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The Broken Circle!

CHAPTER XII.

The exquisite face brightened. "There are times, uncle," she said, "when I do not quite know myself—the change is so great to me."

"My dear Leah," he returned, in the earnest simple manner which always carried truth with it, "you were born for the station I hope to see you fill. It would have been ten thousand pities to—leave you where—you were."

That was the only allusion the general ever made to the past, and it seemed to be wrung from him by the surprise of her marvellous loveliness. On that same night he showed Leah all over the magnificent mansion that he had made his own, with all its treasures of art and wealth.

"This will be yours when I die Leah" he said; and he was proud to see that no flush of elation came to her face. "I wonder Leah," he said, suddenly, "if you could bear ill-fortune as well as you do prosperity?"

"I trust so," she answered; and the firm, steadfast expression on her face made him think that she could.

"I hope you will never be tried," he said.

They sat together for some time talking. He was charmed with Leah's manner, her bright, fascinating ways, her graceful, well-chosen words.

"You shall not have me again, Leah," he said, "until you are married."

"I do not think I am one of the marrying kind," she replied, with a sweet, low laugh.

"Among the old Roman noblesse and gay Neapolitan princes was there not one you liked, Leah?"

"I liked them all in the same fashion," she replied. "The Prince of San Sabino is, I should think, as handsome a man as could be seen in the world, with a most musical voice and most

courtly manner. They call him the Roman Apollo."

"And even this Apollo did not interest you, Leah?" he said.

"No; so, dearest uncle, if we are to live together until I am married, I do not see any chance of our parting just yet."

"That's right," he said. "I could hardly bear to lose you at present. Leah. Let me see—how old are you now?"

"I am in my nineteenth year," she replied.

"And when is the drawing-room to be held?"

"Next Tuesday."

"And from that day a new life will unfold to you, I suppose. I wish you success; I could not wish it more earnestly were you my own daughter."

When, after a few days of anxious preparation, Leah stood before him dressed for her presentation, he owned himself perfectly well pleased. The duchess, whose taste was irreproachable, had chosen her court dress; and the general had presented her with a suite of diamonds—stones that shone and scintillated with every movement—diamonds that made many envious.

"Are you quite satisfied with me, uncle?" she asked, with a smile that deepened her bright loveliness.

"Quite," he answered. "I always thought the fashion of wearing feathers awkward until now."

The duchess called for her, and they drove away to the Palace together. The day was fine, the crowd great. Many of the royal family were present. There were debutantes from many of the noblest families in the land; but Leah outshone them all as a planet outshines the stars.

She never forgot the moment when she stood first in the presence of the gracious lady who rules the vast empire over which the sun never sets. Looking up with half-frightened eyes, she saw before her a noble, kindly face, with a pleasant smile, she saw before the gleam of jewelled orders. A kindly voice was speaking to her. The piece of so brave and worthy a soldier as Sir Arthur Hatton could not but be welcomed by the sovereign whom he had so faithfully served. Looking at the royal lady, so true a woman, and so true a Queen, Leah thought her of who she herself really was—the daughter of the man who used all his eloquence, and every other gift of Heaven to him, in his endeavors to hurl his sovereign from her throne, to turn the hearts of her people from her; and, as she bent low before the Queen, her eyes were dim with tears. True loyalty rose in her heart, and she thanked Heaven once more that she had been saved from what seemed to her worse than "a furnace of fire." She could never have spoken against the Queen, or led the hearts of her people from her. She smiled to herself a half sad smile. It seemed so strange that she, who was once destined to be a lecturer against royalty, should now be presented to her Majesty.

CHAPTER XIII.

From the day of her presentation a new life began for Leah. Hitherto she had seen but little of the world. In Rome and in Naples the Duchess had taken her out but little. She wanted her to take the London world captive by her fresh and undimmed beauty; she did so. On the day of the drawing-room little else was discussed but the loveliness, the rich dress, the costly jewels, the vast wealth of Miss Hatton. People even went into raptures over her name, and said that no other would have suited her dark passionate beauty.

