John Arthur's Ward;

OR THE DETECTIVE'S DAUGHTER.

Continued from 1st page.

Through the doorway Claire saw a white hand laid on the man's shoulder, and suddenly he became galvanized into life.

Then the chain fell, and the door opened wide.

Claire and the mysterious lady were face to face.

By this time the people were moving in the street, and from the windows of Claire's home, lights were flashing.

The woman drew back at the sound of the first footstep, and seemed to hesitate, with a look of uneasiness upon her face. Instantly Claire spoke the thought that had been in her mind when she rang the bell! "Madame, your house will soon be surrounded by strangers. Secure such valuables as are at hand and come with me across to my home. There you will be safe from intruders."

The lady raised her hand, and saying, simply, "Wait," hurried up the broad stairs.

Now all was confusion. Down the street came the rushing fire engines; servants ran about frantically, and people went tearing past Claire in the crazy desire to seize something and smash it on the paving stones, thereby convincing themselves that they were "helping at a fire." Regardless of these, Claire stood at her post like a sentinel. Just as the first fire engine halted before the house, the mistress of all that doomed grandeur crossed its threshold for the last time. Then she turned to Claire, and the two hurried silently through the throng, and across the street. The door was fortunately ajar. The servants and Mr. Keith were all outside, so the girl and her companion had been unobserved.

Claire led the way straight to her own room. Ushering in her companion, she closed the door upon chance intruders, and turned to look at her. The stranger had appeared at the door in dressing-gown of dark silk, and this she still wore, having thrown over it a long cloak, and wrapped about her head, so as to almost entirely conceal her features, a costly cashmere shawl. This she now removed, and revealed to the anxious gaze of Claire the face of a woman past the prime of life;—a face that had never been handsome, but which bore unmistakable signs of refinement and culture in every feature. The eyes were large, dark-gray, and undeniably beautiful. The hair was wavy and abundant; once it had been black as midnight, but now it was plentifully streaked with gray. The face was thin and almost colorless. The hands were still beautiful, with long slender fingers and delicate veining; the very beau ideal of aristocratic hands.

This much Claire saw almost at a glance. Then the lady said, in a low, sweet voice that was in perfect unison with the hands, and eyes, and general bearing:

"I cannot tell you, dear young lady, how much I thank you for your courage and hospitality. I could not have endured the going out upon the street in that strong."

Claire laughed softly, and said, with characteristic frankness: "I guessed that, madame, for I must confess to having, on more than one occasion, seen that you do not desire observation."

The stranger looked at her with evident admiration. "You were kinder and more thoughtful for a stranger than I have found most of our sex, Miss—; I beg your pardon; I am so much of a hermit that I don't even know your name."

"My name is Keith—Claire Keith."

Then the girl crossed to the window and looked over at the burning building, while the stranger sank wearily into a chair.

"Your house is going fast, madame. I fear nothing can be saved," said Claire. "The upper floor is already gone."

The stranger smiled slightly, but never so much as glanced out at her disappearing home.

"I hope my landlord is well insured," she said. "As for me, I have my chiefest valuables here," drawing from underneath the cloak, which she had only partially thrown off, a small casket, and a morocco case that evidently contained papers. "I keep these always near me; as for the rest, there is nothing lost that money cannot replace."

Claire looked a trifle surprised at her indifference to the destruction of her elegant furniture, but made no answer. And the stranger fell into thoughtful silence.

A rap sounded on the door, and a gentle voice outside said: "Claire, dear, are you there?"

The girl turned upon the stranger a look of embarrassed inquiry. "That is mamma," she said.

The lady smiled sadly at her evident perturbation, and replied, with a touch of dignity in her tone, "Admit your mother, my dear. I was about to ask for her."

Claire drew a sigh of relief and opened the door.

"My child," began Mrs. Keith, as she hurriedly entered the room, "James tells me that you—"

Here she broke off as her eyes fell upon the stranger, and Claire hastened to say: Mamma, this is the lady whose house is burning. I ran over there as soon as I saw the first flame and asked her to come here."

Mrs. Keith was not only a lady, but a woman of good sense, and she turned courteously toward the intruder, saying, "You did quite right, my dear. I trust you have not been too seriously a loser by this misfortune, madame."

