

FOR THE THIRD TIME.

CHAPTER IX.

There was an instant's dead silence during which the two gazed steadfastly at each other. Dr. John's pale face and fearless gray eyes met the wolfish glare in the black orbs of Victor Latour unflinchingly.

"So!" cried the latter, hissing his words, and turning suddenly upon Amy—"so, madam, this is how you amuse yourself in my absence, is it? You send word to your old lovers, and they face the howling tempests and spend the long winter evenings by your side. A thousand pities, is it not, that I should come in at this early hour and spoil your tete-a-tete? My dear Dr. Sterling, pray don't hurry on my account; conduct yourself precisely as though I were still at Major Mallory's."

"I intend to," said Dr. John coolly. "I was taking my departure, when you appeared so unceremoniously—I shall take it now. Good-night, Amy, my mother will be relieved to hear you are so well."

He bowed to trembling Amy, and stalked past Victor Latour, towering above him by a head. An instant later the house door closed heavily behind him. Mr. and Mrs. Latour were alone.

An artist, wishing to paint a living embodiment of terror might well take Amy for his subject at that moment. She stood clinging to the back of a chair, her face utterless colorless, the blue eyes dilated until they were almost black, the lips quivering, the slender form trembling from head to foot. Those wild eyes were fixed upon the face of Victor Latour as if fascinated; the white lips strove to speak, but no sound came. He stood confronting her, dark as doom. Only for a second! Then, with one stride he was beside her, grasping her arm in a cruel grip.

"Traitor!" he hissed; "perjured traitress! And this is how you keep your oath?"

"I have kept it, Victor—truly, faithfully, so help me, Heaven! faith, don't! As truly as I live, I have not betrayed you!"

"Then, what brings that meddling interloper here to-night? How came he to know I was absent from home? You, madam, sent him word."

"No, no, no! I knew nothing of his coming—I never sent him word. He was the last person I expected to see to-night."

"Or wished to see; eh, Mrs. Latour?" with a sneer. "He was a lover of yours, you know, in the days gone by."

"He never was!" Amy cried, with spirit. "John Sterling was always like a brother to me, always my good, kind friend. Never anything more."

"Indeed! And pray what brought your good kind friend all the way from St. Jude's this stormy night? Tell me the truth, mistress, or it will be worse for you! He had some purpose in coming. What was that purpose?"

"Let go my arm, Victor. You hurt me."

"I will hurt you still more if you do not answer me at once, and truthfully. What brought John Sterling to Blackwood Grange, to-night?"

"No earthly harm, Victor—I am sure of it. He came to see me, and as a specimen of your handwriting."

"My handwriting!" He dropped her arm, and stood staring at her aghast. "My handwriting! What could Dr. Sterling want with that?"

"He did not say. Some question of identity, I think, he mentioned; but there could have been no particular purpose."

"Couldn't there? Much you know about it. Did you gratify his whim?"

"Certainly, Victor. I never dreamed that you would object. There was a copy of verses in a book on the table. I gave him that."

"And he kept it, I'll be sworn?"

"He kept it, I think—yes. If I had thought you would object, Victor, indeed I never would have shown it."

"You're a fool, Amy, and John Sterling is a meddlesome knave. But let him take care; I have risked too much to lose lightly now. If I find him prying into my private affairs, by Heaven! I'll treat him as I treated—"

He stopped short. His face was livid, his eyes blazing. In that moment he looked like a madman.

"Don't stand there, gaping like an idiot!" he cried, turning with sudden rage upon the affrighted Amy; "don't you see I'm wet to the skin? Ring the bell and summon your servants; let them fetch me my clothes. Do you want me to get my death? But of course you do, you little white-faced hypocrite; that is the dearest desire of your heart; and then you might mark, the big, bulging doctor 'John Anderson, my jo John—'your brother—'your good, kind friend!' But I'll baffle you both yet."

Surely Victor Latour was mad. His voice rose to a shrill cry—his eyes flamed like living coals. He strode toward her—then stopped.

His white face turned dark red—He put his hand comely to his head,

staggered blindly and fell prostrate at her feet.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sterling, in pursuance of his resolve, had started on his journey to Framlingham. He was not the man, when he had once formed a plan of action, to let the grass grow under his feet before he put it into execution. Cool, clear-sighted, and practical, he saw at once that it would be useless to challenge a crafty villain like Latour, until he had more evidence than a mere letter and photograph, which might simply be a spiteful hoax, and by going straight to Framlingham, the doubt could be at once solved. It was the day before Christmas, and as he had his mother good-by he smiled sorrowfully.

