

THAT BEAUTIFUL RIVER.

CHAPTER I.

All the clocks of the great, thronged city changed on the hour of midnight from their hoarse, hoarse throats simultaneously, and as the last tremulous echo died away on the air, a human soul that had wasted its glorious talents, and squandered its heritage of genius in a reckless, dissipated life, was launched out on the great, shoreless tide of eternity.

And in the same moment of time a young, fair, innocent girl, the dead man's only child, was cast adrift, friendless and forlorn, upon the merces of the cold, hard world.

She fell, like one dead, by the bedside, and the wealth of her burnished golden hair fell like a pitying veil over the slender form that had bent like a flower before the relentless blast of fate.

The coarse, but not unkindly, lodging-house people bore her into her own little room, and left her there alone to recover, while they prepared the dead man for burial to-morrow.

It was but a little while that this blessed unconsciousness lasted, when Laurel Vane struggled up to her feet to push back with little, trembling hands the cloud of golden hair from her white brow, and stare with great, frightened, sombre eyes out into the strange, unknown future.

What terrible temptation, what love and sorrow and bitter despair that future held in its keeping for her was yet mercifully hidden from her sight by the thick curtain of mystery that ever hides to-morrow from our curious eyes.

The daughter of a genius, who had belauded his gutted brain with the fumes of strong drink, and who had only written his brilliant articles under the stress of compulsion, and to keep the wolf from the door, the girl realized that she was left alone and penniless, with not a friend to pity or protect her. It came over her suddenly, and a great thrill of horror, that her father's last article—finished only yesterday, before that sudden illness laid its chilly, fatal hand upon him—must be carried to the publishing house and the money received therefor before she could bury her dead.

Her dead father she could scarcely realize that he had, though erring father, the profound scholar, the erratic genius who had loved his little girl even while he had unparitarily neglected her, was gone from her for evermore. With trembling footsteps she gazed to the room where the people, having robbed him for the grave, had left him alone in the solemn majesty of death.

A terrible shudder shook her frame as she beheld that sheeted something lying in stiff, rigid outline upon the narrow bed. Half frightened, she drew back the snowy linen and gazed upon the handsome, marble-white features, so whose pallid grace death had soiled a solemn dignity all its own.

Great bursting sobs of regret and sorrow shook the daughter's frame as she gazed on that loved face, where in life the stamp of genius had been marred by the traces of dissipation and vulgar pleasures. Laurel was little more than a child, yet she knew that her father had recklessly wasted his God-given talents and eaten his soul on the dry husks of life. Yes, in all her sorrow and pain, in all her fear of the untied future, no thought of anger or blame came to her as she kept her sorrowful vigil by his side.

There were others who blamed him that he had left his tender flower, his "Laurel-blossom," as he poetically called her, alone and penniless in the hard, cold world. But she, his daughter, had nothing but tears and love for him now when he lay before her dead.

In a few hours they would carry him away, far beloved, forever out of her sight, but even those last few hours she could not have to spend with him. She was too forlorn and poor to give herself these last moments with him. She must carry his last manuscript to the office and receive the money before she could pay for his coffin and hearse. And already the lodging-house keepers were adjuring her to hasten in burying him. It was so gloomy having a corpse in the house, they said, unfeelingly.

So, at the earliest office hours, Laurel presented herself at the editor's desk with the small roll of manuscripts clasped tightly in her little black-gloved hand.

The clerk stared almost rudely at the young face from which she put aside the shielding veil with one timid hand.

"A little beauty, if only she weren't so pale and tear-stained," was his mental comment.

"I have brought Mr. Vane's article for the magazine. Can I have the money for it now?" she asked, falteringly.

"Very sorry, but the editor isn't in. You may leave the paper, and Mr. Vane can call for his money later in the day," replied the clerk, detouring her sweet face with his bold, admiring eyes.

The red mouth trembled, the wide, sombre dark eyes brimmed over with quick tears.

"He—cannot come—he is dead!" she answered in uneven tones, "and," flushing crimson in a sensitive shame at her own poverty, "I must have the money to bury him."

"Ah, dead? Very sorry, I'm sure," said the clerk, a little startled out of his coolness; "and you are his daughter?"

"Yes, I am Laurel Vane."

