

FATE'S INSTRUMENTS.

CHAPTER II.

"How could I ever have forgotten?" said George, aloud, as he walked home. "I remember her now as if it was yesterday."

Memory, like much else that appertains to man, is a queer thing, and the name of Peckton had supplied the one link missing in his recollection. How, indeed, had he ever forgotten it? Can a man forget his first love?—so like are they in their infinite promise, so like in their very finite results!

The picture was now complete in his mind: the little, muggy court at Peckton; old Dawkins, his wig black with age, the rest of him brown with snuff; the fussy clerk; the prosecuting counsel, son to the same fussy clerk; he himself, thrusting his first guinea into his pocket with shaking hand and beating heart (nervous before old Daw! Imagine!); the fat, peaceful policeman; the female warder, in her black straw-bonnet trimmed with dark-blue ribbons; and last of all, in the dock, a young girl, in shabby, nay, greasy, black, with pale cheeks, disordered hair, and swollen eyelids, gazing in blank terror on the majesty of the law, strangely expressed in the Recorder's ancient person. And, beyond all doubt of imagination of a doubt, the girl was Gerald's bride, Neera Witt.

"I could swear to her to-day!" cried George.

She had scraped together a guinea for his fee. "I don't know where she got it from," the fat policeman said with professional cynicism as he gave it to George. "She pleads guilty and wants you to address the court." So George had, with infinite trepidation, addressed the court.

The girl had a father—drunk when not starving, and starving when not drunk. Now he was starving, and she had stolen the shoes (oh! the sordidness of it all) to pawn, and buy food—or drink. It was a case for a caution merely—and—and—and George himself, being young to the work, stammered and stuttered as much from emotion as from fright. You see the girl was pretty!

All old Daw said was, "Do you know anything about her, policeman?" and the fat policeman said her father was a bad lot, and the girl did no work, and—

"That's enough," said old Daw; and, leaning forward, he pronounced his sentence:

"I'll deal lightly with you. Only—shaking a snuffy forefinger—"take care you don't come here again! One calendar month, with hard labor."

And the girl, gazing back at honest old Daw, who would not have hurt a fly except from the bench, softly murmured, "Cruel, cruel, cruel!" and was led away by the woman in the black straw bonnet.

Whereupon George did a very unprofessional thing. He gave his guinea, his firstborn son, back to the fat policeman, saying, "Give it her when she comes out. I can't take her money." At which the policeman smiled a smile that convicted George of terrible youthfulness.

It was all complete—all except the name by which the fussy clerk had called on the girl to plead, and which old Dawkins had mumbled out in sentencing her. That uttered escaped him. He was sure it was not "Neera"—of course not "Neera Witt," but not "Neera Anything," either. He would have remembered "Neera."

"What on earth was it?" he asked himself as he unlocked his door and went upstairs. "Not that it matters much. Names are easily changed."

George Neston shared his chambers in Half Moon Street with the Honorable Thomas Buchanan Fillingham Myles, commonly known (as the peerage has it) as Tommy Myles. (Tommy also had a small room in the Temple Chambers, but Tommy pursued their livelihood; but Tommy's appearances at the latter resort were few and brief. He did not trouble George much in Half Moon Street either, being a young man much given to society of all sorts, and very prone to be in bed when most people are up, and vice versa. However, to-night he happened to be at home, and George found him with his feet on the mantelpiece, reading the evening paper.

"Well, what's she like?" asked Tommy.

"She's uncommonly pretty, and very pleasant," said George. Why say more, before his mind was made up?

"Who was she?" pursued Tommy, rising and fiddling his pipe.

"Ah! I don't know. I wish I did."

"Don't see that it matters to you. Anybody else there?"

"Oh, a few people."

"Miss Bourne?"

"Yes, she was there."

Tommy winked, sighed prodigiously, and took a large drink of brandy and soda.

"Where have you been?" asked George, changing the subject.

"Oh, to the Escorial—to a vulgar, really a very vulgar entertainment—as vulgar as you could find in London."

