

A NIGHT IN HER LIFE.

CHAPTER IX.

The concert was over at last; the beaming Duke had shaken hands with most of his friends and now approached Kent, who had sent the ladies to be cloaked and was chatting with Ric Luxmore and a few others.

"Kent—the very man I want! Come and overhaul the programme takings! I fancy we have made more than I dared to hope for!"

Julian was obliged reluctantly to comply, loath though he was to leave his jealous watch over the door of the ladies' cloak-room.

"There," cried Mrs. Luxmore, when she had muffled Vanda, Phoebe, Madeline Sedgewick, and Cecily to her satisfaction—"now, girls, let us be on the move, or it will be so late before we get home!" Cecily, Mr. Randall has invited us to supper at his rooms. Let me see, Madeline; you are kindly driving Vanda, are you not? Phoebe and Cecily, come with me."

She hastened towards the door of the crowded room, leading Phoebe, and Cecily did her best to follow; but she was so repeatedly stopped by unknown ladies, all eager to congratulate her on her success, that, when she reached the doorway, she found herself quite separated from every one she knew.

She paused in the wide corridor, while the warmly-wrapped ladies passed out with nods and smiles, and felt rather forlorn. Mrs. Luxmore might have waited, she thought. She gazed along the fast emptying space to catch the sight of a friendly face. Some one approached whom she knew—Oscar Mallinger.

"Miss Rutland," he said, rather breathlessly, "Mrs. Luxmore has sent me to fetch you."

The statement astonished Cecily; but, as she had so lately seen him speaking to Mrs. Luxmore, she unwillingly accepted his proffered arm, and they walked off together.

"I am terribly afraid that Mrs. Luxmore will have driven off," he said deferentially; "they are bringing up the carriages so fast, they will not allow a minute's delay. I thought I saw you get into Mrs. Brace's carriage, and I believe I told Mrs. Luxmore so. But you will allow me the privilege of taking care of you for that short distance? You know we are invited to supper at Randall's rooms?"

"Mrs. Luxmore said so," answered Cecily coldly, with anger and rebellion in her heart.

She felt herself in a fix. Everybody she knew seemed to have gone, yet to accept the escort of this man was intolerable. How could Mrs. Luxmore have subjected her to such a vexation? But of course Mrs. Luxmore knew no reason why Cecily should dislike to meet Mr. Mallinger. She could imagine the good lady's distress when, hurrying Phoebe into the carriage, and getting in herself, she had turned to find that her other charge was not following her; and now, as the men-servants ruthlessly shut her in and called up the next carriage, she had cried out to the first person she saw to bring Cecily to her.

That it should have been Mallinger, of all people, to whom she had appealed was a real misfortune; but the girl was determined to brave it out. After all, it would agitate her less to drive alone with him than to drive alone with Mr. Kent!

Strange indeed, but true, as she admitted, with silent wonder.

"Gone, as I feared!" said Oscar sympathetically, as they reached the wide doorway. "Wait a minute however, and my brougham will be up—"

"Mr. Mallinger's carriage!" shouted the footman, and before she had time to reflect, Cecily found herself shut up with Oscar in the cosy little brougham, a fur rug drawn over her knees, and the wheels already in motion once more.

Could she but have known how madly the blood of this man was leaping through his veins, and the terrible excitement under which he laboured, she would scarcely have sat so quietly by his side.

There was a light moon, and it just lighted up her piquant profile, gray misty draperies, and the huge bouquet of snowy flowers, which filled the carriage with perfume.

Her companion was very silent; his time was not yet come, as he knew full well. He contented himself with stealthily observing her, noticing how well she was dressed—he was a man to whom such things appealed—and marvelling at his own folly in having allowed this prize so nearly to slip through his fingers. It seemed too wonderful to be true that on this night of all nights he should be free, his hated engagement broken, his bonds hung aside. For five minutes they drove in silence through the gas-lit and crowded streets—Cecily never noticed whither; but presently she nerved herself to say something which she felt must be said.

"I have not congratulated you on your engagement, Mr. Mallinger."

He turned round with a start, answering vehemently—

"My engagement! it is at an end, thank Heaven!"

