A CLOSE RELATION.

CHAPTER III.—(CONTINUED.)

In others' sight he never descended from the dais and his motive power was never unveiled. I am confident that the deception was maintained in their most private interviews, that she assumed his superior knowledge and skill, and he graciously allowed the assumption. In wholesome disgust at the deception, I could not but recall the plea by which Katherine Parr saved her head. In reading aloud Strickland's "Queens of England" to Mrs. Upton, I could not quite hold my voice steady at the passage describing the diplomacy of the royal and most Christian consort:

"'I have always held it preposterous for a woman to instruct her lord; and if I ever presumed to differ with your highness on religion, it was partly to obtain information for my own comfort regarding nice points on which I stood in doubt and sometimes because I perceive that, in talking, you were better able to pass away the pain and weariness of your present infirmity, which encouraged me to this boldness in the hope of profiting withal by your majesty's learned discourse.'

"'And it is so, sweetheart?' replied the king. 'Then are we perfect friends.'"

Raymond Wentworth's wife could have been perfect friends with him upon no other terms.

"The husband is the head of the wife," I heard him reply once, and pointedly, to Don's argument for the equality of the sexes. "If your principle were put into practise, the household would be a double-headed lusus naturæ."

And my dear mother applauded the phrase, her fine eyes shinning with pride and love upon her superb lord.

He was never cross to her in public, never dimitted the least of the graceful attentions due from the chief to an honored lieutenant; yet I think he was never altogether rid of the apprehension that she might penetrate the secret of her power and his weakness. Her loyalty must have surprised him in moments of candid self communing, if such ever visited him.

Husband and wife stood together this morning, just within the entrance of Mrs. Upton's drawing-room, evidently expectant of a summons to the upper floor. Both were tall. There was hardly the difference of half a head between them; yet, as I perceived from the stairs, he was looking down upon her from the height of one of his loftiest and blandest moods. His well-fitting morning-coat was buttoned below the swell of his broad chest; his shoulders were squared resolutely; one gloved hand holding his silk hat was cast behind him; the other played with a silky chestnut moustache without hiding a politely wearied smile. I knew the mood for one that tried my undisciplined soul more than downright and vulgar abuse would have done. I caught, too, the pleading intonations that sought to dispel it

Both turned at my footsteps, Dr. Wentworth leisurely, with perfunctory interest in the report I might bring; my mother eagerly, her heart in face and upon tongue.

"How is she this morning?" she asked before I could kiss her.

"Very bright and brave!" I answered, breathlessly. "And quite comfortable. She wishes you to come up."

Dr. Wentworth bowed in stepping back for his wife to pass. Looking around at the stair-foot, she saw that he did not follow and made an anxious pause.

"Come, Raymond, dear."

"Not without an invitation, love. If our friend desires my presence, she will send for me."

I bit my lip. To strike him I must thrust through my mother's heart.

"The 'you' was plural," I said, with tolerable grace. "Mrs. Upton mentioned you both by name."

"She is very good. Your mother and Dr. Barker have shown themselves so competent to the management of the case that I am, at best, but a supernumerary."

"You are physician-in-chief," returned my mother, emphatically. "Without whom we cannot take a step."

"Opinions may differ upon that, as upon other points, my dear." But he condescended to follow her up the stairway.

Left below,—for I, at least had nothing to do with the consultation,—I stamped rather than walked up and down the floor in a paroxysm of angry mortification. To see such a woman the puppet to such a man would stir any lover of justice to indignation. When the puppet was the woman dearest to me, the object of my exulting adoration, and the man was despised in my eyes the exhibition drove me to frenzy. I anticipated the prolonged penance my mother must pay for abetting her friend's visit to the city physician, if she had not herself proposed it. Her husband's vanity was made up of nerve-tips, and, as his manner showed, every nerve was smarting. With the intense self-consciousness of one who knows himself to be as weak as vain, he descried with the naked eye intentional slights which greater souls could not have seen with a microscope, and resented them in inverse proportion to his deserts. While the precious life of one whose goodness to him and to his had been beyond computation hung upon the flutter of a breath, he could stand to consider questions of precedence and ceremony, and stab as he best understood how to pierce the soul already racked with anxiety as to the fate of her beloved friend.