"Are you going out again?"

"My dear Tommy! It's close on twelve!" said George, in reproving tones.

"Or to bed?"

"No, George, you hurt my feelings. Can it be that you wish to be alone?"

"Well, at any rate, hold your tongue, Tommy. I want to think."

"Only one word. Has she been cruel?"

"Oh, get out. Here, give me a drink."

Tommy subsided into the Bull's-eye, that famous print whose motto is Lux in tenebris (meaning, of course, publicity in shady places), and George set himself to consider what he had best do in the matter of Neera Witt.

The difficulties of the situation were obvious enough, but to George's mind

they consisted not so much in the question of what to do as in that of how to do it. He had been tolerably clear from the first that Gerald must not marry Neera without knowing what he could tell him; if he knew to do it afterwards, well and good. But, of course he would not. No Neston would, thought George, who had his full share of the family pride. Men of good family made disgraceful marriages, it is true, but not with thieves; and anyhow nothing of the kind was recorded in the Neston annals. How should he look his uncle and Gerald in the face if he held his tongue? His course was very clear. Only—well, it was an uncommonly disagreeable part to be cast for—the denouncer and exposé of a woman who very probably was no worse than many another, and was unquestionably a great deal better-looking than most others. The whole position smacked unpleasantly of melodrama, and George must figure in the character of the villain, a villain with the best motives and the plainest duty. One hope only there was. Perhaps Mrs. Witt would see the wisdom of a timely withdrawal. Surely she would. She could never face the storm. Then Gerald need know nothing about it, and six months' travel—say to America, where pretty girls live—would bind up his broken heart. Only—again only—George did not much fancy the interview that lay before him. Mrs. Witt would probably cry, and he would feel a brute, and—

"Mr. Neston," announced Tommy's valet, opening the door.

Gerald had followed his cousin home very anxious to be congratulated, and still more anxious not to appear anxious. Tommy received him with effusion. Why hadn't he been asked to the dinner? Might he call on Mrs. Witt? He heard she was a clipper; and so forth. George's felicitations stuck in his throat, but he got them out, hoping that Neera would free him from the necessity of eating them up at some early date. Gerald was radiant. All about "Peckton," though he was loud in denouncing the unnatural hardness of Mr. Blodwell's head. Oh, and the last thing Neera said was, would George go and see her?

"She took quite a fancy to you, old man," he said affectionately. "She said you reminded her of a judge."

George smiled. Was Neera practising double entendre on her betrothed?

"What an infernally unpleasant thing to say!" exclaimed Tommy.

"Of course I shall go and see her," said George—"to-morrow, if I can find time."

"So shall I," added Tommy.

George pleaded. He liked to see his taste endorsed with the approbation of his friends. "It's about time old George, here, followed suit, isn't it, Tommy? I've given him a lead."

George's attachment to Isabel Bourne was an accepted fact among his acquaintances. He never denied it; he did like her very much, and meant to marry her, if she would have him. And he did not really doubt that she would. If he had doubted, he would not have been so content to rest without an express assurance. As it was, there was no hurry. Let the practice grow a little more yet. He and Isabel understood one another, and, as soon as she was ready, he was ready. But long engagements were a nuisance to everybody. These were his feelings, and he considered himself, by virtue of them, to be in love with Isabel. There are many ways of being in love, and it would be a want of toleration to deny that George's is one of them, although it is certainly very unlike some of the others.

Tommy agreed that George was wasting his time, and with real kindness led Gerald back to the subject which filled his mind.

Gerald gladly embraced the opportunity. "Where did I meet her? Oh, down at Brighton, last winter. Then, you know, I pursued her to Manchester, and found her living in no end of a swell villa in the outskirts of that abominable place. Neera hated it, but of course she had to live there while Witt was alive, and she had kept the house on."

"She wasn't Manchester-born, then?"

"No. I don't know where she was born. Her father seems to have been a romantic sort of old gentleman. He was a painter by trade—an artist, I mean, you know, landscapes and so on."