A strange tremor ran through the girl's frame. For so many months she had been accustomed to say over to herself, "He is engaged to be married; he loves another woman." And now this wall of separation was broken down. His engagement was at an end—and he thanked Heaven! What would that news have meant to her three months back? Now, to-night, looking into her own heart, she realized that it was too late. Oscar Mallinger was nothing to her. She had no answer to make to him.

"Yes," he said, after a short pause; "that was the mistake of my life. My eyes were dazzled, my head was turned. I imagined that I could live without love and marry for position, like the rest of the world. But I was not so low as I thought I was. I did myself injustice—made a mistake. Do women ever pardon such a mistake, Miss Rutland?"

"I really cannot say."

He looked at her searchingly in the moonlight.

"You are cold and prudent—cold as the moon that shines upon you. You are right; I will be prudent too for a few moments."

Cecily was most unaccustomed to the language of passion; she wished she were anywhere else than driving tête-à-tête with this man, to whom she felt so strangely indifferent.

"Are we nearly there?" she asked with an impatient gesture.

"Yes, nearly there," he said, with a sudden movement towards her so tender, a sudden inflection of voice so emotional that the girl shrank back from him, sitting erect behind her snow-white flower fence and quailing inwardly with a fear she could not tell what. "You are shy of me; you barricade me with flowers," he said reproachfully. "Is it that you are shy or angry—which?"

"Neither, as a matter of fact," she replied, with considerable vexation; "but I have a reason to be angry with you, though none, that I know of, to be shy. You tried to make me believe you sent me this bouquet."

"Well?"

"Well, you did not send it," said Cecily, with marked displeasure.

"How do you know that?"

"The real donor has acknowledged that he sent it."

"Has he produced proofs?"

"Certainly not. I believe his word."

"Against mine?"

Cecily was silent. The swiftly-rolling carriage stopped at the moment, and in an instant Mallinger was helping her to alight. They stood before the wide doorway of a handsome block of residential chambers; she experienced an unspeakable sense of relief that the drive was over and that she should soon be among her friends again. A strange feeling of actual repugnance towards her companion had taken the place of her former fancy for him.

"It is the second floor," said Oscar, leading the way up the stone staircase.

Cecily followed. At the end of the second flight he opened a door, through the stained glass of which a rosy light streamed forth. A narrow corridor lined with good engravings and mezzotints met the view. Hurrying along it, he flung open a door, ushering the girl in, and, rapidly following, shut the door.

Cecily paused bewildered. She stood in a luxuriously-furnished sitting-room, with grand piano, lounges, antique furniture, Venetian lamps, and all the confusion of voluptuousness with which the Sybarite of our century can surround himself. But there was no sign of Paul Randall or of any of her party; she and Mallinger were alone. She turned indignantly towards him.

"Where am I? What have you done?"

"You are where I have often longed to see you. I have brought you to your home."

He answered, in tones which in their day had thrilled many a woman's heart.

"I do not understand you in the least. Explain your conduct at once," she said steadily, though her teeth chattered with vague terror and distrust.

"I have explained myself. You are in my rooms. All is fair in love, you know; and I love you, Cecily, as you must always have known that I loved you. I could not rest a moment, after once beholding your face to-night without pouring forth my adoration and my penitence. My love, my dream of sweetness, I know that you will hear me! I brought you here that you might hear me!"

The words were poured out in an undertone of the most intense feeling; the dark, burning, blue eyes were fixed upon her. Mallinger knew perfectly well what he said. He had not lost his self-control; but he was just excited enough to make him reckless of consequences. He meant no harm to Cecily—only to retrieve his lost celebrity, his lost position, by the magnificent stroke of engaging himself to the girl of whom all London to-morrow would be talking. His faculties had never been keener; but the mental balance was lost. His rapid rise, his ignominious fall, had partially unhinged him; for the time being he was a lunatic.

The girl heard his speech with repugnance. This the man whom she had professed to love? Why, she loathed, loathed, loathed him! For a moment strength left her, and she was terrified. Then a sense of her danger, her perilous position, brought back her courage at a bound.

"I will not hear you," she said, in a steady tone, though she was trembling violently.

"How dare you behave to me, or speak to me, in such a manner? And how dare you deceive me by bringing me here? Let me go at once!"

She moved to the door. He darted there before her, locked it, and slipped the key into his pocket.

"You shall and must stay and hear me!" he cried, angry and surprised at her manner.

"Cecily, don't be hard upon me—forgive me! I must speak!"

