The Gates of Hope

BY ANTHONY CARLYLE

The Beginning of the Story.

Marcia Halstead, secretary to Mrs. Alden, is entrusted with some jewels while her employer goes out to luncheon with Kempton Rosslaer, his stepmother Lady Rosslaer and her son Gordon Ruthven. Marcia puts the jewels in the safe but fails to find the duplicate key. She consults a noted physician who tells her she cannot live longer than six months; then answers the call of a solicitor to find that she is heir to a large fortune on condition that she marries before she is twenty-one. Returning to Mrs. Alden's she finds Kempton Rosslaer (who is secretly married to Araby Trask) replacing the gems which his step-brother had stolen. Believing him to be the thief, Marcia promises silence if he will marry her within two days. To shield his father's name and in consideration of release within six months, Kempton consents. At a restaurant Marcia faints and is assisted by three strangers, Araby Trask, her father, who is an artist, and a wealthy young man, Jasper Waldron. After the secret marriage ceremony Rosslaer and Marcia go their several ways; her improved mode of living benefits Marcia's health; she attracts the admiration of her new friends and the love of Waldron.

CHAPTER XXIV.—(Cont'd.)

Trask had acted upon Waldron's suggestion and had painted Marcia in her black gown with the rose brocade cloak slipping from her shoulders. The black lent a queer sombre note, which he had accentuated by making the background entirely of shadows.

Her eyes were a little sombre, too, with a wistfulness of which she had been unconscious and which he had painted just as he had seen it. But there was the alluring curve of a smile upon her lips; youth was in the cream and rose loveliness of her face—a color in the wonderful cloak.

The whole was distinctly pleasing. Araby said so with increasing emphasis.

"It ought to sell!" she asserted; and then stopped short, looking at Marcia. "But perhaps you wouldn't like that?" she added.

There was something in the wistfulness of her tone that made the other look at her quickly—and then away round the sunny, empty studio. There were so many canvases with their faces to the wall—so many little signs that success had seldom smiled here. She made a sudden, quick gesture.

"But, of course!" she cried. "I supposed Mr. Trask was painting it to sell—not for amusement. Or—or, perhaps to exhibit?"

She paused tentatively. Trask stood back from his canvas and regarded it with one eye closed.

"It is good!" he pronounced, and laid down his brushes. "It is finished. And it is already sold!"

Marcia stared, amusedly. She was getting used by now to this queer little man with his almost childlike habit of disregarding other people and the minor conventions. He amused her, and she liked him. It was Araby who voiced a questioning, half-dismayed astonishment.

"Sold!"

Trask began to scrape his palette with energy.

"To Jasper Waldron!" he acquiesced, with the utmost tranquility. "He saw it last night. He was enchanted. He gave me a cheque for it there and then. Five hundred pounds he paid!"

Araby gasped. There was almost consternation in the glance she turned upon Marcia. The latter had drawn back a little and there was a quick, hot color aflame in her cheeks, a half startled brightness in her eyes. Perhaps naturally Araby mistook the color and the light for annoyance. She swung indignantly upon her father.

"But—really—you are impossible!" she declared. "You had no right to sell it without Marcia's permission—not to anybody!"

Marcia interrupted hurriedly:

"I do not mind!" she said, and Trask looked at her for a moment in a sort of level, smiling comprehension.

"I knew that!" he told her. "It isn't as if Jasper was one of the ordinary public. That would have been different. But he is a friend—one of ourselves. And, besides"—naively—"the price was very good!"

"It isn't worth such a sum!" Araby's young voice was uncompromisingly blunt. "I don't mean," she added, "that it isn't a delightful picture of Marcia. It is! But it certainly isn't worth five hundred pounds!"

Trask smiled and pushed his half cleaned palette with the rest of his paraphernalia into an inadequate tin box.

"It is," he contradicted, placidly—"to him!"

Marcia remembered those words more than once with a queer breathlessness and a tingling sensation of pleasure. But she sheered away from surmise as to just exactly what they had meant—or why Jasper Waldron had bought her portrait.

Also the conversation had pointed to her a way by which she could, perhaps, without hurting them, help this gay couple who already had become warm friends of hers. She commissioned another, smaller portrait, head and shoulders only, which, she said, she wished to give to her mother. She tactfully named the sum she was willing to pay, ignoring Araby's assurance that she was mad, seeing only the warming pleasure of Trask's eyes.

It brought her a quick, keen thrill of pleasure, such as so far she had not experienced. She saw before her a new way of making her possession of a fortune delightful to her, and she knew in that possession a sudden, increased enjoyment.

Often, after a sitting, she would insist upon the two lunching with her at some little Soho restaurant, where they would amuse themselves like three children. Invariably afterward Araby would help her with her shopping. It was after one of these gay, merry days that she went rather wearily, but in great content, back to the flat and found Lady Rosslaer there.

