## Copyright, 1899, by Jeannette H. Walworth.

"He is dying, dying, and you have killed him! Father, don't die before you have answered her! Don't go with her awful words ringing in my ears! I know they are false, all talse, father, but I want to hear you say so! Silence her yourself, father! Speak to me only once! Speak, papa!"

"He cannot." said the old woman mercilessly. "The Lord has stricken his false and deceitful tongue. It is paralyzed."

## CHAPTER XIV. SUSPICION IS CATCHING.

The next day's sun had run its course, its last friendly service being to gild with transient glory the topmost branches of the ancient cedars that flanked the front gate of the Matthews cottage on either side. They were wrapt in twilight gloom when Olivia opened the gate between them and stood staring down the road with unseeing eyes. Dr. Govan had just passed out of sight. He had spent nearly the whole day with her father. She had been rigidly excluded from the sickroom. They had broken her heart by telling her that it was her father's wish.

"Her distress was agitating to the patient," the old doctor had said, with paternal kindness, adding, "Since you can do no good in there, my dear," with a grave nod toward the sickroom, "you had better brace yourself by

long walk." She had listened to him restlessly with a haggard look in her childish eyes, which had great black rings around them.

"Will father ever speak again, Dr. Govan?" she asked sharply.

"Speak again? Oh, yes! He has spoken. I promise you he shall scold you roundly for those white cheeks and staring eyes before bedtime."

She waved one hand impatiently. "He must speak, doctor. There is something he must tell me before-before"- She gasped and added in a choked voice, "Did Clarence tell you?"

"About that old lunatic's visit last night? Of course he did. I saw her today. She is properly punished, poor old imbecile-not punished, for she did not know what she was about. She's about done for herself, coming up here in those thin house shoes. Malvina is pretty well broken up about it all."

Ollie moved up very close to the old man and put her clasped hands on his heart as she said pleadingly, "She is : lunatic, isn't she, Dr. Govan?"

"Mad as a March hare." "And nobody ever thinks of believing what lunatics say, do they, Dr. Go-

van?" "Not unless they are a little touched themselves."

He had no difficulty in tracing her meaning. It was a piteous plea for faith in her father. Westover had told him of the scene he had invaded without revealing his own part in the pro--ceeding. But, knowing as well as he did the old woman's mania, the doctor had no difficulty in supplying the details.

"Poor papa-to think of my not protecting him better!"

Dr. Govan pushed her gently toward the door. "There, there, child, go. You are working yourself up into a condition of absolute uselessness." "Oh, that will never do! I must not

become useless while father needs me. I will go for a walk."

"That's right. You are a good child. See that your walk means something. I will be back about 10."

Passing swiftly and resolutely from under the gloomy cedars through the smart, highly ornamented gate into the broad public road, with its fringe of grass and weeds, gray with dust, she turned her face westward. She was going to the Spillman cottage. Miss Malvina must tell her what her mother meant about finding and losing papers that belonged to Tom Broxton. She would not let Miss Malvina know about the awful things that "poor old crazy woman" had said to her father. Those were words that must never find utterance a second time. They were too dreadful, too cruel, too false, absolutely false! And yet they haunted her. Some sleek black and white -cows filed past her, wending their way homeward for the night. Their gener--ous udders hung heavy with the promise of a rich yield. All of the black and white kine used to belong to Colonel Broxton. No one else had their like. She could distinctly remember hearing the old colonel discourse upon the superiority of his imported Holsteins and being rallied by her father on his extravagance in keeping such a fancy breed. She wondered who the black and white cows belonged to now -Tom, of course. The thud of rapid hoof beats on the road behind her made her draw still farther aside into the dusty grass and weeds. She felt has she left you asleep and wandered like hiding. "Why?" she asked herself petulantly. With long, clean strides, drawing a light sulky after her as easily as if it were a baby's perambulator, the colonel's black mare sped past her. A stranger was in the sulky. A man she had never seen was driving the mare Winnie. She wondered who she belonged to now-Tom, of course.

