

Marian Mayfield

Or, The Strange Disappearance

CHAPTER XXXII.

On arriving at Washington, our party drove immediately to the Mansion House, where they had previously secured rooms.

The city was full of strangers from all parts of the country, drawn together by the approaching inauguration of one of the most popular Presidents that ever occupied the White House.

As soon as our party made known their arrival to their friends, they were inundated with calls and invitations. Brother clergymen called upon Mr. Wilcoxon, and pressed upon him the freedom of their houses. Alice Morris and Mrs. Moulton, the relative with whom she was staying, called upon Miriam, and insisted that she should go home with them to remain until after the wedding. But these offers of hospitality were gratefully declined by the little set, who preferred to remain together at their hotel.

The whole scene of metropolitan life, in its most stirring aspect, was entirely new and highly interesting to our rustic beauty. Amusements of every description were rife. The theatres, exhibition halls, saloons and concert rooms held out their most attractive temptations, and night after night were crowded with the gay volarities of fashion and of pleasure. While the churches, and lyceums, and lecture-rooms had greater charms for the more seriously inclined. The old and the young, the grave and the gay, found no lack of occupation, amusement and instruction to suit their several tastes or varying moods. The second week of their visit, the marriage of Alice Morris and Oliver Murray came off, Miriam serving as bridesmaid, Dr. Douglass as Groomsman, and Mr. Wilcoxon as officiating minister.

But it is not with these marriage festivities that we have to do, but with the scenes that immediately succeeded them.

From the time of Mr. Wilcoxon's arrival in the city, he had not ceased to exercise his sacred calling. His fame had long preceded him to the capital, and since his coming he had been frequently solicited to preach and to lecture.

Not from love of notoriety—not from any such ill-placed, vain glory, but from the wish to relieve some over-taxed brother of the heat and burden of at least one day; and possibly by presenting truth in a newer and stronger light to do some good, did Thurston Wilcoxon, Sabbath after Sabbath, and evening after evening, preach in the churches or lecture before the lyceum. Crowds flocked to hear him, the press spoke highly of his talents and his eloquence, the people warmly echoed the opinion, and Mr. Wilcoxon, against his inclination, became the clerical celebrity of the day.

But from all this unsought world-worship he turned away a weary, sickened, sorrowing man.

There was but one thing in all "the world outside" that strongly interested him—it was a "still small voice," a low-toned, sweet music, keeping near the dear mother earth and her humble children, yet echoed and re-echoed from sphere to sphere—it was the name of a lady, young, lovely, accomplished and wealthy, who devoted herself, her time, her talents and her fortune, to the cause of suffering humanity.

This young lady, whose beauty, goodness, wisdom, eloquence and powers of persuasion were rumored to be almost miraculous, had founded schools and asylums, and had collected by subscription a large amount of money, with which she was coming to America, to select and purchase a tract of land to settle a colony of the London poor. This angel girl's name and fame was a low, sweet echo, as I said before—never noisy, never rising high—keeping near the ground. People spoke of her in quiet places, and dropped their voices to gentle tones in mentioning her and her works. Such was the spell it exercised over them. This lady's name possessed the strongest fascination for Thurston Wilcoxon; he read eagerly whatever was written of her; he listened with interest to whatever was spoken of her. Her name! it was that of his loved and lost Marian!—that in itself was a spell, but that was not the greatest charm—her character resembled that of his Marian!

"How like my Marian?" would often be the language of his heart when hearing of her deeds. "Even so would my Marian have done—had she been born to fortune, as this lady was."

The name was certainly common enough, yet the similarity of both names and natures inclined him to the opinion that this angel-woman must be some distant and more fortunate relative of his own lost Marian. He fell drawn toward the unknown lady by a strong and almost irresistible attraction; and he secretly resolved to see and know her, and pondered in his heart ways and means by which he might, with propriety, seek her acquaintance.

While thus he lived two lives—the outer life of work and usefulness, and the inner life of thought and suffering—the young people of his party, hoping and believing him to be enjoying the honors heaped upon him, yielded themselves up to the attractions of society.

Miriam spent much of her time with her friend, Alice Murray.

One morning, when she called on Alice, the latter invited her visitor up into her own chamber, and sitting her there, said, with a mysterious air:

he may not utterly disinherit you, and even if he should, I would not grieve myself to death about it if I were you! Miriam, look up I say!"