They were a long time up-stairs, I began to tell myself, as my impatient fit subsided. It was silly and selfish in me to waste time and temper upon what could not affect her whose interests were now paramount. Whatever might be my private opinion of Dr. Wentworth's mental and moral calibre, the sufferer up-stairs believed in him, and must be sustained in that faith until the great trial was over. He was, beyond doubt, a skilful surgeon. His head and, I could not but add, his heart were cool; his hand was steady and deft. Surgery was his specialty, and several critical operations successfully performed by him had given him more than provincial fame. Only a week ago he had been called into consultation with a corps of celebrated metropolitan doctors upon a case of unusual interest, and, according to his theory, had taken a prominent part in that which resulted in a cure noised abroad as miraculous. Impartial judgment decided that while he should never give the casting vote as to the need of the knife, he was competent to wield it when wiser men had decreed the use of it. I wondered—as from sudden inspiration—if this were not also my mother's secret persuasion. Beneath the show of absolute trust and admiration that galled me to the quick did the professional side of her rate him at his exact value? Was her apparent endorsement of all he did the mask for a brave, sustained effort to straighten his deflections and ward off the consequences of his erring judgment?

As the meaning of what daily went on under my eyes grew and glowed before my contemplation, my heart stood still. From wondering reverence for the grand creature in whose dual life conscience and heart touched hands across what would have seemed to timid natures a mighty chasm, fancy passed into speculation as to what would or might be the end of the pious fraud. How long would the sensitive vanity of the occupant of the throne brook the whisper of the concealed vizier? Since no mortal is ubiquitous, might not some exigency find him alone and unprepared? A single failure in tact would wreck the wife's influence. A word such as Mrs. Robb had dropped to the effect that she was "firsted, not seconded" by his partner, would infuriate him to the rending of the silken leading-strings so cleverly disguised. And then

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My hands and feet were numb with cold; a veiwless wall closed upon me and hindered respiration. When I heard the visitors descending the stairs, I shook off, as it were, a horrible nightmare, and ran into the library. Just then I could not look into my mother's eyes, or support her husband's presence. The long window through which I would have fled into the garden was fast, and the bolt was stiff. There was no time to struggle with it. I must have wrought myself into a state akin to dementia, for I had but the one motive in mind of eluding observation until I could comport myself more decorously than was practicable just now.

I stood close against the frame of the door connecting library and drawing-room, folding the velvet portiere about me. I never thought of the chance that they might linger in the outer apartment to consult as to the case they had examined together. I marvel still that my mother's fine sense of propriety did not dictate a different course.

The first sentence I overheard put the discovery of myself out of the question:

"If you are bent upon murdering your friend, you must choose some other confederate. Your favorite Dr. Barker may be less scrupulous than your husband."

To my surprise, the reply was in the wife's mildest voice:

"I have not cited Dr. Barker's opinion to yours, Raymond. I merely questioned if your diagnosis were altogether correct. She has remarkable will-power, and is less nervous than one would believe in the circumstances. I think if the truth were told her she would instantly propose——"

"That is your theory. I have mine," broke in Dr. Wentworth, heedless of common courtesy. "If I am to perform the operation, it is, I submit, somewhat important that my veiws should have some weight. If you are to run the affair, do not shirk responsibility. That would be—womanish!"

I guessed at the sneering smile from his tone. As he grew insulting, my mother became calm. I divined, too, for whose sake she hid the writhings of a wounded heart and continued to argue in support of her position.

"It is because I value your reputation, and because this is no common case, that I urge mature consideration of all possibilities. My confidence in your skill is perfect. But I have heard you say that women are, sometimes, better judges than more learned men of one another's physical idiosyncrasies. The fear I have expressed is not new to me. It is based upon careful study of symptoms that some months ago excited my apprehensions."

It is strange that you have never alluded to them until lately. Yet not so strange, after all, perhaps. This is not the first instance by many in which I have been kept in the dark until you saw fit to admit me to your counsels. If I have not seemed conscious of this before, it was not that I have not observed and felt every indication of your growing independence of myself and such poor service as I have been able to render one so gifted and distinguished as Dr. Charlotte Salisbury—*Wentworth!*"

I have heard other men say cruelly unjust things to the women they had sworn to cherish,—men of piety and refinement, whom the world at large accredited, likewise, with humanity. No other exhibition of the power to wound, vested by law and gospel in husband or wife, ever appalled me as this unexpected demonstration from the suave, elegant physician. Had the woman he addressed shrieked, or sobbed, or swooned, I should have thought it natural. It was more sadly significant of the frequency of such scenes that the brief pause succeeding the last speech was not broken by so much as a sigh.