"Not a very cheerful task, mother, for Christmas eve," he said, "but if our darling is to be saved, no aids to be lost."

"Heaven go with you, and aid you in your task. Now don't go and be too scrupulous in asking questions. Leave not a stone unturned to learn the truth."

"Trust me, mother," he said, as he kissed her at the gate. "I am not likely to be too nice when there is so much at stake, however delicate I may feel, where only my own wishes are concerned. If this Ellen Rossiter is above ground I will find her and shall prove her words, or I'll know the reason why."

The old lady watched his stalwart figure striding off in the direction of the nearest railway station, and sighed as she thought what a wasted life his would be were his mission unsuccessful.

"I believe the girl loves him in her inmost heart," she mused; "but she is so vain and frivolous that she does not know her own mind. At least she has had a terrible lesson, and married life with Mr. Victor Latour ought to have awakened her from her silly, romantic dreams."

She turned and went into the house, as her son's figure was lost in the thickening gloom of the winter's day, to await his return on the morrow with feverish anxiety.

Dr. John himself walked briskly along the snow-clad road, and to tell the truth, his mind was, first of all, exercised as to the manner in which he was to get across the country to Framlingham. Blackwood Grange was a goodly distance from any large town, and he had first to get to a centre whence he could get on to Lancashire. However, it had got to be done, and he calculated that he could catch the train at the little wayside station. If fortune befriended him, he thought he could get to his journey's end before daylight had quite fled from the sky; and then, by pushing his inquiries the same night, get home by midday on Christmas day.

He was very lucky in catching a train which took him half way along his route at express speed, and he got out at the Framlingham station, as George Wildair had on that wild March night, when he went to that fatal rendezvous with Isabel Vance, but with very different feelings, and on a very different errand. The talkative little station master, whom he had met before, seeing he was a stranger, touched his hat respectfully to him.

"Can you be of service to me?" responded Dr. Sterling, to his civil question. "Well, yes; perhaps you can; do you know anything of a Miss or Mrs. Ellen Rossiter who lives here? I wish very much to see her on a matter which may be one of life or death."

The man shook his head.

"You are too late, sir," he said; "the poor thing died yesterday morning. She never quite got over the shock of losing Miss Hardenbrook's money, after slaying her life out for it as she did. But if you'll step down with me, my missus can tell you all about her, for she has lived with us for the last year or so since she had to do needle work for a living."

Dr. Sterling thanked him, and, after he had given a few necessary directions to his subordinates, he led the way to a neat little cottage close to the station. The wife, a pleasant, comely woman, but who spoke with rather a broad, north country accent, was only too ready to impart all the information she had to give, which though not much, was quite enough to satisfy Dr. Sterling of the genuineness of the letter, and of the worth of its contents. He left the worthy couple the richer by a five-pound note for their trouble and kindness, and with a promise on their part to give him access to the dead woman's papers, if necessary. She had neither kith nor kin, and all belonged to them. He then betook himself to the Crown Hotel, where the landlord, who was a particular friend of the lawyer who had drawn Miss Hardenbrook's will, and who was perfectly well acquainted with all the circumstances connected with Isabel Vance's unhappy courtship, confirmed all that the stationmaster's wife had said. That night Dr. Sterling slept sounder than he had for many a week, and when he presented himself at home on the following day, his mother saw by his face that he had succeeded.

"I have solved the mystery, I believe, mother, and to-night shall put the scoundrel fairly to the test."

But the end was to come sooner than he anticipated. The two were seated at their solitary dinner on Christmas day, when a carriage from Blackwood came over the frozen snow, and stopped at their door. A moment later and the little maid servant ushered in the mistress of Blackwood Grange.

"Amy, what has happened?"

Both started up with the same question, for Amy was deadly pale, and the frightened expression that had grown habitual to her of late was wild alarm now.

"Oh, John! Oh, Mrs. Sterling! Victor is ill—dying! I am afraid!"

