

The Lady Brandolin ;

OR, THE LOST PATRIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

Early in the autumn of 18—, we were journeying leisurely through the majestic and beautiful mountain and valley scenery in the interior of Virginia.

It was near the close of a golden October day that we reached the picturesque little village of Hillsborough, situated upon a very high point of land, and in the midst of abrupt, rocky, tree-capped peaks, with green dents of fertile soil between. It was a town of rocks—founded upon rocks—hemmed in by rocks—the dwelling-houses, out-houses, fences, pig-pens, chicken-coops, all built of rocks of every conceivable variegated hue. It was, indeed, a beautiful and brilliant piece of mosaic work, up and down a ground of shaded green. It was as radiant and many colored as the forest in autumn, and flashed and sparkled in the golden sun like an open casket of jewels.

We reached the quaint old inn in time for a late dinner. There we expected to meet the carriage of a friend who resided at a farm about five miles distant across the mountains, and at whose house we were going to spend a few weeks. We found our friend, Mrs. Fairfield, waiting for us, and as soon as dinner was over we set out for Cedar Cliffs. Our road lay west through a savagely beautiful country, breaking itself up toward a lefty range of blue mountains encircling the western horizon, and behind which glowed and burned the crimson sunset sky.

We approached the celebrated pass of the Bear's Walk, from the highest point of which an extensive view of the valley was afforded. As we began to ascend the mountain, I fell into one of those indolent, pleasant, but rather selfish reveries, which the gathering shadows of twilight, the darkening scene, and the heavy, sleepy motion of the carriage, seemed to invite. From this reverie I was at length aroused by my indulgent companion, who, laying her hand upon my arm, and pointing across me through the window on the right, said,

"I wish you to observe that house."

We had just slowly reached the summit of the mountain, and the carriage had stopped to breathe the horses. I looked out at the window on the right. It was yet early enough in the evening, and there was light enough left to see, pitching precipitately down below us, a flight of cliffs, the bases of which were lost in abysses of twilight gloom and foliage, and the circular range of which swept round in a ring, shutting in a small, but deep and cup-shaped valley. Down in the depths of this darkening vale loomed luridly a large old farmhouse of red sandstone. The prevalent tone of the picture was gloom. Down into a reverie about the deep, dark vale, and darker house, swooped my fancy again. The carriage was in slow motion. I drew in my head.

"Did you notice the house?"

"Yes; and through that deep sea of dark and floating shadows, itself the densest shadow, it looms like some phantom, some ghost of a dead home—"

"Say a murdered home."

"I wish you wouldn't break a well-rounded sentence with any sort of improvement—ghost of a dead home about to melt away again in the surrounding gloom."

"Well said—better even than you think. Yet that old, half ruined farmhouse is the center of one of the largest, most beautiful fertile, highly-cultivated, and productive estates in all Virginia. If you saw it under the noonday summer sun you would see a variegated ground-view of vast fields of wheat and rye, yellow and ripening for the harvest; corn, green, waving in the sun; red-blossomed clover, pastures of blue grass rolling down the sides of the hills behind us, and stretching out on all sides of the old house, and disappearing under the bow of the circular-bounding of mountains. You hear now the mellowed tinkle of a waterfall, which, springing from the cliffs we have just left, flows

down the sides of the rocks, and reaching the bottom of the cup-like vale, spreads itself into many little, clear rills, well watering its fields, red pasturage, and heavy woods. This estate, with its fine water, its wealth of iron ore and coal in the encircling mountains, its abundance of game in the forest and fish in the river, and its immense water-power, is one of the most valuable in the Southern States. Yet in the midst of that wealthy and highly-cultivated plantation stands the homestead itself a desolation!"

"Then the shadowy view of it is after all the best. Now that you have directed attention to this dark phantom of a home looming luridly from the deep shadows, I warrant that we shall hear you say that this uncouth jumble of rough hewn red sandstone and miscellaneous rubbish is no less a place than Lingston Lawn, Pomfret Park, or some other style of sonorous sound."

"No—it is only Hickory Hall."

"Oh, yes! one of the oldest mansion-houses in the States—the residence, since 1610, of the oldest branch of the Lingstons, the Doverfields, or some other great family, with nothing left but their great name and great need."

"On the contrary, Hickory Hall is only the home of the Wallravens and has been so for only a hundred years."

"Exactly—precisely—I said that. Hickory Hall, for upward a hundred years, the seat of the Wallravens, an old family, with nothing left but their name. And now I understand why the homestead is in ruins, while the farm is in the highest state of cultivation."

"Why, I pray you?"