The lady had risen. Now she stepped forward and said, in her unmistakably high-bred tones. "I have suffered no material injury, I assure you. And your daughter has done me a great kindness. I was about to ask if I might see you, as I felt sure it was to you, as the mistress of this house, that I owed some explanation regarding myself, before accepting further hospitality from your daughter."

Mrs. Keith bowed gravely, and the stranger continued,

"My name is Mrs. Ralston. I have lived for nearly ten years a secluded life, having been an invalid. Messrs. Allyne & Olive are my bankers, and have been for years. Mr. Allyne is an old family friend. If you will ask your husband to call upon him, you will be assured that I am not a mysterious adventuress."

Mrs. Ralston smiled slightly, and Mrs. Keith smiled in return as she said, cordially: "Your face and manner assure me of that, Mrs. Ralston. And now will you not permit me to show you a room where you can rest a little, for it is almost morning, and your night's repose has been sadly disturbed?"

"I must accept your hospitality, Mrs. Keith, and ask to be allowed to intrude upon you until I can communicate with Mr. Allyne, and he can find me a suitable place of residence."

"Don't let that trouble you, pray. We shall be happy to have you remain our guest," and Mrs. Keith turned to leave the room.

Mrs. Ralston held out her hand to Claire, and that impulsive young lady clasped it in both her own, as they bade each other good-night. And so the mysterious lady was actually under the same roof with the girl who had been so much interested in her and her possible history.

Mr. Allyne was well known to Mr. Keith, and a man whom he highly esteemed. On the following day, at the request of Mrs. Ralston, he called at the banking-house of Allyne & Olive.

On learning that Mrs. Ralston was the guest of his brother banker, and of the demolition of her house, Mr. Allyne was doubly surprised. And his statement, concerning the lady was not only satisfactory but highly gratifying. She had been left an orphan in her girlhood, and was from one of the oldest and proudest of Virginia's old and proud families. She had now no very near relatives, and having separated from a worthless husband, had lived mostly in Europe. She had resumed her family name, and although the husband from whom she had withdrawn herself, had squandered nearly half her fortune, she was still a wealthy woman. He spoke in highest terms of praise of her mind and accomplishments, and assured Mr. Keith that she was not only a woman of unusual refinement and culture, but one also of loftiest principles and purest Christianity. If it were not that it would be the very place where this worthless husband would be likeliest to find her, he would not allow her to occupy any home save his own. And, lastly, Mr. Allyne stated that if he, Mr. Keith, could prevail upon Mrs. Ralston to remain under his roof, he would do Mr. Allyne a great favor.

"For," concluded that gentleman, "she lives too secluded, and she is so well fitted for such society as that of your wife and daughter; she is a woman to grace any household."

Mr. Keith returned home and faithfully reported all that he had heard concerning their guest.

Claire had been very much in love with the graceful, stately lady from the first, and after a morning's chat with her, Mrs. Keith was not far behind in admiration.

And the woman who had lived alone so much, found this cheery little family circle very pleasant, so when Claire and her mother begged her with much earnestness to remain with them, she did not refuse.

"I cannot resist the invitation which I feel to be sincere," she said. "I will remain with you for a time, at least, but I am too much of a hermit to tarry long where there is such a magnet as this," turning to Claire.

And Claire laughingly declared that he would forswear society, and den a cell of any thickness, if only Mrs. Ralston would share her isolation.

So she stayed with them, and soon became as a dearly loved sister to Mrs. Keith; while between herself and Claire an attachment, as unusual as it was strong, sprang into being. They drove together, read together, talked together by the hour, and never seemed to weary of each other's society.

Enthusiastic Claire wrote to Olive and Madeline, giving glowing descriptions of her new found friend. But because of the events that were making Olive and Madeline doubly dear to her, and because she could not speak of them to a stranger, however loved and trusted, Claire said little to Mrs. Ralston of her sister or of the little heroine of Oakley.

CHAPTER XXX.

WAITING.

The expert who had been tracing out the goings and doings of Percy, made his report.

After it had been thoroughly reviewed by Clarence and Olive, they were forced to confess that they were not one whit the wiser. The detective had found how and where Percy had squandered much of his fortune, but had brought to light absolutely nothing that could be of use to his employers. And so they abandoned the investigation in that direction.

