

PARTED;

OR,
A MOTHER'S SIN.

BY NORA LAUGHER.

It was a lovely, summer morning. The beautiful trees around the northern outskirts of the "Queen City" were clad in their lovely robes of emerald and the joyful carol of thousands of feathered songsters filled the air.

The happy song of birds resounding through the trees that morning was accompanied by the loud, ringing tones of a manly baritone voice trilling forth, "Oh! to be in Canada—In Canada now."

"How good it seems to be home. After all I think I'll settle down here. A quiet life is best; but as for taking the mother's advice and turning Benedict, I certainly shall not. I am a confirmed old bachelor and likely to remain so."

"In Canada now!" and the loud, cheery tones again echoed through the trees, starting the shy, tawny squirrels.

Guy Monteith was in a happy mood that morning. He had returned to Toronto, the home of his ancestors, the previous day, after years of wandering in foreign lands. Wealthy, courted, this last lineal descendant of the house of Monteith had reason to be joyous.

Ten years ago Rupert Monteith, of the firm of Monteith and Buchanan, the wealthiest stockbrokers in Canada, died leaving "Monteith Place" and all his vast property, situated in and near Toronto, to his only child, Guy, then just of age, and in England studying hard at Cains College, Cambridge.

Leaving College, Guy Monteith joined a fellow-student, Sir Arthur Paget in a lengthy tour of the continent of Europe, thereby acquiring a taste for Bohemian life. He then made a voyage to India, and for the last four years had resided with Lord Paget—Sir Arthur's father—in Calcutta.

During these years "Monteith Place" had seen nothing of its young master.

Mrs. Monteith, a haughty, young-looking American lady of scarcely fifty years, loved nothing in the world better than her only child, and fretted continually at his long absence. Now on his return to Canada her greatest hope was that he might wed the girl she had already chosen for him, Pauline Buchanan, the only child of her husband's late partner, whose marriage dowry would be not less than \$750,000 and who, with her chaperone, was then staying for a few weeks at the "Rossin House."

"In Canada now," resounded again through the maple trees, this time startling a slight, girlish figure, clad in white muslin dress, which was gracefully gathered up by a pair of small, dimpled hands to hold a quantity of starchy water lilies; but with a startled blush of fright the girl let them fall to the ground.

As Guy Monteith raised his cap he thought the face before him the sweetest he had ever gazed upon. A fair, oval face it was, now tinged with a bright blush like the petals of a rose, and surrounded with a tangle of short, flossy, golden curls and brightened by a pair of bewitching hazel eyes, shaded by long, dark lashes, which drooped low at the earnest gaze of a stranger, as she bowed slightly in answer to his salute and hastily began to gather up her lilies.

Mr. Monteith stooped to help her and then again raising his hat he held out his hand "Gladys—Miss Morville, I mean—pray, forgive me, I did not recognize at first my little friend and playmate. Do you not remember Guy, the noisy school-boy whom your good father undertook to tame and prepare for the college in Europe, and who so ill-remembered his trouble? Will you not welcome me home, Gladys?"

Then Miss Morville recognised in the handsome, bronzed, bearded face before her the gay young student, who had been the life and terror of her quiet home; but who had always taken such tender care of the little, motherless Gladys.

They sat down on a fallen tree, for he had much to relate, and found a willing and attentive listener.

The distant chime of a clock told that luncheon was already served at "Monteith Place" and Guy asked permission to accompany Gladys to her home on Bloor street and take luncheon with her father.

That evening as he gave his arm to conduct Miss Buchanan to the Monteith dining room, his mother's eyes dwelt admiringly upon them. "What a handsome pair they will make," she thought, "and there will not be a more wealthy couple in all Canada."

But, alas! Guy was mentally comparing the pale, dark beauty at his side with the winning, dimpling face of golden-haired Gladys, and the comparison was not flattering to Pauline Buchanan.

Alas! for Mrs. Monteith's match-making, her son was irretrievably, hopelessly in love with the penniless daughter of the Toronto schoolmaster.

One evening when Mrs. Morville's old-fashioned garden was laden with the sweet breath of the roses, Guy Monteith asked Gladys to be his wife. The schoolmaster had earnestly begged him to cease his visits, fearing Mrs. Monteith's displeasure at them; but the master of "Monteith Place" was not thus to be reasoned with, and that very evening acquainted his mother of his engagement to Miss Morville.

The anger of Mrs. Monteith was very great, and she firmly refused to call upon Gladys, determining by fair means or foul to put an end to such a foolish entanglement.

"To think that you, Guy, my only child, can be so blind. Pauline Buchanan loves you devotedly, and it is the wish of my heart, as it was of your dear father's, to see you both united, yet you must demean yourself by marrying a common-looking, paltry, *sois-disant* governess. I have no patience, I—"

"Hold. Though you are my mother, I will not brook such words. Miss Morville is a lady in the highest sense of the word and as my affianced wife shall be recognised as such. I do not wish to turn you from the home you love. So long as you live you shall remain here if you wish. I have bought an estate in England—Brackenbury Court in Northamptonshire—a far larger place than this. Gladys and I will live there until you can give her a mother's welcome home to Canada." And Guy walked off through the spacious Monteith grounds in no tender mood towards the haughty woman, his mother.

