MR. MAGSDALE'S COURTSHIP.

CHAPTER I.—(Continued.)

'She's in earnest,' said Peter sorrowfully to his cousin when the slam of Mrs. Bunshaw's bedroom door pronounced her to be safely out of hearing. 'She attacked me about it as soon as I came in.

'Pooh! she doesn't mean anything,' replied Allan easily. 'It will be all right to-morrow morning.'

'You don't know Cornelia,' said Peter; 'I do;' and he shook his head mournfully. 'Of course, it's out of the question for me to let her go away. She would alter her will the same day.'

'If you really think your sister wants me to leave, I'll go.—I know it isn't your doing, old fellow; and I should be glad to stay on myself, though the house hasn't been what it used to be for the last six months.'

Peter Magsdale's heart sank as Allan spoke; he would lose much by his cousin's departure. Even without Mrs. Bunshaw's restraining hand, he would never have the spirit to embark on a night's 'spree' all by himself; he would be completely lost without his guide. But that was a phase of the impending change in his household that he knew it was useless to dwell upon. If Allan went, he might say good-bye to his evening amusements, for Mrs. Bunshaw would not allow him to go outside the garden after his dinner. He was a weak vacillating creature, and the influence his sister had over him was entirely due to her superior strength of will, though he always attributed his submission to the very remote 'prospects' contingent upon her demise.

'No more pleasure in life for me, if you go,' he said dismally.

'Oh, nonsense; you can take care of yourself by now.'

'Cornelia will make the house unbearable if I cross her,' sighed Peter; 'no more suppers at the Gaiety for me.'

'And what about Miss Cressburn, Peter?' asked Allan with a chuckle.

Mr. Magsdale blushed, and assumed a more abject look of melancholy than he had worn before. Miss Mary Cressburn was a young lady whose acquaintance he had made through his cousin's kind offices, and to whom he had lately paid a marked degree of attention. She was an orphan, in poor circumstances, supporting herself and the aunt with whom she lived by giving music lessons. The Magsdales' visits to her house were always made in the evening, and Peter concealed none of his doings more jealously from his sister than this tender dalliance with his heart's mistress. Mrs. Bunshaw had long cherished a matrimonial scheme of her own regarding him; and this gifted woman was so accustomed to regulate every action of his life without resistance, that she had brought herself to believe that the consummation of her wishes was only a question of time. The lady she had selected to be her sister-in-law was Miss Anna Terripeg, her most intimate friend and staunchest disciple. Miss Terripeg was by no means averse from the idea, and having satisfied herself on this point, Mrs. Bunshaw had proceeded to sound Peter. It was mortifying to discover that the gentleman was not prepared to consider the subject of matrimony at all for the present, and persisted in treating her proposals with unbecoming lightness. This was baffling; but so long as his young affections remained free, there was room for hope. Miss Terripeg had at least no rivals to contend with, reflected Mrs. Bunshaw.

Now, if she came to hear of his attachment to Miss Cressburn, she would spare no pains to sift the matter and throw obstacles in his way; indeed, if she took a firm stand, he doubted his ability to continue his courtship at all. A faint-hearted, timorous lover was our friend Peter. Miss Cressburn would have lent a willing ear had he been able to screw up courage to propose to her; but he did not know this, and nursed his hopes fondly, confiding them to Allan, who, we must admit, had been mischievously diligent in furthering a business which he knew would be so distasteful to Mrs. Bunshaw.

'You will be able to make opportunities of seeing her easily enough, if you care for her,' said Allan, with an effort to prick a little life into his cousin. 'It's too ridiculous to let Cornelia have a word in that.'

'You don't know what she is,' groaned Peter. 'Cornelia and the Terripeg women between them'—— He broke off with a shudder, which moved Allan to uncontrollable laughter.

'I know quite enough, anyhow,' he rejoined. 'I'll look up some rooms I know of to-morrow, and I daresay I shall be able to move into them next week; so you may tell her that it's all settled.'

A very silent party assembled at breakfast the next morning. Mrs. Bunshaw, not having been made aware of Allan's intentions, shrouded herself in dignified reserve. Peter was unusually gloomy and dejected; and his cousin having failed to draw him into conversation, devoted himself to his meal without even attempting to pay Cornelia the somewhat cramped civilities which duty demanded of him.