Sick at heart, sore frightened, hating herself for even remembering that "crazy old woman's" terrible words, she reached the Spillman gate and face impulsively.

passed timidly through it and up the broken brick walk, between Miss Malvina's two rows of gayly blossoming annuals, into the cottage, without knocking, for the door stood wide open. If she knocked, "Mother" Spillman might answer.

There was no one in the little sitting room. The great chintz covered easy chair which she had never before seen vacant had been pushed back against the wall. Miss Malvina's sewing machine was closed, and its oilcloth cover was spread over it. The books on the table in the center of the room were rigidly correct in their stiff arrangement. A lamp burned dimly in the midst of them. There was a certain air of decorous repose about the entire room which smote upon Olivia's nerves ominously. The door to the adjoining room was ajar. A dim light shone through it. Perhaps she would find them in there. Of course she would. Dr. Govan had said "Mother" Spillman was sick. She had forgotten it.

With considerate caution she made her way toward the light. She did not want to disturb "the poor old lunatic," but she must have speech with Miss Malvina. She could not rest that night without it. Yes, she found them in there, mother and daughter, the one quiet, motionless, at rest, with her long, gaunt hands lying stretched peacefully upon the white coverlet, the other sitting by the bedside weeping in noiseless resignation to the expected, weeping for her dead. Olivia swept swiftly forward and laid a hand on Miss Malvina's arm. "Is she sick? Is she asleep?"

"She is dead," said Malvina quietly. "She went very peacefully just five minutes ago."

The lonely woman lifted her dull red eyes to Olivia's. The girl felt a quick rush of sympathy. She wound her arms about the mourner.

"Dead, and you here alone!" Miss Malvina turned and smoothed the thin gray hairs back from the marble cold face on the pillows.

"I'd rather have had it so," she said. "I wanted nobody about. Poor dear! She has not been herself for so long. She talked queerly sometimes, and I wanted no gossips about."

Olivia bowed her head in sad comprehension. "You mean about my father." She stood resting one hand on



"My c'." ! Olivia, there are no papers." Miss Malvina's shoulder, her eyes fixed the dead woman's face. She did not catch her friend's look of startled astonishment. Her voice was drearily

"Yes, I know. It is very good of you. It is just like you not to want anybody to know how she talked about father. She said such dreadful things to him last night." "Mother up to your house last night!

My dear, you must have dreamed it." "Oh, no! I wish I had! I wish had! But she was up there. I cannot tell you what she said to papa. thought then I could never forgive her, but she knows better now, and I expect if she could she would ask his pardon and mine too. She knows now that my dear father did not ruin Thomas Broxton. She knows that he is a good and true man. I can forgive her now. I have forgiven her."

Miss Malvina forgot her own bereavement in pity for the desolate young face bent over her mother's bed. She turned comforter.

"Yes, she knows better now. You poor little girl-to think I should have fallen so dead asleep that she could leave the house without my knowing it! I begin to suspect that she has been deceiving me for a long time. You know the in-people in her fix are dreadfully sly. I did not know she had been out of the house for years. I can't beg your pardon often enough for letting her worry Mr. Matthews. I knew she had a sort of unreasoning grudge against him. Sometimes, you know, dear, they-I might as well out with it," she added in a sort of desperation, "insane folks often pick out their best friends to vilify."

"I know, I know. More than once out into the night. I heard her tell about it last night. Oh, if she had only lived long enough to tell me something more about those papers! Why cannot I get her dreadful words out of my head?"

Miss Malvina turned her tear dimmed eyes away from the dead old face to the pallid young one with startling suddenness.

"Papers! What papers?" Olivia stooped and kissed the plain

to come here and accuse her of cruelty when she cannot say a word in self defense! But, then, no more could father last night. She said that somebody had brought her some papers that she meant to keep until Tom came back, but that she had lost them. She said that she could not look for them in the daytime because you watched her so closely." Here the poor child dropped on her knees and clasped her trembling hands upon Miss Malvina's lap. "Oh, what dreadful things she said to papa about those papers! Find them for me, Malvina. Help me to find them before it is too late."

Miss Malvina gathered her into a motherly embrace. "Too late for what, my poor little Ollie?" "Before father-goes-and cannot tell

me what to-do-with them."

