AN AMERICAN GIRL.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHARES LOOKING UP.

There were others who echoed her ladyship's words afterward, though they echoed them privately and with more caution than my lady felt necessary. It is certain that Miss Octavia Bassett did not improve, as time progressed, and she had enlarged opportunities for studying the noble example set before her by Slowbridge.

On his arrival in New York, Martin Bassett telegraphed to his daughter and sister, per Atlantic cable, informing them that he might be detained a couple of months, and bidding them to be of good cheer. The arrival of the message, in its official envelope, so alarmed Miss Belinda that she was supported by Mary Anne while it was read to her by Octavia, who received it without any surprise whatever. For some time after its completion, Slowbridge had privately disbelieved in the Atlantic cable, and, until this occasion, had certainly disbelieved in the existence of people who received messages through it. In fact, on first finding that she was the recipient of such a message, Miss Belinda had made immediate preparations for fainting quietly away, being fully convinced that a shipwreck had occurred, which had resulted in brother's death and that his executors had chosen this delicate method of breaking the news.

"A message by Atlantic cable?" she had gasped. "Don't—don't read it, my love. L—let some one else do that. Poor—poor child! Trust in Providence, my love, and—and bear up. Ah, how I wish I had a stronger mind, and could be of more service to you."

"It is a message from father," said Octavia. "Nothing is the matter. He's all right. He got in on Saturday."

"Ah!" panted Miss Belinda. "Are you *quite* sure, my dear—are you quite sure?"

"That's what he says. Listen."

"Got in Saturday. Piper met me. Shares looking up. May be kept here two months. Will write. Keep up your spirits.

"MARTIN BASSETT."

"Thank heaven!" sighed Miss Belinda. "Thank heaven!"

"Why?" said Octavia.

"Why?" echoed Miss Belinda. "Ah, my dear, if you knew how terrified I was; I felt sure that something had happened. A *cable* message, my dear! I never received a telegram in my life before, and to receive a *cable* message was really a *shock*."

"Well, I don't see why," said Octavia. "It seems to me it is pretty much like any other message."

Miss Belinda regarded her timidly.

"Does your papa *often* send them?" she inquired. "Surely it must be expensive."

"I don't suppose it's cheap," Octavia replied, "but it saves time and worry. I should have had to wait twelve days for a letter."

"Very true," said Miss Belinda, "but—"

She broke off with rather a distressed shake of the head. Her simple ideas of economy and quiet living were frequently upset in these times. She had begun to regard her niece with a slight feeling of awe, and yet Octavia had not been doing anything at all remarkable in her own eyes, and considered her life pretty dull.

If the elder Miss Bassett, her parents and grandparents, had not been so thoroughly well known and so universally respected; if their social position had not been so firmly established, and their quiet lives not quite so highly respectable, there is an awful possibility that Slowbridge might even have gone so far as not to ask Octavia out to tea at all. But even Lady Theobald felt that it would not do to slight Belinda Bassett's niece and guest. To omit the customary state teas would have been to crush innocent Miss Belinda at a blow, and place her—through the medium of this young lady who, alone, deserved condemnation—beyond the pale of all social law.

"It is only to be regretted," said her ladyship, "that Belinda Bassett has not arranged things better. Relatives of such an order are certainly to be deplored."

In secret, Lucia felt much soft-hearted sympathy for both Miss Bassett and her guest. She could not help wondering how Miss Belinda became responsible for the calamity which had fallen upon her. It really did not seem probable that she had been previously consulted as to to the kind of niece she desired, or that she had in a distant manner, evinced a preference for a niece of this description.

"Perhaps, dear grandmamma," the girl ventured, "it is because Miss Octavia Bassett is so young that——'

"May I ask," inquired Lady Theobald, in fell tones, "how old you are?"

"I was nineteen in—in December."

"Miss Octavia Bassett," said her ladyship, "was nineteen last October, and it is now June. I have not yet found it necessary to apologize for you on the score of youth."

But it was her ladyship who took the initiative and set an evening for entertaining Miss Belinda and her niece, in company with several other ladies, with the best bohea, thin bread and butter, plum-cake and various other delicacies.

"What do they do at such places?" asked Octavia. "Half-past 5 is pretty early."