But when the report of the Professor's case was sent in, they found more cause for congratulation. First, it had been discovered that the Professor had visited three different physicians, all of them men bearing reputations not over spotless. Next he had made sundry purchases from two different chemists; and third, last and all important, he had been dogged to the bazar of a dealer in theatrical wares, where he had purchased a wig, beard, and other articles of disguise.

Two days had passed since the above discoveries were reported. Then the detective called upon Dr. Vaughan and informed him that Mr. Davlin and the Professor, the latter disguised with wig, beard and spectacles, had taken the early morning train that very day, and that he, the detective, had been lounging so near that he heard Davlin call for two tickets to Bellair.

Three days later, Olive received the following letter, which speaks for itself:

"Oakley, Wednesday Evening.

"Dear Olive:—

"The engagement has opened in earnest

"Last evening, Mr. D., and le Docteur, between them, frightened the two maids out of the house. This morning I succeeded in scaring away the old housekeeper, which made a shortage in servants. Old Hagar happened along just then by some chance, and declared herself not at all afraid of contagion so madame bade her brother employ her. The cook remains, as Monsieur and le Docteur must eat.

My meals are served in madame's dressing-room, and shared by that lady.

"Courage, my friend, our time is almost here. And I am yours till death,

M——."

This letter was perused by Olive and Clarence with almost breathless eagerness and interest. And then they found themselves once more waiting eagerly for fresh tidings from the "seat of war," as Clarence termed it

At last came a letter from Madeline that aroused them as the clarion stirs those arrayed for battle. It ran as follows bearing neither date nor signature:—

"To Arms, My Friends!

"If you were among the village gossips to-day, this is what you would hear, for it is what is fast spreading itself through the town: 'The lady up at the mansion has been very ill, but is now better. Her husband took the fever from her, and, being old and his constitution enfeebled by the dissipation of his earlier days, he came very near dying. Now they hope that he will live, although the danger is not yet passed. But if he does live he will never be himself again. The fever has affected his brain, and he will be hopelessly mad.

"That is what the villagers know.

"What they do not know is, that Mr. D—— and the doctor have already fitted up two rooms in the most secluded part of the closed-up wing, and that the 'insane' man will be removed to those rooms to-night.

"One fact concerning le Docteur, your expert has failed to discover, is that at some time the man has made a study of medicine. This is only a theory of mine, not a discovery; but when I tell you what he did, I think that you both will agree with me. A few days ago the doctor walked down to the village one morning, and coolly presented himself at the door of Doctor G——'s office.

"Docter G—— is the least popular and least skilful of the three physicians here, but of course the city man was not supposed to know that. He, the city doctor, informed Doctor G—— that although his employer had not desired it, as he had perfect confidence in the present treatment of Mr. A——, still it was always his practice to consult with another physician.

"So he desired Doctor G—— to accompany him to O——, and see his patient; not that he had any doubts about the disease, but because, in case of a serious termination, it was always a consolation to the friends to know that every precaution had been taken. Doctor G—— came, to find the patient in a bedrugged stupor. He endorsed everything le Docteur chose to say, and went away feeling much puffed-up because of having been called in to consult with a New York physician.

"You see they are moving very carefully, and do not intend to have any doubts raised.

"Miss A—— of course remains in the village, and receives reports daily concerning her brother, and her Knight is still at her elbow.

"Henry has been here for a week, and does not dream of my identity.

"Hagar and myself, between us, have managed to get possession of a specimen of every drug that has been administered to Mr A——, also of the harmless nostrums that are dealt out to madame for appearance's sake.

"There is but one thing more that I must accomplish and that must be done to-night, if possible. If I succeed in this, two days more will see me on route for the city. If I fail—then I must remain here, if I can, and try again. In any case, I must make my new move within the week. So look out for the chrysalis; it remains for you to develop into the brilliant butterfly."

This letter chanced to arrive during one of Doctor Vaughan's afternoon visits, and Olive read it aloud to him, saying at the end, and almost without taking breath,

"Something she must accomplish first. If she had secured the medicines, and they are safe not to run away in her absence then what is it she means?"

Clarence shook his head, saying: "I have no idea. She speaks as if the thing, whatever it is, was attended with some risk."