"My child, Olivia, there are no paof a disordered brain. Mother was queer for a long time back. I have known it for a year or two. How could there be any papers of importance to any one in this little cabin and I not know about them? Forget what you heard her say, my child. Let it go for naught. As you say, she knows better now."

Olivia got up on her feet, and, folding her hands tightly upon her breast, she looked down on Miss Malvina with an inexorable purpose in her sad eyes.

"I wish I could let it go for naught, but I cannot. I know there were some papers lost, because I distinctly remember father asking you if you had seen any the night of Colonel Broxton's death. I know he could not wrong any one purposely, but losing those papers may have put him in a wrong position. Help me to find them, Miss

Malvina." Miss Malvina fell back upon her only line of defense. "Mother was queer, Ollie. That was the reason I have shut our door to all the neighbors of late. She did not know what she was talking about. There are"-

Olivia interrupted her impatiently. "But did you never hear her speak them, I mean?"

"Never." "Nor any one else? Father? Don't you remember that morning after Colonel Broxton died?"

A subtle change swept over Miss Malvina's plain face. A frightened look came into her eyes.

"Think, Miss Malvina. Try to remember. And-ah, do tell me the truth, the whole truth, no matter how more than you think I can. But I shall never know what peace is until my mind is relieved about those pa-

Thus adjured, Miss Malvina made a reluctant confession.

lies in my power. Ollie, if you will only try to stop worrying over what can't be cured. I was standing at our front somebody would happen by that I could question about him. When heard a horseman coming, I rushed out into the road with very inconsiderate speed. I frightened your father's horse, and he dropped his bag. picked it up myself and handed it back to him."

"He told me the next day-you remember, it was when you brought him in your phaeton-that he missed some papers and thought they might have dropped out when he let his bag fall."

"All of which," said Olivia stonily, "goes to prove that some papers were

"Yes, but of course he found them again. He said that morning that he presumed he must have left them in the study at the Hall, but it did not matter much. They could not have been very important."

"But Mrs. Spillman-where does she come into your story?"

"I told her when I went back into the house all about it. Poor mother! got into the way of repeating everything to her. It interested her, you know, and, being queer already, she got a twist in her head about those papers, I suppose, which there is no use trying to account for."

"But she was so terribly in earnest last night, Miss Malvina. There must have been something more than imagi nation in it all. But there, now. That sounds as if I were helping her to cast discredit on father."

Miss Malvina sighed wearily and turned her eyes toward the cold, still form on the bed. There was a note of pride in her voice when she said "Mother was always one of the terribly earnest sort. I used to tell her she must have some of the blood of the old Covenanters in her veins. Mother burnt out. She didn't rust out. Poor dear! How glad she must be to have done with it all-this fuming and fretting. I mean. Mother's wasn't a happy nature, at least not here below. I hope she is now. I've told you all I know, Olivia."

Olivia was standing, with meekly folded hands, looking down upon the dead woman. How strange it all was! Less than 12 hours ago that quiet form had quivered with passion as it towered over her father's sickbed, and those sealed lips had burled terrible accusations at him almost with their last activity. Now, if she should offer up her own vigorous young life in exchange for a single word she could not purchase it.

"Yes," she said slowly, "she looks as if she had found rest. I would give my life, though, to bring her back to auswer me one question. There would be no guesswork about it now. She knows, and, O dear Lord, I want to know! Just one question I want to

With a touch of exhausted patience Miss Malvina asked, "And the question?"

"Where are those papers?" "How should she know, child? What

would she be doing with papers that belonged to your father or to Thomas Broxton? She spent her whole waking time in that big chair. I never will be able to look at it without bringing her | der. back. How could she have found any papers? And, if she had, she would have turned them over to the person they belonged to. Mother was too honest to trick her worst enemy. If I sound peevish and cross, child, bear in mind, that I, too, have gone through an ordeal."

Olivia drew in her breath with a quick gasp of excitement. She was too absorbed in the terrible mystery she was trying to unravel to take any note of the tired look on the plain face she was searching.

