

A SHADOWED PATH;

Or, The Curse Of The Family

CHAPTER XXV.—(Cont'd).

"Now my dear Charles," she remonstrated; "do be reasonable; what possible object could I have in preventing your seeing the girl?"

"That you best know yourself," was the reply.

"I am sure," persisted the lady, "all that I have ever wanted was to promote your and her happiness; that has been my one sole aim."

"May I be hanged if I don't think your sole aim on earth is to be married yourself," vociferated Dr. Duvard, with considerably more candor than politeness; "but, once for all, will you tell me where Alice is?"

"I thought she had declined ever to marry a man who could leave her to run after a handsome face," sneered Miss Merdun.

"That letter was written under influence," retorted the doctor; "you put ideas into her mind that never would have come there of themselves. You have done a great deal of harm, which you can only undo by telling me where she is. Do give me her address, and I will forgive all the falsehoods that you have implied about me to her, and all the misery you have caused me? Will you?"

"Upon my word, I no more know where Alice Crepton has gone to, than you do," said Miss Merdun, earnestly. "I consider that she has treated me very badly—particularly at a time when I was trying to make her as happy and comfortable as possible. She took offence on very slight provocation, and left the house, notwithstanding all I could say to dissuade her from such a step. I really do not think she is thoroughly sane," finished the lady, by way of completing her sentence in a manner gratifying to her auditor's feelings.

"She has a good deal more sense than you, at any rate," murmured Dr. Duvard; and after two or three more ineffectual attempts to get anything further out of his relative, he left the house, determining to write to Mr. Merdun concerning Alice.

Very wearily, and very hopelessly, he paced along the London streets—little dreaming that within ten minutes' drive from Miss Merdun's door, Alice Crepton was sitting up in a little third-floor room, crying "her eyes out"—because it had, at last, occurred to her she might have been premature in giving Charles his dismissal.

She found out, when it was "too late," that she had only jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire—that her change for the better, had turned out a change for the worse; that Miss Merdun was by no means an amiable hostess, that her influence and abilities stood higher in general estimation at Combe Ridgis than in London.

It was the old story over again—of a patron pretending to more power than she actually possessed, of a protegee growing impatient, and both losing their tempers, and telling each other of truths more plain than pleasant.

Then Miss Merdun reproached her friend with ingratitude and want of genuine talent—whilst Alice accused her of a lack of straightforwardness, of having raised hopes she knew never could be fulfilled.

The end of which state of warfare was that Alice took leave of Miss Merdun one morning in a huff—and without so much as informing that lady of her destination, conveyed herself and her worldly effects to cheap lodgings at the top of a very large house, situated in a quiet street in Portman Square, where she managed to pass her time very miserably.

For so far she was not short of money, having saved nearly fifty pounds during her three years' sojourn at Combe Ridgis, and, therefore, all tedious as publishing delays are, she fancied she could afford to wait patiently for a result; but days and months passed drearily away—and still, though her pen was never idle, no gold accrued from her labors.

Tired and sorrowful she rambled from office to office, getting her tales read by some, skimmed by others, and refused by all; till at last, somebody wanting to get rid of her, and never having the remotest intention of ever printing anything she submitted for approval, advised, or rather "suggested,"

the propriety of her trying a three-volume novel.

The idea revived Alice's spirits, when they were almost below freezing point; she jumped at the proposal as if it had been a bona fide offer of purchase, there made, and there accepted—thanked her adviser eagerly, and gratefully declared, in a tone which, to do him justice caused him to wince a little as he thought of how lightly he had uttered the words—that she was very much obliged to him, turned into a neighboring stationer's shop, purchased a ream of paper, a pint of ink, a quarter of a hundred of quills, and hurried away home to commence, without the delay of a single hour, the "great work," which it had been recommended unto her to attempt.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The letter which summoned Dr. Duvard away from Combe Ridgis with such speed, was one announcing the fact that Judith's landlady was most uneasy concerning her lodger, who had, at time of writing, been absent for four days. The woman expressed her apprehensions lest some serious accident had befallen the lady; "for she told me before she went out," added the landlady, "that she would be certain to be back for dinner at five, and to have all ready for her."