"And this explains Henry's absence," Olive said, tapping the letter in her lap. "No doubt he was summoned without any prelvous warning. Of course, he is a mere tool for his master. They will hardly dare let him see their game."

"Hardly; but if they were not using him to Madeline's satisfaction, she would have revealed herself to him."

"True."

"We are approaching a crisis now. If this new movement fails—but I hardly think it will."

Olive looked up in alarm. "Oh, don't suggest failure," she exclaimed. "She must succeed. What will become of poor Philip if she does not?"

Clarence lifted his face reverently. "I believe that the Power above us, who permits evil to be because only from pain and sorrow comes purification, has not permitted the life of this beautiful young girl to be darkened in vain. Out of her wrongs, and her sorrows, and her humiliation, He will allow her own hands to shape not only a strong, true, earnest womanhood for herself, but the weapons which shall deliver the innocent, and bring the guilty to justice."

And Olive felt comforted, and her hope took new wings.

CHAPTER XXX.

MR PERCY SHAKES HIMSELF.

It was noonside at Oakley, and a December sun was shining coldly in at the window of Mrs. Cora Arthur's dressing-room. Within that cozy room, however, all was warmth and brightness. A cheerful fire was blazing and crackling in the grate. Sitting before the fire, wrapped in a becoming dressing-gown of white cashmere, was Cora herself, looking a trifle annoyed, but remarkably well, withal. Wonderfully well, considering how very ill she had been.

Lounging near her, his feet lazily outstretched toward the fire, was Lucian Davlin.

"What did you write to Percy?" he inquired, consulting his watch.

"Just what you told me; that I had something of importance to communicate, and desired him to call to-day at two," replied Cora

"But—aren't you looking a little too well for a lady who has been so desperately ill? It won't do to arouse his suspicions, you know."

Cora crossed to her dressing-case, went carefully over her face with a puff ball, and did some very artistic tracing in India ink under each eye. Then she turned toward him triumphantly. "There!" she exclaimed, "now I shall draw the curtains," suiting the action to the word, "and then, when I lie on this couch, my face will be entirely in the shadow, while from the further window there will come enough light to enable him to recognize you."

At this moment a rap was heard at the door. Cora threw herself upon the invalid's couch, and lay back among the pillows. When she had settled herself to her satisfaction, Mr. Davlin opened the door, admitting Celine Lerouge.

"Monsieur Percy is below, madame," said the girl, glancing sharply at the form in the darkened corner.

"Come and draw these coverings over me, Celine, and then go and bring him up" replied Cora.

Then she glanced at Lucian, who said, carelessly: "Well, my dear, I will go down to the library."

Celine adjusted the wraps and pillows and then went out, closely followed by Lucian. She was not aware that Mr. Percy was expected, the message having been sent by Henry. And she was not a little anxious to know the nature of the interview that was about to be held.

Mr. Percy, conducted to Cora's door by Celine, entered the room with his usual lazy grace, and approached the recumbent figure in the darkened corner, saying, in a tone of hypocritical solicitude:

"Madame, I trust you are not overtaxing your strength in thus kindly granting me an interview."

He knew so well how to assume the manner best calculated to throw her off her guard and into a rage.

But Cora, understanding his tactics, and her own failing, was prepared for him. In tones smooth as his own she answered

"You are very good, and I find my strength returning quite rapidly. In fact," and here a double meaning was apparent, as she intended it should be, "I think I shall soon be stronger than before my illness."

There was silence for a moment. Evidently Mr. Percy was not inclined to help her to put into words whatever she had in her mind.

"I sent for you," she continued, "because I have something to say before you meet with a person who, as you are likely to remain one of this pleasant family, you must of necessity, and for policy's sake, meet with the outward forms of politeness." Here she paused as if from exhaustion, and he, lifting his fine eyebrows slightly, kept silence still. Cora, beginning to find her part irksome, hurried to his consolation. "You have heard, no doubt, of the presence of my brother in this house. I sent for you that you might meet him, and I desired my maid to show you this room first, that I might venture a word of warning and advice. My brother is not the stranger that you evidently imagine him. Beyond the fact that you and I were once married, that I of my own will forsook you, and the reason, or part of the reason for so doing, he knows little of our affairs. For, my sake he will make no use of that knowledge. But I think it best that you understand each other. Will you please ring that bell?"