"There is the carriage, dear," was the next remark, in a full, gentle tone. "I am afraid we have detained you inconveniently long. I know how full your hands are. There is no need that this matter should be decided to-day. Further developments may make plain the path of duty and expediency. Would you like to have me go home now, or shall I stay with Mrs. Upton a little longer?"

He answered sulkily, evidently but half appeased by her deferential quary:

"Stay—if you like. Perhaps you may quiet measurably her intense nervous excitement. Give valerian, red lavender, or bromide of potassium, should it continue. It is of the last importance that she should be kept tranquil. I will look in again in about two hours. Let her suppose that I am to call for you in time to take you home to luncheon. She might be agitated did she suspect my second visit to be professional."

He had grown composed and perfunctory: the kiss without which he never left his wife for an hour was dutifully given: in the hall he raised his voice slightly, that the "*Au revoir*, my darling!" might reach the upper chamber and delude the invalid into belief of his easy mind with respect to herself. He was not consciously hypocritical, and better men find their tempers sweetened by overflow and gust.

Misled by the silence in the outer room into the idea that it was untenanted, I peered from behind my curtain. Through the front window I saw Dr. Wentworth, erect and stately, march down the walk and step into his carriage, leaning forward, as the horses started, to lift his hat to the wife he had left. She returned the salute with a wave of the hand, turned from her outlook, walked a few steps, paused irresolute and remained standing for a full minute, hands clasped tightly upon one another and head bent. Not daring to stir, I gazed at her whitening face with new agony in my heart,—the anguish of seeing her torn by suffering with which I might not intermeddle. She was hardly a dozen feet from me in body. Death could not have sundered us more completely in spirit. Had the man who wounded her been my father, I could have flown to her and mingled my tears with hers over his injustice and petulance. What I branded, mentally, as the monstrous relation she had assumed to this man cut her off from my sympathy with, or just apprehension of, the nature of that which made her vulnerable, and lent him the art to pierce her through with incommunicable sorrows.

The awful minute during which, all unconscious of my scrutiny, she stood motionless in the middle of the room, paling visage and clinched fingers testifying to the inward battle she must ever wage alone, was ended by her abrupt motion to cast herself upon her knees before a chair. Her face hidden upon her outstretched arms, she lay, rather than crouched there, dumb, still, but shaken by dry sobs more terrible to look upon than excess of weeping. I stole soundlessly to the long window nearest me, wrestled desperately with the bolt, and escaped into the shrubbery.

CHAPTER IV.

Half an hour elapsed before I dared show my face in Mrs. Upton's room. The scene was peaceful, bright with the sunlight that had crept around to the invalid's feet, and cheerful with the tones of the two friends. My mother had laid aside her hat, and produced from her reticule a purse she was crocheting as a Christmas-gift for her husband. Mignonette scent mingled with the half-bitter odor of a bowl of white chrysanthemums Don had set that morning upon his mother's table. Both ladies turned at the sound of the open door.

"Here is our truant!" said my hostess.

And my mother as blithely,—

"We were exchanging conjectures as to your hiding place, my daughter. I thought you might have walked over to see Kitty Wilcox. She called to see you this morning. We are agreed—Mrs. Upton and I—that you should not be kept in suspense any longer. Everything is settled. The operation is simple, and we think will be attended with little danger. It is to be done in a few days, and as quietly as posible. Our dear friend wishes this especially. Not a creature in the neighborhood is to know it. She can trust her servants, and the nurse to be brought from New York will be received as a visitor."

She had told me everything in half a dozen sentences, with no waste of words and in the matter-of-fact way that might go with the utterance of an unimportant piece of gossip. Her power of quelling nervous disorder was a gift. I thought how useless had been the prescription of a choice of drugs. Her gift had wrought like a charm upon her companion. Mrs. Upton's manner, which had been calm while I read and talked with her, was now almost gay. It was apparent that a weight had left her heart.