Visions of all sorts of horrors immediately took possession of Dr. Duvard's mind, after perusing the epistle just referred to. There is a nameless dread in the minds of most about being "lost" in London. Looked at from a "possibility-of-losing-yourself" point of view, London is an awful place; and, accordingly, not having an idea of what shocking event might have happened to his mysterious patient, Dr. Duvard hurried off, as we have seen, to the metropolis, with the intention of finding her. The illness previously mentioned, however, kept him chained to his bed for weeks, almost for months afterwards, and when, feeble and emaciated, he crawled to Mr. Mason's office, he learned that search for the lady was superfluous, as no one can interfere between man and wife, and she had been only reclaimed by her husband.

Engrossed as a man was with his own troubles and anxieties—with his vain search after Alice, with pecuniary difficulties, and fresh anxieties—he had still time to spare a few thoughts to the woman he had met under such strange and painful circumstances.

Her clothes and trinkets he took into his own possession, feeling a vague conviction that some day or another she would return and claim them from him. He remembered the circumstances of the diamonds, and he thought a similar chance might occur any time again. For months he expected a letter from her, but none arrived; and at last, even with her worldly goods safely stowed away under lock and key in his sitting-room, he grew to forget to look for tidings of her.

Since her departure, he had become almost old. His illness, for want of needful nourishment during his recovery, had left dregs in his constitution which were undermining his health. He was weary of the useless struggle, weary of his vain search after Alice, weary of his patients, his situation, his abode, himself, everything. If he had not still clung to the hope of some day meeting the foolish girl who had caused him such unhappiness, he would have left England and joined his sister; but it was impossible to tear up hope by the roots, to cut off the last link of communication between himself and Alice—to give up, after having gone so long.

He was sitting one night over the fire in his little parlor, when the postman, a rare visitor at his door, brought a letter to him, directed in a woman's hand.

He recognized it instantly. Very eagerly he tore the cover open, and read the few lines traced on the inside—traced, apparently, with an unsteady hand:

"For pity's sake, come to me; now, if you can. Come to 63, Upper Emery Street, and ask for Miss

Leake. Remember, I am Miss Leake.

"Yours,
"JUDITH MAZINGFORD."

"Poor soul! a fugitive again," he muttered, as he put the note in the fire, and taking his hat, walked forth to comply with her request.

From the time he turned into Upper Emery Street, until he reached the door of No. 63, he kept repeating her new name, over and over to himself, lest by making any mistake, he should endanger her chances of safety; and when he fairly got the sentence, "Is Miss Leake at home?" out, without a sip of any kind, he felt as if he had performed a remarkable exploit.

"Yes, sir, will you walk upstairs," was the servant's reply, and following the steps of the speaker, he found himself in another minute at the drawing-room door.

"The gentleman, ma'am," announced the servant, ushering in Judith's visitor—and, advancing into the apartment, he was seized by two trembling hands, and addressed by her who had been beautiful Judith Mazingford. Had been!—he thought he had never gazed on such a wreck in his life—pale, emaciated, frightened-looking—with a restless look in her eyes, and quick, eager, unsettled gestures. Could this be the woman he had known in other days? He gazed in her face, doubtfully.

"You would not have known me?" she said, and the very tone of her voice was altered.

"I should not," he answered. "Thank Heaven for that," she cried, and fell back into a chair, sobbing hysterically—"Oh! I'm so glad!" she continued; "sit down, and I will tell you all. No, I cannot tell you; but be quiet, and listen while I think."

He did not answer her by words; he only lifted a candle from the table, and looked earnestly at her for a moment—then he laid his fingers on her pulse, and, finally, rang the bell.

"You—you won't betray me!" she exclaimed, springing up and seizing hold of his hand; "oh, surely I can trust you—I thought I might rely on you."

"So you may, implicitly—" he replied, putting her gently back into her seat; and drawing an inkstand and portfolio to him, he wrote for a minute or two:

"Now," he said to the servant, who stood at the door, in answer to his summons, "take that to the nearest chemist, and tell him I want this prescription filled up at once—And, stop a moment—have you any brandy in the house?"

"No, sir, I am afraid not, unless Mr. Gartmore—" the woman stopped.

"Who is he?"

"Oh! it is a gentleman who occupies the ground floor," interposed Judith, "do not go to him, do not—I am quite well. I want nothing."