"You shall not speak a word!" she answered, deathly pale. "Do you know what you are doing? Mr. Mallinger is strangely altered since I knew him, if he can detain a lady against her will."

"It is you—you who are altered," he returned, in tones tenderly, passionately reproachful. "You are not the Cecily whom I knew, but some one changed—spoiled by prosperity! You have forgotten me; but I cannot forget!"

"Mr. Mallinger, you will let me pass that door at once! No further delay will endure!" Her eyes flamed as she advanced close to where he stood. She was so angry that for a moment terror was forgotten.

"Unlock that door!" she said, between her teeth.

He made a movement towards her as if he would have taken her in his arms. She sprang backwards, away from him, clenching her small hand.

"If you touch me, I'll strike you!" she said furiously. "You are a bad man! What excuse have I given you to treat me like this?"

"Are not you yourself enough for anything?" asked Oscar, driven still more out of himself by her resistance. "Do you dare pretend to have forgotten the past—to have forgotten all it held for you and me? Were you to look me in the face and say 'You do not remember, I would not believe you! You played the 'Abschied'-to-night!'"

"I decline to hold any sort of conversation with you, sir. I will not enter upon the subject. It is as useless as it is ungentlemanly of you to keep me here. The only course open to you is to apologise to me and let me go."

"I will not let you go until you listen to me," he said. "See, I obey your wishes; I do not even approach you, though I long to take you in my arms. Instead, I kneel before you—I, who never knelt to human being before. I want your pardon. Do you not understand?"

There was no answer. The girl's eyes were fixed slightly upwards; her hands were joined. She was praying.

"Cecily, have you no pity, no pardon?"

"None, sir. What is the meaning of this mockery—crying for pardon to the prisoner whom you refuse to release?"

"You will not understand! I mean pardon for my infamous behaviour in leaving you, whom I loved, to engage myself to Blanche, whom I did not love."

"It is a matter of absolute indifference to me Mr. Mallinger, to whom you choose to engage yourself. You are raving, I believe! It is your intention to insult me, and you are succeeding very well!"

"You dare to pretend to misunderstand me?" he cried, springing to his feet. "Behave—I tell you, behave! I understand you perfectly. Your resentment is natural; but I will atone. See how I abuse myself before you! Oh, my darling, my only love, my whole life shall show you the depth of my repentance!"

"Let me go, then?"

"Yes, yes; you shall go immediately! Only speak the words—only say to me, 'I forgive you, Oscar, all the shameful past, and I will be your wife—that is what I want you to promise; for that I brought you here! Love makes opportunities; and this is mine! Only say you will be my wife, and I release you instantly! Have pity upon me, my own; I suffer terribly!'"

He was kneeling by the table, and as he spoke, he laid his arm upon it, dropped his fair head with its waving locks upon his arm, and waited in an attitude of abandoned love and grief. Presently Cecily's voice sounded, icy cold and clear.

"There must be no doubt about this matter," she said, calmly. "I am willing to believe that you are acting under a complete misapprehension of my feelings. I have nothing to forgive you for. You have not injured me until to-night; and I would sooner be tortured to death than be your wife! Now I think that is clear. There can be no further object in prolonging this interview."

He raised his desperate face from its lowly hiding-place, and the look of it sent a vague horror through Cecily. She felt as though she were in a dreadful nightmare from which she must soon awaken. Naturally she was ignorant of the full gravity of the consequences which might arise from her present position; but she had that instinctive dread, that shrinking from evil which seems to be innate in all good women.

Heavily Oscar arose from his knees, brushing his hand over his beautiful eyes. He seemed weighed down, crushed by her words; and she hoped he might be going to unlock the door. Instead he went to a table-drawer, unlocked it and took out a beautiful little revolver. The table was an exquisite Venetian *Cinque-cento* bureau, and a small copper lamp standing upon it shed its light over the young man's beautiful face and head, over his hands and the murderous little weapon they held. Cecily gazed at him as if fascinated.

"You will not terrify me with firearms!" she said contemptuously. "Are you going to shoot me?"

"You!" he said, turning to her, while tears sprang into his eyes. "You! I would not hurt a hair of your head! I love you, Cecily, cruel, beautiful that you are! I cannot bear my life without you. Do you think I could bear to see you the wife of another man—the man who gave you those flowers? No! I am going to blow my own brains out!"