But the hapless girl replied not, heard not, heeded not; deaf, blind, insensible was she to all—everything but to that sharp, mental grief, that seemed so like physical pain; that fierce anguish of the breast, that, like an iron hand, seemed to clutch and close upon her heart, tighter, tighter, tighter, until it stopped the current of her blood, and arrested her breath, and threw her into convulsions.

Alice sprang to raise her, then ran down-stairs to procure restoratives and assistance. In the front hall she met Dr. Douglass, who had just been admitted by the waiter. To his pleasant greeting, she replied hastily, breathlessly:

"Oh, Paul! come—come quickly up stairs! Miriam has fallen into convulsions, and I am frightened out of my senses!"

"What caused her illness?" asked Paul, in alarm and anxiety, as he ran up stairs, preceded by Alice.

"Oh, I don't know!" answered Alice, but thought to herself: "It could not have been what I said to her, and it it was, I must not tell."

The details of sickness are never interesting. I shall not dwell upon Miriam's illness of several weeks; the doctor's pronounced it to be angina pectoris—a fearful and often fatal complaint, brought on in those constitutionally predisposed to it, by any sudden shock to mind or body. What could have caused its attack upon Miriam, they could not imagine. And Alice Murray, in fear and doubt, held her tongue and kept her own counsel. In all her illness, Miriam's reason was not for a moment clouded—it seemed preternaturally awake; but she spoke not, and it was observed that if Mr. Wilcoxon, who was overwhelmed with distress by her dreadful illness, approached her bedside and touched her person, she instantly fell into spasms. In grief and dismay, Thurston's eyes asked of all around an explanation of this strange and painful phenomenon; but none could tell him, except the doctor, who pronounced it the natural effect of the excessive nervous irritability attending her disease, and urged Mr. Wilcoxon to keep away from her chamber. And Thurston sadly complied.

Youth and an elastic constitution prevailed over disease, and Miriam was raised from the bed of death; but so changed in person and in manner, that you would scarcely have recognized her. She was thinner, but not paler—an intense consuming fire burned in and out upon her cheek, and smouldered and flashed from her eye. Self-concentrated and reserved, she replied not at all, or only in monosyllables, to the words addressed to her, and withdrew more into herself.

At length Dr. Douglass advised their return home. And therefore they set out, and upon the last of March, approached Dell-De-light.

The sky was overcast, the ground was covered with snow, the weather was damp, and very cold for the last of March. As evening drew on, and the leaden sky lowered, and the chill damp penetrated the comfortable carriage in which they travelled, Mr. Wilcoxon redoubled his attentions to Miriam, carefully wrapping her cloak and furs about her, and letting down the leather blinds and the damask hangings, to exclude the cold; but Miriam shrank from his touch, and shivered more than before, and drew closely into her own corner.

"Poor child, the cold nips and shrivels her as it does a tropical flower," said Thurston, desisting from his efforts after he had tucked a woollen shawl around her feet.

"It is really very unseasonable weather—there is snow in the atmosphere. I don't wonder it pinches Miriam," said Paul Douglass.

Ah! they did not either of them know that it was a spiritual fever and ague alternately burning and freezing her very heart's blood—hope and fear, love and loathing, pity and horror, that striving together made a pandemonium of her young bosom. Like a flight of fiery arrows came the coincidences. I the tale she had heard, and the facts she knew. That spring, eight years before, Mr. Murray said he had, unseen, witnessed the marriage of Thurston Wilcoxon and Marian. That spring, eight years before, she knew Mr. Wilcoxon and Miss Mayfield had been together on a visit to the capital. Thurston had gone to Europe, Marian had returned home, but had never seemed the same since her visit to the city. The very evening of the house-warming at Luckenough, where Marian had betrayed so much emotion, Thurston had suddenly returned, and presented himself at that mansion. Yet in all the months that followed she had never seen Thurston and Marian together. Thurston was paying marked and constant attention to Miss Le Roy, while Marian's heart was consuming with a secret sorrow and anxiety that she refused to communicate even to Edith. How distinctly came back to her mind those nights when, lying by Marian's side, she had put her hand over upon her face and felt the tears on her cheeks. Those tears! The recollection of them now, and in this connection, filled her heart with indescribable emotion. Her mother, too, had died in the belief that Marian had fallen by the hands of her lover or her husband. Lastly, upon the same night of Marian's murder, Thurston Wilcoxon had been unaccountably absent, during the whole night, from the deathbed of his grandfather. And then his incurable melancholy from that day to this—his melancholy augmented to anguish at the annual return of this season.