"We spend some time at the tea-table, my dear," explained Miss Belinda. "And afterwards, we—we converse. A few of us play whist. I do not. I feel as if I were not clever enough, and I get flurried too easily by—by differences of opinion."

"I should think it wasn't very exciting," said Octavia. "I don't fancy I ever went to an entertainment where they did nothing but drink tea and talk."

"It is not our intention or desire to be exciting, my dear," Miss Belinda replied, with mild dignity. "And an improving conversation is frequently most beneficial to the parties engaged in it."

"I'm afraid," Octavia observed, "that I never heard much improving conversation."

She was really no fonder of masculine society than the generality of girls, but she could not help wondering if there would be any young men present, and if, indeed, there were any young men in Slowbridge who might possibly be produced upon festive occasions, even though ordinarily kept in the background. She had not heard Miss Belinda mention any masculine name, so far, but that of the curate of St. James', and, when she had seen him pass the house, she had not found his slim black figure and faint ecclesiastic whiskers especially interesting.

It must be confessed that Miss Belinda suffered many pangs of anxiety in looking forward to her young kinswoman's first appearance in society. A tea at Lady Theobald's house constituted formal presentation to the Slowbridge world. Each young lady, within the pale of genteel society, having arrived at years of discretion, on returning home from boarding-school, was invited to tea at Oldclough Hall. During an entire evening, she was the subject of watchful criticism. Her deportment was remarked, her accomplishments displayed, she performed her new "pieces" upon the piano, she was drawn into conversation by her hostess, and upon the timid modesty of her replies, and the reverence of her listening attitudes, depended her future social status. So it was very natural indeed that Miss Belinda should be anxious.

"I would wear something rather quiet and—and simple, my dear Octavia," she said. "A white muslin, perhaps, with blue ribbons."

"Would you?" answered Octavia. Then, after appearing to reflect upon the matter a few seconds, "I've got one that would do if it's warm enough to wear it. I bought it in New York, but it came from Paris. I've never worn it yet."

"It would be nicer than anything else, my love," said Miss Belinda, delighted to find her difficulty so easily disposed of. Nothing is so charming in the dress of a young girl as pure simplicity. Our Slowbridge young ladies rarely wear anything but white for evening. Miss Chickie assured me, a few weeks ago, that she had made fifteen white muslin dresses all after one simple design of her own."

"I should think that was particularly nice myself," remarked Octavia, impartially. "I should be glad one of the fifteen didn't belong to me. I should feel as if people might say, when I came into a room, 'Good gracious, there's another.'"

"The first was made for Miss Lucia Gaston, who is Lady Theobald's niece," replied Miss Belinda, mildly. "And there are few young ladies in Slowbridge who would not desire to emulate her example."

"Oh," said Octavia, "I dare say she is very nice, and all that, but I don't believe I should care to copy her dresses. I think I should draw the line there."

But she said it without any ill-nature, and sensitive as Miss Belinda was upon the subject of her cherished ideas, she could not take offence.

When the eventful evening arrived, there was excitement in more than one establishment upon High street, and the streets in its vicinity. The stories of the diamonds, the gold-diggers, and the silver-mines had been added to, and embellished, in the most ornate and startling manner. It was well known that only Lady Theobald's fine appreciation of Miss Belinda Bassett's feelings had induced her to extend her hospitalities to that lady's niece.

"I would prefer, my dear," said more than one discreet matron to her daughter, as they attired themselves,——"I would much perfer that you would remain near me during the earlier part of the evening——before we know how this young lady may turn out. Let your manner toward her be kind, but not familiar. It is well to be on the safe side."

What precise line of conduct it was generally anticipated that this gold-digging and silver-mining young person would adopt, it would be difficult to say; it is sufficient that the general sentiments regarding her were of a distrustful, if not timorous nature.

To Miss Bassett, who felt all this in the very air she breathed, the girl's innocence of the condition of affairs was even a little touching. With all her splendor, she was not at all hard to please, and had quite awakened to an interest in the impending social event. She seemed in good spirits, and talked more than was her custom, giving Miss Belinda graphic descriptions of various festal gatherings she had attended in New York, when she seemed to have been very gay indeed, and to have worn very beautiful dresses, and also to have had rather more than her share of partners. The phrases she used and the dances she described were all strange to Miss Belinda, and tended to reducing her to a bewildered condition, in which she felt much timid amazement at the intrepidity of the New York young ladies, and no slight suspicion of the "German"—as a threatrical kind of dance, involving extraordinary figures, and an extraordinary amount of attention from partners of the stronger sex.