"Ah, something else comes back to me! I feel like some one who has had a clew put into his hands, but it is so frail and delicate he is afraid to strain pers. Believe me, it was all the fancy | it for fear of losing it forever. It comes back to me when you speak of that chair. I remember one day-it was long before my garden party-I came here to see you about something. You were not here, and I was afraid of her. I have been afraid of her ever since I was a little child. I drew back when I saw you were not in the room and waited on the porch for you. 'Mother' Spillman was down on her knees before that big chair acting so queerly. I thought at first she might

be praying." "Which I don't doubt she was," said Miss Malvina coldly. "She was very devout. Mother prayed a great deal. I expect you disturbed her at her morning devotions."

"I don't think I disturbed her," said Ollie humbly. "I stole right away very quietly and left her patting the chair an over with her hands outstretched." "Patting the chair? Mother some-

times got very fervent in prayer." "Oh, now I can see you are getting angry with me! Think of it, Miss Malvina-my father may soon be as your mother is now. When they meet up yonder, she will know him as he is. All mistakes, all doubts, will be set to rest forever for them. But for me-oh, of those lost papers—of her finding | help me to find those papers before he leaves me! I must have them!"

> Sobs shook the tired young frame, and Miss Malvina's rising resentment was swept away on the tide of returning pity. She got up and put loving arms about the weeping girl.

and yours, too, all this wild talk about a few lost papers may be dropped for the time being? It don't seem quite respectful to her, lying there so still sorry you may feel for me. I can stand | and helpless, with us questioning her meanings and criticising her acts. I am only asking you to wait a little while."

"Forgive me." clasp and dropped on her knees by the bed. Malvina left her there. It would "I will relieve your mind as far as | do her good to wrestle with herself alone. She passed into the desolate little sitting room and paused by the table with its burden of rarely used gate the night the colonel died, hoping | books. Ollie joined her there presently.

have told her that I forgive her. Of course she did not know what she was saying."

be just to her."

Suddenly the girl's eyes widened. me, Miss Malvina, promise me," she went on, with growing excitement. "that when it is all over-I mean when there is nothing more to do for her-

you will let me come back here and"come whenever you can spare a mo- | had never thought to notice. ment from your own dear invalid."

eyes were burning feverishly. "I mean may I come back and examine that chair?"

It was on Miss Malvina's sorely tried | won't be good for me." heart to ask, "Are you, too, going daft over Thomas Broxton's affairs?" but the girl's hot cheeks and shining eyes if she should break down under the strain, with a greater ordeal ahead of | drawer had fallen out once more.

So she said soothingly: "You can do the old drawer! Mother must have just whatever you choose with anything that is mine, Ollie. The old chair has served its purpose. I don't care if you pull it all to pieces. Mother, I am sure, would be the first one to say 'Humor her.' Now go home, my dear. Your father may be calling for you. I wish I hadn't sent Jimmie Martin for Mrs. Lyons. I've got no one to see you home, and it is a real dark night."

"I am not afraid. I am coming back as soon-as soon"-"Yes, as soon as we have put mother away by father's side in the little

churchyard. But now go home." She watched the small, graceful figure until it became invisible by reason of the twisted road and then closed her front door softly.

Could there be anything in all this talk about some lost papers? "Suspicion is catching, I do believe."

## CHAPTER XV.

THE TITLE DEED TO BROXTON HALL. Mrs. Deb Lyons and Miss Laetitia Gaines, who were what might be called mortuary ministers to all defunct Mandevillians, stood drawing on their outdoor things with evident reluctance and inward resentment. It was the first time in long years of service that they had been informed that they need not stay all night. It was unprece-"You are quite sure, Malvina, you

would rather have us go than stay?" "Quite sure, Mrs. Lyons," the mourner said, with firm lips. "And you won't be afraid to spend

the night here all alone?" night of the last 30 years right here?" a single small sheet of paper, yellow "Yes, but not"-

about? You want to know if I am days of her remote ancestors-"what afraid to stay here alone with mother? on earth?" Oh. no! She and I are used to it."

Miss Lactitia gave a little gasp and she spread this one immediate glanced toward the room for whose der the lamp and, with how passive tenant she and Mrs. Lyons had planted on the table done everything decently and in or- every faculty of her brain

"Yes; but, Malvina, you know it is attention, she leaned back in her different now."

