

For Weal or for Woe;

Or, A Dark Temptation

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Cont'd)

In an instant the greatest excitement prevailed. Passengers had left the coaches and were hurrying breathlessly to the spot that might have witnessed such a tragedy. The bright, glaring light from the engine fell full upon the pallid face, crowned in the curling rings of golden hair clustered about it; that lovely face fairer than ever poet dreamed of or artist painted.

Two dark figures, one faultless in dress, had hurried toward the scene from among the shadow of the dark pines, and had mingled with the excited passengers.

Harold Tremaine—for the one in faultless dress was he—ground his teeth in impotent rage as he realized that his scheme had been thwarted by some young girl who had discovered the loosened ties and saved the train.

"Perhaps it was just as well after all," he concluded; for Percy Granville did not appear to be among the passengers. He had not taken that train. Against handsome Percy Granville had escaped the terrible fate his relentless foe had marked out for him.

Tremaine pressed forward eagerly with the rest to behold the young girl who had saved the train, mentally wondering how in the world she had discovered it. Now she happened to be at this lonely place at this unseemly hour—and if she had by any chance heard his companion and himself planning the affair when they had fancied themselves so securely alone in the dense copse.

One glance at that lovely white face, and despite the golden hair and the great changes illness had made, Tremaine recognized her—Gay Esterbrook whom he believed to be in the charred ruins of the old brick house on the river road—Gay in the flesh as sure as fate.

No one notices him in the great confusion about them. A quick thought flashes through the villain's brain, his black eyes glitter with a devilish gleam, he springs forward, raises Gay in his strong athletic arms, and in an instant, quite unnoticed, he has gained the dark shadows beyond with his lovely unconscious burden.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the excitement which prevailed, the passengers hurrying hither and thither, all anxious to view the spot which, but for a young girl's bravery must have been the scene of a terrible disaster, Gay was for the moment forgotten.

The engineer had torn off his coat, laying the slender, inanimate form upon it, hurrying to the baggage-car for a flask of spirits with which to revive the heroic little heroine.

The passengers as well as the engineer were mystified; none of them had seen her depart.

They come to the natural conclusion that, upon regaining consciousness, the young girl had fled; why, no one could even conjecture.

She had saved their lives, yet they could not even express their heartfelt gratitude to her. One childless old millionaire on the train asked, if the beautiful young stranger could be found, and her name learned, that he would make her his heir.

They concluded that the best plan would be to put personals in the leading journals on the morrow to that effect.

Meanwhile the train hands were busily repairing the rails; a few moments more, and the train, which had escaped disaster in so miraculous a manner, went thundering on its way.

Harold Tremaine, who still held the unconscious form of Gay in his arms, watched it from a safe distance, with a covert smile playing about his curling, mustached lips.

"Rogers, the coast is clear now," he said, turning to his companion, who stood near him leaning against the trunk of a tree. "You can go to Hackensack for the coach as soon as you like; mind you, make quick time in driving back here, for we must not be found here when day breaks."

"All right, chief," returned the man addressed as Rogers; "I'll be back in a trice. It's a pity you hadn't a little chloroform about you to settle the little beauty in case she should come to while I am gone and give you trouble."

"I'll attend to all that," retorted Tremaine imperatively. "She escaped me once before, but I shall take good care that it don't happen again. Make haste, will you, and bring a conveyance at once; confound your infernal slowness."

The man moved off with alacrity, while Tremaine carried his unconscious burden on the bridge.

A few moments later Gay's eyelids fluttered feebly for an instant, then few wide open, encountering the triumphant gaze of the handsome villain bending over her.

A shriek of terror burst from Gay's lips as she struggled out of his arms, but he still maintained his hold of the slim, white wrists.

"You!" she pants, with blazing eyes, attempting to wrench her delicate hands from his firm grasp. "Heaven help me! I am in your power again."

"If you could strike me dead with those beautiful eyes of yours, I am sure you would do it," he said coolly.

"Yes, I would do it," flashed Gay, bitterly. "You have wrecked and spoiled my life—made my very existence a torture to me. Only Heaven knows how I abhor you—you who are the wickedest of men—a counterfeiter—and a would-be murderer—yes, a murderer, who would have sent many a soul into eternity to-night if I had not heard your nefarious plans as you discussed them—and thwarted you."