It must be admitted, however, that by this time, notwithstanding the various shocks she had received, Miss Belinda had begun to discover in her young guest divers good qualities which appealed to her affectionate and susceptible old heart. In the first place, the girl had no small affections; indeed, if she had been less unaffected she might have been less subject to severe comment. She was good-natured, and generous to extravagance. Her manner towards Mary Anne never ceased to arouse Miss Belinda to interest. There was not any condescension whatever in it, and yet it could not be called a vulgarly familiar manner, it was rather an astonishingly simple manner, somehow suggestive of a subtile recognition of Mary Anne's youth, and ill-luck in not having before her more lively prospects. She gave Mary Anne presents in shape of articles of clothing at which Slowbridge would have exclaimed in horror, if the recipient had dared to wear them; but when Miss Belinda expressed her regret at these indiscretions, Octavia was quite willing to rectify her mistakes.

"Ah, well," she said, "I can give her some money, and she can buy some things for herself." Which she proceeded to do; and when, under her mistress' direction, Mary Anne purchased a stout brown merino, she took quite an interest in her in making it.

"I wouldn't make it so short in the waist and so full in the skirt, if I were you," she said. "There's no reason why it shouldn't fit, you know," thereby winning the housemaiden's undying adoration, and adding much to the shapeliness of the garment.

"I am sure she has a good heart," Miss Belinda said to herself, as the days went by. "She is like Martin in that. I dare say she finds me very ignorant and silly. I often see in her face that she is unable to understand my feeling about things; but she never seems to laugh at me, nor think of me unkindly. And she is very, very pretty, though, perhaps, I ought not to think of that at all."

CHAPTER IX.

WHITE MUSLIN.

As the good little spinster was arraying herself on this particular evening, having laid upon the bed the greater portion of her modest splendor, she went to her wardrobe, and took therefrom the sacred bandbox containing her best cap. All the ladies of Slowbridge wore caps, and all being respectfully plagiarized from Lady Theobald, without any reference to age, size, complextion or demeanor, the result was sometimes a little trying. Lady Theobald's head-dresses were of a severe and bristling order. The of lace which they were composed was induced by some ingenious device to form itself into aggressive quillings, the bows seemed lined with buckram, the strings niether floated nor fluttered.

"To a majestic person, the style is very appropriate,' Miss Belinda had said to Octavia, that very day; "but to one who is not so, it is rather trying. Sometimes, indeed, I have *almost* wished that Miss Chickie would vary a *little* more in her designs."

Perhaps the sight of the various articles contained in two of the five trunks had inspired these doubts in the dear old lady's breast; it is certain, at least, as she took the best cap up, a faint sigh fluttered upon her lips.

"It is very large—for a small person," she said. "And I am not at all sure that amber is becoming to me."

And just at that moment there came a tap at the door, which she knew was from Octavia.

She laid the cap back in some confusion at being surprised in a moment of weakness.

"Come in, my love," she said.

Octavia pushed the door open, and came in. She had not dressed yet, and had on her wrapper and slippers, which were both of quilted gray silk, gayly embroidered with carnations. But Miss Belinda had seen both wrapper and slippers before, and had become used to their sumptuousness; what she had not seen was the trifle the girl held in her hand.

"See here," she said. "See what I have been making for you."

She looked quite elated, and laughed triumphantly.

"I did not know I could do it until I tried," she said. "I had seen some in New York, and I had the lace by me. And I have enough left to make ruffles for your neck and wrists. It's Mechlin."

"My dear!" exclaimed Miss Belinda. "My dear!"

Octavia laughed again.

"Don't you know what it is?" she said. "It isn't like a Slowbridge cap; but it's a cap, nevertheless. They wear them like this in New York. And I think they are ever so much prettier."

It was true that it was not like a Slowbridge cap, and it was also true that it was prettier. It was a delicate affair of softly quilled lace, adorned here and there with loops of pale satin ribbon.