"And went about looking for bits of nature to murder, eh?" asked Tommy.

"That's about it. I don't think he was any great shakes at it. At least, he didn't make much; and at last he settled in Manchester, and tried to pick up a living, working for the dealers. Witt was a picture-fancier, and when Neera came to sell, he saw her, and—"

"The late Witt's romance began?"

"Yes, confound him! I'm beastly jealous of old Witt, though he is dead."

"That's ungrateful," remarked George, "considering—"

"Hush! You'll wound his feelings," said Tommy. "He's forgotten all about the cash."

"It's all very well for you—" Gerald began.

But George cut in, "What was his name?"

"Witt's! Oh, Jeremiah, I believe."

"Witt? No. Hang Witt! The father's name."

"Oh!—Gale. A queer old boy he seems to have been—a bit of a scholar as well as an artist."

"That accounts for the 'Neera,' I suppose," said Tommy.

"Neera Gale," thought George. "I don't remember that."

"Pretty name, isn't it?" asked the infuriated Gerald.

"Oh, drily up!" exclaimed Tommy. "We can't indulge you any more. Go home to bed. You can dream about her, you know."

Gerald accepted this hint, and retired, still in that state of confident bliss that filled George's breast with trouble and dismay.

"I might as well be the serpent in Eden," he said, as he lay in bed, smoking dolefully.

CHAPTER III.

The atmosphere was stormy at No. 3, Indenture Buildings, Temple. It was four o'clock, and Mr. Blodwell had come out of court in the worst of bad tempers. He was savage with George Neston, who, being in a case with him, had gone away and left him with nobody to tell him his facts. He was savage with Tommy Myles, who had refused to read some papers for him; savage with Mr. Justice Pounce, who

had cut up his speech to the jury.—Pounce, who had been his junior a hundred times—savage with Mr. Timms, his clerk, because he was always savage with other people. Tommy had fled before the storm; and now, to Mr. Blodwell's unbounded indignation, George also was brushing his hat with the manifest intention of departure.

"In my time, rising juniors," said Mr. Blodwell, with sarcasm, "didn't leave chambers at four."

"Business," said George, putting on his gloves.

"Women," answered his leader, briefly and scornfully.

"It's the same thing, in this case. I am going to see Mrs. Witt."

Mr. Blodwell's person expressed moral reprobaton. George, however, remained unmoved, and the elder man stole a sharp glance at him.

"I don't know what's up, George," he said, "but take care of yourself."

"Nothing's up."

"Then why did you jump?"

"Timms, a hansom," cried George. "I'll be in court all day to-morrow, and keep you straight, sir."

"In Heaven's name, do. That fellow Pounce is such a beggar for dates. Now get out."

Mrs. Witt was living at Albert Mansions, the "swell villa" at Manchester having gone to join Mr. Witt in limbo. She was at home, and, as George entered, his only prayer was that he might not find Gerald in possession. He had no very clear idea how to proceed in his unpleasant task. "It must depend on how she takes it," he said. Gerald was not there, but Tommy Myles was, voluble, cheerful, and very much at home, telling Neera stories of her lover's school-days. George chimed in as best he could, until Tommy rose to go regretting the convention that drove one man to take his hat five minutes, at the latest, after another came in. Neera pressed him to come again, but did not invite him to transgress the convention.

George almost hoped she would, for he was, as he confessed to himself, "funking it." There were no signs of any such feeling in Neera, and no repetition of the appealing attitude she had seemed to take up the night before.

"She means to bluff me," thought George, as he watched her sit down in a low chair by the fire, and shade her face with a large fan.

"It is," she began, "so delightful to be welcomed by all Gerald's family and friends so heartily, I do not feel the least like a stranger."

"I came last night, hoping to join in that welcome," said George.

"Oh, I did not feel that you were a stranger at all. Gerald had told me so much about you."

George rose, and walked to the end of the little room and back. Then he stood looking down at his hostess. Neera gazed pensively into the fire. It was uncommonly difficult, but what was the good of fencing?