He obeyed her, looking much mystified and somewhat apprehensive. "Celine appeared promptly, and disappeared again in answer to Cora's command:

"'Show my brother here, Celine"

When the door opened, he turned slowly and met the cool gaze of—Lucian Davlin!

That personage approached the invalid, saying: "You sent for me to introduce me to this gentleman, I suppose, Cora?"

Mr. Percy arose slowly, and the two confronted each other, while Cora nodded her head, as if unable to answer his words.

As Percy advanced the light from the one window that had been left unshrouded fell full upon the two men, who gazed upon each other with the utmost sang froid. Two handsomer scoundrels never stood at bay. And while the dark face expressed haughty insolence, the blonde features looked as if, after all, the occasion called for nothing more fatiguing than a stare of indolent surprise.

Cora's voice broke the silence: "Mr. Davlin is my brother, Mr. Percy. Please stop staring at each other, gentlemen, and come to some sort of an understanding."

"Really, this is a most agreeable surpirse," drawled Percy, looking from one to the other with perfect coolness.

"And quite dramatic in effect," sneered Davlin, flinging himself into a chair. "Sit down, Percy; one may as well be comfortable. How's the fair spinster today?"

Percy waved away the question, and resumed his seat and his languid attitude, saying: "Upon my word this is quite dramatic"

Davlin laughed, airily. "Even so. I hope the fact that this lady is my sister will explain some things to you more satisfactorily than they have hitherto been explained. And if so, we had better let bygones drop."

Percy turned his eyes away from the speaker, and let them rest upon the face of Cora. Again ignoring the remark addressed to him, he said, slowly: "I don't see any very strong family resemblance."

"I don't suppose you ever will," retorted Davlin, coolly.

"'And I don't precisely see the object of this interview," Percy continued.

Davlin made a gesture of impatience, and said, sharply: "Hang it all, man, the object is soon got at! It's a simple question and answer."

Percy brushed an imaginary particle of dust off his sleeve with the greatest care, and then lifted his eyes and said, interrogatively: "Well?"

"Will you have war or peace?"

"That depends."

"Upon what?"

"The terms."

"Well!"

"Well?"

"What do you want?"

Percy examined his finger nails, attentively, as if looking for his next idea there. "To be let alone," he said, at last.

Davlin laughed. "And to let alone?"

"Of course."

"Then we won't waste words. Rely upon us to help, rather than hinder you. There's no use bringing up old sores. If you vote for an alliance of forces, very good."

Percy nodded, and then rising, said: "Well, if that is all, I will take my leave. No doubt quiet is best for Mrs. Arthur," bowing ironically. "By the by," meaningly, "when you find yourself in the village, Davlin, it might not be amiss to show yourself at the inn."

"Quite right," said Davlin, gravely. "Possibly I may look in upon you to-morrow."

Mr. Percy nodded; made a graceful gesture of adieu to Cora, who murmured inaudibly in reply; and the two men quitted her presence. In a few moments Davlin returned to Cora, smiling and serene. "I told you we could easily manage him," he said. "He won't trouble himself to go to war, save in his own defense. You did the invalid beautifully, Co., and I feel quite satisfied with the present state of things."

But Mr. Percy has not looked and listened for nothing. He went straight to his room, and shutting himself in, began thinking diligently. Finally he summed up his case on his fingers as follows: "First, are they brother and sister? I don't believe it. Second, taking it for granted they are not, what is their game? If the old man dies, and if I can ferret out the mystery, for I believe there is one, who knows but that two fortunes may come into my hands? I must watch them and to do that, Ellen must go back to Oakley, and they must invite me to be their guest!"

Mr. Percy arose and shook himself, mentally and physically.

But alas for Celine! She had heard almost every word of the interview, through the keyhole of a door leading into an adjoining room, and it had told her nothing, save that there was to be peace between the two men, and that there had been, perhaps, war.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SILKEN BELT.

Mr. Percy and Miss Arthur were openly engaged now, and were anxiously waiting for the recovery of the sick at Oakley, in order to celebrate their marriage.

The spinster was in a frame of mind to grant almost any favor to her lover to-night. And when at last she, herself, led up to the subject she wished to broach, he foresaw an easy victory.