In very shame I struggled to emulate the bravery of the pair of strong women. I stooped to kiss the crown of silvery hair above the serene brow of one, and sitting down upon her footstool, asked certain questions as to symptoms and the regimen indicated by which the system was to be prepared for the excision. The child of two physicians, and the stepchild of a surgeon, was not terrified by the details. The thought of the ordeal was already familiar to me. But I must be instructed in the duties delegated to me as the custodian of the dear patient. I had a talent for nursing, and had often exercised it. I inquired boldly if I might not take the place and office of the professional city nurse. I engaged to obey orders up to the letter, and that my nerves would not play me false.

Mrs. Upton took me in her arms impulsively as I said it. I felt her tears upon my face as she spoke:

"Darling daughter! Greater love could no child have than this. It may not be. The burden is not for your young heart and shoulders. But I shall never forget—nor will Don—that you have begged to have it laid upon you."

My mother's decision was the same, and as prompt. She gave me, as a compensation for the disappointment, plenty to do. I was to see that the prescribed diet and rules for daily living received proper attention. We were to take several short drives each day, that Mrs. Upton might, without fatigue, get abundance of fresh air. Betweenwhiles she was to spend much time upon the lounge, and I must see to it that her mind did not dwell upon mournful or agitating themes.

"In short"—the dicator concluded in the firm, sweet voice that was like elixir to heart and spirit,—"you two girls are to have a 'jolly time' together, build up your nervous systems and freshen your complexions by keeping early hours,—and enough of them,—eating what you ought to eat, and leaving uneaten the things you ought not to eat, writing to Don every day, of course, and never letting him know now, or in days to come, that his mother was ever really ill in her life. That will be a secret worth keeping from him—and from C. A. R.!"

I recollected myself just in time not to tell her that the newspaper-woman, as she gloried in calling herself, had interviewed Don but yesterday as to the visit to Dr. Barker which both of them imagined was known to nobody outside of the two households. To keep back the remark was the first exercise of my new office of guardian. What I said, carelessly, instead, to hide the trifling awkwardness of the pause, was not well chosen:

"I will write at once to Kate Wilcox and excuse myself from her luncheon-party next week."

"My love! when you have ordered a new gown purposely for the occasion?" expostulated my mother.

"Upon what pretext will you withdraw the acceptance already sent?" said Mrs. Upton.

I answered them in one disdainful breath:

"As if I cared for wearing the new gown that once! Upon no pretext at all to her, except that circumstances over which I have no control oblige me to refuse myself the pleasure—and all that, you know. Do you suppose for one moment, dear Mrs. Upton that I could be so heartless as to leave you for a few hours of so-called pleasure? or that they could be anything but slow agony to me?"

"I know it better than you can tell me. Yet for my sake you will endure them. We cannot afford, at this juncture, to excite suspicion. It is altogether natural that you should spend the first week, or ten days, or even the whole term of Don's absence, with me. It is not natural—or, what amounts in society to the same thing—conventional, that you should retract a promise given to a friend because you cannot leave a woman who has cogent reasons for wishing to be thought well."

A shade of nervous worry, new to my sight, crossed the face. The serene depths of her eyes were ruffled; her hands shook in passing over my hair. She tried to recover her late manner but ineffectually.

"I should call it whimsical folly if another woman shrank with dread that she could not shape into words from the antemortem inquest that will sit upon me if the truth should take wind. I am old enough to put away childish horrors. But the fear is a mild edition of Prometheus's lacerated liver. I seem to hear and feel the vultures. Pray God my boy may never know of my weak, silly notions and my real pain!"

I sprang to catch her as she dropped to the side of her chair. The bluish pallor that had overspread her face at the station was there now; her hands plucked at her chest; her breath intermitted alarmingly. My mother loosened her clothing and lowered the adjustable chair to an easy angle; then bidding me support the lax figure, poured out something from a phial, administered it, and, her fingers on the sufferer's pulse, her lips set hard, her eyes upon Mrs. Upton's face, watched for the effect of the potion.

"The paroxysm is passing," she said, presently and reassuringly.

The patient opened her eyes upon a smile of resolute cheer.

"You are better now," said the sympathetic accents. "The worst is over. It was not a very bad attack."