"Let me try it on," said Octavia, advancing, and in a minute she had done so, and turned Miss Bassett about to face herself in the glass. "There!" she said. "Is that better than——well, than emulating Lady Theobald?"

It was so very pretty, and so becoming, and Miss Belinda was so touched by the girl's innocent enjoyment, that the tears came into her eyes.

"My——my love," she faltered, "it is so beautiful and expensive, that—though indeed I don't know how to thank you—I am afraid I should not dare to wear it."

"Oh," answered Octavia, "that's nonsense, you know. I am sure there's no reason why people shouldn't wear becoming things. Besides, I should be awfully disappointed. I didn't think I could make it, and I'm real proud of it. You don't know how becoming it is."

Miss Belinda looked at her reflection and faltered. It was becoming.

"My love," she protested, faintly, "real Mechlin! There is really no such lace in Slowbridge!"

"All the better," said Octavia, cheerfully. "I'm glad to hear that. It isn't one bit too nice for you."

To Miss Belinda's astonishment, she drew a step nearer to her, and gave one of the satin loops a queer, caressing little touch, which actually seemed to mean something. And then suddenly the girl stooped, with a little laugh, and gave her aunt a light kiss on her cheek.

"There!" she said. "You must take it from me for a present. I'll go and make the ruffles this minute, and you must wear those, too, and let people see how stylish you can be."

And without giving Miss Bassett time to speak, she ran out of the room, and left the dear old lady warmed to the heart, tearful, delighted, frightened.

(To be Continued).

Life in Chicago.

Visitor (in Chicago)—I should think you would be dreadfully afraid of burglars in a place like this.

Hostess—Burglars? Mercy, no. We don't mind the burglars. It's the police we're afraid of.

Of Two Evils Choose the Lesser.

Mrs. Lumkins—Joshua, I am going to a dentist s to have a tooth pulled out. You mind the baby while I'm gone.

Mr. L. (jumping for his hat)—Say, you mind the baby and I'll go get a tooth pulled, you know.

Many a towering ambition has been crushed, many a cupful of happiness has been converted into dregs of bitterness, from the neglect of a young man to become thoroughly acquainted with a girl before marriage.

Mr. S. M. Donaldson has accomplished the remarkable feat of riding his bicycle from Edinburgh to London, 394 miles, in 2 days, 6 hours and 50 minutes—less than 55 hours—over roads unfavorable from wetness. This is little more than 7 miles an hour, nclusive of time necessarily taken for rest and refreshment.

A humane New York undertaker delayed a funeral the other day. The dead man had not paid for his first wife's burial, and once the undertaker got him in his grip he did not propose to give him up—dead or alive—until the bills were all paid. The matter was settled by the pall-bearers contributing enough to appease the undertaker, who allowed the corpse to proceed to the grave. Undertakers' rings are all of the same metal.

EGYPTIAN CHICKENS.

How They Are Hatched by Millions in Rude Incubators.

The Egyptian chickens are smaller than the American variety and the eggs are only about half as large as those laid by the speckled hens on Uncle Sam's farm. The Egyptians are, however, far in advance of us in the science of raising chickens, says Frank G. Carpenter, and the incubating establishments of the country hatch out eggs by the millions every year. At a hatching establishment near the pyramids the farmers trade fresh eggs for young chicks, and the rate is two eggs per chick. Another artificial egg hatchery turns out 500,000 little chickens every season, and the oven crop of chickens in Egypt amounts, accord- to figures furnished me by the Consul-General, to more than 20,000,000 of chickens a year. We have about $200,000,000 worth of money invested in the fowl industry in the United States, an amount so large that all the money of Jay Gould could not equal it, and still we have to import more than 16,000,000 dozens of eggs every year. If America would adopt the Egyptian hatching system we could sell eggs instead of buying them, and our farmers might buy little chickens to raise at a price of 20 cents a dozen. More than 20,000,000 of little chickens are sold each year in this way in Egypt, and there is a regular business in chickens just about old enough to walk.