"Oh, Edward," she sighed, with a very dramatic shudder, "you cannot think how I dread to-morrow's ordeal, the visit to my brother! Suppose John were to rave at me—me, his own sister!"

He took the hand that was quite as large as his own, and caressed it reassuringly. "I don't think there is the slightest danger, Ellen, dear, but I am convinced I must attend you to-morrow. I shall feel better to be with you."

"Oh, Edward!" sighed the maiden, enraptured at this declaration of tenderness, "you are so careful of me."

He smiled and still caressed her hand, saying:—

"Listen, darling," drawing her nearer to him, "I don't like to have you here; it is not a fit place for you. And I find that remarks are being made. This I cannot endure. Besides, I do not think it right for me to leave your brother so entirely at the mercy of—Mrs. Arthur. Promise me that you will consult a physician to-morrow, and as soon as the danger of contagion is past, you will go back."

"But I can't bear to leave you, Edward."

"'And you shall not. I will come to Oakley, too."

"You? Oh, how nice! Have they asked you to come?"

"I saw Mrs. Arthur's brother to-day, and we settled that."

"Oh, did you? Then you are good friends again?"

He turned upon her a look of inquiry. "Again?"

"Yes; Cora told me not to speak of Mr. Davlin to you, as you were not good friends, and it might make you less free to come to the house."

Mr. Percy's eyebrows went up perceptibly. "Mrs. Arthur is very thoughtful; but she was mistaken; our little misunderstanding has not made us serious enemies."

"Oh, how nice!" rapturously.

"Very nice," dryly. "Now you will be a good girl and go back soon?"

"I don't think Cora will be over anxious to have me come back," she said, looking like a meditative cat-bird. "I know she kept that Celine in the house to spite me."

"I can readily understand how she might be jealous of you, dear. Perhaps she fears your influence over your brother. At any rate, your duty lies there. When it is time to do so, don't consult her or anyone; take possession of your former apartments, and stand by your brother in his hour of need."

Miss Arthur promised to comply with her lover's request, and he managed at last to escape from her, and seek the repose which he preferred to such society.

All this time John Arthur was a prisoner in the west wing. He was attended by the doctor sometimes, by Celine occasionally, and by Henry almost constantly since the arrival of that sable individual, Lucian Davlin, having no taste for the work kept aloof as much as possible himself and Dr. Le Guise, as he called his confederate had labored hard and, with the assistance of old Hagar, had put the rooms in proper condition for the occupancy of a lunatic. And a lunatic John Arthur certainly was. Once before his removal, and once since, he had been seized with a paroxysm of undeniable insanity.

John Arthur had been, and still was, the dupe of his supposed brother-in-law and Dr. Le Guise. We have all heard of natures than can be frightened into sickness, almost into dying, of an imaginary disease. John Arthur's was one of these. And, with a little aid from Dr. Le Guise, he had been really quite ill.

Henry had been constituted his keeper, a position which he filled with reluctance, and there was a fair prospect that sooner or later he would break into open mutiny. Although he could not guess at the nature of the game his master was playing, yet he felt assured that it was something desperate, if not dangerous."

He had promised "his young lady," as he called Madeline, to remain in Mr. Davlin's service until she bade him withdraw, and but for this would hardly have submitted to remain John Arthur's keeper at any terms. Henry had a certain pride of his own, and that pride was in revolt against this new servitude.

He had not met Cora here, and had no idea that she was an inmate of the house. Dr. Le Guise had relieved Henry on the morning of the day that Miss Arthur ventured, for the first time since her flight, within the walls of Oakley manor, escorted by Mr. Percy. He had detected some signs of fever, although Mr. Arthur declared himself feeling better, and administered a powder to check it.

Soon the patient began to show signs of increasing restlessness, and by the time Henry appeared to announce that Miss Arthur desired an interview with Dr. Le Guise, he began to wrangle with his physician and gave expression to various vagaries.

Consigning his charge to Henry, with the remark that he "must watch him close, and not let him get hold of anything." Dr. Le Guise hurried down to the drawing-room.