'I am sorry that it is necessary for you to leave us, Allan,' she said, in a tone which implied that it was all his doing, and much against her inclinations. She took his departure for granted, knowing she could have her own way about banishing him.

'I'm sorry, too; but I couldn't have stayed much longer in any case,' he replied; and he quitted the room followed by Peter, who was carefully avoiding a tete-a-tete with his sister.

Allan's readiness to leave Astley Villa was a little disappointing to Mrs. Bunshaw. She prided herself upon her adamantine firmness, and had hoped her cousin would have given her a chance of displaying it by begging her to let him remain with them. She had prepared one of her 'little speeches' (Peter knew the kind), in which she would kindly but sternly resist such an appeal. It was annoying that this weak pretence of putting her authority on one side, this transparent assumption of willingness to go, should compel her to leave it unspoken. It was bravado, nothing else.

'I should have told Cornelia that I couldn't continue to live in the same house with her, if I had stayed in the room another five minutes,' said Allan as they started for the station en route for their respective offices.

'It's no use quarrelling with her,' said Peter.—'By the way, will you come with me to Queen's Road on Sunday afternoon? I want to see Mary Cressburn.'

'I'll come; and I hope you will take advantage of the occasion, Peter. I suspect your evening visits are things of the past.'

As a matter of fact, Mr. Magsdale had proposed the visit with the deliberate intention of 'coming to the point,' trying to close his eyes to possible results. 'I was just thinking about it,' he replied.

'That's right,' said his mentor encouragingly. 'I'll take care you get a chance; and see that you make the most of it.'

'I don't know what Cornelia will say,' the amorous Peter went on after a pause. 'Don't you think I had better tell her?' He looked up questioningly, and his adviser promptly gave him his directions.

'Now, look here, Peter,' he said. 'You just hold your tongue until you are safely married. If Cornelia finds out before, I don't believe you've got the pluck to defy her and as a row is inevitable in any case, you may as well let it stand over till it can do no harm.'

Mr. Magsdale fairly gasped: this was taking time by the forelock with a vengeance, and the very idea of such a step took away his breath. He had the most implicit confidence in Allan, however, and was so accustomed to follow his guidance, that he did not even raise any objections; indeed, he hardly realised what the advice implied. 'Thank you,' said this trembling lover. 'It would be the best way, I believe.'

'Of course it's the best way. Why, my dear man, we'll have you nicely settled before Christmas!'

Within six weeks! Allan's audacity carried Peter away, and he parted with him, feeling, that if Miss Cressburn's answer should be 'Yes,' he was committed to a line of action she would not be likely to approve of. 'I'll wait and see,' he wisely decided. 'If she thinks Allan is right, we will follow his advice.' Nevertheless, he quailed as he thought of the consequences he would have to meet afterwards.

The important Sunday afternoon came round at last and Peter set forth on his knightly quest, squired and stimulated by the indefatigable Allan. They had some difficulty in escaping without Mrs. Bunshaw; for her brother's preoccupation had roused her suspicious nature, and if Allan had not stepped into the breach, the expedition must have been abandoned. They were only going to call on some friends of his up at Queen's Road. Of course, if Mrs. Bunshaw cared to come, they would be delighted; but it was a long way, and the people were not very interesting. The explanation allayed her doubts, and she let them go, reflecting that they could not get into much mischief on Sunday wherever they went.

'Does Miss Cressburn know anything about Cornelia?' asked Allan as they walked along.

'No. Do you think I ought to mention her?'

'I wouldn't, unless you are prepared to bring them together, which would hardly suit your plans.'

'Not at all,' replied Peter briskly. He was beginning to feel quite reckless, now his mind had been made up for him, and was prepared to rush upon his fate as soon as he found himself face to face with it.

Allan certainly did everything the most sympathetic helper could be expected to do in such a case. He drew old Miss Parkins, the aunt, to one end of the room, and exerted himself manfully to keep her attention from the pair in the distant corner. He knew that if Peter imagined that he was being watched, he would be thrown completely off his balance for the time; and as Miss Parkins' ideas were few and her conversational powers somewhat undeveloped, his task was not an easy one. Moreover, she suspected the nature of Peter's mission, and did not altogether approve of it; and at the end of a quarter of an hour she broke away from Allan, and approaching her niece, asked her pointedly if she was not going out for a walk this afternoon. Miss Cressburn started; but after a tender inquiring glance at Peter, answered in the affirmative, and the two ladies left the room together.