CHAPTER XXV.

Marcia stopped abruptly on the threshold. She was taken aback, startled. This visit was completely unlooked for. It was also strangely disturbing. The little look of tired contentment was gone from her eyes as she went forward to greet her visitor, something watchful had crept into their expression.

Lady Rosslaer rose with lithe, swift grace. She held out a slim, perfectly gloved hand, smiling brilliantly.

"I'm so glad not to have missed you!"

The low, slow voice was cordial, the long, rather Oriental eyes met Marcia's and dwelt upon her keenly.

Beneath them the girl stirred slightly. That same faint sense of antagonism which she had felt toward this woman upon their first meeting was with her again. Her presence here in the bright, fresh room with its bowls of roses jarred upon her.

It reminded her of all that had happened upon that other, never-to-be-forgotten day. It brought back poignantly the events which had piled themselves one upon the other in a few short hours. She shivered a little as she took the extended hand; her fingers closed upon it with a reluctance which surprised herself.

Lady Rosslaer went on:

"I did not call before—though, of course, I have wanted to offer my congratulations on your good fortune—but I felt that for a little while you would be unsettled, would prefer not to be bothered. When I learned you and your mother had come here I felt I could not wait any longer. I hope you are going to be very happy!"

She spoke with a charming, friendly graciousness which with many would have been quite irresistible. Marcia's grave lips relaxed a little, but her eyes remained shadowed. She answered briefly:

"Thank you very much." Then she moved to a chair beside her mother's couch and began pulling off her gloves. She felt jarred, troubled. She wished that Lady Rosslaer had not come; she wished it so intensely that she was surprised at herself.

She was not generally inhospitable; she liked meeting new people, making new friends. She supposed that her uneasiness now was due to the fact that Lady Rosslaer reminded her so vividly of her stepson. During the last few days especially the girl had managed to put him right out of her mind, and she resented the remembrance of him—of the part she had forced him to play in helping her attain her wealth.

She brought her troubled thoughts back with an effort to listen to the older woman's voice.

"Your mother and I have been having quite an interesting talk!" she was saying vivaciously. "Isn't it quite extraordinary that we should be connected? I did not dream of such a thing when Mrs. Alden introduced us a little while ago—it seems so very strange—meeting like this. It is a great pleasure for me."

Marcia looked at her with faintly puzzled eyes, but she merely smiled. She looked fagged, and there were blue shadows under her eyes. Lady Rosslaer, observing her closely, decided that she was not nearly such a "peach" as her son had led her to believe. She was too pale, and altogether too thin. But her clothes were exquisite.

Lady Rosslaer gave a small, smothered sigh of envy. Just for a minute there came into her brilliant eyes that same thoughtful look of calculation which had amused Gordon, and had prompted his rash remark about Kempton's eligibility for what he would have racily described as "the matrimonial stakes."

Neither he nor his mother had forgotten the white flame of anger which had leaped across Kempton's face, the fury of scorn with which he had silenced the speaker. It had amazed them. It had also set them thinking.

Looking at Marcia now Lady Rosslaer wondered if, during his many visits to Mrs. Alden's hospitable flat, her stepson had seen more than she had suspected of this girl. Upon an impulse she skillfully brought his name for a passing moment into her idle small talk.

She saw Marcia's slight movement; saw the quick, nervous color that flooded her face for an instant, to ebb, leaving her a shade paler than before, and her beautiful eyes grew shrewd. While still she talked she was telling herself that a match between these two would be no bad thing. Gordon's idle suggestion had fallen upon fertile soil.

Kempton was so atrociously poor. Yet she knew that if he had money he would, if not foolishly free with it, be generous. For the sake of the name he would help Gordon pay those debts which were pressing upon him. And it would be an immensely good thing for Kempton himself. The talked-of attentions he was paying Araby Trask could lead to nothing. The girl was a nobody, hadn't a penny—already there was a widening breach between him and his father because of the affair. Anything serious in that direction would be utter madness.

Yes, she would be really doing Kempton a good turn if she could throw him and this girl, Marcia Halstead together—could interest him in her.

She rose presently, took Mrs. Halstead's hand in both of hers, then turned to Marcia. Her irresistible, brilliant smile lighted up her whole face.

"I have already spoken to my husband about you—about the coincidence of our connection. He would like to meet you. He has not been well lately—does not go out much, or he would have called with me to-day. Your mother tells me she is unable to visit at all—but you——"

Again she smiled dazzlingly, and Marcia drew a quick, half startled, little breath. The sense of uneasiness was stronger upon her than ever.

"You must come and see us very soon. What about dining on Sunday? Not a party, you know—just ourselves?"