And then rising, in refutation of all this evidence, was his own irreproachable life and elevated character.

Ah! but she had, young as she was, heard of such cases before—how in some insanity of selfishness or frenzy of passion, a crime had been perpetrated

About the Farm

SHEEP AND HOG RAISING IN EUROPE

Sheep are raised in all parts of England regardless of the quality or rent of the land and the greatest part of the feed used is produced on the farms. In the southern and central parts of the country more use is made of pasture and forage crops for fall and winter grazing than is possible in northern England, where feeding must be done under cover.

Sheep, either as a specialty or as an important adjunct of the regular farming operations, are raised in all parts of Scotland. In the farming country where the rental values are from five dollars per acre sheep are considered indispensable, as they not only generally give handsome returns in mutton and wool for the feed consumed and the labor expended, but they also increase the fertility of the soil. The Scotch farmer values sheep very highly as a soil improver. Although use of commercial fertilizers is very general in all parts of the country, the farmer who takes possession of a wornout farm invariably resorts to sheep feeding as the surest and quickest method of enriching his land. On the hill and mountain land sheep are grown in large numbers. With high and well drained land the conditions in Scotland are well suited to the production of sheep, as many parasitic troubles which so often cause heavy losses among the flocks of England are almost unknown in Scotland. The climatic conditions are favorable to this growing of roots, especially turnips which form the basis of practically all sheep feeding. The fall and winter months are generally open and permit the grazing of the turnip crop, eliminating a great deal of labor in harvesting and saving the labor of handling the manure.

Sheep folded on turnips are always fed from one-half to one and a quarter pounds each day of grain and cake, this feeding being relied upon to enrich the manure. The influence of sheep husbandry on the fertility of the soil is generally recognized as of sufficient value to compensate for the labor expended and for one-third of the total cost of the grain and cake fed. In some sections of the country the terms of the lease entitle a farmer who is giving up a farm to reimbursement for one-third of the total cost of all cake fed on turnip ground during the year. The influence of sheep feeding on the soil is so great that many farmers claim that they cannot afford to be without sheep, even if they were to lose money on the mutton and wool produced. Two or three old wethers are considered the most valuable and in lambs ewes the least valuable to improved soil fertility.

The tendency now is to use younger

by one previously and afterward irreproachable in conduct. Piercing wound after wound smote these thoughts like swift coming arrows.

A young, immature woman, a girl of seventeen, in whose warm nature passion and imagination so largely predominated over intellect, was but too liable to have her reason shaken from its seat by the ordeal through which she was forced to go.

As night descended, and they drew near Dell-De-light, the storm that had been lowering all the afternoon came upon them. The wind, the hail, and the snow, and the snow-drifts continually forming, rendered the roads, that were never very good, now nearly impassable.

More and more obstructed, difficult and unrecognizable became their way, until at last, when within an eighth of a mile from the house, the horses stepped off the road into a covered gully, and the carriage was overturned and broken.

"Miriam! dear Miriam! dear child, are you hurt?" was the first anxious exclamation of both gentlemen.

No one was injured; the coach lay upon its left side, and the right side door was over their heads. Paul climbed out first, and then gave his hand to Miriam, whom Mr. Wilcoxon assisted up to the window. Lastly followed Thurston. The horses had kicked themselves free of the carriage and stood licking yet.

"Two wheels and the pole are broken—nothing can be done to remove the carriage to-night. You had better leave the horses where they are, Paul, and let us hurry on to get Miriam under shelter first, then we can send some one to fetch them home."

They were near the park gate, and the road from there to the mansion was very good. Paul was busy in bundling Miriam up in her cloak, shawls and furs. And then Mr. Wilcoxon approached to raise her in his arms, and take her through the snow; but—

"No! no!" said Miriam, shuddering and crouching closely to Paul. Little knowing her thoughts, Mr. Wilcoxon slightly smiled, and pulling his hat over his eyes, and turning up his fur collar and wrapping his cloak closely around him, he strode on rapidly before them. The snow was blowing in their faces, but drawing Miriam fondly to his side, Paul hurried after him.