A wan gleam responded. The weak hand groped for mine, and, feeling it to be icy cold, Mrs. Upton looked anxious.

"Don't let Sydney be frightened. Tell her what it is," she whispered.

My mother arose abruptly, and, going to a closet, took out another phial. For some moments she was too intent upon counting the drops of a dark liquid into a glass and measuring teaspoonfuls of water to mix with it, to speak. Not until she had held it to lips that were regaining color did she give sign of having heard the request concerning me.

"Sydney has never had an hyterical fit, but she knows that such are more alarming than dangerous. If she would be of use to you she must bear this in mind."

The admonition was upon her lips when her husband's ring was heard. She hastened into the hall and called to him over the balustrade:

"Come up at once, Raymond."

The tone was professional, and in ring authoritative. Some powerful emotion had mastered wifely reverence, or swept it aside for the instant. The summons was not obeyed in haste. In the stillness of expectancy we heard the visitor lay aside his gloves and hat upon the rack in the hall; then—I could hardly credit it of one whose good-breeding was a proverb—he breathed an opera-air between his teeth in the deliberate ascent of the stairs. A shade less of refinement would have converted it into a whistle. Mrs. Upton's eyes were closed again, and she did not appear to notice that anything was amiss. My mother avoided my eye; she paled perceptibly, yet met the laggard upon the threshold of the chamber with collected mien and ready word:

"Mrs Upton has had one of her faint turns. I wish you had been here in time to ward it off!"

Dr. Wentworth, with the cool grace for which he was renowned,—the happy blending of personal interest in the individual, and conscious mastery of the disease that had brought back more than one almost frightened-to-death patient from the grave's mouth,—laid his fingers upon Mrs. Upton's wrist. I have not described as it deserves his manner of performing so simple an act, and I despair of conveying an adequate idea of it. It was an art, and inimitable. I am not at all sure that there was not genius in it. I am altogether sure that his income was doubled by the degree of perfection to which he had brought what is considered by most practitioners too slight a matter to receive serious consideration.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

It Is a Great Farming Country—There Are Still Indians Living on the Island.

Our island province, though generally very little known, is one of the most peculiar and interesting parts of the Dominion.

Prince Edward Island lies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, separated from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by Northumberland Strait. It is the smallest of the Canadian provinces, with an area of 2,173 square miles, and is in shape an irregular crescent, 105 miles in length.

The shore is indented by numerous harbors, those on opposite coasts twice approaching so close to one another that only narrow isthmuses connect the three peninsulas that form the island. Many of the bays terminate in tidal rivers that run far into the interior. The coasts are bold, in most places high cliffs of red sandstone rising up from the sea between twenty and one hundred feet. Part of the eastern shore, however, is low, and bordered by long, curving lines of sand dunes, in places broken through by winding channels leading back to shallow, sandy bays. The island is generally flat, and nowhere too rough for cultivation. The vegetation is very green and luxuriant, thick turf growing in every vacant place.

Nearly all the trees native in the Northern States and Canada are to be found in its dark moss-carpeted forests. These are large reed-bordered marshes and ponds of fresh water separated from the sea by only a barrier of drifting sand, strewn with the wrecks of many vessels dashed up and lost in the storms of spring and autumn. There are large mossy peet bogs, whose products give off sweet smells in burning, and it is said that hidden away far under the island lie seams of coal, too deep, however, for profitable working.

The soil is usually a layer of decayed vegetable matter over a strata of bright red loam. It is very fertile and yields abundantly to the rather primitive farming methods of the natives. Oats, wheat, and barley are grown in large quantities, and almost everything does well except Indian corn, which needs warmer weather than is furnished by this northern climate. The summers are not cold, but rather cool. The weather is usually clear and sunny, and peculiarly free from the fogs which are a prominent feature in the climates of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The island winter is milder than that further south on the mainland.

Prince Edward Island is more densely populated than any other part of the Canadian Dominion. It has about 110,000 inhabitants, or 54 to a square mile. Of these the greater part are of Scotch and English descent, but about 10,000 are French Acadians come over long ago from Nova Scotia. They live apart, speak French, marry among themselves, and mix little with other races. On the northern coast still lives a remnant of the once powerful tribe of Micmac Indians, dwindled now in numbers to about 300. They are conservative and keep up old customs, gliding softly up the streams in birch-bark canoes or prowling through the forests, wearing moccasins as did their ancestors of long ago.