'Congratulate me!' exclaimeed Mr. Magsdale with a comical assumption of superiority.

'With pleasure.— Did you find any difficulty?' asked his cousin with the air of a man who did that kind of thing every day of his life and was versed in its intricacies.

'None whatever,' replied Peter. 'But I must say I am glad it's over,' he modestly added.

'Ah! Have you settled the day?'

Mr. Magsdale had not settled the day; he had found the task of declaring himself quite as much as he could manage, and was content to leave the rest in abeyance for the present.

Allan looked a little disappointed. He was bent on revenging himself on Mrs. Bunshaw, and had cherished wild schemes of a civil marriage at the registrar's office in the course of the ensuing week. His notions on the subject were crude, to say the least of them, and he had lost sight of the fact that Miss Cressburn was not likely to prove so tractable as Peter.

Miss Parkins and her niece now returned to the room, and the four set out on their walk. It was a lovely afternoon: a stray September day seemed to remain behind to contrast itself with the murky November, which is the unpleasantest month of the London year, and Miss Parkins, who was an enthusiastic pedestrian, evidently intended to make the most of it. She took possession of Mr. Magsdale, and, much to his chagrin, he had no opportunity of speaking to Miss Cressburn again by herself, though her aunt followed the young lady's movements with tantalising closeness.

Unfortunately, some malignant fate prompted Mrs. Bunshaw to go for a solitary walk that afternoon, and so guided her steps that she came upon the party at the moment Allan was bidding Mary Cressburn good-bye with more tenderness than Peter considered was at all necessary. She saw them without being observed herself, and passed on, resolving to take her brother to task as soon as he returned. 'These, then, were Mr. Allan Magsdale's friends; these were the people Peter had been so anxious to go and see without her.' There was something at the bottom of this, and Mrs. Bunshaw intended to find out what it was.

She was very stern and forbidding in her manner when the cousins came in; a tactical error on her part, for it caused Peter to avoid giving her the chance she wanted of cross-examining him by himself. She was anxious that Allan should not hear her inquiries, but finally curiosity overcame her, and, she spoke. 'Who were the ladies I saw you with to-day, Peter?' she asked carelessly.

The question was so utterly unlooked-for, and Peter's mind at the moment was so taken up in thinking about one of the ladies, that for an instant he fancied that his sister had acquired a new and dangerous talent for thought-reading.

'They were friends,' he blundered—'friends, friends of'—— He broke down, and threw a beseeching look at Allan, who swallowed a morsel with provoking deliberation and came to his aid.

'Great friends of mine, Cornelia,' he said airily. 'Very dear friends. I took Peter to see her—that is, them, as I thought he'd like to know them.'

If Mrs. Bunshaw's eyes had been turned upon her brother instead of the speaker, the look of intense relief and gratitude he cast at Allan might have turned her suspicions into the right channel; but as it was, she remarked that she had passed them, and wondered who they were.

'Who are these friends of Allan's?' asked Mrs. Bunshaw, when that mendacious person left the room.

'A Miss Parkins and her niece,' said Peter, who had seized his cousin's hint, and meant to act upon it even at the sacrifice of truth.

'He seems to know them very well,' she continued, watching him narrowly.

'Yes, I believe he does,' assented Peter.

'The young lady is the attraction, no doubt.—Does he seem to like her?

'Oh no—I mean yes,' replied the unhappy Peter, recovering himself in time. Allan likes Mary! He recoiled from the idea, but must support it to save himself.

'He said the other day it would be impossible for him to remain here much longer in any case,' mused Mrs. Bunshaw. 'I thought at the time it was merely brag; but now I begin to see daylight. Mr. Allan no doubt is very clever and very deep; but he doesn't think to deceive me, I hope: I can put two and two together.'

So Cornelia Bunshaw put two and two together, and, like many people who are inexpert at such worldly arithmetic, she made them anything but four.

CHAPTER II.

The day fixed for Allan Magsdale's departure from Astley Villa had arrived, and Peter was saying his farewells with a lugubrious countenance. His cousin had secured lodgings in Holland Park Road, no very great distance geographically; but for all the assistance he could be there, he might as well have taken up his residence at the North Pole. Hence unbrotherly feelings raged in Peter's mild breast against the sister who had brought about this separation.