"I saw you recognized me," he said, deliberately.

"In a minute, I had seen your photograph."

"Not only my photograph, but myself, Mrs. Witt."

"Have I?" asked Neera. "How rude of me to forget! Where was it? Brighton?"

George's heart hardened a little. Of course she would lie, poor girl. He didn't mind that. But he did not like artistic lying, and Neera's struck him as artistic.

"But are you sure?" she went on.

George decided to try a sudden attack. "Did they ever give you that guinea?" he said, straining his eyes to watch her face. Did she flush or not? He really couldn't say.

"I beg your pardon, Guinea?"

"Come, Mrs. Witt, we needn't make it more unpleasant than necessary. I saw you recognized me. The moment Mr. Blodwell spoke of Peckton I recognized you. Pray don't think I mean to be hard on you. I can and do make every allowance."

Neera's face expressed blank astonishment. She rose, and made a step towards the bell. George was tickled. She had the amazing impertinence to convey, subtly but quite distinctly, by that motion and her whole bearing, that she thought he was drunk.

"Ring, if you like," he said, "or, rather, ask me, if you want to settle the ring. But wouldn't it be better to settle the matter now? I don't want to trouble Gerald."

"I really believe you are threatening me with something!" exclaimed Neera. "Yes, by all means. Go on."

She motioned him to a chair, and stood above him, leaning one arm on the mantel-piece. She breathed a little quickly, but George drew no inference from that.

(To Be Continued.)

SWEETHEARTS AND WIVES.

If sweethearts were sweethearts always,
Whether as maid or wife,
No drop would be half so pleasant
In the mingled draught of life.

But the sweetheart has smiles and blushes
And the wife has frowns and sighs,
And the wife's have a wrathful glitter
For the glow of the sweetheart's eyes.

If lovers were lovers always,
The same to sweetheart and wife,
Who would change for a future Eden
The joys of this checkered life?

But husbands grow grave and silent
And care on the anxious brow
Oft replaces the sunshine that perishes
With the words of the marriage vow.

Happy is he whose sweetheart
Is wife and sweetheart still;
Whose voice, as of old, can charm him;
Whose kiss, as of old, can thrill.

Who has plucked the rose to find ever
Its beauty and fragrance increase,
As the flush of passion is mellowed
In love's unmeasured peace.

Who sees in the step a lightness;
Who finds in the form a grace!
Who reads an unaltered brightness
In the witchery of the face.

ABSOLUTE PROOF.

A recruit, wishing to evade service, was brought up for medical inspection, and the doctor asked him:

Have you any defects?

Yes, sir; I am short sighted.

How can you prove it?

Easily enough, doctor. Do you see that nail up yonder in the wall?

Yes.

Well, I don't.

About the House.

HINTS ON HOUSEKEEPING.

The responsibilities of housekeeping are manifold. There are very few women who are naturally endowed with the requisite knowledge and ability to successfully conduct the affairs of the household. This is due in large part to the fact that very few girls are given proper instruction in their girlhood days. Mothers, it seems, always have been, and always will be, self-sacrificing. Instead of the daughters doing each their share of the housework, they are too often allowed all the pleasures and freedom of the times, while the mother slaves from morn till night.

Yet even the young housewife who has not had the advantages of early training, may accomplish much if she will set to work earnestly to study her husband, the requirements of the home, the economy of the purse.

One of the cardinal virtues of housekeepers, in my mind, is system and order. There is nothing that is so conducive to peace and happiness in the home. If, indeed, "order is heaven's first law," remember that home is the heaven of this life, and where order reigns, peace and happiness will follow as the very shadow.

There are very few men who are not susceptible to its influence. It is as important as prompt and appetizing meals. Where both are attained it will save no end of discords and family jars that make up all too much of this life. Take care of the little things about the home life. The great events are not to be controlled, but they may be shaped to our good, if we take due care of the trifles.

A place for everything, and everything in its place. This will save much time and worry. Don't trust to luck in anything. There is no luck in housekeeping. It all works by rule.