"Present my—Dr. Duvard's compliments to Mr. Gartmore, and tell him I should be much obliged by his letting me have a small quantity for a patient who is seriously ill;" and, putting Judith's wishes thus quietly in the background, and substituting his own commands in their place, he led her back to her chair, and told her not to excite herself.

"But do you know who this Mr. Gartmore is—" she remonstrated.

"Nor do I care," replied Doctor Duvard.

"He is a heartless old man—a perfect oyster."

"More likely to get what we want out of him, then!" returned the doctor. "I want to know how long you have been ill?"

"Ill—I am not ill; I am only—" "In a bad state of health," finished Dr. Duvard. "Precisely so; and I wish to hear for what length of time you have been—not so well as when last I saw you?"

"I have been growing weaker and weaker for some months—oh, I think for nearly a year past. I was not well latterly at Ashford Row—only, only if I confess I am ill—you must not say I am mad."

"Say you are what?"

"You must not think that—that—that—"

Here the sobbing fit recommenced so violently, that Doctor Duvard was compelled to say, "Now, Mrs. Mazingford—"

"No, no, not that—" she interrupted.

"Well, Miss Leake, you must not give way in this manner, it is very injurious in every respect; if you will but help me to cure you, I think I can; but you must strive to do your part likewise."

"Mr. Gartmore's compliments," said the servant, entering at this moment, "and anything he has, is at your and Miss Leake's service. Should you like a little port, sir? He has some which has been in bottle twenty-five years."

"My master says, sir," added a middle-aged valet, following close

at the maid's heels; "that if the case is a pressing one, I can go for any medicine or further advice, that may be required; also, that if he can be of any service—"

"Got the knife in," remarked Dr. Duvard; sotto voce,—though not so softly but that the words reached the domestics—who concluded, however, that the observation applied to some surgical operation. "Best thanks to Mr. Gartmore, and the brandy is all I require; unless, indeed, you will be good enough to have this prescription filled up for me immediately. Now," he added, turning to Judith, when they were left once more alone, "did I not say the oyster was good eating?"

"Yes, but he is half-brother to Sir John Lestock."

"To whom?"

"Sir John Lestock—why, do you know anything of him?"

"I know no good of him," answered Doctor Duvard; "but never mind who Mr. Gartmore is at present—we have got the brandy;" and he set about the work of curing Judith as zealously as if he had not another care or object in life.

"What have you eaten to-day?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Nothing," was the reply; "I cannot eat—I have no appetite—"

"There, lie down and don't exert yourself," he interrupted; "you must keep quiet, or you will have a very serious illness."

"But I cannot keep quiet," she persisted; "I am so wretched—there is a dreadful woman coming here to-night, and I have no money for her—have you any?"

He had not, and he looked inquiringly in her face as he said so.

"Oh! do not look at me that way," she cried, "if they come and say I am mad, won't you defend me, and tell them I am not? What became of the things I left in Ashford Row—they are safe, are they not?"

"Yes, you can have them turned into money at any time."

"Then will you see this creature to-night, and tell her you have valuables of mine, and promise her what she wants?—and I will go to bed. I am afraid of her. Do stay here till she comes; she will be here directly. And I may trust you, may I not?"

"As yourself," he answered; "but I must ask one other question—what claim has this woman on you? What has given you such a horror of insanity? What is the matter with you?"

"You could not guess;" and she came quite close up to him, trembling from head to foot; "if I tell you, you must not think—"

"I shall think nothing but what you would wish me," he answered, kindly.

"Well then, do not ask me any particulars; only when I defied him he said he would break my spirit, and so he lodged me in a Lunatic Asylum—and I was not mad. Doctor—I was sane, as sane as ever I was—as sane as you are."

"And he knew that?"

"Perfectly."

"The infernal scoundrel!" ejaculated Doctor Duvard, heavily.

reader, just as you or any other honest man would have spoken the words.

"And—and Doctor—what I saw there nearly made me as bad as the rest; I cannot tell you about it—my blood curdles when I think of that place—another month, and I should have been as mad as the maddest amongst them. But this woman—this keeper, or matron, or whatever she was, helped me to escape; and now she is continually wanting money; always, always, more money, when I have none to give her—and I am afraid—for ever afraid."