The doctor listened to Miss Arthur attentively, while she made known her desire to return to the manor if the danger of contagion was at an end. Then he replied, hurriedly:—

"Quite right; quite admirable. But if you will take my advice, I should say, don't come just yet. There will be no danger to you, in going to your unfortunate brother for just a few moments—a very few—and then going straight out of the house into a purer atmosphere. But to remain here now, to breathe this air just yet—my dear lady, I could not encourage that; the danger would be too great."

And then he led the way straight into John Arthur's presence, explaining as they went that the cause of his removal from his own rooms was to escape the fever impregnations still clinging there.

John Arthur was sitting in the middle of his bed, beating his pillows wildly, and imploring Henry, between shrieks of laughter, to come and kiss him, evidently mistaking him for some blooming damsel. As the damsel declined to come, the lunatic became furious, and hurled the pillows, and afterwards his night-cap, at him, with blazing eyes and cat-like agility. This done, he began to rock himself to and fro, and shout out the words of some old song to an improvised tune that was all on one note

Dr. Le Guise turned to Mr. Percy, whispering: "You see that's the way he goes on, only worse at times"

Mr. Percy turned away. The fair spinster who had been clinging to him in a paroxysm of terror, attempted to faint, but remembering her complexion thought better of it and contented herself with being half led, half carried out, in a "walking swoon." And both she and Mr. Percy felt there was no longer room to doubt the insanity of her brother.

Having seen them depart, Dr. Le Guise sought out Mr. Davlin. Finding him in Cora's room, he entered and informed the pair of the desire Miss Arthur had manifested to come back to her brother's roof, and of his mode of putting off the evil day of her return.

"Humph!" ejaculated Davlin, "what does it mean? I saw Percy in the village this morning, and he told me quite plainly that he desired an invitation to quarter himself upon us."

"And what did you say?" gasped Cora.

"Told him to come, of course, as soon as it was safe to do so."

"Well!" said Cora, dryly. "I don't think it will be very safe for either of them to come just at present."

"Oh, well," said the doctor, cheerfully, "we have got seven long days to settle about that. And if they insist upon coming, and then catch the fever, they mustn't blame me."

And Dr. Le Guise looked as if he had perpetrated a good joke.

John Arthur's insanity was as short-lived as it was violent. He lay for the rest of the day quiet and half stupefied. When night came on, he sank into a heavy slumber.

At twelve o'clock that night, all was quiet in and about the manor.

Cora Arthur was sleeping soundly, dreamlessly, as such women do sleep. In the room adjoining hers, Celine Lerouge sat, broad awake and listening intently. At last, satisfied that her mistress was sleeping, Celine arose and stole softly into the room where she lay.

Softly, softly, she approached the couch, passing a river of moonlight that poured in at the broad windows. Then she drew from a pocket, something wrapped in a handkerchief.

Noiselessly, swiftly, she moved, and then the handkerchief, shaken free from the something within, was laid upon the face of the sleeper while the odor of chloroform filled the room.

Nimbly her fingers moved, pulling away the coverings, and then the clothing from the unconscious body. It is done in a moment. With a smothered exclamation of triumph she draws away a silken belt, and removing the handkerchief, glides noiselessly from the room.

She steals on to her own room in the west wing. Here she locks the door and striking a light, hurriedly rips the silken band with a tiny penknife, and draws from thence two papers.

One glance suffices. Replacing the papers, she binds the belt about her own body, and then envelopes herself in a huge waterproof, with swift, nervous fingers.

And now, for the second time, this girl is fleeing away from Oakley. Out into the night that is illuminated now by a faint, faint moon; through the bare, leafless, chilly woods, and down the path that crosses the railway track not far from the little station. Once more she follows the iron rails; once more she lingers in the shadows, until the train thunders up; she night train for New York. Then she springs on board.

For the second time, Madeline Payne is fleeing from Oakley and all that it contains; fleeing cityward to begin, with the morrow, a new task, and a new chapter in her existence.

But no lover is beside her now; for that love is dead in her heart. And no Clarence breathes in her ear a warning, for now it is not needed. Since that first June flitting, she has learned the world and its wisdom, good and evil.

And the cloud that Hagar saw on that June night, hangs dark above the house of Oakley.

(To be continued.)

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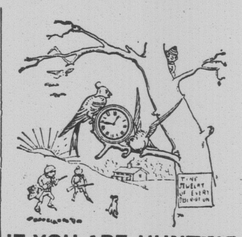

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