She laughed scornfully.

"I am unsophisticated, but not quite the country rustic you imagine me. I am not to be frightened by melodrama. People do not commit suicide for love nowadays."

"You know nothing about it!" he answered passionately, his whole manner changing. You do not know or understand that you are life—life itself—to me. If you still adhere to what you said just now, if you meant it, I swear to you I will shoot myself before your very eyes."

"I am not afraid; I do not believe you," she replied, undaunted. "You must be out of your senses. But none of this nonsense has any effect with me. You may as well release me. Oh, Mr. Mallinger—with a sudden change of tone—"be yourself—be for a few moments what I used to think you! Reflect on the cowardice, the dishonourableness of your conduct; set me free! Tell me you are sorry to have grieved me!"

"Cecily," he cried, laying the revolver upon the table and approaching her. "I will! I will do or be anything you bid me for one kind word! Oh, my darling, think of the past! You remember all! I see—I know you do. If I could tell you how I felt when I went down to Greyfield this Christmas, when I saw all the old haunts where we used to be so happy together! How my conscience smote me! How I longed to hear you say you forgave me, till the longing dominated me completely! Weak I have been, sweet love, but never disloyal. I loved and loved you on and on, even when promised to another. Cecily, I am desperate—I am at bay! I do not stop to reason, or reflect, or apologise. I love only you, madly, blindly, completely, for ever and ever! You are mine—you must be! It is Heaven's law, and no one may contradict it. You are mine, my love, my wife, and you know it! Drop the mask—yield yourself up; you belong to Oscar and no other!"

The wildness of his words increased; he was losing all control over himself. The impassioned appeal struck Cecily mute and motionless. She stood as if fascinated, while he poured out the torrent of his passion. It was genuine enough. He did love her, as he understood love—weak, base, and degraded. He recognised her purity and integrity and clung to her as his only hope of salvation. She could see his terrible emotion, but she knew only one of its causes. Of his formidable array of debts and dispraise she was of course entirely ignorant. Like all men of his stamp, he had, immediately on his engagement, traded largely on his expectations. Great extravagance had been necessary to him in keeping up appearances among the society in which he moved. Now that the engagement was broken, his creditors in a body would surround him. He was already involved in a lawsuit which might result in heavy damages. He was absolutely reckless, absolutely despairing. He cared neither what he did nor what became of him if he could not have Cecily.

Seeing her silent still, regarding him with wide eyes, his passion and the excitement under which he was labouring swept up over him and mastered him. He seized her in his arms, drawing her strongly and tightly to him, and kissed her on the mouth repeatedly and madly. For a moment she was powerless, breathless, horror-stricken, bewildered, almost stunned. Then con-

sciousness and almost superhuman strength returned. Wrenching herself away, she sprang a step from him, and, with clenched fist, struck him upon the mouth a blow which drew blood from every knuckle; and, finding her voice, she cried aloud, as she called the blow—

"I hate you!"

He staggered back against the table, and his hand went feeling behind him for an object which lay there. The terrified girl ran wildly round the room, frantically pulled at the door-handle and uttered cry upon cry. Then, suddenly turning, she beheld Oscar slowly raising the revolver to his temple with a look upon his face indescribably horrible and fixed.

With an impulse of womanly compunction, she rushed towards him. He held out his left hand to ward her off. Reckless of her danger, she grappled with him and tried to seize the pistol.

There was a sharp report.

CHAPTER X.

Julian Kent left Camelot House with a feeling of disappointment, and in some irritation. By the time the garrulous Duke released him, every one had gone home. He emerged to find the corridors, so lately thronged with gay colours and lively groups, empty and deserted. The last carriage had rolled away. His forcible detention had cost him more than he knew. It had excluded him from Paul Randall's supper-party. In the hurry and excitement of the moment, the young man had forgotten the absent Kent.

However, the novelist was not a man given to moods or to unreasonable despondency. The most he had hoped for that evening had been the privilege of handing Cecily into her carriage and perhaps receiving a look, a smile to treasure in his heart on his homeward way. This had been denied him, but he would soon see her again. To-morrow he would go and call at Pemberton Square, and ask how she felt after her operation. Meanwhile he had a chance to do a kindness, and he would make use of it. He would go to Mallinger's rooms and find out if he needed help, either from brain or purse.