(To be Continued.)

STRANGE, INDEED.

The other day an ingenious-looking person called with the message to the housewife that her husband had sent him for his dress suit, which was to be pressed and redone by the tailor.

"Dear me," said the housewife, "he said nothing to me about it. Did he look quite well?"

"Yes, mum, he wuz in good health and spirits."

"And he seemed quite as if he knew what he was about?"

"He did that, mum."

"And did he look as if he were quite content with things about him?"

"He was all that, mum."

"Well," said the lady, "it seems strange that he should only think of that dress suit now, because it's ten years since he's dead and buried, and I've often wondered how he's been getting on."

Young Mother—"The doctor thinks the baby looks like me." Visitor—"Yes; I wanted to say so, but feared you might be offended."

When the other fellow offers to compromise, it means that you have the best of it.

About the Farm

FATTENING CHICKENS.

The following remarks on fattening chickens are taken from the 1907 annual report of W. R. Graham, Poultry Manager at the Ontario Agricultural College:

Owing to the high price of feeds, we made some changes in our ration for fattening the chickens. The cheapest palatable ration we could find, locally, was one composed of equal parts of ground corn, low-grade flour and middlings. This mixture cost \$1.30 per hundred pounds. The gains made by the birds were not equal to those made in previous seasons when oats and buckwheat were fed along with the corn, nor yet was the quality of flesh as good. The birds did not dress as white as we usually have them. Sour skim milk or buttermilk was used for wetting the ground grains.

Many of the dealers in dressed poultry complain of the thin chickens that are sent to market, and I have noticed that on many of the local markets the birds offered for sale were anything but fleshy, and the method of dressing was very bad. Scalded, thin chickens, where the skin is mostly torn off, are certainly unsightly, and, further, they decompose more quickly than those which are dry-picked. All birds offered for sale, where they have to be kept a few days, should be dry-plucked.

It may be of interest to know what it costs to fatten chickens, and what the difference is between the cost price and the selling price. The following table gives the results in fattening 60 chickens hatched between June 15th and July 1st. The birds were reared in a corn field, and were put in the fattening crates October 1st. These were the cull birds—those that we did not want to use in our laying or breeding pens. We are keeping a number of June chickens as egg-producers for 1908. There were 12 chickens of each of the following breeds: Barred Plymouth Rocks, White Plymouth Rocks, White Wyandottes, Buff Orpingtons, and Rhode Island Reds. These chickens could not have been worth more than 8 cents per pound, live weight, when taken from the corn-field. They were sold, when fattened, for 12c to 14c per pound.

Weight when put in the crate, 181.5 pounds.

Weight after three weeks' feeding, 252 pounds.

Grain consumed, 249.25 pounds.

Milk consumed, 517 pounds.

Cost of feed, \$4.26.

Chickens cost, at 8c. pound., live weight, \$14.52.

Total cost, \$18.78.

Dressed weight, 212.5 pounds.

Selling price, at 12c. per pound, \$25.50.

Profit, \$6.72.

The profit on each chicken does not appear very large, yet, at the same time, one must consider that there is a gain of \$6.72 for the work or we consider an amount over 50c. per hour. This is not an unusual lot of chickens. Many chickens have made greater gains than were made in this trial. There is nothing in the trial, so far as I know, but what can be accomplished by anybody.

To market thin chickens is wasteful, and it appears to me that there is at least sufficient margin of profit to pay a reasonable wage.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Keep the young colts growing if they are expected to become as large or larger than their parents. A colt once stunted may afterward be made fat, but it can never be made to grow as large as it otherwise would.

Fall preparation is necessary to successful management in the spring. The new bee year, or preparation for it, must begin before the old one ends. If colonies go into winter quarters without a queen, without sufficient stores, or reduced in number, half or perhaps the whole of the next year passes before they have gained their normal strength.

The sow is at her best after farrowing the second litter until she is six years old. First litters are seldom profitable, being neither numerous, nor the sow well enough developed to be able to supply milk sufficient to grow them properly. There may be exceptions, however, but this is the rule. Retain as breeders only sows that have proved themselves to be good sucklers, as only these will grow a litter profitably. There is as much difference in sows in regard to giving milk as there is in cows.