"Yes; some things are different. It is not a very far cry to your house or | Hall could not be sold; that the to Mrs. Lyons' either, Letty, if I should need anybody, and you have ting it back. Why, Mr. Westover both been awfully kind."

After that there was nothing to do see it all now. She kept her but to leave her alone with her dead. from me for fear I would care The clock was striking 10 as Miss papers straight to Mr. Mar. Malvina turned the key in her front which is just what I should do door, shutting out all intruders effec- only"tually. Lifting the lamp from the center table, she passed with it into her brought her to her feet with a se mother's presence. Clasped in the fold- She opened the big family Bill ed hands were some flowers that Oliv- the table and swept the papers in ia had come back to bring as a peace for concealment. "It was nobode offering.

"I wanted to bring them myself," spite of her." She opened the she said, lifting heavy eyes to Miss with an unwelcoming smile. Malvina, "so that you should feel very sure that all the hardness had gone out of my heart. I could not stay at home. Father still refuses to let me come into his room. I wanted something to do, so I came." Then she had flitted out into the darkness again, a lonely, pathetic figure.

Malvina stood pondering, not the flowers, but the act she had resolved

"I might as well do it now as at any other time. It will help me through with my lonely vigil. It is a simple act of justice to you, mother. I am going to put that wild notion about those papers to rest. I can't bear to have other hands searching among your things, though I did promise that poor unhappy child she might. You know it is not I that am mistrusting you. mother, dear, and I think you are well pleased to have me clear your name from the suspicion of hiding papers that did not belong to you."

With this apology to her dead for what she was about to do she returned to the sitting room. The gay chintz covered chair had been pushed back against the wall. She advanced toward it resolutely.

"I believe I'd rather have the plain black horsehair showing anyhow. It is more in keeping with a funeral," she said and went to work. Kneeling before the old chair, she set

about untying the numerous tapes that "Olivia, don't you think, for my sake kept the slip cover in place. Many a knot was rendered all the more refractory by the tears she dropped upon it. The old armchair was very intimately associated with her life. As a child

she had watched her father's pen traveling patiently by the hour over the paper spread upon the little shelf attached to its right arm. She had a vague She slipped out of Miss Malvina's recollection of a mysterious drawer, located somewhere under the ample seat, which had an inconsiderate habit of tumbling out of its socket at the most unexpected moments, scattering its contents in the most unseemly fashion. Many a time had it compelled her to go down on her knees to recover the "I have asked her to forgive me. I disjecta membra of the next Sunday's

Later, when the Rev. Mr. Spillman had been transferred to a world where "Thank you, my dear, for trying to there was neither writing nor preaching of sermons, the chair had become identified completely with her mother. "And that is the very chair. Promise | But the drawer, which had been voted a family nuisance when subject to careless masculine handling, had never played any part in latter days. "Mother" Spillman had long ago carried into effect her threat to fix it so it should "I'll be only too glad to have you cease from troubling-how, Malvina

"Yes," she said, rising to her fee "You don't understand me." Her after conquering the last knot, "I'd rather never see this old slip cover again. Every flower in it would set me to thinking about mother, and that

With a skillful jerk she drew the cover from its loosened moorings. loud noise accompanied the act. I aroused her grave apprehensions. What startled her, coming so unexpectedly upon the solemn stillness. The old

"To think I should have forgotten crisscrossed some of these strings about it to keep it in place."

She stooped to repair the mischief she had done. A package of papers had fallen out of the drawer. She was sure she had never seen them before. With a frightened cry she gathered them into a parcel. A long envelope, soiled and unaddressed, had fallen out with the papers. Hastily replacing the drawer and reverently folding the old cover away in the closet, she carried the package nearer to the lamp for examination. With a strange sense of reluctance upon her she drew a chair up to the table and carefully manipulated the lamp. She was dallying with the moments. She was sure her mother had never made any use of that drawer. This package would prove to be a lot of worthless old papers left over from the days of her father's occupancy. The first paper which her trembling fingers unfolded settled that point forever.