And then tender-hearted little Amy sank in a chair and burst into hysterical weeping, and told them, incoher-

ently, how he had fallen in a fit last night; how they had got him to bed; how they had brought him to after infinite trouble; and how his first act had been to turn every one of them out of the room and double-lock the door; how they had listened in fear and trembling all night, outside his chamber door, and heard him raving in wild delirium, and talking to and fro, talking insanely to himself; how he had raved and walked, all this long day, until he had fallen on the bed from sheer exhaustion, and lay there like a dead man. How, frightened almost to death, she Amy, had fled hither for succor from Dr. John.

"And, oh, please come!" Amy cried, giteously, clasping her hands, "and force the door and see what you can do for him. I know that you are not a friend of his, John, and that he dislikes you; but, oh! he is dying, and you must try, and forget the past for my sake."

"My poor little Amy," John said, with infinite love and compassion, "I would do far more than that for your sake. I will go at once, and my mother shall come too; you will need her services as nurse; I think I understand why Victor Latour locked the chamber door. Mother, put on your bonnet and come; I am certain you will be needed."

Half an hour later, and the trio were back at the lonely old house, its western windows all ablaze with the yellow wintry sunlight. The housekeeper met them in the hall.

"He hasn't opened his door yet, ma'am," she said. "He lies there like dead. I verily believe he has gone mad."

John called upon the footman, and, obtaining the necessary tools, forced the door. "Stay here an instant, Amy," he said. "I will call you and my mother directly."

He entered and closed the door. Victor Latour lay upon the bed still wearing the same clothes he had worn at Major Mallory's dinner party. The dark face was burning red, and the false mustache was gone and the face was the very face of Isabel Vance.

Dr. Sterling opened the door a moment later and called his mother in. "It is as we suspected," he said, gravely. "Victor Latour is Isabel Vance. You will remove her masquerade and replace it with suitable garments. The unfortunate woman is on the verge of a raging brain fever, brought on partly by mental excitement, and partly by wetting and exposure. It is ten to one if she ever rises from that bed!"

"Better so," said his mother, sternly. "And Amy? But Amy knows!"

"No," said Dr. John. "That is the strangest part of the story; I don't believe she does. Whatever the secret was she swore to keep it was not the secret of this trickster's sex. You will break the deception that has been practiced upon her as gently as you can. I will go now, and return with the necessary medicines in an hour or two."

He quitted the room. Amy stood waiting on the landing outside. He took both her hands in his, and looked down lovingly into her troubled face.

"My own Amy!" he said. "My pale little girl! All will be well with you soon now. There is a shock in store for you—bear it like the little heroine you are. My Amy! to think that paper walls should have held us apart so long! Go in; my mother has something to tell you."

She looked after him wonderingly; then she opened the chamber door and went slowly in.

Mrs. Sterling led her to the bedside; the light was dim, but gradually an object after another became discernible till her eyes rested on the face of her husband—smooth pale, and motionless. Slowly the truth dawned upon her, and with a strange gasp of surprise and astonishment intermingled, she sank into Mrs. Sterling's arms, burying her face in her bosom.

(To be Continued.)

ON FLEETING WINGS.

"Only a day!" Ah yes, dear,
Only a short, short day,
Till quickly pass, my little lass,
Then use it while you may.
On twelve swift wings the burden
swings
They'll bear it swift away.
Only a passing day, dear,
Only a passing day.

"Only an hour!" But then, dear,
An hour is ample time
To cheer some heart, to ease some
smart;
To sing a simple rhyme
Of love and home to those who roam,
So sweet is memory's power.
Only a little hour, dear,
Only a little hour.

"Only a minute!" Yes, dear,
The minutes flee away
On swiftest wing; but speeding sing:
"Oh use us while ye may."
'Tis only one at a time, dear,
To weave in the web of life,
Then ply the shuttle of love, dear,
But never the shuttle of strife.

GLOVES.

Wash and thoroughly dry your hands before placing your gloves on them; do not have them very tight about the palms and wrists; let them be of porous material and in all respects comfortable. In taking them off turn them inside out for airing. There are persons who think that gloves should be worn at night in order to preserve the softness of the hands. If you wish your hands to look faded, wear gloves at night, but if you wish them to preserve their natural characteristics use gloves when you are not in repose. While walking about in sun, wind, or rain, gloves will do you a very good service; at night, however—and here the hours of sleep are referred to—they are ill-suited to anyone.

Very Modest—She—"Mr. Beacon talks like a book." He—"Yes, like an autobiography."

HOUSEHOLD.

MACARONI IN VARIETY.