Most of the people are farmers, and live in the country. There is but one town of much importance. Charlottetown, the capital.

Though there is no large four-footed game left, wild birds are still about in plenty and the forest streams hide thousands of speckled trout, while a few salmon still remain in some of the large rivers. The fresh water lagoons by the coast are the summer resorts of enormous eels and countless herring and smelt. There are the sea fish which swarm all summer along the coast, mackerel the most plentiful, then come halibut and cod. Of the half dozen ways of reaching the island, all are part rail and part water. One of the most interesting passes lengthwise through Nova Scotia, affording a good look at that interesting old peninsula.

Like every one else, the Prince Edward Islanders have half-chimerical schemes for improvement. Their particular one is to build a great railroad tunnel under the Straits of Northumberland to connect Nova Scotia roads with those on the island. The island has much railroad for so small a territory, and is also traversed in all directions by tolerable country roads.

Some enterprising citizens of the island have started large hotels at the most attractive points, which are already much frequented in summer by Canadians, and the proprietors hope that their fine summer climate and picturesque scenery will prove attractive to Americans also. A nicely gotten up little pamphlet has recently been issued with this end in view.

THE CAMERA IN HYPNOTISM.

A Bewildering Incident to Photographers in India.

Two young men of Boston while on a journey through India last summer witnessed an exhibition by a fakir in a small village outside of Calcutta. The fakir was performing the usual experiment of making a rope descend from the clouds and a man come down the rope, who ascended by the same route after having his head cut off. The exhibition was in an open square before 1,000 spectators. Every one saw plainly what was happening. The two Bostonians had cameras with them, and took numerous snap shots of the exhibition in its various stages. They intended to write an article upon the subject for a magazine and illustrate it direct from photographs. They developed the plates with much interest upon their return to Boston recently. They were nonplussed when they saw the results. The photographs revealed the fakir surrounded by the crowd, with astonishment, bewilderment and horror pictured on their faces, but the extraordinary decapitation they had witnessed did not show upon the sensitive plates. The crowd standing around was apparently looking at nothing in the photographs. What they saw had not happened at all, but they merely saw it in their mind's eye. While there is nothing remarkable in the force of suggestion when applied to one person, and it would not be possible for an impression such as the event which the Boston men saw to be conveyed to one person in a hypnotic condition, the circumstances at the Indian fakir's exhibition were entirely different. Here were 1,000 people fully awake who all saw in their minds exactly the same picture, and had no doubts that the wonderful events actually happened. An incident of this kind tends to make one begin to consider if he has not done so before, if it is not possible for certain influences to so strongly impress the mind that we may, even while clinging to the old theory, "seeing is believing," be honestly deceived, yet what we see may be so real that the thought of its being anything else never enters our mind. It was so in the case of the Bostonians.

BRITISH ARMY TO USE CORDITE.

It Is More Powerful Than Black Powder and Is Smokeless.

The smokeless powder which has been adopted by the British Government for use with the New English army rifle is known as cordite. Cordite derives its name from its structure, the powder being made up in strings or cords of varying thickness, from about three-hundredths of an inch to half an inch in diameter. The thick cordite is cut in lengths of fourteen inches. The cordite used in field guns is cut in strips measuring eleven inches in length. The small-arm ammunition is made up of sixty strands to a load. According to Col. F. W. Burke, of the British artillery, the new cordite is a combination of nitro-cellulose and nitro-glycerine. The combination is 37 per cent. gun-cotton, 58 per cent. nitro-glycerine, and 5 per cent. vaseline, to which is added a proportion of acetone distilled from wood. The mixture takes on a stringy form. In a magazine rifle a charge of seventy grains of black gunpowder gives a velocity of 1,830 feet a second, while thirty grains of cordite give the same bullet a velocity of 2,000 feet. To obtain a velocity of 1,710 feet a second in a field gun requires a black-powder charge of four pounds. The same velocity is obtainable from one pound and a half-ounce of cordite. Cordite, it is stated, has successfully withstood all climate tests imposed at the powder works at Waltham, England. Cordite samples have been exposed in an open case in an open pouch to rain, snow and the sun, and retained their force unimpaired.