"The editor doesn't come down to his office till noon. He always examines articles and pays for them himself. Very sorry your father is dead—a fine writer when he chose to take up the pen. Can I do anything else for you, Miss Vane?" went on the bold-eyed young man, rather pitying her sorrow and timidity, inasmuch as she was fair to look upon.

"If you will give me the address I will go to Mr. Gordon's private residence. I must have money without delay," she answered, faintly.

He scribbled the address on a card for her, and after bowing her out in his most killing air, he went back to tell the printers that "old Vane had drunk himself to death at last, and left a devilish pretty little daughter without a penny."

"With a name as pretty as her face—Laurel Vane!" he added.

"He might have had a prouder laurel for his brow than a penniless daughter if he had not been so fond of his glass," said the printers, grimly.

And this was Louis Vane's epitaph. While Laurel directed her faltering steps

to the editor's up-town residence, all unconscious that the finger of fate was pointing the way.

Mr. Gordon was one of the most successful editors and publishers of the day, and his brown-stone house on one of the fashionable avenues of the great city looked like a palace to Laurel's unaccustomed eyes. She went slowly up the broad steps and rang the bell a little nervously, feeling her courage desert her at the thought of the interview with the stern editor. No thought came to her that her first meeting with that august personage would be in a darker, more fateful hour than this.

The smart serving man who opened the door stared at our simply clad heroine a little superciliously. He could not recognize a lady apart from a fine dress.

"I wish to see Mr. Gordon, please," Laurel said, with quiet dignity.

"Mr. Gordon is out, mem," was the disappointing reply.

"Where is he gone? When will he come back?" exclaimed Laurel in piteous disappointment.

"He's gone into the country, and he won't be back until to-morrow night," was the concise reply.

The day was warm, but the girl shivered as if the ground had been swept from beneath her feet by the icy blast of winter. An unconscious cry broke from her quivering lips, and she clasped her little hands tightly together.

"Oh, what shall I do now?" she moaned, despairingly.

"I'm sure I don't know, mem," said the man impudently, and making an impatient move to shut the door in her face.

He might have done so with impunity, for Laurel, gazing before her with dazed, despairing gaze, was for the moment incapable of speech or action; but at that moment a door opened sharply on the side of the hall, a swift of silk sounded softly, and a clear, sweet voice inquired:

"Who is that asking for papa, Charles?" Charles opened the door and fell back obediently. A lovely blue-eyed girl, richly dressed, came toward Laurel.

"I am Mr. Gordon's daughter. Is your business important?" she inquired with girlish curiosity.

She thought she had never seen anything so sweet and sad as the dark, wistful eyes Laurel flashed upward to meet her gaze.

"Oh, yes, yes, it is very important," she faltered, incoherently. Perhaps you could—that is, if you would—"

Miss Gordon smiled a little at the tripping speech, but not unkindly.

"Come in. I will do what I can," she said, and led Laurel past the discomfited Charles into a lovely little anteroom, with flowers and books and pictures, that made it a little feminine paradise.

She pushed a little cushioned blue-satin chair toward Laurel.

"Sit down and tell me what you want of papa," she said gently; and Laurel's impulsive heart went out in a great flood of gratitude to this beautiful stranger who looked and spoke so sweetly.

She grasped the back of the chair tightly with both hands, and turned her dark, beseeching eyes on Miss Gordon's face.

"I have brought Mr. Vane's manuscript for the magazine," she added. "He—my papa—is dead," she added, with a rush of bitter tears, "and we are so poor I must have the money to pay for his funeral."

Instantly Beatrix Gordon drew out her dainty pearl *portemonnaie*. "You poor child!" she said, compassionately. "What is the price of the article?"

Laurel named it, and Miss Gordon counted the money out into the little trembling hand, and received the manuscript.

"I am sorry Mr. Vane is dead," she said. "He was a very gifted writer. Has he left you all alone, my poor girl?" with gentle compassion.

"All alone," Laurel echoed, drearily.

Then suddenly she caught Miss Gordon's hand, and covered it with tears and kisses.

"You have been so kind and so noble to me, that I will do anything on earth for you, Miss Gordon," she sobbed out gratefully.

Then she hurried away to bury her dead, little thinking in what way Beatrix Gordon would claim her promise.

CHAPTER II.

"Come in," said Laurel, faintly, in answer to the sharp rap at the door.