As he approached Roscommon Chambers, he saw the smart little brougham lately affected by the young celebrity moving slowly along the road, evidently waiting. He recognised the coachman as he passed.

"I may just catch him," he reflected; "he is evidently at home now."

He hurried up the public staircase, his mind full of Cecily. As he reached the first floor, he heard a sound which startled him out of his imaginings and for an instant arrested his footsteps—a woman's scream. With an instinctive dread in his heart, he dashed on; and another cry and yet another were distinctly audible. Then as he gained the stair-head, came the unmistakable sound of a pistol-shot; after which there was silence.

All sorts of horrible conjectures crowded upon his mind, each widely far from the truth. The sound proceeded most decidedly from the suite of rooms occupied by Mallinger, the entrance door of which stood open.

Kent dashed in and along the passage to the sitting-room door, which he tried to open; it was locked.

"Mallinger," he cried, rapping smartly at the panel, "let me in, I say! Are you there?"

No answer, no movement from within. Yet some one must be there, or why was the door locked? He waited a moment and then called again—

"Is nobody there?"

Applying his ear to the key-hole, he heard a sound—a slight sound as of the rustle of a woman's silk dress. Very soft steps crossed the floor; they paused at the door, and then a low voice asked—

"Who is it?"

He knew the voice instantly, and his brave heart died within him. A cold chill crept over every limb.

"Great heavens," he ejaculated, "what is the matter? What can possibly have happened?"

"Open the door!" said the same stifled voice.

"Where is the key?" he asked frantically.

"I cannot give it to you. You must open the door without it."

"Is Mallinger there?" he cried.—"Yes, he is."

"Why does he not open the door?"

No answer was returned.

"Cecily—Miss Rutland, I implore you to give me the key!"

"I cannot."

"Is it there?"—"Yes."

"Can you not pass it under the door?"—"No."

"What am I to do then?" he cried despairingly.

"Open the door," she repeated steadily. "Let me out, or I shall go mad!"

Kent put up both hands to his head as if to exclude the ghastly surmises pouring in upon him. Cecily—Cecily Rutland—in Mallinger's rooms, locked in, and past midnight! What could it possibly mean? Had he—Julian—been fatally mistaken in her? Could he be awake and sane, or was it a delusion—some other woman's voice which to his prepossessed imagination sounded like hers?

And, if Mallinger were there, why did he not open the door?

"You have not gone away?" suddenly wailed the girl's voice from within. It was hers, without a doubt.

"No—no," he answered hurriedly; "I am here. Shall I go and knock up the porter and get a key? No, wait a moment; how stupid I am! I think I can get to you through the bedroom, along the balcony, if you can open the window to me."

"I will—I will! Oh, for pity's sake, be quick!"

He wasted no more time, but dashed in through the bedroom, along the balcony, and in at the sitting-room window, which Cecily opened for him.

There she stood, so white and cold and rigid that it might have been her ghost; there was a look in her eyes that terrified him. Near the fire lay Mallinger, partly on the ground, partly on a sofa. He was in a twisted attitude, his face hidden, as if he had rolled over. His hands were clenched and his arms thrown out. On the hearthrug at his feet lay a pistol.

"Gracious Heaven!" cried Julian, with pale lips, as he went forward, with hurried yet uncertain steps, and stooped over the motionless figure. "Mallinger—Oscar, my lad, look up!" broke hoarsely from his trembling lips, as he turned the beautiful face up to the lamplight.

It was bath unmistakably; the open

fixed eyes told that. Julian almost reeled with horror as he began to realise it and as his glance fell upon the slowly spreading crimson stain on the white shirt front.

This was the end of the brief, brilliant history—the natural end, moreover. Oscar Mallinger's death was the direct outcome of his life. His creed, if he had one, had been a creed of despair. Now that things went wrong, what more fitting than to enter protest—to show his entire belief that he himself knew what was best for him and would take the law into his own hands?

Thoughts like these flashed with lightning speed into Kent's mind as he stood, gazing passionately down upon the beautiful yet terrible face of the dead. In the supreme shock and horror of the moment, he had almost forgotten Cecily. She gave no sign, and, as he laid Oscar's head back upon a pillow and turned quickly, he thought she must have fainted; but she was standing erect, with her back towards him, motionless.

"Miss Rutland."