The wise housewife who lives a long ways from market lays in a goodly supply of macaroni for winter use. It keeps well, especially if it is of a good brand. In buying macaroni it is well to remember that the yellowish article is much better than the bleached, gray-white. Macaroni can be cooked in so many delicious ways, and is relished almost by everybody, especially during winter, when vegetables are scarce. Although it cannot take the place of vegetables, still it is a nourishing food and is a pleasant addition to any meal depending of course upon how it is prepared. A pound of macaroni does not seem much nor cheap, but if it will be remembered that when cooked it swells to almost four times its bulk it is not expensive after all. In cooking macaroni it should be put into boiling water, and a small tablespoonful of salt added to each quart of water. It requires about an hour to slowly boil that which comes in large pipes. The fine macaroni, or that cut up in fancy shapes, is not the best for ordinary use. When cooking the macaroni it should always be well covered with water. When it yields to pressure between the fingers it is done. It should then be placed in a colander to drain and afterwards covered with cold water until ready to prepare in some of its various guises.

The best known dish made from this article is "macaroni and cheese." Before boiling the macaroni for this dish break it up into small pieces and boil until tender. Drain and set aside until wanted. Put a good sized lump of butter in the bottom of a pudding dish (one of porcelain or granite ware) and allow it to melt. Place a layer of macaroni an inch thick in the dish. Sprinkle with dry grated cheese and a dash of salt and pepper and a few bits of butter. Then put in another layer of the macaroni, cheese, etc., until all the macaroni is used. Put no cheese on top, but use butter instead. Add a few spoonfuls of milk and bake until a golden brown on top. Roll a napkin around the dish and place it upon the table.

Especially good is macaroni au gratin. Cream together a tablespoonful each of butter and flour in a saucepan then add a pint of cream. Cook until the cream thickens, then season with pepper and salt. Add the beaten yolk of an egg and remove at once from the fire. Place a lump of butter in a baking dish, then a layer of cooked macaroni. Pour over it some of the sauce; then add more macaroni and sauce until full. Melt five tablespoonfuls of grated cheese with one of butter. Cover the top of the macaroni with some crisp bread crumbs and pour the melted cheese over all. Brown in a quick oven.

A nice breakfast or lunch dish is stewed macaroni. Cook until tender and drain. Cream together a tablespoonful of butter with one of flour and add a little milk, salt and a dash of pepper. Add the macaroni cut up fine, and allow it to boil up until thick. Serve hot. Macaroni with oysters is liked by many. Boil half a pound of the macaroni until tender. Drain and divide it equally. Place half of it in a well buttered pudding dish. Add to this one pint of oysters and their liquor. Cover with bits of butter and season with salt and pepper. Add the remainder of the macaroni. Beat two eggs thoroughly and add a pint of milk. Pour over the macaroni and cover the top with cracker crumbs. Place in the oven and bake until brown.

RECIPES.

Rich Plum Cake.—For a large size take one and one-half pounds each of currants, and the same of flour, beat three-quarter pound of butter to a cream; whisk fifteen eggs in a pan, then set it over the fire, adding one pound of powdered sugar, still whisking all the time. When warm, take the pan off, but on whisking till the mixture is cold, after which mix in the butter then the currants. Work into this one-half pound of candied orange, citron and lemon peel cut fine; one-half ounce of bitter almonds, blanched and beaten to a paste with a pinch of sifted sugar; two ounces of sweet almonds blanched and sliced likewise; one-half ounce of pounded mace and cinnamon, one-quarter pint of Curacao brandy or other liquor. Work well together for half an hour, bake from two to three hours, take it out, let the oven cool, and put the cake in for a few moments to dry; ice and ornament.

One-Egg Cake.—The one cup of sugar and a half cup of butter in a cake bowl; beat this to a cream with a wooden spoon; next add one fresh egg and stir it in well; then pour in a cupful of milk; sift two cupfuls of flour in another dish, mix through it three teaspoonfuls of baking powder and then stir the flour through the milk, butter and sugar. Grate in a very little nutmeg, or, if preferred, flavor the mixture with a teaspoonful of lemon or vanilla extract, or any flavoring one may choose. Line a cake pan with thin brown or white paper, well buttered on both sides. Put the cake dough in the pan and bake it in a moderate oven; it will be done when you can thrust a broom splint in the cake and it comes out without any of the dough sticking to it. Let the cake stand in the pan a few minutes after you take it from the oven; then carefully turn it out on a folded napkin and let it remain on the cloth till cool.