Tremaine's handsome face flushed hotly under the fire of her scathing words.

"I would have informed upon you, and brought you all to speedy justice on the night I made my escape from the lone brick house in which you held me captive, had I not been stricken down on that very night by a long and serious illness," Gay went on recklessly.

"You are not wise in persistently angering me," returned Tremaine, coolly. "You know too much concerning me to ever escape from me. Take care how you spurn my proffered friendship. Beware lest you make an enemy of me, my beau-

tiful, defiant little fairy. I am your master, but love would make me your slave."

Gay shrank from him in the most intense loathing.

"A wicked man is incapable of the pure, holy sentiment called love," she cried. "I spurn you and your love alike."

"Notwithstanding that, you are destined to be my bride by fair means or foul," retorted Tremaine.

"I would kill myself first," panted Gay, defiantly.

Tremaine merely smiled at this bitter outbreak. "We shall have to move on toward the road," he said haughtily, drawing her arm within his own and moving away from the shadows.

"I suppose you are wondering how you fell into my arms again," he said mockingly, and in a few words he explained the matter to her, adding that she should never escape him again.

Gay vouchsafed him no answer. She was bitterly incensed.

On the bridge that spanned the rock-bedded rapids, Gay drew suddenly back. "Oh, if she could but die and end it all in the dark, seething waters below," she thought wildly.

Tremaine drew nearer to her and would have thrown his arm about the slender, lissom figure had she not repulsed him with a stinging blow, just as she had done once before for the same offense, straight upon his aristocratic face with her little clinched white hand.

"Stand back—do not touch me," the girl panted, "or I will throw myself over this railing down into the water below."

The handsome villain laughed, and that mocking laugh froze the blood in poor helpless Gay's veins.

"What a perverse little darling you are to be sure, to stand out so bravely and defy me. By George, this difficult wooing gives a zest to it; but from the first your deep-rooted dislike made me all the more anxious to win you and tame you and clip your wings, my beautiful, struggling bird of paradise, whose beauty has bewitched me. There's nothing tame about this romance, by the eternal! But, my charming Gay, my bride to be, I must exact a kiss for the blow you dealt me, here and now. Why struggle when you know you must submit to it?"

No wonder the villain's breath upon her cheek and the clasp of his arm around her maddened poor Gay and made her desperate, she had suffered so.

With a low, frenzied cry she flung off the clasp of the arm wound about her, scarcely realizing in her terror that she was pressing him back with almost superhuman strength against the railing of the bridge, while he seemed nearly paralyzed at the suddenness of the attack.

There was a crash and a terrible cry, and the thin boards that formed the railing parted, and Gay's persecutor was precipitated down, down into the seething waters that dashed the rocks below in their relentless fury.

The thrilling, awful cry, "Murder!" rang out shrilly on the night air, quickly followed by the splash of a heavy falling body, and in the fearful despair of that terrible moment poor Gay, who had perished her soul by an awful crime, realized what she had done.

The pale moon struggled out from the black, heavy clouds, and with bated breath Gay peered down into the angry waves.

"Oh, Heaven! I did not mean to do it!" she gasped, wringing her little white hands in mortal terror. "But he drove me to it; he goaded me to madness. One of our lives would have ended in a tragedy—what does it matter that it was his instead of mine?"

She looked at the little hands, white as lily-leaves, clutching the broken rails, and it almost seemed to her excited fancy that they were crimson stains of blood upon them.

Would the angels up in heaven who had witnessed what she had done take vengeance upon her? she wondered vaguely.

Like one fascinated, Gay gazed into the dark, angry waters, tipped by the golden light of the gleaming stars; suddenly the waves parted, and in the flickering light she saw Harold Tremaine's white face, and the piercing cry of "Murder!—help! help!" rose up from the waves.

A hurried step was answering the call. It was too late to save him, but she would be discovered there and accused of it; yet, if her very life had depended on it, he could not move hand or foot to fly; every nerve seemed paralyzed.