"I will undertake to say that all these well-cultivated fields, rolling in richness from hence to the horizon, belong to an 'industrious, intelligent and enterprising' Yankee purchaser and settler, who came here some five or six years ago peddling mouse-traps, and has now become possessed of all this land, and whose substantial, square-built, red brick house stares one out of countenance somewhere ever yonder by the side of the main road leading to market."

"Wrong again. Hugh Wallraven is one of the wealthiest, if not the very wealthiest man in Virginia. His fortune is estimated, with what truth I know not, at one million."

"Possible! I did not think there was such a private fortune in the country."

"It is said to be true, however."

"One million! why in the world, then, does he not put up a decent house? A decent house! Good! why does he not erect upon this favored spot a palace of white marble, with terraces, conservatories, pleasure gardens, fountains, groves? Fill his palace with the most beautiful and perfect work of mechanism in the way of furniture, to be procured in Europe and Asia—with the rarest works of art of ancient or modern times—his conservatories with the richest exotics of all climes—his gardens with the finest vegetables—his orchards with the utmost perfection of fruit? If I were he, with one million of dollars, I would introduce every new improvement in farming, grazing, stock breeding—I would import the best specimens of cattle, horses, poultry. I would have Welsh ponies, Scotch draft horses, English hunters, and Arabian coursers. Oh! I would make myself and so many other people so happy! One million! Oh! stop—don't speak to me yet—just let me revel in the idea of one million to lavish on this magnificent spot."

"Why, you unsophisticated little blockhead!"

"But why then does not this Mr. Wallraven—or rather Judge Wallraven, or General Wallraven—for I never heard of a planter, of any importance, reaching a certain period of life, without some title of distinction—why does not Governor Wallraven do something with one million?"

"He has done something — his

farm is the best cultivated in the State."

"Yes! but it should be the best stocked—the best in every particular—the model farm."

"Mr. Wallraven is a very aged man."

"Ah! he is Mr., then."

"Of course. People do not confer honors of any sort upon men like him!"

"Men like him! He is a bad man, then? perhaps a criminal, whose immense wealth and powerful family connections have enabled him to cheat the State prison of its due!"

"Mr. Wallraven has never been charged with or even suspected of, a crime—"

"In his own proper person. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.' His father, perhaps—"

"Possessed a name that was a synonym for high honor and sterling integrity—his son, with his name, has inherited his reputation and character of strict truth and honesty."

"Ah! that is it, then! He does not cheat at cards, and therefore he has not won any of the prizes in the game of life. But to return to my first question. Why does not Mr. Wallraven, of the sterling integrity, and the pounds sterling, do something?"

"He is the best agriculturist in the State—it is his ruling passion—his occupation."

"And he lives in a wretched, old, ruinous house? Why doesn't he improve his place?"

"Pertinacious! He is an aged man of sixty years."

"Yes! I see! And he has no children—that circumstance paralyzes his energies even more than old age!"

"How you jump to conclusions! He has a son and daughter!"

"Hum—hum—ah! well, sixty years old! His son and daughter must themselves be married, and settled off, and have children—and so, at last, he is a solitary old man, with no motive for improving and embellishing his homestead—the old house, it will keep out the rain, is quite good enough, he thinks, for the short life of the solitary old grandfather."

"Utterly wrong! His children, though past their early youth, are both still single."

I paused for a moment and then a luminous idea lighted up the whole subject, and I exclaimed, triumphantly:

"Now I have it! Now I certainly have it! He is one of those unnatural monsters, a miser. Of course! why surely! Why did I not see it at once? How it explains everything that was difficult to understand now! How clear that answer to the enigma makes all obscurity! How consistent all seeming contradictions! He is a miser! That does not prevent him being a man of strict honesty, sterling integrity—yet, most certainly, he is a miser; and 'people do not confer titles of distinction upon men like him! Yes, he is a miser! That is the manner in which he has amassed his immense property! That is also the reason why his house is suffered to fall to ruins while his farm is well cultivated—the farm will make returns, but the house will not. He has also half starved, half clothed, and half educated his children. They have grown up coarse, uncouth, ignorant, unfit for good society. They are consequently not well received, and even if they were disposed to marry, he would not portion his daughter or establish his own son in business. That is the answer to the whole enigma! Now say that I have no quickness of apprehension!"

"Wonderful!"

"Ah! I have my inspirations sometimes!"

"Stupendous!"

"You are making fun of me!"

