

# ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

## CHAPTER XXVII.—(Cont'd.)

"If he had been at home, I can't help thinking that this never would have happened," she said. "And I have a sort of hope that he will find out some explanation of it all."

"My dear, what explanation can there be but the one that satisfies your father?" said Mrs. Boniface. "Frithiof must have taken it in a fit of momentary aberration. But the whole affair shows that he is not so strong yet as we fancied, and I fear is a sign that all his life he will feel the effects of his illness. It is that which makes me so sorry for them all."

"I do not believe that he took it," said Cecil. "Nothing will ever make me believe that."

"Did you see him last night at the concert?" asked Mrs. Boniface.

"Yes," said Cecil, choking back her tears; "just when he arranged the platform. He was looking very ill and worn."

"That is what I am afraid of. He will go worrying over this affair, and it is the very worst thing in the world for him. I wish your father were better, and I would go and have a talk with Sigrid; but I hardly like to leave the house. How would it be, dearie, if you went up and saw them?"

"I should like to go," said Cecil, quickly. "But it is no use being there before seven, for Madame Lechertier has her classes so much later in this hot weather."

"Well, go up at seven, then, and have a good talk with her; make her understand that we none of us think a bit the worse of him for it and that we are vexed with Cousin James for having been so disagreeable and harsh. You might, if you like, go to meet Roy; he comes back at half-past eight, and he will bring you home again."

Cecil cheered up a good deal at this idea; she took Lance round the garden with her, that he might help her to gather flowers for Sigrid, and even smiled a little when of his own accord the little fellow brought her a beautiful passion-flower which he had gathered from the house-wall.

"This one's for my dear Herr Frithiof!" he exclaimed, panting a little with the exertions he had made to reach it. "It's all for his own self, and I picked it for him, 'cause it's his very favorite."

"You know, Cecil," said her mother, as she returned to the seat under the veranda and began to arrange the flowers in a basket, "I have another theory as to this affair. It happened exactly a week after that day at the sea-side when we all had such a terrible fright about Roy and Sigrid. Frithiof had a long run in the sun, which you remember was very hot that day; then he had all the excitement of rowing and rescuing them, and though at the time it seemed no strain on him at all, yet I think it is quite possible that the shock may have brought back a slight touch of the old trouble."

"And yet it seemed to do him good at the time," said Cecil. "He looked so bright and fresh when he came back. Besides, to a man accustomed as he once was to a very active life, the rescue was, after all, no such great exertion."

Mrs. Boniface sighed. "It would grieve me to think that it was really caused by that, but if it is so, there is all the more reason that they should clearly understand that the affair makes no difference at all in our opinion of him. It is just possible that it may be his meeting with Lady Romiaux which is the cause. Sigrid told me they had accidentally come across her again, and that it had tried him very much."

Cecil turned away to gather some ferns from the rockery; she could not bear to discuss that last suggestion. Later on in the afternoon it was with a very heavy heart that she reached the model lodgings and knocked at the door that had now become so familiar to her.

Swanhild flew to greet her with her usual warmth. It was easy to see that the child knew nothing of the trouble hanging over the house. "What lovely flowers! How good of you!" she cried.

But Sigrid could not speak; she only kissed her, then turned to Swanhild and the flowers once more.

"They are beautiful," she said. "Don't you think we might spare some for Mrs. Hallifield? Run and take her some, dear."

When the child ran off, she drew Cecil into their bedroom. The two girls sat down together on the bed but Sigrid, usually the one to do most of the talking, was silent and dejected. Cecil saw at once that she must take the initiative.

"I have been longing to come and see you," she said. "But yesterday was so filled up. Father and mother are so sorry for all this trouble, and are very much vexed that Mr. Horner has behaved badly about it."

"They are very kind," said Sigrid, wearily. "Of course most employers would have prosecuted Frithiof, or, at any rate, discharged him."

"But, Sigrid, what can be the explanation of it? Oh, surely we can manage to find out somehow. Who can have put the note in his pocket?"

"What!" cried Sigrid. "Do not you, too, hold Mr. Boniface's opinion, and think that he himself did it unintentionally?"

"I!" cried Cecil, passionately. "Never! never! I am quite sure he had nothing whatever to do with it."

Sigrid flung her arms round her. "Oh, how I love you for saying that!" she exclaimed.