'You will come and see me sometimes?' he said for the tenth time, as Allan stepped into his cab.

'Oh, yes; I won't lose sight of you.—Let me know how you get on up at Queen's Road.'

Alas, poor Peter! How was he to 'get on' at all, when Cornelia would be always at his elbow? Miss Cressburn's occupation kept her abroad all day, or he might have snatched an occasional holiday to spend in her society; and he knew that his sister would not accept any excuse he might invent for going out night after night, as had been his habit when Allan was with them. He half wished that he had not been so hasty in proposing to Mary. Now that they were actually engaged to be married, she was justified in expecting him to be frequently with her; and unless he told her how he was situated, it would be hard to give a satisfactory explanation of his remissness. It was very perplexing; and like all weak men, he took refuge in a resolution to wait and see what time would do for him.

He thought the matter over carefully, and came to the conclusion that his first aim must be to disarm Mrs. Bunshaw's vigilance; to make a show of resigning himself to the humdrum life she considered proper, before attempting to begin operations again. The plan answered admirably in its direct object; but it was not long before he discovered that he could not satisfy Miss Cressburn with promises, and within a week of Allan's departure he found himself fairly confronted with the difficulty. He had received his second letter asking him to call, and its terms forced him to confess that the young lady would have just reason to complain of his behavior unless he promised to go and did go.

'I shall be at home about half-past eight this evening,' wrote Miss Cressburn, 'and won't accept any excuse for your non-appearance. You neednt' plead engagement, as you did last time. If you cared to see me, you wouldn't make engagements at the only time I am at leisure.'

'It's very clear that she's not to be trifled with,' thought he, as he read the letter in his office. 'I must say I'll go, and trust to luck to manage it.' He wrote and despatched his reply at once, and passed the day wondering how he was to fulfil the promise he had made. His good angel sent him succour in a very unexpected shape. On his return to Putney, that afternoon, he found Miss Terripeg with his sister and Mrs. Bunshaw's first words showed him the means of keeping his promise without the least risk of trouble. 'Miss Terripeg is going to remain to dinner with us, Peter,' she said; 'and you must walk home with her afterwards.'

Since the day on which Mrs. Bunshaw had suggested that this lady was of all others the one best qualified to make him happy, Peter had given her as wide a berth as he could; nor, so long as Allan had been in the house was there any difficulty in avoiding her. She was a brisk, dark-haired little person of about his own age, with an endless flow of very small talk, and a degree of admiration almost amounting to worship for Mrs. Bunshaw, whose character and principles she took every opportunity of extolling. Her manner to Peter was one of confiding tenderness, painfully embarrassing to a man of his shy temperament; and as his sister gave her every encouragement to continue this mode of treatment with tactless disregard for his feelings, it is not wonderful that Peter met her with very moderate joy.

But she would want him to walk home with her after dinner, and that materially altered matters. His heart bounded with relief and eagerness, for she lived in the direction of Queen's Road, and she was sure to go home early. He received her with unusual warmth, and made light of the task his sister had had imposed upon him; nothing would give him more pleasure than to see her home, and in saying this he was at least sincere.

'Well, I never expected help from that quarter,' reflected Mr. Magsdale as he went upstairs to his room. 'Odd that it never occurred to me before—very odd.' He went on with his dressing, and as he did so his thoughts took a wider range. 'There's no earthly reason,' he said to himself as he struggled into his coat—'no earthly reason why Miss Terripeg shouldn't come here every night of the week, so that I could walk home with her. At all events, I'll do my best to encourage her visits as often as I can.'

It was a new thing for Peter to plan an elaborate scheme to impose upon any one, and although in this instance everything seemed to be in his favour, he went downstairs to join the ladies somewhat dubious about his ability to carry it through. He made a very creditable beginning, however, and fairly astonished his sisters by the brilliancy of his conversation and the assiduous attention he paid to Miss Terripeg's wants at dinner.

'Peter is positively coming out, my dear,' she observed to her friend when they were alone in the drawing-room. 'I never knew him to be so entertaining before; he doesn't exert himself like that for me.' This was strictly true, but hardly fair, for Mrs. Bunshaw's usual demeanor was not calculated to excite hilarity in one who held her in such awe as did her brother.