The following day he received a telegram summoning him hastily to Montreal to the death-bed of a distant relation.

Hastily pencilling a few lines to Gladys, he left the note on the library with strong injunctions to his manservant to see it delivered to Miss Morville that evening.

Mrs. Monteith, entering the room, saw the note lying on the table. "How very much Guy's hand resembles mine," she thought "Ah! I know a way to break off this very foolish engagement and in after years he will thank me for it."

Breaking open the seal Mrs. Monteith, with a scornful curl of the lip, read the tenderly worded epistle that apologised for his few days' absence, substituting instead a few cold lines begging Miss Morville to release him from his engagement to her.

When the schoolmaster entered his sitting-room that evening he was horrified to find poor Gladys lying upon the floor insensible. The cruelly forged letter lay in her hand. Placing her upon a couch he bathed her forehead with some iced water and then the poor child, weeping bitterly, threw her arms around her father's neck and begged him to take her away from Toronto until she could forget the face of the false one who had won her heart only to trample upon it as a broken toy.

That evening Gladys penned a few brief lines to Guy Monteith, telling him their engagement had been a mistake which she much regretted and hoped they might never meet again.

The first train from the Union Station the following morning bore her and her father—who had concluded to leave his school in the charge of his assistant—away on their road to Winnipeg.

Mrs. Monteith hastened to forward Miss Morville's note to her son, supposing rightly that it was—in answer to the cruel one she had forged—to release him from his engagement to her.

Directly Guy received the letter, his kinsman being dead—he returned to Toronto. He did not in the least suspect his mother's treachery. Great indeed was his surprise to hear of Gladys' and her father's departure to Manitoba. He was naturally of a very jealous disposition and Mrs. Monteith, being aware of this, alluded strongly to an imaginary lover of Gladys and tried by all her powers of persuasion to bring about a match between him and Miss Buchanan.

But Guy's life in Toronto, believing Gladys to be faithless, grew unbearable and he determined to again join Lord Paget in India until his wound had healed. Accordingly he bade his servant at once prepare for the journey.

Mrs. Monteith was terribly grieved at this, finding that she could not induce her son to marry Pauline Buchanan and with the painful knowledge of the wrong she had committed—but alas! not daring to confess it—she wept bitterly and offered to write to Miss Morville and welcome her as a daughter if he would only stay.

But Guy would not hear of this, for he believed Gladys to be untrue, and with a heavy heart he journeyed to New York and from there set sail for India, via England.

Gladys Morville, to her father's intense grief, fell ill at her aunt's house at Winnipeg with a violent attack of brain fever in which the burden of her wailing was "Guy—Guy." When able to be removed she was brought home to Toronto; but a perfect wreck of her former self, the lovely rounded cheeks wasted and sunken, the merry, hazel eyes now dim and joyless.

Guy Monteith could not enjoy his Bohemian life with Lord Paget as formerly and after nearly eighteen months' absence, roaming aimlessly about from place to place, he returned to Canada to satisfy himself if Gladys had married her old lover.

The church bells were chiming, for it was Christmas Eve.

His heart was lighter than it had been for months, as almost playfully shaking the heavy snowflakes from his thick seal-skin coat, he entered the gate of the schoolmaster's old-fashioned garden on Bloor street.

As he turned the corner of the little summer arbor—where but little more than eighteen months ago he had asked Gladys to be his wife—now covered with pure, white snow and thickly fringed with icicles, he met the schoolmaster. Regardless of the freezing wind, his gray head was bare and bent down upon his hands as though in great trouble, but an angry, fierce light came into his keen, gray eyes, as with a start of affright he recognized Guy Monteith. He did not take the young man's proffered hand as he enquired eagerly of Gladys' and if she were married.

Sweetly and faintly over the snow came the sound of the Christmas bells, but they sounded like a knell to the heart of Grey Monteith as he breathlessly listened for the reply.

"No, Guy Monteith," said the old schoolmaster, with a piercing, heart-rending look in his eyes, "I will take you to her and there you shall have your answer."

Leading the way across the snow into the house and beckoning him upstairs he paused at the door of a white draped chamber and reverently, almost pityingly, bade him enter.

"Here, Guy Monteith, is your answer." "Oh! my God—dead—my little Gladys, my golden-haired love—dead—dead—" and Guy Monteith, with a wild, heart-broken cry, fell forward on the open coffin senseless.

Mr. Morville sprang towards him, but it was too late, the young master of "Monteith Place" was no more.

A sorrowful-looking, white-haired lady repeatedly kneels daily in one of the most secluded of the Toronto churches praying earnestly for forgiveness. She would gladly give her life if it were possible to recall the two broken hearts, caused, alas! by her sin.

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