the glimpses that she caught of the pretty places along the river, the color rose in her cheeks, and the sparkle came to her eyes. She was hardly weary when they reached New York, and the thought of seeing Dyke seemed to imbue her with fresh spirits.

"I think, Ned," said Carnew the next morning, after an elegantly appointed breakfast in their own apartment in the Astor House—at that time one of the leading hotels in the city—"that we shall call on Mr. Dutton. I am afraid your impatience would never brook the delay of sending to him to call upon us. So if you see, we shall go immediately."

"Shall we?" he wide eyes alight with pleasure. "How very thoughtful and good you are, Alan!"

"Am I?" He was standing near her, and he could not resist the impulse to draw her to him and fold her in his arms.

"My own," he murmured. Was it the spirit of prophecy which occasionally, all unconscious to ourselves, comes upon us, that impelled her to say almost as if another and not she were speaking:

"Will the day ever come, Alan, that you will not find it in your heart to call me that?"

And he answered firmly; clasping her closely:

"Never!"

Neither dreamed of the black, cruel, horrid phantom which was so soon to separate them.

Dyke, in the private office of his business house in consultation with the senior partner, was told some one wished to see him.

"Let the party come in here," said the senior partner, and he retired to a desk in a remote corner of the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Carnew appeared. It was Ned's plan to send in no cards, in order to surprise Dyke, and never was a surprise more effectual. Though knowing that their wedding trip was to include New York, he never dreamed of their visiting him, and now as he looked at the lovely, blushing, smiling bride, it seemed to be all a dream. But she did not leave him in dreamland long. Forgotten of everything but that the honest fellow whom she loved with all a tender sister's warm affection stood before her, she rushed to him, put her arms about his neck, and kissed him heartily. Even the senior partner could not help looking up, and wondering, and almost envying Dyke, for Ned was so lovely.

Dyke was crimson up to the roots of his hair and down to his shirt collar with surprise, delight, and a host of emotions. Something even like moisture came into his eyes, but he managed to conceal that and to avert a recurrence of it.

Ned drew him to Carnew, introducing: "My husband!"

with a naive and pride that was charming, and Dyke wrung Alan's hand and congratulated him in a voice that to himself was unexpectedly steady. It was no use for him to beg to be excused from giving the day to the couple, for the senior partner, from his corner, over-hearing some of Mrs. Carnew's entreaties, came forward, apologizing for his intrusion, but saying that, having heard the young lady's solicitations, he could no longer refrain from adding his request to hers that Mr. Dutton would take the day. These few lowly instructions to the gentlemen, and Dyke finally was induced to go on with his friends.

A LITERARY VENTURE.

I have some imagination and a great many near relations. These two facts go far toward explaining why I nearly became an author, and did not quite.

As a child I was fond of imagining things and for this reason was considered untruthful; but all the punishments and scoldings endured on this account from nursery maids and governesses failed to entirely crush my love of inventing. Indeed, when I became emancipated from the thralldom I found the early habit return in greater force, and at last, some years after I had been "out," it occurred to me to try my hand at authorship.

The reason that I had not done so before was not because I was entirely given up to gaieties. I went to dances more as a duty than a pleasure; and in my secret, very secret soul I disliked dinners and loathed afternoon teas—social functions, be it understood, for I have a very healthy appetite. No; the main reason why I did not seek this outlet earlier lay in family influence.

I write it with a capital, for in our household family reigns supreme. It is not so much a matter of pedigree—though I believe we go back to the Edwards. One of my brothers declared once that Edward V. was an ancestor in the direct line. But I have never troubled to hunt it up myself, though I suggested to Fred that it might be as well to study the history of England before making statements, not thoroughly corroborated, about the history of the Gwenslons.

However, to return to family influence. My people, I had, perhaps, better explain at once, are of the old fashioned type, and the idea of any female member of the Gwenslon family ever doing anything is undreamt of by them. I and my four sisters drift in our old country home, sewing and chatting and visiting our neighbors, as our aunts and great-aunts and great-great-aunts have done before us for generations.

When my friend Edith Marsden took a studio and turned from an elegant amateur into a professional painter, who actually sent her pictures to exhibitions and offered them for sale, the news was received by my family with every expression of sympathy.

"Sold her pictures!" cried my eldest sister, Marianne. "Poor girl! has she really come to that?" while my Aunt Sarah, who, with her sister Ellen, lives in the dowry house on the father's estate, said in a shocked tone of voice that "it did not seem to her quite nice."

"But it does to Edith," I could not refrain from saying. "She thinks it very nice indeed."

"Well," said Aunt Sarah, with a still more horrified expression, "all I can say is that I don't know what can have possessed the girl. She has a good home and kind relations—what can she want more?"

"Don't you think," said my gentle little Aunt Ellen, "that we ought to play rather than blame her? It seems so sad to be reduced to really making money for her pictures. She must be very poor."

But Aunt Sarah was not to be mollified. "Ellen, my dear," she said, severely, "in our young days a gentleman would have preferred starvation to remunerative work."

It would, of course, have been quite useless for me to attempt to explain that Edith had not even the excuse of poverty and had sold her work for choice, not necessity, preferring to do so, even if the returns did little more than cover the outlying expenses, as they at least gave her the means of pursuing her art. It was soon after this, and probably as the result of Edith Marsden's success, that it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, might earn an honest penny and add to my scanty supply of pocket money by turning my taste for imagining things to account; so I wrote a story. It is not necessary to relate the plot in detail here; perhaps it is better not to revive what has long since been forgotten; let it suffice to say that it turned partly on the idea of a woman giving her love unknown to and unreturned by the man on whom it was bestowed. The subject seemed to me serious enough, and I endeavored to treat it in a befitting spirit. For weeks before I put pen to paper I thought of my characters, and tried to imagine how they would act, and what they would say, until at last I felt as if I were actually living with them, and knew them far better than the people really around me, though at the same time I flattered myself that they were all entirely the creatures of my imagination, and unlike any one whom I had ever met or known.