The cheap, plain funeral was over, and the orphan sat alone in the deepening twilight in the shabby little room, now invested with sombre dignity all its own since the presence of death had so lately been there.

Laurel's head was bowed upon her hands, and tears coursed slowly, each one a scalding drop of woe, down her white cheeks.

The door opened, and the woman from whom Mr. Vane had rented the two shabby little rooms entered abruptly. She was a coarse, hard-featured creature, devoid of sympathy or sensibility. She looked coldly at the weeping girl.

"The rent's due to-day, Miss Vane," she said roughly. "Have you got the money to pay it?"

Laurel silently counted over the contents of her slim purse.

"Here is the money, Mrs. Groves, and it is the last cent I have on earth," she said, drearily, as she placed the silver in the woman's greedy, outstretched hand.

"Is that so? Then of course you'll not be wanting the rooms any longer. I will trouble you to move out early in the morning, so's I may rent them to somebody else," exclaimed Mrs. Groves.

Laurel sprang to her feet in dismay, a terrified look on her fair young face.

"Oh, madam, I have nowhere to go—so soon!" she cried out pleadingly. Perhaps you will let me keep the one little room until I can find work. I will be sure to pay you!"

"I can't depend on no such uncertain prospects," declared Mrs. Groves, unfeelingly. "I've got to be pretty certain where my money's coming from before I rent my rooms. So out you go in the morning, and if you don't leave quietly I'll have your trunk h'isted out on the sidewalk in a jiffy, so there!"

With this emphatic threat the rude landlady banged herself out of the room, and Laurel sank down with a low moan of terror upon the floor.

"She was no coward, reader, this forlorn little heroine of ours, but she knew scarcely more of the wide world outside her cheap lodging-house than a baby. She had lived in one poor place or another with her errand father all her life, keeping their poor little rooms with untaught skill, meagerly supported by his neglected talent, and with

not an idea of how to earn her own living. Mr. Vane had educated her after his own desultory fashion, but not in a practical way that she could utilize now in her need. She wondered with a shudder of dread what she should do, and where she should go to-morrow when she was turned out into the streets, of which she felt so horribly afraid, and which her father had seldom permitted her to traverse alone.

She pushed open the casement and looked out. Night had fallen, and under the glare of the gaslight Laurel saw wicked men and ribald women tramping the streets. To-morrow night she would be out on the horrible pavements among them, with nowhere to go, and not a friend in all the wide, wicked city. Perhaps they would murder her, these wolves of the street, when she was cast out like a helpless white lamb astray from the fold.

Shivering, she recalled some verses she had somewhere read. They seemed to fit her own forlorn strait:

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river
With many a light
From the window and casement
From garret to basement
She stood with amazement,
Houseless by night.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she moaned, tremblingly. "It were a thousand times better, papa, if I had died with you."

The room door opened suddenly and without warning, and Mrs. Groves appeared.

"Here's a young man asking for you, Miss Vane. P'raps he'll tell you how to make a honest living now your pa's dead," she said, with a coarse, significant chuckle.

She hustled the visitor across the threshold, and closing the door, stumped loudly down the passage, but returned in a moment on tip toe, to play the eaves-dropper.

The room was all in darkness save for the gaslight that streamed through the open window. Laurel turned quickly to light her little lamp, wondering who her visitor might be.

To her amazement she saw the rather good-looking and bold-eyed clerk she had met at the publishing-house that morning.

"Good evening, Miss Vane," he said, insinuatingly. "I ventured to call, thinking you might need a friend."

The quick instinct of prudence took alarm in Laurel's breast. She drew back coldly as he offered her his smooth white hand.

"I needed a friend this morning, but you did not seem to remember it then," she said, scathingly.

"I—ah—oh, I was taken by surprise, then. I had not my wits about me," he stammered, disconcerted. "Pray, pardon my forgetfulness. I have been thinking about you all day, and wishing I could help you. Here is my card. Pray, command my services."

Laurel took the bit of gilt-edged pasteboard, and read the name written on it in smooth copper-plate. It was

"ROSS POWELL."

The young man had seated himself meanwhile, with the coolest self-possession, Laurel looked at him with her great, wistful, dark eyes.

"Do you really mean what you say?" she inquired, a faint ring of hope in her dejected voice.