Marcia's lips framed a hurried excuse; but they did not utter it. With some dismay she realized that no excuse was possible without seeming to be grossly ungracious. Lady Rosslaer chose to take an interest in her; her connection gave her a certain claim to pursue an acquaintance.

A little wildly she searched her mind for some means of escape. The idea of going to this woman's house—to Kempton Rosslaer's home—was almost abhorrent to her. A chance meeting was bad enough, but——

"I—I don't know," she began with a distress she could not entirely conceal, and which Lady Rosslaer completely misread. She interrupted, half laughingly:

"My dear child! Surely you can't have an engagement for Sunday? And I really should like Lord Rosslaer to meet you. Besides, now I've found folks belonging to me I'm going to make the most of them! Will you come?"

Later, as she drove away with Marcia's stammering murmur of assent still in her ears, she smiled.

"I do believe," she murmured under her breath, "that the girl is really attracted to Kemp! She must be, or why on earth should she get all flushed and uncomfortable at the mere mention of his name? And if so"—she leaned back with a long sigh that had in it something of satisfaction—"if so—then that's half the battle! When a woman wants a man——"

She broke off, shrugging. For a while she sat looking contemplatively out at the busy street. As the car stopped she sat upright with another sigh.

"Anyway," she told herself, complacently, "Marcia certainly is rich enough to make friendship with her thoroughly worth while. I rather fancy I shall manage so we see quite a good deal of each other!"

(To be continued.)

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The Christmas Corner.

"Your garden always is the most entrancing place, Pris. But what's in that little corner over beyond the trellis? You keep steering me away from it, but it looks altogether too inviting to miss."

Priscilla led the way, and stood aside, smiling, as they passed through the arch. "Well," she said, "what do you think of it, Prue?"

"Of all the queer mixtures!" said Prudence frankly puzzled.

"It's my Christmas corner," said Priscilla proudly. "Your present happens to be growing somewhere else; but my main Christmas crop is here. I can't spend lavishly in money; and last year I spent too much in nerves and eyesight. So this year instead of doing fancywork I'm turning to my garden. Here are the sweet things: lavender and lemon verbena, to fill simple muslin bags for bureau drawers and linen closets; and here are my old-fashioned everlasting flowers—yellow and crimson and pink and purple and white—for winter bouquets and for baskets; and here are a few clumps of my choicest flowers, like those in the main garden, but especially reserved for seed, to put in pretty packets for my gardening friends—"

"I'm a gardening friend!" suggested Prue.

"You'll like what I'm planning for you, Prue,—at least, I do, and I'll disown you if you don't appreciate it!—but you mustn't covet what I'm giving other people, piggy! See, here are sweet herbs: those are for the kitchen-loving contingent—thyme and tarragon and summer savory and sweet marjoram. I love the very sound of the names, don't you? Some I'll dry in bunches, and some I'll make into flavored vinegars, for salads and ragouts. And here are tomatoes—the little plum and cherry varieties in red and yellow to put up whole; they make the gayest and most Christmasy preserves! And over there against the wall is our ancient quince tree; it bears lots of fruit some years, and some people haven't learned yet that quinces make delicious jam. A jar of that, neatly labeled and tied with red ribbons is sure to please anyone who likes goodies. And who doesn't? That's all, I think—at least in the corner. But I'm going to use all my rose leaves and preserve a few of our strawberries whole in jelly. And did you ever see parsley packed between layers of salt in a preserve jar and keeping green all winter? And—O goodness, I was just going to mention what I'm raising for you!"

"Don't! I'd rather be surprised. But if you should slip up on it, Prissy dear, I can assure you I'd be quite contented with any of your other Christmas products. What I really covet, though, is the grand idea of growing them. Why didn't I have the wit to make my garden help out my Christmasing?"

"It isn't too late yet," suggested Priscilla, consolingly. "And I have no copyright on the plan!"

Let's Plant Dahlias.

No matter what you may or may not have in your garden, you must have dahlias if you would have your garden family complete. Flowering as they do in late summer, you will be sure to appreciate them, because your roses and peonies will mostly be over by that time.

Much of the success with dahlias depends entirely on the soil, especially the way it is prepared. Dahlias never take kindly to soil that is too rich. Even on clay soil you can grow the finest varieties of dahlias.

If you want dahlias, plow or dig the ground early. Dig deep, the deeper the better. Do this as soon as the ground is workable. Then let it settle and redig it just before setting out the tubers. If your soil is fertile, use no manure. If the ground is very poor, spread it with manure before digging. You do not need a great deal of manure.

There is a difference of opinion as to the time to plant dahlias. Some successful growers say, set them out as early as possible in the spring. Others say, wait until July. Personal experience tells me that it is impossible to keep the roots in good condition when you set them out so late. The end of May seems to be the proper time. Set them four to six inches deep—no deeper. In order to leave room for future development set them from two to four feet apart each way. Allow but one stalk to the root. Cut off all others.