A BIRTHDAY.

What pleasant recollections a birthday brings to many a man or woman

grown old and gray and who has probably for years never had time to give it but a passing thought. In their childhood's home what a happy thing a birthday was! For weeks before there had been secret plans and whisperings between other members of the family, and when at last the eventful day arrived, what surprises awaited the fortunate one! Even the tiniest one in the household had its little gift for the brother or sister, and many were the kind wishes and every-one was merry for the while.

The little gifts made by loving hands or bought with pennies saved, and for which many a sacrifice was made, became doubly dear to the recipient, for she knew what they had cost her dear ones.

A birthday had, too, a sort of holiday air about it. In the first place, the breakfast table was always made festive with flowers and the company chime. The gifts were placed there, if possible, and everyone had a smile of welcome for the one for whom this was done, and who was kept within her room, her door being guarded by a sentinel—a small brother or sister. Then came the examination of the gifts, the thanks, the laughter and the breakfast. This was always somewhat better than usual or else everyone enjoyed it more. How eagerly the little folks would run errands and how anxious they were to help her throughout the entire day! It seems a pity that birthdays may not always be remembered in such a happy fashion.

In every home, and especially where there are children, it is an enjoyable day for them. Because the gifts must necessarily be insignificant, or because it may take an hour or two of time is no reason why the birthday of each member in the family should not be set apart to be remembered ever after with joy. It is a sweet custom, but this busy rushing life seems to stamp out many of these old-time holidays, for which everyone would be much better off in keeping fresh in the memory.

The children are proud to remember mother's and father's birthdays. The motley array of old presents they sometimes bring are hoarded by fond parents, and as time slips by the old memories still cling around these precious things, the years roll back and the children are once more there.

The boys and girls should have birthdays, no matter how simple the home or celebrations may be. It is something which is their own, yet with no happiness in it without the good wishes of all who are dear to them.

PROGRESSIVE PENNY HUNT.

From four to five tables make a goodly number, six at a table. However, one can have as many tables as they choose. There should be three gentlemen and three ladies at each table. A penny for each table. Hands all under the table; one gentleman as captain starts with the penny in his hand and passes it along; when he says "hands upon table," every hand is placed on the table with closed fists. Everyone must feign consciousness as though he or she held the penny. The captain gazes at each and finally decides upon the one he thinks has it. He calls upon this one "open your hand," he or she asks "which hand?" and he must state either the right or the left; if the penny is not discovered in the hand mentioned, then he or she "goes up" to the second table, and the one at the second table who is caught takes her or his place. And so the game goes on; those who are fortunate to reach the fifth table receive first prizes; and a lobby prize or prizes to any one who does not get beyond the first table or those who come down and cannot get back or higher.

TO MAKE FLOOR RUGS.

Old ingrain carpet, even when badly worn makes lovely rugs if the work is properly done. The pieces of carpet should be thoroughly cleaned and then cut crosswise of the breadth in strips one and one-quarter inches wide. The strips are then raveled on each edge by drawing out the threads lengthwise, until only four or five are left in the center. As fast as finished they are sewn like carpet rags, and wound in loose balls not more than a pound in weight, for the convenience of the weaver. About two pounds are required for weaving each yard of rug twenty-seven inches wide, the amount used depending somewhat on the weight of the carpet in its original state. When completed the rugs are exactly alike on both sides, and as thick and soft to step on as a bed of moss. Any kind of color of carpet can be used and even a variety of colors, making the center "hit and miss" and having a border of contrasting color near each end. I would not advise any one to make one of cotton warp carpet, as they are not nearly as handsome or as satisfactory in any way.

THE SMART MAN.

Haven't but 50 cents said the Smart One.

Haven't but 50 cents, said the Smart Man, so I will lend you a half and owe you a half.

And that, said the Simple One after he had taken the 50 cents, to the best of my comprehension makes us square. You owe me a half and I owe you a half, which same I have just borrowed. Somehow I am a half dollar ahead, but why should such a feeble intellect as mine question the gifts of the gods?

HEARD WHILE MAMMA WAS OUT.

Does the baby look like you or your wife?

Well, it depends somewhat on how he feels; when he's good natured he resembles me, but at other times I can see a great deal of his mother in him.