She moved slightly without turning; she put up her hand to her face. He went to her and saw how she shuddered and shook from head to foot.

"Can you speak to me?" he asked softly.

"Do you remember—can you tell me—how this came about?"

She turned her face upon him, scanning his expression with dilated eyes, as if to see whether he distrusted her. Then seeing his look of grief and horror, she suddenly burst forth—

"I tried to prevent his doing it, but he would! I am not a murderer, I—I want to tell you! Oh—"

She broke off suddenly, with a violent fit of trembling, and staggered, clutching at a chair. He made a step forward and caught her. For a moment she seemed as if she would break away from him; then, as if hardly knowing what she did, she flung both arms around his neck, crying wildly and confusedly—

"Oh, hold me! Take me away! Don't let me see him! I feel so wild! I am going mad, I think! But I want to say something first; I am so thankful it was you—you. You can understand—you will listen to me. I did not do wrong; he told me a lie; he brought me here under false pretences. I thought we were going to Mr. Randall's rooms. He locked the door; he said he would not open it till I had promised to be his wife! His wife—I could not! You know I could not! Oh say I was right! I tried to stop him, but what could I do? Oh, take me away—let me go home! I cannot look at him; but it is not my fault, is it? Oh, say it is not my fault!"

"My poor child, my poor dear child," he said, with a depth of pity, of comprehension, of tenderness which soothed the frenzy of her excitement instantly. "I know—I understand. You could not help it; you have been most terribly wronged; but his judgment is taken out of our hands. Thank Heaven I came here to-night—that it was I who found you! Now I will take you home. Trust me; I will explain everything—arrange everything for you; you must just rest and be at peace. Will you trust me, Cecily?"

"With all my heart—anywhere, always," she cried softly, raising hereyes to his steadfast ones.

He drew her tenderly towards him, laying a hand upon her burning forehead, and whispered, as though he could not help it, the words "My Cecily!" before he led her through the window as fast as possible from the scene of terror, downstairs into the still waiting carriage, and so home to Pemberton Square.

Mrs. Julian Kent is much admired among her husband's very numerous circle of friends. She is a most happy and beloved wife, and the gentle sweetness of her manner is an additional charm. But one peculiarity of hers is frequently discussed with great wonder among her acquaintances. She can endure neither the sight nor the sound of a violin. A great deal is said, by those who do not know her intimately, about affectation and crazes which ought to be overcome; and they wonder that her clever and sensible husband does not break her of so fanciful an idea. But those who best know and love Cecily Kent know that there is a cause. The violin reminds her too forcibly of a certain terrible night in her life the dark memories of which no years of happiness have yet availed to efface.

ROBIN GRAY.

[THE END.]

Converting Coal into Electrical Energy.

The solution of the problem of converting coal directly into electricity, which is being grappled with by some of the first inventors of the day, is estimated to mean the opening up to mankind of benefits equal to twenty times those following in the wake of the steam engine, and the steam engines of the world to-day are doing work that would require the labor of 1,000,000,000 men. At present coal is burned under a boiler for the production of steam; the steam is passed through an engine and power is produced; then the power of the engine turns a dynamo and electricity is created. In the course of this long and elaborate process there is a clear loss of 95 per cent. of power, so that only 5 per cent. is really available. An electrician, who has faith in the ultimate devising of an electric generator, in which coal is shoveled in at the bottom and electricity taken out at the top and the enormous waste of present methods saved, has calculated that among the results of this change would be the possibility of a transatlantic steamship that now burns 300 tons of coal per day, doing a day's work with but fifteen; or, with the present coal consumption being able to cross the ocean in less than two days. In the same way, an electric locomotive, carrying its own supply of coal and generating its own electricity, would be able to haul a train of cars from Boston to New York in less than two hours. Furthermore, the machinery of our great manufactories, which now require to move it power equal to the labor of 2,000,000 men, could then be operated for one-twentieth of the present cost.

Charity.

Farmer (emerging from shadow of hen-house)—"Hold on there, you old rascal! I saw you coming an' I jest thought you wouldn't be able to go by that pullet."

Rastus—"Go by dat pullet? No, sah—reckon not, sah! I see some humanity in me, sah. Yo' didn't 'pose I cud see a po' chicken roost out a freezin' night laik dis, did yo'?"

The term hand, used in measuring boxes, means 4 inches.