In a few days "the beautiful Miss Hatton" grew famous—she became the

rage. On the night of the day that she had been presented, the Duchess of Rosedene gave a sumptuous ball, at which she was the belle. Some young girls would have been both elated and excited by the sensation made. She was neither; she was cool, calm, stately as a young empress. Some of the noblest men in the land bowed before her, peers complimented her; but the beautiful face never flushed, the beautiful eyes never brightened with triumph.

"Who shall say that good blood does not tell?" thought the old soldier. "I do not believe her pulse would beat more quickly even if an emperor asked her to dance."

He was right; in this, the most brilliant scene in which she had ever mingled, a strange sense of unreality came over her. She could remember the fiery, passionate burning words with which her father had denounced all such gaudies and the men and women who pointed in them; and yet, here was she, his eldest daughter, who had been trained by him, the very queen of one of the assemblies he censured!

There was a few moments' pause for her, during which she said to herself that her past life shadowed the present, during which she wondered if she would have been perfectly happy had the past been different, had she been differently trained. Those watching her wondered at the shadow that seemed to fall over her face.

It was not the perfect beauty alone which attracted men. She was unlike most girls of her age. She was calm, but not content; nothing seemed to interest her long—the sweetest music, the most witty or animated conversation, could not hold her for any time. She was restless, as one always seeking something better than that yet found. The only time when she seemed quite satisfied was when she poured out all the pent-up passion and poetry of her nature in music of her own. Men were quick to perceive that she was not of the ordinary type of girls, that flattery did not touch her, that she was above all coquetry and flirtation. Half of those who met her went home that night raving of her.

The duchess was delighted with her success. She had felt sure of it, she had prophesied it; but it had far exceeded even her most sanguine anticipations.

"The world is at her feet, Sir Arthur," she said; "she can do as she will. No girl ever made a more successful debut. I am proud of her. Look at her now!" The duchess was seated watching the dancing; Sir Arthur stood by her side. "Look," she continued, "at the easy self-possession. There is not the faintest flush on her face, not even the faintest stir in the diamonds that lie on her breast, not a quiver in the blossoms of the lovely flowers she holds."

Yet on one side of her stood a gallant, genial prince, on the other a group of the most notable men in the world of fashion. She turned with ready attention from one to another, without coquetry, without affectation. The professional beauties fought shy of her, and were very hard in their criticisms, much to the amusement of the sterner sex; they did not see what there was to rave about. Lord Dunbar, who was supposed to be a good authority on beauty, said that if she had no other charm but that of the long dark silken lashes that fringed her eyes, she would still be the fairest of women.

(To be continued)

CRAMPS

Miss Marie Rasmussen of Nordlandet, Kristiansund, Norway, writes as follows:

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THE QUIET VILLAGE.



In Pruneville, when the clocks strike nine, the lights go out along the line, the streets are dark and bare; and moral citizens, at that, wind up the clock, turn out the cat, and to the hay repair. At times the citizens will go to see a helpful movie show that some great truth expounds, or when a lecturer arrives to brighten up their quiet lives with hoarse but earnest sounds. But breaks like these are far between; the voters are but seldom seen away from home at night; no lights are shining in their homes, but harmless dreams pervade their homes, where they are sleeping tight. If you remark their lives are tame, they'll tell you of a checker game that lasted seven years, with final honors yet to win—and they can't see why you should grin, nor understand your sneers. Gay aleks from the crowded marts stop there for gas to run their carts, and gaze with high disdain; to live in such a burg, they've said, when there are towns that are not dead, is neither safe nor sane. But Pruneville people, in their way, seem cheerful, jubilant and gay, despite the city's jeers; in their old age they're hale and spry; they laugh and sleep and seldom die at less than five score years.

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GINGER BREAD.

6 tablespoonfuls water, 2 1/2 cups flour, 1 cup molasses, 2 tablespoonfuls Carnation Milk, 1/4 teaspoonful salt, 3/4 teaspoonful soda, 1 1/4 teaspoonfuls ginger, 1/4 cup butter or lard. Sift dry ingredients together. Add liquid to molasses. Combine mixtures, add shortening and beat well. Pour into oiled shallow pan and bake in moderately hot oven about 25 minutes.

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