"Yes, I infer that your father has left you without means of support, and I wish to offer you a good situation," Mr. Powell replied, suavely, with a sparkle in his bold grey eyes.

The girl clasped her little hands impulsively together. Hope and fear struggled together on her fair young face.

"But I don't know how to do anything," she cried, ingenuously. "I have never been to school like other girls. I've always kept papa's rooms and mended his clothes, and made my own dresses, but I couldn't do anything like that well enough for any one else."

Ross Powell's gray eyes sparkled wickedly. He kept the lids drooped over them, that Laurel might not see their evil gleam.

"Oh, yes, you could!" he exclaimed. "I know some one who wants a little housekeeper just like you, to keep two beautiful rooms in order as you did for your father. Will you come, Laurel?"

"Who is the person?" she inquired, flushing sensitively at his familiar utterance of her name.

Ross Powell moved his chair to Laurel's side, and gazed deep into her beautiful, wondering dark eyes.

"The person is myself," he replied, in low lover-like tones. "I have fallen in love with you, my beautiful little Laurel, and I want you to come and be my little fairy housekeeper. I will love and cherish you as the darling of my heart."

Laurel regarded him a moment in blank silence. There was a look of genuine perplexity on her innocent face.

She spoke at length in a low, doubtful tone.

"Are you asking me to be your wife, sir?" was her naive question.

He flushed and looked rather abashed, at the innocent question.

"Why, no, my dear, not exactly," he answered, regaining his self-possession in a moment. "I don't wish to saddle myself with a wife yet, but it would be about the same thing. I would worship you, my beautiful Laurel, and you should have fine dresses and jewels, visit the theatres and operas, live in beautiful rooms; while I, your adoring slave—"

"Stop, Ross Powell!"

She had stood like one turned to stone, gazing and listening for a moment; but now her young voice rang like a clarion through the room; "Stop, Ross Powell!"

He sprang from his seat, and moving to her side attempted to take her hand. She tore it from him and struck him an ignominious slap in the face with that small white member. Her eyes blazed, her cheek burned.

She crossed to the door, and threw it open so suddenly that Mrs. Groves was discomfited in the act of listening, but Laurel paid no heed to her as she shuffled away, crestfallen, and for once ashamed of herself.

The flashing eyes of the girl seemed to wither the villain where he stood gazing sullenly upon her, with the red mark of that frantic blow upon his face.

"Go, Ross Powell," she said, pointing a disdainful finger at him. "Go, and may the good God in heaven punish you doubly and trebly for this dastardly outrage on an unprotected girl!"

He slunk across the threshold like the base, evil-hearted coward that he was, but out in the narrow passage he turned and

looked back at her with a malevolent glare on his crimson-marked face.

"You have made an enemy, Laurel Vane," he hissed. "I would have given you love and protection, but you have chosen my hatred instead. I shall not forget you. I shall always remember that blow in my face, and I shall have my revenge for it. Look well to your future, my beautiful fury!"

Laurel slammed and locked the door in the face of the angry wretch, and fell upon the floor again, giving vent to her outraged feelings in a storm of passionate tears.

But it seemed as though she were not destined to have any peace or quiet that evening. Again a rap sounded on the door.

She brushed away her falling tears and opened it in fear and trembling.

A smart, pretty girl was her visitor this time.

"I am Miss Gordon's maid," said the newcomer, and she slipped a perfumed little envelope into Laurel's hand.

Laurel opened it and read, with bewildered eyes:

"MY DEAR LITTLE LAUREL.—I wish to see you very much, but there is a reason why I cannot come to you, so I have sent my maid, Clarice, to bring you to me. I have been thinking of you all day, and of your sweet promise to do anything on earth for me. I believe that we can mutually help each other. Come quickly, dear. Have no fear but that Clarice will guide you safely to me. Your friend,

"BEATRIX GORDON."

"Will you come, Miss Vane?" asked the pretty maid, intelligently.

"Yes," Laurel answered, hopefully, and so went forth to her future.

(To be continued.)