By all means plant a few of the cactus varieties. They are the huge, shaggy kinds that closely resemble chrysanthemums. Their colors are unusually beautiful. All cactus varieties have vigorous constitutions, so do not hesitate to plant them.

Just before frost, lift the tubers. Place them in a sunny corner of the porch until the soil about them is dry. Then shake it off and place them on a closet shelf until spring, when you can plant them in their old location in the garden.

Ruth's Family.

"It's all very well to talk about life's being rich and full," said Sara Crandall, "but if you had no family at all,—no relative in the world nearer than a second cousin,—you wouldn't like it much yourself."

Ruth Lawton looked at her friend thoughtfully. "I haven't," she said at last.

Sara stared incredulously. "Ruth Lawton, what do you mean?" she cried. "Why, ever since I've known you you've been talking about your grandmother and your little brother. I can't tell you how homesick you made me feel when you invited me to share the good things your grandmother sent you. And your little brother—"

"I am adopting a family," Ruth interrupted, smiling in a half-merry, half-wistful way. "Grandmother and Billy are the only ones I've acquired so far; of course no one expects families to grow in a minute. But I have in mind one or two other persons whom I hope to have as relatives soon. I understand how you feel, Sara. I spent a miserable wasted year pitying myself; then I suddenly realized that if it were a new gown or a new position I wanted I'd go to work and get it; and I asked myself why I should not also go to work and get a new family. I'd been sitting there crying when all the while there were thousands of other lonely people in the world, and many of them were worse off than I, who am young and strong and able to make friends."

Sara's eyes were wide open.

"As soon as I realized that there were other lonely persons," Ruth continued, "I realized that I had missed a whole year of having a grandmother. I had known Grandmother Barrett all my life at home and used to run in to see her a dozen times a week. She had three children then. Now they're all dead except one son, who is in the navy. So grandmother and I adopted each other. As for Billy, he was in my Sunday school class. He is an ambitious little fellow, but there is no one at home to help him; his people can't appreciate the value of an education. But Billy is working for one. I'm going to be mighty proud of him one of these days."

"And who is to be your next relative?" Sara asked.

Ruth hesitated. "Next I want a—a sister," she said. "If I had a sister I think that she and I could adopt Poncita, the most adorable little three-year-old Spanish baby that you ever saw. She is in the day nursery at the mission, for her mother has to work. Some one should make clothes for the child and teach her things that her mother has neither time nor knowledge for, and—" Ruth's voice faltered.

Sara saw the appealing look in her friend's eyes and leaned forward. "O Ruth!" she exclaimed. "Would I do? Could I be your sister? Would you teach me how?"

"Would I!" Ruth cried. "O, Sara, would I!"

Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.

Increasing Fish Tribes.

Improved methods of handling and hatching the eggs of the whitefish are showing such results that this exceedingly valuable finny species is now steadily gaining numbers in the Great Lakes. The work has been highly systematized, and is being conducted by the United States Fisheries Bureau in co-operation with our own Canadian authorities. The scale on which the artificial propagation of the whitefish is being carried on may be judged from the fact that in the year 1921 the Fisheries Bureau hatched 540,000,000 eggs and planted 420,000,000 young "fry." Thanks to this work, the whitefish supply in the Great Lakes has been increasing ever since 1917. It is helped importantly by a new interest which the lake provinces and States are taking in the matter, and which is evidenced by the framing of laws for the protection of the whitefish and the regulation of the size of mesh allowed to be used for seines and traps. If the mesh be not too small, the little ones, which have no commercial value, can get away and have a chance to grow big.

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Grocers Were Grossers.

Many of our modern trade names have curious origins. The costermonger, for example, was in the old days a costard-monger. He hawked a kind of fruit called the costard. The word "monger" means a seller, and is still found in iron-monger, fish-monger, and so on.

Originally the grocer was a gosser, a man who sold things by the gross, or a wholesaler; no one knows why his name should have changed in spelling. When we speak of a wholesale grocer, we are really saying the same thing twice.

Tailor is a French word meaning one who fits the figure. Draper is also French; it comes from the word drap, and means a dealer in cloth. Mantle-maker, originally Mantua-maker, is Italian. Cloaks were fashionable in the town of Mantua, and were called after it. Milliner, originally Milaner, stood for a dealer in goods made of Milanese silk and straw.

The most puzzling word is haberdasher, which has baffled many people and produced all kinds of weird explanations. The haberdasher was formerly a pedlar who went round to fairs selling ribbons, buttons, and other small articles, which he carried in a sack. His name comes from two old words— hafer, meaning oats, and tasche, a sack.

Cases of so-called "suicide" among animals are stated to be due to colic, the severe pain causing horses and other sufferers to throw themselves about in agony.

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