Then all that talk about papers that concerned Thomas Broxton had not been the fancy of a disordered mind! Her mother had been secreting papers that belonged to the Broxton estate! With never a thought as to the ethics of the case she spread out paper after naper, mastering the character of each document with a clear, practical insight for details which had been her most marked mental attribute always.

"The inventories! Poor, dear mother! She always maintained that there were inventories of the Broxton plate and jewels that Tom ought to have. My, but what a lot of it there was!

"The title deed to Broxton Hall, made out, I suppose, by that old Englishman who built the Hall and opened "Afraid? Haven't I spent every up the place! But"-she had unfolded with age, covered with writing in the "Is it mother you are thinking small, cramped letters in vogue in the

Pushing all the other papers aside.

Finally, with a deep sigh of

"This, then, is what poor meant when she said that going to put Tom in the way is not worth a shoe button.

A sudden knock on her front a Mrs. Deb and Letty come



ots of

lew

Clarence Westover stood out Her first thought was of the lawren "Why, Mr. Clarence, is he gone?" "I have come to take Olivia home" "Olivia! Why, she isn't here." "Not here? Then where?"

He stepped inside with the work He was a young man who cordish resented being taken unawares.

"Oh, it is all right. I presume si went home by the lane, and I miss her by coming around the long we I suppose she has shut herself un her own room. The old man still s fuses to admit her to his room, ar it made her restless. Reuben said is told him she was going to bring ye some flowers. I am awfully sorry for you, Miss Malvina."

"Thank you. Mother was full of years, and she was ready to go." "Yes, exactly-perfect Christian and

all that sort of thing, I suppose." "I am sorry you were not watchfil enough to keep her from annoying Matthews the other night. I'm dre fully sorry, as much on Ollie's accom as anybody else's."

"Well, you see, it was this way: It erything was so peaceful and quiet first part of the night that I fell into sound sleep. When I waked up. first words I caught made me hesh to go in. I was afraid of making m ters worse and supposed she would away without any harm coming of I was afraid of adding to Mr. 1 thews' excitement by revealing presence at that hour of the nic Things were considerably mixed

"Yes, dreadfully mixed up. I know

He added an incongruous feature Miss Malvina's decorous little sitting New S room with his high bred face and fast ionable garb. As long as Olivia was The La not there to be fetched home he had latest better be going. He offered some mon ready made condolences and turned to ward the door. Malvina stopped him with a pleading look.

"Don't go yet, please, Mr. Clarence It looks as if Providence had sent you here on purpose tonight. I have a fall. vor to ask of you."

"Certainly, anything I can do," bt said, politely enough, but he looked s trifle bored. He was not devoid of kindly feelings, but really the "queet old party who had just shuffled off this mortal coil and the unbeautiful spitster upon whom he had intruded it search of Olivia" had never appealed very strongly to the aesthetic side of

Miss Malvina stood with her hands resting reverently on the big Bible. He hoped she was not going to ask him to read a portion of Scripture with her. That would be too much for his nerves As if direct contact with the book had brought strength to her, Miss Malvina suddenly lost all that timid nervous ness which possessed her whenever she came in contact with this elegant rather haughty young fellow. who made her "feel like a milkmaid for clumsiness." This man as Olivia's all anced husband and the owner of Brox. ton Hall had a much better right than she had to know about that particular paper. She entered abruptly upon the task she had set herself.

"I don't know that you ever heard of it, Mr. Clarence, but my poor mother had a mania."

"Spare yourself, Miss Spillman. 1 heard every word she said to Mr. Matthews last night." "About-about-some papers and

things?" "Yes, poor old lady! She was really unsparing, dreadfully caustic. But of course it went for nothing. We all are knew, don't you know."

Miss Malvina flung back the lid of the big Bible and revealed the papers. "There are the papers my mother spoke about."

In life she had belped the world to cast discredit upon her mother. 10 shield Horace Matthews she had put at naught her mother's words. In death she would make reparation, so far as was possible. Westover turned an uncomprehending stare from the old ps. pers to the plain, twitching face upon which the lamp cast uncanny shades.

"So then there were some hidden documents. Any importance, do you suppose?"

(To be continued.)