'You can't mean that I am the cause of his high spirits,' said Miss Terripeg.

'I didn't say that your presence had anything to do with it; I only said that he is never so cheerful when we are alone.'

'I wish I could think so,' sighed the lady, pursuing the tenor of her own remark. She really liked Peter, and his sister's candidly expressed desire to create her a relation was treasured in her memory.

'I hope we shall often see you here now; we found our cousin rather—rather undomestic, and were very glad when he left us; I could never depend on having Peter at home any day,' said Mrs. Bunshaw with meaning.

Cornelia thought that her brother's solicitude lest they should detain Miss Terripeg unduly late was a little out of keeping with the pleasure he appeared to take in her society; as a matter of fact, he had to exercise some self-control to refrain from looking at his watch every five minutes, after the clock in the hall struck eight. It was nearly nine before the guest thought of moving, and past that hour when her leave-takings with Mrs. Bunshaw were concluded. The night was cold, and Mr. Magsdale's fear lest his companion's health should suffer was no doubt the reason which prompted him to start on the journey at a good round pace of about five miles an hour.

'I must say I enjoy a smart walk on a night like this,' he said pleasantly.

'Yes,' panted Miss Terripeg; 'but—do you think we—need go quite—so fast?'

The discomfited Peter slackened his speed, and explained that he thought she was in a hurry to get home. But she disclaimed the idea of being in haste to lose Mr. Magsdale's company—a pretty speech which was thrown away on him, for he was engaged in a mental calculation of the time he must lose in going home with her instead of making his way direct to Queen's Road.

'I love the night,' said Miss Terripeg softly when she had quite recovered breath; 'it seems to me that one's noblest thoughts and highest aspirations are born of the darkness.' Her tone was so alarmingly tender, that Peter felt a little apprehensive, and conceived the noble thought of checking further conversation by increasing his pace again. 'If she begins that kind of thing, I must,' he decided in consternation; 'I shouldn't know how to make her stop it.'—'I dare say you are right,' he answered vaguely; and Miss Terripeg, finding him as insensible to poetry as he was to flattery, altered his strain, and proceeded to chatter volubly about Mrs. Bunshaw, her talents, her work, and the admiration she commanded.

'How could you get on without her, Mr. Magsdale?' she cried enthusiastically. 'So kind, so thoughtful, so attentive to your comforts and happiness.'

'I don't know, I'm sure,' said Peter, wistfully thinking how well he could take care of his own comfort and happiness, if Cornelia would only give him a chance.

'Yes, it must be sad for you to think that she cannot always remain with you.'

As Peter's chief sorrow in life was that the future offered no trustworthy prospect of his ever being without her, he could not respond to this very cordially.

'I am devoted to Cornelia,' said Miss Miss Terripeg, warmly. Of course her brother must be devoted to her also, and she wanted to find some common ground of sympathy with him.

'I hope you will come and see her frequently, Miss Terripeg,' said Peter as gravely as though his sister was in extremis, 'and give me the pleasure of walking home with you.—Ah! here is your door.—Good-night.' He evidently feared to linger over the pleasure, for he was out of sight and down the street almost before she could ask him to come in and sit down for a few minutes.

'A little eccentric,' she said to herself, as she went indoors; 'but a very nice fellow indeed. I must go and see Cornelia again about the Society's meeting, soon.'

Although love lent wings to Peter's heels, he did not reach Mary Cressburn's door until nearly ten, and he hastened up-stairs with some misgivings as to the reception he might expect. His apologies were very graciously received, however, and he settled down to make the most of the short time he considered it safe to prolong his absence. He spent an hour with her, and left the house with sufficient food for reflection to last him a much longer time than he cared about.

(To be Continued.)

Bright Boy.

Teacher—Have you learned yet to use the exclamation point?

Small pupil—Well, I should remark!

PRESAGE OF A STORM.

THE WAR CLOUDS IN EUROPE GROWING DARKER.

Curzon's Reference to a Possible Break-up Of Turkey Astonishes Europe—Other Speeches Cause A Dismal Feeling In England.