Map out your work day by day. If you have got to slight anything, slight it, and include it in the next day's work. Don't try to do everything, and accomplish nothing, and be always topsy-turvy. Don't trust to memory, either. Have a blankbook, in which to keep notes of everything, especially marketing. Jot down from day to day your needs. When you go to make your purchases, take it with you. When you buy, do not make small quantities of you wants, if you can possibly avoid it. There are so many things that will keep any length of time in the house, and by getting enough to last you, say six months, you not only save in cost price, but you are saving your time and your nerves.

EGGS AND MUTTON.

Miss Maria Parloa, in her series of practical talks on "Domestic Economy," in Cooking, told of the proper method of cooking two of the most important of our albuminous foods—eggs and mutton—which are so frequently encountered improperly cooked. Both these foods, she said, are hard to digest if improperly cooked, but by maintaining a heat just below the boiling point, they are easily digested and full of nutriment, and this is where the cook's art comes in. The market value is no indication of nutritive qualities.

It is a simple fact that the amount of water affects the cooking of eggs. Half a pint is necessary for one, and while every extra one does not require that much in addition, there should be plenty of water. Having it boiling, put in the eggs, take the pan from the fire, cover and wrap closely, or set on the back of the range for ten minutes, when the albumen will be cooked evenly, whereas if it had been boiled three minutes it would have been soft within, tough without and very indigestible. "So," said Miss Parloa, "you see that the right way to 'boil' an egg is not to boil it at all! This principle," she went on to say, "applies to soups that require a regular, low temperature and also quick cooling in a fresh current of air."

Mutton was next considered, and Miss Parloa showed how the "mutton" flavor that comes from the wool and which is so unpalatable to many people can be removed with the thin skin covering. This meat should never be fried. Successful broiling and roasting require much the same treatment; high heat at first to sear the outside and retain the juices, then less heat. For roasting, place the meat on a rack to prevent burning. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and, by holding the box almost perpendicularly, dredge lightly with flour. This will make a light, frothy crust. Dredge the bottom of the pan also, and when this is dark brown, pour in a little boiling water. Every fifteen minutes take the pan out of the oven, baste thoroughly, dredge again lightly and add a little more boiling water. After the first half-hour reduce the heat. This process will produce juicy and perfectly digestible meat.

SOME GOOD RECIPES.

Pickled Eggs.—Empty pickle jars can be refilled with pickled eggs. Boil one dozen eggs fifteen minutes, then throw into cold water and shell them. Boil several red beets, slice them and put them in the jar with the eggs. Heat enough vinegar to cover the eggs, add salt, pepper and all kinds of spices, and pour over the eggs. Keep them tightly covered.

Doughnuts.—One large cup of sugar, 1 egg, 1-2 cups buttermilk, 1 small teaspoon soda, 1 large tablespoon lard, and flour enough to prevent it from sticking to the board. Roll about a quarter of an inch thick, cut in desired shapes and cook until a light brown in boiling lard. When they are two or three days old put them in the oven a few minutes. The heat softens them. Before putting them on the table for use, sprinkle them well with sugar and they are as nice as if just made.

Corn Meal Fritters.—Southern cooks are famous for their corn meal fritters. To make them, beat very light the yolks of 4 eggs and add to them 1 tablespoon of sugar, the same of melted butter, 1 spoonful of salt and 1-2 teaspoon soda dissolved in a little water. Stir in 2 cups of Indian meal and beat vigorously 5 minutes, and add the whites

of the eggs beaten stiff and 1-2 cup flour in which 1 teaspoon of cream tartar has been sifted, and stir very hard. The batter should be just thick enough to drop readily from the spoon. Drain on paper and serve very hot, with powdered sugar sprinkled over them, to which a little sugar and ginger have been added.

Orange Ice Cream.—Allow 1 quart of cream, juice of 6 oranges and rind of 1, 1-2 coffee cups of granulated sugar. Put half of the cream in a double kettle to scald, add the sugar and stir well. When all dissolved, remove and cool, add the juice of the oranges and grate in the rind of one, then pour in the rest of the cream, taste to see if it is sweet enough, if not, add more sugar; put in the freezer and pack it slowly. Do not leave it until it is frozen. Then remove the dasher, put the cover on, and let it stand two hours before using.