As in a glass darkly, a picture of the future rose in a ghastly vision before her—she could see herself in a prisoner's box, her golden head bowed on the rail, her white wrists manacled, the words "Charged with the murder of Harold Tremaine" written in letters of fire against her name—even the picture of the hangman and the scaffold rose before her mental vision; and she raised her lovely young face to the night sky with such infinite terror and such piteous moans that the white angels must have pitied and wept for her.

She realized that she should fly from the terrible spot, but fate seemed to close in around her and bind her there.

"They will find me here and arrest me," she moaned sinking down on her knees, and covering her white face and startled eyes with her poor little trembling hands, she tried to utter a prayer, but the words died on her lips in a moan of terror.

"No one can help him now," muttered Gay, as she saw he did not rise again.

Would the dark waters ever reveal their terrible secret until the day of judgment came?

Nearer, nearer came the swift footsteps, and again the horrible cry of "Murder!" was faintly repeated, echoed weirdly back through the waving pines.

CHAPTER XX.

We must now return to Percy Granville and Evelyn, whom we left bidding a hasty adieu to their friends and hurrying back to Redstone Hall in response to the telegram Percy had received.

Scarcely a word was spoken between them during that long, swift ride; Evelyn could have been content to sit forever by his side gazing wistfully into his handsome face, wondrously pale now in the flickering light of the carriage lamps.

As they neared Redstone Hall Percy observed a great confusion among the servants, a murmur of voices, and lights moving to and fro.

"Oh, I am afraid we are too late!" cried Evelyn. "I fear the dear old general is dead! Oh, Percy, hurry to his room and tell me—if I can come too."

One of the servants met him at the door and told him how the fearful accident had happened.

In carelessly handling a loaded revolver which he had always kept in one corner of his wardrobe, it had been accidentally discharged, the bullet lodging in one of his lungs.

Internal hemorrhage had set in, and now his death was but a question of a few short hours.

Like one in a dream, Percy hurried along the corridor.

The sound of his own name fell upon his ears.

He knew it was his uncle's voice calling for him.



ENVER BEY,

Who is believed to have killed Nezim Pasha during the uprising of the Young Turks at Constantinople, and who succeeds the man he killed.

For hours the general had lain in an unconscious state, his burning, staring eyes fixed intently on the wall, and the doctor who watched at his bedside feared that he would pass away without one word to the nephew whose coming he had so ardently desired.

The sound of the carriage wheels aroused him as nothing else could have done.

"Send my nephew to me," he moaned, "and leave us alone together."

Another moment and the doctor opened hurriedly, and Percy Granville wittily crossed the chamber of death and was kneeling beside his uncle's couch.

The doctor quietly withdrew to an adjoining room, as he had been bidden, leaving them alone together.

A half hour passed, and as the doctor paced the luxurious room back and forth restlessly was it only fancy—or did he hear Percy Granville cry out excitedly: "Ask anything else of me and I will gladly do it, uncle, but this which you urge upon me I cannot do."

The rest of the sentence—that is, if it were not an hallucination of the doctor's morbid fancy—was drowned in the moaning of the trees that stood like grim sentinels guarding Redstone Hall.

The large, magnificent room in which the old general lay, was quite in shadow—the white statues gleamed in the soft semi-darkness; one blind was half drawn, and through it came the clear, white moonlight. A large silver urt-lamp stood upon the center-table; but it was carefully shaded.

Faint glimmers of light fell upon the bed with its costly velvet hangings, and on the white, drawn face that lay on the pillow with the filmy look that comes only into eyes that death has begun to darken.

The dying general had held out his hand feebly to Percy as he entered the room.

"You have come, Percy," he said faintly. "Thank Heaven you are here."

The stern old general had never been demonstrative; now he seemed to tremble with emotion as he clung to the strong hands that held his.

"I am dying, Percy," said the old general, gaspingly, "my eyes grow dim—I cannot see you."

"Uncle," said Percy, tremulously, "if I could suffer every pang that you endure, I would gladly do it for your sake."

The general laid his hand on the handsome bowed head.

"Heaven bless you, Percy," he murmured, "you are a great comfort to me—my hope and my trust are in you. Percy," he cried, starting up with energy that was partly feigned, now he seemed to tremble with emotion as he clung to the strong hands that held his.

"I will surely do, uncle."

"Heaven bless you, my boy," returned the general, gratefully. "You make death a thousand-fold easier to bear."