When they reached the park gate, Thurston was laboring to open it against the drifted snow. He succeeded, and pushed the gate back to let them pass. Miriam, as she went through, raised her eyes to his form.

There he stood, in night and storm, his tall form shrouded in the long black cloak—the hat drawn over his eyes, the faint, spectral gleam of the snow striking upward to his clear-cut profile, the peculiar fall of ghostly light and shade, the strong individuality of air and attitude.

(To be continued.)

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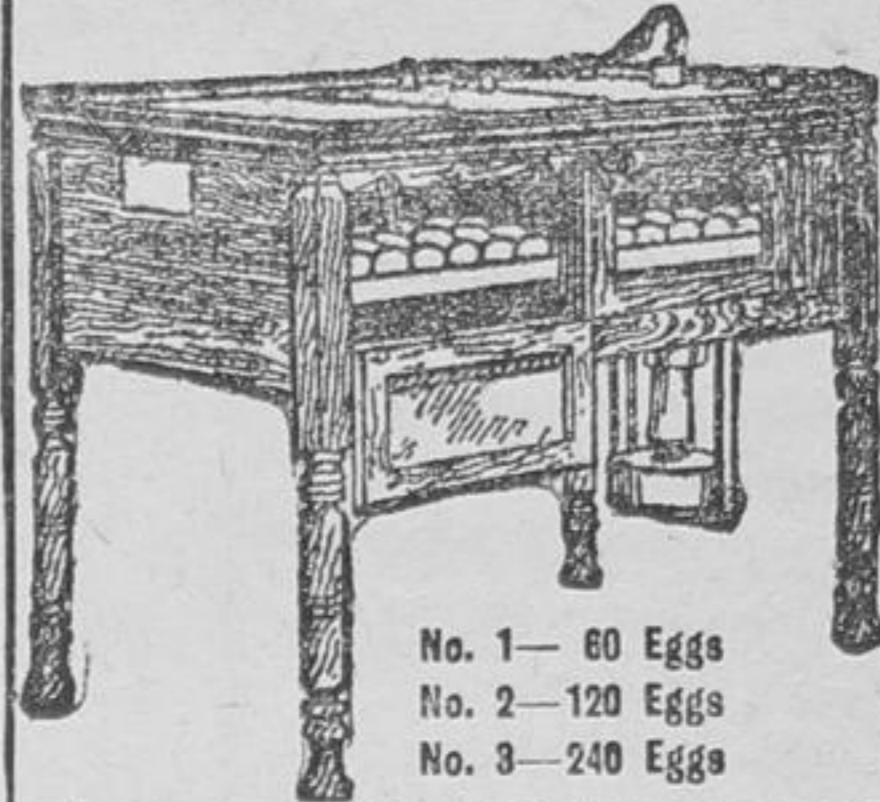
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sheep in feeding than in former years. The lambs grown on the arable farms are nearly all marketed under one year of age, while in former years they were fattened as yearlings and two year olds. The hill and mountain sheep are also finding an easier market. The change in the age of feeding sheep was brought about by the demand of the retail dealers for smaller carcasses to supply smaller cuts. Furthermore, mutton from young sheep can be sold at once, as it does not require several weeks to ripen, as in the case of that from two and three year old wethers.

In practically all European countries considerable attention is given to the production of hogs. As a rule farmers are not engaged in the industry as a specialty. The prevailing custom is for each farmer to rear enough pigs to utilize the waste of the farm, but where dairy farming is followed as the chief occupation pigs are reared and fed in considerable numbers as an auxiliary industry. The two industries go hand in hand, and to all appearances neither one can be so successfully conducted alone as the two combined, especially in those countries which rank high in the production of high class bacon. The real secret of success in European feeding for prime bacon is due to the large amount of skim milk and buttermilk fed with grain and meal.

JEW'S HARPS.

Jew's harps are made principally in Boccaccio, the seat of the industry since the sixteenth century. A good workman can make seven dozen in a day, and, simple as the little instruments are, no fewer than twenty tools are employed in their manufacture.