The wary diplomats of Europe's courts are still tossing and fretting upon the stormy sea of uncertainty says a despatch from London. Throughout the week the political outlook has been murky and threatening to a degree not experienced for such a length of time in years past. Continuous fogs and rains have added to the feeling of depression, giving London the gloomiest week recorded for a long time. And, as if this was not enough to give anybody the blues, the speeches which several of the cabinet ministers have made during the week in various parts of the country have not been calculated to enliven the drooping spirits of the average Britisher. The ministerial utterances have been pessimistic in the extreme, no glint of sunlight having streaked through the clouds.

The gravity of the political situation is recognized on all sides, and, thereby, the speech which the Marquis of Salisbury delivered at the lord mayor's banquet at the Mansion House deepened the gloom. This feeling of apprehension is not decreased by the fact that the naval estimates which will be presented to the house of commons, when that body reassembles, will be of unprecedented magnitude and importance. The Times, in a leading article on this subject, which, is attracting much attention, said: "England can brook on rivalry in naval armaments." The above remark, to a certain degree, sums up a situation, which, for Great Britain, is perplexing and dangerous beyond any exaggeration.

CURZON CREATES A SENSATION.

The apparently rather indiscreet speech which the Hon. George N. Curzon, under secretary of the foreign office, delivered at Derby, in which he alluded to the evident break-up of Turkey, has caused a sensation abroad, especially in Berlin, where as much significance has been attached to it as if it had been delivered by the Marquis of Salisbury himself. That something will soon have to be done by Turkey, or for Turkey, in order to restore order in Armenia, where anarchy prevails, nobody for a moment doubts. Between this and the partitioning of the Turkish empire among the powers there is a wide gap. The Turk is indolent and cruel, poor and fond of pitting one power against another while carrying on his alleged policy; but the Turk is capable of doing some hard fighting against the best troops of Europe if the religious fanaticism of the Mohammedans is aroused.

BAHRI PASHA HONORED.

The Official Gazette, of Constantinople, to-day announces that Bahri Pasha, who was dismissed from his official position in pursuance of the representations of the British ambassador, Sir Philip Currie, owing to his ill-treatment of Armenians, has been decorated with the grand cordon of the Osmanieh Order, "as a reward for his good services." This step upon the part of the sultan is considered most significant. It is not only an open distinct mark of approval of the ill-treatment of Armenians, but it is a deliberate snub to Great Britain, particularly as, in addition to the decoration bestowed upon Bahri Pasha, the Official Gazette publishes a long list of the names of Turkish officials in Armenia who have been decorated by the sultan for their "good services." In fact, it almost seems as if the sultan is openly defying the powers.

MINISTER TERRELL CAUSED HIS DISMISSAL.

It is understood that the Vali of Aleppo, who is to be succeeded by the ex-grand vizier, Kiamil Pasha, was dismissed in consequence of the representations of the United States minister to Turkey, Alexander W. Terrell, because the vali refusre to permit the United States consular agent at Aleppo to visit a naturalized American citizen, Guendjiam, of Armenian origin, who had been imprisoned for life. Mr. Terrell obtained permission from the grand vizier for the consular agent to visit Guendjiam, but the vali persisted in his refusal to permit the prisoner to be seen. The eventual result was that Mr. Terrell made the strongest representations to the porte.

Over one hundred Armenians were arrested the other day at Stamboul, and all the inquiries made as to the cause of their imprisonment have failed to obtain a satisfactory answer.

A Unique Pen.

Henry Pearson, a young man who occupies the position of bookkeeper for a grocery establishment in St. Paul, Minn., uses, perhaps, the most novel pen in existence. Pearson has allowed the nail of his middle finger to grow to the length of a full inch, and this he has whittled down till it has exactly the appearance of an old-fashioned quill pen. Pearson says his pen has many advantages over any other which he ever used, the chief of these being that it is always "at hand." A neat silver ferule or, rather, an elongated thimble protects the pen when not in use, and Pearson says it writes for an incredible time without having to be trimmed or repaired.

She Sent Him Off.

Clara—I am amazed to hear that you have broken your engagement.

Dora—What else could I do? His beard is so stiff and rough that I was continually going about with my face full of scratches.

Will Reproduce Napoleon's House.

A French engineer has conceived the interesting idea of reproducing the house in which Napoleon lived in St. Helena as an attraction during the exposition of 1900. The house will be an exact copy of the original, surrounded by panoramic canvasses representing the natural surroundings.