She was recalled from her thoughts by Cecil's voice; it was sweet and gentle again now, and no longer vehement.

They went back to the sitting room and began to prepare the evening meal; and when, presently Frithiof returned from his work the first thing he caught sight of on entering the room was Cecil's sweet open-looking face. She was standing by the table arranging flowers, but came forward quickly to greet him. Her color was a little deeper than usual, her hand-clasp a little closer, but otherwise she had exactly as if nothing unusual had happened.

"I have most unceremoniously asked myself to supper," she said "for I have to meet Roy at half past eight."

"It is very good of you to come," said Frithiof, gratefully.

His interview with Carlo Donat had done much for him, and had helped him through a very trying day at the shop, but though he had made a good start and had begun his new life bravely, and borne many disagreeables patiently, yet he was now miserably tired and depressed, just in the mood which craves most for human sympathy.

"Lance sent you this," she said handing him the passion-flower and making him smile by repeating the child's words.

He seemed touched and pleased. Then, while Sigrid and Swanhild were busy in the kitchen, she told him what she knew of Donati's previous life, and how it was that he had gained this extraordinary power of sympathy and insight.

"I never met anyone like him," said Frithiof. "He is a hero and a saint, if ever there was one, yet without one touch of the asceticism which annoys one in most good people. That the idol of the operative stage should be such a man as that seems to me wonderful."

"You mean because the life is a trying one?"

"Yes; because such very great popularity might be supposed to make a man conceited, and such an out-of-the-way voice might make him selfish and heedless of others, and to be so much run after might make him consider himself above ordinary mortals. Instead of being ready, as he evidently is, to be the friend of any one who is in need."

"I am so glad you like him, and that you saw so much of him," said Cecil. "I wonder if you would just see me into a cab now, for I ought to be going."

He was pleased that she had asked him to do this; and when she had said good-bye to Sigrid and Swanhild, and was once more alone with him, walking through the big courtyard, he could not resist alluding to it.

"It is good of you," he said, "to treat me as though I were under no cloud. You have cheered me wonderfully."

"Oh," she said, "it is not good of me—you must not think that I believe you under a cloud at all. Nothing would ever make me believe that you had anything whatever to do with that five-pound note. It is a mystery that will some day be cleared up."

"That is what Signor Donati said. He, too, believed in me in spite of appearances being against me. And Sigrid says the same. With three people on my side I can wait more patiently."

Cecil had spoken very quietly, and quite without the passionate vehemence which had betrayed her secret to Sigrid, for now she was on her guard; but her tone conveyed to Frithiof just the trust and friendliness which she wished it to convey; and he went home again with a fresh stock of hope and courage in his heart.

Meanwhile Cecil paced gravely up and down the arrival platform at Charing Cross. Perhaps the anxiety had already left its traces on her face, for Roy at once noticed a change in her.

"Why, Cecil, what has come over you? You are not looking well," he said, as they got into a hansom and set off on their long drive.

"Father has not been well," she said, in explanation. "And I think we have all been rather upset by something that happened on Monday afternoon in the shop."

Then she told him exactly what had passed, and waited hopefully for his comments on the story. He admitted his brows in perplexity.

"I wish I had been at home," he said. "If only James Horner had not gone ferreting into it all this would never have happened. Frithiof would have discovered his mistake, and all would have been well."

"But you don't imagine that Frithiof put the note in his pocket?" said Cecil.

"Why, who else could have put it there? Of course he must have done it in absence of mind. Probably the excitement and strain of that unlucky afternoon at Britlin-lap affected his brain in some way."

"I can not think that," she said. "And even if it were so, that is the sort of thing he would do."

"But that is just the way when people's brains are affected, they do the most unnatural things; it is a known fact that young innocents will often in delirium use the most horrible language such as it is to deal life they can not possibly have heard. Your honest man is quickly under the circumstances to become a thief. Is not this the view that my father takes?"

"Yes," said Cecil. "But some how—I thought—I hoped—that you would have trusted him."

"It doesn't in the least affect my opinion of his character. He was simply not himself when he did it. But one can't doubt such evidence as that. The thing was missed from his till and found pinned into his pocket, how can any reasonable being doubt that he himself put it there?"

"It may be unreasonable to refuse to believe it—I can not help that," said Cecil.

"But how can it possibly be explained on any other supposition?" he urged.