THE KITCHEN FLOOR.

The money cannot always be spared to lay a new floor when the old one is badly worn, and kitchen floors often get into very bad condition. There is no room in which so much work is done and no floor which receives such hard usage as that of the kitchen. For that reason it is almost impossible to spare it even for one day.

The old-fashioned, soft, pine wood floors become rough in a very short time and no amount of cleaning and scrubbing will keep them smooth. The following suggestions may prove helpful to some housekeeper who cannot afford the expense of a new floor and who is annoyed by the appearance of the old one:

Scrub the floor as clean as possible. Procure some good paint—the color desired—and some putty. Mix a little of the paint with the putty, and by the use of a knife fill every crevice, crack and hollow with it. This may be done at odd times during the day when no work demands attention. Then if the floor cannot be spared for a day or two paint every alternate board, on the following day paint the others. Two coats of paint are necessary. The first one should be permitted to dry before the other is applied. By such a method the floor will be smooth and shiny and no time need be wasted.

JAPANESE COMPETITION.

With Very Low Wages They Turn Out Goods Astonishingly Cheap.

A new trading country whose energetic competition is making itself felt even inside the high tariff walls of the United States is the Empire of Japan. Japan has shot up into a first-class commercial power as suddenly as it sprang forth a first-class war power fully armed. From a state of primitive industry it has advanced by one marvellous bound to the most highly-developed modes of mechanical production. It has introduced the commercial methods, the modern machinery, the scientific appliances, and the industrial skill of the chief manufacturing countries of Christendom. In order to operate on the great scale necessary for the most perfect results, its commercial class make use of the joint stock principle to bring large masses of capital to bear upon their undertakings. It has consequently huge factories furnished with costly and efficient plant, while railroads and steamships are forthcoming whenever and wherever traffic seems to call for the opening of a line. Great industries the country now has, flourishing in all their parts, from the roots to the most delicate bloom—from the rough ore of the mine, through all intermediate stages, to the most

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of steel; from the pod of cotton, from the fleece of wool, from the thread of the silk-worm, to every variety of woven fabric. And while Japan has manufacturing facilities and capacities equal to those of any country in the world, it has an advantage in labour to which no other country can approach. A very bright people, capable of mastering the most difficult of mechanical arts, the Japanese working classes give their labour for wages so low that a Canadian artisan would regard it as practically free. The country presents an example of capital highly organized, and labour in a state of almost original simplicity. Coolies do a great part of the work, and they are not housed and fed nearly as well as marketable slaves. As for those workmen and workingwomen of a higher grade, they live on what a Canadian labourer would waste. With wages nominal, the manufacturer of Japan can turn out goods astonishingly cheap. Bicycles, and very fair ones, at \$12 are one of the wonders of Yokohama enterprise. And their whole price list is down at the same low level. At these figures, the Japs are prepared to deliver any quantity of goods, and will soon be prepared to deliver any variety. Already their list of exports is a long one, consisting of some 120 important articles. Among these are hemp and cotton carpets, wall paper, bronze and copper ware, crystal ware, silk handkerchiefs, raw silk, pongee, umbrellas, rags, lucifer matches, beer, tobacco, and coal.

NEEDLESS.

"Pushpen—I am glad you like my story. But don't you think I ought to write some sort of an introduction to it? Slightly—my dear fellow that story needs no introduction. It is an old friend."

WISE PRECAUTION.

I don't see what good chatterer ariel Young Dareall kissed Kippie Sweet right before her chaperon!

Ah, yes, but he kissed the chaperon first.

In the dead of night Mr. Billus heard a faint scream. Maria, he said, rousing himself, I forgot to tell you I was carrying my money in one of those trick pocket-books that run a pin in your thumb when you try to open them. Press it on the left side, just below the clasp.