"Hem! listen. His son, Constant Wallraven, graduated at a Northern University, and made the grand tour of the Eastern continent, accompanied by a clergyman salaried to attend him. You never saw a handsomer or magnificent looking man, or one of more perfect dress and address—the 'cour-tier's, scholar's, soldier's eye, tongue, sword.' His daughter, Constantia Wallraven, is one of the most beautiful and elegant of women, with one of the best cultivated minds I ever met."

"You surprise and perplex me more and more—handsome, accomplished, wealthy, in the prime of life, and have never been married? but perhaps it is they that are cold?"

"Not so. They have ardent temperaments and warm affections."

"Then they are, take them all in all, not easily matched, and of course, they are fastidious!"

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"I think not; I am sure not! for listen again, some years ago Constant fell in love with the beautiful daughter of a poor day-laborer—a poor, miserable fellow who hired in harvest, or in very busy times, to work in the field with the negroes."

"Ah! now it comes!"

"Constant wished to marry her."

"Well?"

"He offered himself to the girl."

"Well?"

"And the poor, abjectly poor, father threatened to shoot the son of the millionaire if he caught him near his hut again."

"The poor father could not believe in his daughter's good fortune. He suspected the young man of evil designs?"

(To be continued.)

A MAN WHO HAD COURAGE.

How Mr. Ebbelthwaite Saved the Sea Gulls.

In St. Ives, in Land's End, bird-killing used to flourish almost without protest. It has not wholly ceased yet, to be sure, but one little incident took place which seems to have been remembered here and there, and to have brought about a merciful truce. In "The Land's End" Mr. W. H. Hudson relates the occurrence as he heard of it. He was talking one day to a woman who deplored the way her fellow countrymen were killing birds of all kinds. "I'm sure," she said, "that if some one living here would go about among the people and talk to the men and boys, and not be afraid of anything, but try to get the police and magistrates to help him, he could get these things stopped in time, just as Mr. Ebbelthwaite did about the gulls."

Who was Mr. Ebbelthwaite, and what was it he did about the gulls? I had been, off and on, a long time in the place, and had talked about the birds with a score of people, without ever hearing this name mentioned. And as to the gulls, they were well enough protected by the sentiment of the fisherfolk.

But it had not been so always. On inquiry, I found twenty persons to tell me all about Mr. Ebbelthwaite, who had been very well known to everybody in the town, but as he had been dead some years, nobody had remembered to tell me about him.

It now came out that the very strict protection awarded to the gulls at St. Ives dates back only about fifteen to eighteen years. The fishermen always had a friend-

ly feeling for the birds, as is the case of all the fishing-places on the coast, but they did not protect them from persecution, although the chief persecutors were their own children.

People, natives and visitors, amused themselves by shooting the gulls along the cliffs and in the harbor. Harrying the gulls was the popular amusement of the boys; they were throwing stones at them all day long, and caught them with baited hooks, and set gins baited with fish on the sands, and no person forbade them.

Then Mr. Ebbelthwaite appeared on the scene. He came from a town in the north of England, in broken health, and here he stayed a number of years, living alone in a small house down by the water-side. He was very fond of the gulls and fed them every day; but his example had no effect on others, nor had his words when he went about day after day on the beach, trying to persuade people to desist from these senseless brutalities.

Finally he succeeded in getting a number of boys summoned for cruelty before the magistrates, and although no convictions followed, nor could be obtained, since there was no law or by-law to help him in such a case, he yet in this indirect way accomplished his object. He made himself unpopular, and was jeered and denounced as an interfering person, especially by the women; but some of the fishermen now began to pluck up spirit and second his efforts, and in a little while it came to be understood that, law or no law, the gulls must not be persecuted.

That is what Mr. Ebbelthwaite did. For me it was to "say something," and I have now said it. Doing and saying come to pretty much the same thing. At all events, I have on this occasion kept Ruskin's words in mind concerning the futility of prodding and scratching at that thick, insensible crust which lies above the impressible part in men unless we come through with a deep thrust somewhere.

WHEN CUPID RETREATS.

Polly—"Jack vows he will love me 'till the sun grows cold."

Patience—"H'm! Wait until after the honeymoon and see if he loves you when the house grows cold."

Blouses of chiffon to match the suits are in full vogue.

Striped flannel, linen, and madras are used for morning shirt-waists.

MAPLEINE

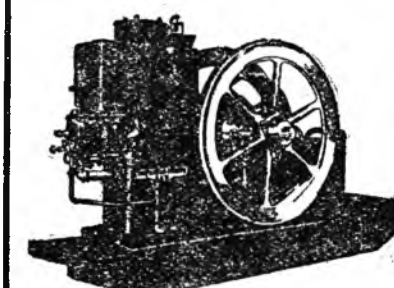


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