In that moment Percy remembered the parting words of the doctor as he quitted the room.

"My dear young man," he had said gently, "I must remind you that your uncle's life hangs on a mere thread. The least excitement, the least agitation would send him into eternity before you could call assistance. No matter what he may have to say to you, listen, and accede if it be in your power."

"I will remember," Percy had answered, gravely; "surely you may trust me, sir."

"I do," the doctor had replied. "Your uncle's life, for the present, lies in your hands."

"Yes, I am dying, Percy," whispered the general, breathing hoarsely; "but for that I should not utter the one wish—the one desire of my life, for perhaps years to come. You must say 'Yes' to my last request, Percy," he murmured.

"You need not doubt it, uncle," the young man replied earnestly. "I cannot refuse anything you may ask—why should I?"

As he spoke, he had not the faintest idea of what he would be asked to do.

At that instant he raised his troubled eyes to a steel-engraving hanging upon the opposite wall, and his handsome face paled.

The picture represented a bridal party emerging from an ivy-covered stone church, and in that moment his thoughts traveled back to just such an episode in his own life; and in the shimmering moonbeams that stole in through the window he could see the face of Little Gay.

His face looked as it was raised to his as they parted—the memory of it, as he knelt there, brought tears to his eyes—the sweet little bride from whom he had parted at the very altar.

"Was ever a man's fate as cruel as mine has been?" he thought. "Who ever lost a wife on his wedding-day?"

"Surely there had never been a love-dream so sweet, so passionate, or so bright as his; surely there had never been one so rudely broken! Poor little Gay, his bride, cold now in death!"

The feeble pressure of the general's hands recalled his wandering thoughts.

"Listen, Percy," he murmured faintly, "my moments are precious."

"Go on, my dear uncle," replied Percy, gently. "I am attending closely to what you have to say to me."

"Percy, my boy," he whispered gaspingly, "I could not die and leave the words unspoken. I want my race to live long generations after me. All rests with you, my best loved nephew—you who wear my

IMITATIONS ABOUND

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name and inherit my fortune. You understand me, Percy—you know the last request I would make of you?"

A cry broke from the young man's lips; the words pierced like a sword to his heart.

"Surely, uncle, you do not mean that you wish me to—"

The very agony crowded into the word "marry" seemed to unman him.

"To marry, yes, Percy; that is what I want you to promise me to do."

"My God, uncle!" he burst out, "ask anything but that; my heart is torn and bleeding; have mercy; spare and pity me!"

Great drops of agony stood on his brow, his whole frame shook with agitation.

Put another in Gay's place? Marry! Heaven pity him; how could he harbor such a fancy for a single instant, when he thought only of the cold, pale face of Gay, his fair young bride, whom he had loved so madly, lying in her seamy shroud in the icy embrace of death, like a broken lily blighted in the bud.

"Answer me, my boy," whispered the old general, his breath growing fainter. "It is the common fate of all men to marry and to love; it is not a hardship, rather a blessing."

(To be continued.)

Winter Care of Drafters.

Most farmers do not get full use of their horses through failure to provide work for them during the winter months. There is generally not much doing on the farm then except, perhaps, hauling of a little produce to town, dragging in the logs for firewood and scattering manure on the snowy fields.

Altogether they are kept idle for so many days that the average number of hours worked per day for a year is even less than two, counting those days in summer overtime is the rule for man and beast.

This condition is unprofitable from an economic point of view, and from the viewpoint of the horse's health.

Heavy drafters in good flesh and fed liberally on oats and timothy will need exercise and plenty of it to keep in fair health during the winter. They will need warm stables properly ventilated; there must be no cement or other damp

floors for them to lie on; there must be plenty of air and sunshine.

One winter we fed scarcely anything but straw and just a little grain and the horses came through in better shape than those of a neighbor who fed liberally, but who did not have any more work for his horses than we had. There was not so much rich stuff to poison the blood.

I know of a farmer who regularly hires a teamster to take his magnificent drafters out into the employ of the local ice company, and so keeps them busy during the winter. Another engages his two teams in the cordwood business for the same purpose.

Neither of these men makes very much money through the deal, but they force their horses to pay for their winter board and to come through in splendid shape for the summer's heavy grind.

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