"I don't know," said Cecil; "at present it is a mystery. But I am as sure that he did not put it there as that I did not put it there."

"Women believe what they wish to believe, and utterly disregard logic," said Roy.

"It is not only women who believe in him. Carlo Donati has gone most carefully into every detail, and he believes in him."

"Then I wish he would give me his recipe," said Roy, with a sigh. "I am but a matter-of-fact, prosaic man of business, and can not make myself believe that black is white, however much I wish it. Have you seen Miss Falck? Is she very much troubled about it?"

"Yes, she is so afraid that he will worry himself ill; but, of course, she, too, believes in him. I think she suspects the other man in the shop—Darnell; but I don't see how he can have anything to do with it. I must own."

There was a silence. Cecil looked sadly at the passers-by, lovers strolling along happily in the cool of the evening, workers just set free from the long day's toil, children reveling in the fresh sweet air. How very brief was the happiness and rest compared to the hard, wearying drudgery of most of those lives!

(To be continued.)

### Either Way.

Flub—"The man who loves a woman can't help being elevated."  
Dub—"And the man who loves more than one is apt to be sent up, too."

### Then He Went Back to Sleep.

"George, I'm positive there's a man in the house."  
"Thanks for the compliment, my dear."

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### THE SCHOOLMASTER'S GUESS.

#### How He Told the Weight of a Pig Almost to a Pound.

Men wonder at what they do not understand, but a seeming marvel often becomes absurdly simple when it is explained. Many years ago a schoolmaster, in the course of his travels, had occasion to stay for a lay or two at a country tavern. As he sat in the public room with a dozen other persons, evidently natives of the place, there came along a man with a fat hog that he was driving to market. Leaving the animal outside, he entered the inn and joined the little company. Several of the latter went to the window to look at the hog.

"That's a fine pig you've got here neighbor," remarked one. "Do you know what he'll weigh?"

"Yes, sir," returned the pig's owner. "I had him on the scales just before I started out. What do you guess he'll weigh?"

The questioner, thus questioned in turn, looked at the pig carefully, and made a guess. The owner turned to the rest of the company, and said:

"Will not somebody else give a guess? Just for the fun of it, let everybody have a try."

The proposal met with favor. One after another, the men eyed the pig critically, and after due consideration, gave their estimates of his weight. The schoolmaster, who seemed deeply absorbed in his own thoughts, alone took no part in the contest. But he was not to be left off.

"Say, friend," the owner of the pig urged, "aren't we going to hear from you?"

The pedagogue, who perhaps had never in his life looked attentively at a pig, rose, went to the window, and gazed out at this one. He deliberated for a moment, then, with modest hesitation, named a certain number of pounds.

At hearing it, the eyes and the mouth of the pig's owner opened wide in astonishment.

"Wal, I swan!" he exclaimed. "You're the champion! All the others guessed either over or under, but you've hit it almost to a pound."

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Everyone stared at the schoolmaster admiringly, but no one was shrewd enough to tell how he had been able to make so good a guess. It had not been a lucky hit, although he could have done quite as well without seeing the pig. He knew nothing about swine, but he knew a good deal about figures. Having heard the guesses of eleven more or less expert judges, he had added together their figures, divided the sum by eleven, and "guessed" the result.

### Nothing Like Civility.

Nothing is more honorable and pleasant than civility and nothing more ridiculous and burdensome than ceremony. Civility teaches us to behave with proportionate respect to everyone, according as their rank requires and their merit demands. In other words, civility is the science of men of the world. A woman of good address who conducts herself with due circumspection conciliates the love and esteem of society because everyone finds herself at ease in her company, but a ceremonious woman is the plague of her acquaintances. Such a one requires too much attention to be a pleasant associate, is too seldom satisfied with what is paid her, and every moment feels her pride hurt by the want of some frivolous etiquette. You cannot be too formal to her, nor can she dispense with her formalities to others. In short, ceremony was invented by pride to harass us with peevish solicitudes which we would blush to be conversant with.

### Has Great Great-Grandfather.

At Zaratanto, Spain, there has just occurred a case which is probably unique of its kind. A child has been born while its father, grandfather, great grandfather and great great-grandfather are all living. Its name is Urriticoechea and the family are Basque farm laborers. The great-grandfather and great great-grandfather have acted as godfather to the child. The united family constitutes nearly a whole village.



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