The incubators are rude, one-story buildings, made of undried bricks, so arranged that the eggs are laid upon cut straw in racks in rooms, around the ovens, which are kept fired in during the hatching season. The outside walls are very thick and are built so they retain the heat, and the only thermometer used is the blood of the boy or man who attends the fires. By long practice these men learn just how hot the ovens ought to be kept, and they replenish the fires as the weather demands. A small amount of fuel is needed, and the temperature of the oven is about that of 98 degrees above zero. The fire is built up for eight or ten days before the eggs are put in, to thoroughly warm the hut, and after this time it does not go out during the season, which is from March until May. The eggs are turned four times a day while hatching. The whole outfit of an establishment which hatches over 200,000 chickens a year does not, I am told, cost more than $25, and one man runs the whole machine, keeping the fires, buying and turning the eggs, and selling the chickens. There are, in this incubator, twelve compartments, each 70 feet long, 60 feet wide and 16 feet high, and each of these compartments will hold 7,500 eggs at a time, or 90,000 eggs in all. It produced last year more than 230,000 chickens and did the work of more than 20,000 hens.

From Penury to Affluence.

B. K. Jamison, the banker, whose wealth nobody exactly knows, went to Philadelphia in his boyhood without money enough in his pocket to pay a week's board, says the *News*.

Director William S. Stokley knows what it is to make candy with his own hands and sell it over a little counter in his own shop.

Postmaster-General Wanamaker began his business life as a clerk in a Market street store upon a mighty small salary. He used to pay five cents for his daily dinner, consisting of a piece of pie and a glass of milk.

Frank Siddall, the great soap manufacturer, and the owner of some of the choicest property on the Jersey coast, to say nothing of mineral interests in Georgia, for years kept a rather insignificant grocery store near Eighth and Callowhill streets.

John B. Gest, Vice-President of the Fidelity Trust Gompany, used to wait for law cases in a little office, generally in vain.

George W. Childs worked for a long time in this city at such a salary that he only paid twenty-five cents for his noonday meals by practicing rigid economy.

Anthony J. Drexel, who is worth more than twenty-five millions of dollars, was the son of a poor portrait painter and thought himself lucky when he got a trifling stipend as a clerk in his father's ittle brokerage office.

The Unnecessary Verbiage of Law.

The world has outrun the courts and legal technicalities have outlived their usefulness. The progress of the people has been toward common-sense methods in all things, and the lawyer's "whereases," "aforesaids," and "parties of the first part" must be relegated to oblivion. There is a demand springing up for plain, direct English. There is really no sound reason why, to a man of ordinary intelligence, legal documents should be unintelligible. The technical verbiage employed is a relict of the age when that which was mysterious and could not be understood was esteemed to be beyond the comprehension of the common herd. The use of uncommon English in purely business circles would not be endured. Why, then, should the transfer of a piece of property be a process so labyrinthine and so mysterious that a man of sound sense cannot fathom it? It has been estimated that the dropping of the letter u in such words as honour, labour and the like has added to the world each year what is equivalent to the productive capacity of 500 able-bodied men. What would we not gain if from every legal paper and from every legal suit there should be removed that vast mass of superfluity, that antique verbiage, that bulk of repetition and solemn senselessness that now enwraps them as its shell enwraps the clam?

Self Preservation.

Wealthy Old Gent—What! Marry my daughter? You are being supported by your father.

Suitor—Yes, sir, but my father is tired supporting me, and I thought I'd better get into another family.

Summer resort extremities. Mattie Bond (on the verandah of the Mountain House)—Here comes a man across the fields. Chorus of feminine shrieks—Oh! Oh!! Oh!!! Oh!!!! A man! a man! Where?" Mattie Bond—No, it's nothing but a scarecrow after all. Chorus—The mean thing! Mattie Bond—Well, you needn't get mad about it. That's more than any of *you* have discovered so far.—*Time.*

ROMAN GIRL AND DOLL.

Touching Scene Brought to Light in the Ancient Italian City.