At last it was completed and sent up, with much trepidation, to the editor of Morris' Journal, which was the only magazine I was in the habit of seeing, and which was taken by most families in the neighborhood. It was so characteristic of our neighborhood that we all followed each other, even to the matter of the magazine we took in, thereby losing the advantage we might have had from interchanging different ones. For a few days I was in a state of feverish excitement every time the postman came; but after a little time this subsided, and I had, indeed, almost ceased to think about my story, when one day, a few weeks after it was sent up, I opened a packet in an unfamiliar writing, and was greeted, to my surprise, by my story in print, with a note requesting me to correct the proof and return it immediately.

About a fortnight later I received a copy of the magazine containing the story, and by the same post a letter from the editor inclosing a cheque for £5.

I don't believe that any one who has never earned a penny entirely by the

fruit of their own brains can imagine the joy with which I beheld that little piece of paper; but my spirits were slightly checked when, on opening the magazine, I saw at the end of the story my name, Dora Gwenslon, in full. Of course I had signed it as I should a letter, unthinkingly. The fact of my name really appearing, to proclaim to all the world that I had written a story, never struck me, even when I saw it in print.

However, the joy of being accepted and of having my £5 outweighed my momentary discomfiture; and feeling that I must share my delight with some one, I made a confidante of Dolly, my youngest sister, the one of us whose role was that of the family beauty, as mine was of the family book worm—if, indeed, any of us could be said to be allowed enough individuality to have a role at all.

"Dolly," I said, "I have written a story in this month's Morris'."

"Written a story!" cried Dolly, pausing with a pair of curling tongs in mid air, for she was dressing for dinner at the time. "What on earth have you done such a thing as that for? What will papa say?"

"I don't know," I said. "Perhaps he won't find out; but as the editor had inserted my name after I am afraid he will."

"Dora," cried Dolly, "how could you? You thought it was only people like—well, the sort of people one doesn't know, who really wrote and had their names in print."

"I don't see that it matters much," I said. "I have done nothing to be ashamed of, and I've got £5 for it."

"Five pounds!" said Dolly, looking at me with rather more respect. "What a joke. What shall you do with it? It would almost buy you a new evening gown."

I did not answer, for the idea of spending such precious earnings on a dress that would be done for with a few evenings' wear seemed to me almost sacrilege, and I felt that Dolly would never understand such an attitude of mind.

"Shall you tell the others?" was her next question.

"They will soon find out," I replied. Adelaide always reads Morris' on the first evening.

The next afternoon, when I came in from a walk, I found my two elder sisters seated in front of the fire, and on Adelaide's lap was the copy of Morris' containing my story.

"Oh, Dora," she cried, on seeing me, "such an annoying thing has occurred; some one has written a miserable story in Morris', and they have taken your name! It must be some one who has heard it, for no one would ever have hit on such a name as Gwenslon of their own accord."

"Yes, is it not dreadful!" echoed Marianne. "Papa will be quite put out to see our name used like that. It is very impertinent of whoever has done it. You don't seem to mind much," she continued, as I made no reply; "and surely you are the one who ought to resent it most, since it is your name in full that appears."

"But I can't resent it," I said, meekly, "because, you see, the person who wrote the story has every right to the use of my name, since it was myself."

"You wrote it!" and "How could you do such a thing! You have disgraced the family!" were the remarks which greeted my announcement, though the surprise displayed struck me as being a little too great to be natural, and I largely suspected that the authorship had not been guessed by my sisters. This surmise on my part was strengthened by the inconsistency of the next remark I heard.

"It is shockingly bad taste," said Adelaide. "Every one will know that the old aunt is meant for Constan Susan, and the clergyman is, of course, Mr. Skopford."

"Indeed, it is nothing of the kind," I exclaimed, indignantly.

"And the sentiment is so false," chimed in Marianne; "one can tell at once that the writer is trying to describe feelings she has never herself experienced. Look at this passage in evidence," and taking the magazine from Adelaide's lap, she opened it at a passage which, more than anything else in the story, contained a little bit of my own inner self, and which, on that account, I had for some time hesitated to include. "It has at once the touch of unreality, my dear," said Marianne. "If you must write stories, you must at least have felt a little more and lived a little more first; but it is the fact that women of our position cannot see life from the point of view of the vulgar, which should in itself debar us from entering the professions of those who happen to be placed lower than ourselves in the social scale."

At this point Louise, the sister next younger to myself, came in. She had evidently read the story before the others, and made no preamble about the authorship. She took up the magazine from the table upon which Marianne had placed it, and with a withering glance at me said:

"Well, I little thought a sister of mine would prove so false a friend!"

"False a friend!" I echoed, feebly; "what can you mean?"

"Oh, don't pretend you don't know," she said. "I am only wondering what poor Minnie Watson will think when she sees her own personal, private story told in print with your name at the end."

"But I never even knew she had a story," I protested.

"Nonsense!" said Louise; "all the neighbors knew that she was heart-broken when Major Culliffe married Madge Westbrook."

"I did not," I said.

"That's what comes of being a book worm," said Louise. "You are so

TO BE CONTINUED.