Prayer for Soldiers and Sailors.
The Archbishop of Canterbury has sent to the Archdeacons of Canterbury and Maidstone the following prayer for the safety of British soldiers and sailors now on their way to the seat of war, with an expression of his wish that it may be used in churches in his diocese:

O Almighty Lord God, King of all kings, and Governor of all things, that sittest in the throne judging right: We commend to Thy fatherly goodness the men who through perils of war are serving this nation, beseeching Thee to take into Thy own hand both them and the cause wherein their country sends them. Be Thou their tower of strength, that, armed with Thy defence, they may be protected through all dangers, to glorify Thee, who art the only giver of all victory. Grant also that we may evermore use Thy mercy to Thy glory, to the advancement of Thy kingdom, and to the honor of our Sovereign; seeking always the deliverance of the oppressed, and, as much as lieth in us, the good of all mankind; through our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All For the Circus.
An Arkansas literary society recently discussed the question: "Resolved, that a circus is superior to a district school as a civilizing agent." The circus packed the convention from the start. Only one orator got up to speak for the district school. He was the teacher, and the president fined him twice and then made him sit down. The fines were for calling Pompey Pompey and saying there were more schools in Boston than in Little Rock, and he was made to sit down for uttering atheistic sentiments when he denied that "Root, bog or die" was to be found in the Bible. To crown his disgrace, in summing up, the president referred to his remarks as indicating to what a low state of knowledge and morals the habit of attending district school would bring a man. He then decided the question in favor of the circus, collected the fines from the unhappy pedagogue, and the society went out and spent the money for bread.—*Burdette in Brooklyn Eagle.*

Corsets Made of Bark.
The bayaderes of India, who possess the most perfect figures of any women of any country on earth, have a much more beautiful and charming device than any Europeans. Their corsets are formed out of the bark of the Madagascar tree, on a principle which permits them every freedom of movement in breathing and in any form of exercise. These are wonderful productions of ingenuity. The color resembles the skin to a remarkable degree, and the material is so fine that the most delicate touch will hardly distinguish it from human flesh. Once made these corsets are seldom removed, the bayaderes even sleeping in them. They thus preserve astonishingly beautiful figures to an advanced age, without pain or discomfit to themselves, while we, who boast ourselves intellectual and civilized, torture without beautifying ourselves.

Stimulating Newspaper Circulation.
A novel way to increase the list of subscribers has just been adopted by a French contemporary—the *Gaulois*. The proprietors of this journal, so we are told, undertake to pay a sum of 5,000 francs at the decease of any subscriber who may meet with his death on a railway or tram way, or by being run over by a vehicle in the street. A proportionate sum is paid for injuries received. All that is necessary to produce is the last receipt of subscription. The *Gaulois* also pays compensation to any purchaser of a single copy, or his heirs, should he be injured or killed on the day on which the paper is bought.—*European Mail.*

The Druggist estimates that the annual production of canned goods in the United States equals 500,000,000 packages, or ten to every person.

The fortune left by the Duke of Buccleuch to his youngest son—\$200,000—represents just about two months of an income which the Duke had enjoyed over sixty years.

That left to his daughter, who married Cameron of Locheil, represents six weeks' income, and that to the other daughters one month's income.

The New York Mail and Express thinks the man was born polite who can pass a dish of celery to his fellow-boarder without first selecting a nice, crisp piece for himself.

Sir Moses Montefiore has fully recovered from his recent indisposition, though he is much depressed by the recent death of his housekeeper, an old lady forty years younger than Sir Moses and for forty years past his faithful attendant.

The Tooth Factory.
The domain of the dentist is about to be disrupted. A great discovery has been made which will revolutionize the whole business, and emancipate the sufferers. A factory has been established, with plenty of capital to back it, for the purpose of making sets of artificial teeth by machinery. All that any one who is troubled with his teeth will have to do will be to get them all pulled out. Then he can purchase a brand new, machine-made set and be exempt from toothache all the rest of his life. There is, of course nothing new in the making and using of artificial teeth, but it will be easily seen that the manufacture by machinery presents great advantages. When the making of watches by machinery was started there were many protests that the new way would never be as good as the old. But the exactness soon attained, and the convenience of having the parts interchangeable, brought about a revolution, and the factory watches now rank above the hand-made. The same advantages will be had in the factory teeth. If one set gets broken, or comes out, an exactly similar one can be ordered from the factory at a very small cost. If the plate gets cracked it can be replaced in the same way. All that will be necessary will be to give the number of the plate, and a new one, precisely like the old, will be sent by return mail.—*N. Y. Mail and Express.*

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