In May last the workmen who were digging the foundation for the new law courts in Rome discovered a sarcophagus buried thirty feet below the surface. Immediately the telephone called to the spot the members of the Archæological Commission; scientific and literary men who watch with jealous care all the excavations made in the Eternal City. Under their direction it was carefully raised and opened. Within lay the skeleton of a young girl, with the remains of the linen in which she had been wrapped, some brown leaves from the myrtle wreath with which, emblematic of her youth, she had been crowned in death. On her hands were four rings, of which one was the double betrothal ring of plain gold, and another with Filetus, the name of her betrothed, engraved upon it. A large and most exquisite amethyst brooch, in Etruscan setting of the finest work, carved amber pins, and a gold necklet with white small pendants were lying about. But what is most strange, as being almost unique, was a doll of oak wood, beautifully carved, the joints articulated so that the legs and arms and hands move on sockets, the hands and feet daintily cut, with small and delicate nails. The features and the hair were carved out in the most minute and careful way, the hair waving low on the forehead, and being bound with a fillet. On the outside of the sarcophagus was sculptured her name, Tryphæna Creperia, and a touching scene, doubtless faithfully representing her parting with her parents. She is lying on a low bed and striving to raise herself on her left arm to speak to her heartbroken father, who stands leaning on her bedstead, his head bowed with grief, while her mother sits on the bed, her head covered, weeping. It seems but yesterday, so natural is the scene, and yet it was nearly 18 centuries ago that these stricken parents laid so tenderly away their dearly beloved daughter with her ornaments and her doll.—*Youths' Companion.*

Earning a Million Dollars.

What about the distribution of wealth? Fortunes such as the world never saw since the days when "great estates ruined Italy" are growing up in the American Republic. We have four or five men who are worth from one hundred millions to two hundred millions apiece, we have sixty or seventy whose fortunes are estimated at from twenty millions to a hundred millions, while as for simple millionaires they are far too numerous to be counted. Consider what the possession of a single million means. Consider how long it would take an American mechanic or American laborer—I will not say such protected American laborers as the coal miners of Illinois or Pennsylvania—after supporting himself and his family, to save a million dollars. How many lifetimes? For though he were to live to the age of Methusalah he could not save a million dollars. If you would get any intelligible idea of what these fortunes of millions, tens of millions, scores of millions and hundreds of millions really mean, figure up how many workingmen's incomes—deducting of course the necessary subsistence of a man and family, for even the slave owner had to allow that to the slave—it would take to make such incomes as these fortunes represent.

And look again. While these monstrous fortunes are gathering in the hands of a few, one has but to read our daily papers to see how familiar we are becoming with conditions that we once thought possible only in effete monarchies of the old world, and could not exist in the free air of our democratic republic—with tramps and paupers and beggars; with charities that show the need of charity, with destitution and starvation, with crimes and suicides caused by want, or fear of want; with a struggle for existence on the part of great classes of the people that makes life hard, bitter and ofttimes imbruting—a struggle which grows not less, but more intense as these great fortunes go rolling up.—*Henry George at Baltimore.*

The Syndicate of Specalists.

The exposure of Graham's and of Brodie's fraudulent performances at Niagara Falls has had the unexpected effect of throwing the light of publicity upon a little syndicate of newspaper reporters in Buffalo, the members of which have been lending themselves to the schemes of imposters of the Brodie and Graham stripe. These reporters have acted as the correspondents of the papers in nearly all the large cities of the country, and it has been their duty to telegraph "specials" at rates which are considered highly remunerative. Their connection with Buffalo papers give them unusual facilities for news gathering and had they been content with the legitimate business they might have done very well after the manner of their brethern in other cities. But they were too ambitious. They tried to establish a "corner" in news and it must be confessed that they were running matters pretty much as they chose, when they tried to foist upon the world the story of Graham's adventure in in a barrel. It was a clever enough "fake" and paid the syndicate well and they did equally well with the Brodie story, but then came a reaction. It was soon proved that the reports were absurdly untruthful and the papers in other cities that had been duped by their Buffalo correspondents began to make inquiries. It was not long before the real facts in the case were discovered and now it looks very much as if another syndicate must go down before a burst of public indignation.

The boys have been bright and enterprising and have seriously impeded the regular channel for news, but they made the mistake which many older men have made of not knowing where to draw the line.—*Rochester Democrat.*

Knowledge Costs Money.

Irate Patron—See here, sir, I dropped a nickle into this machine, and nothing came out.

Agent—If nothing came out, that shows it's empty.

"But, sir, what do I get for my nickle?"

"Information."

Fond Father—Sir, my daughter is the apple of my eye. She shall continue under her father's wings. Van Gall—Thanks. I was just going to speak about that. Can you give us the northwest wing?