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For the Year 1886

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1	Milton	Wm. Pauton	29	26	28	9	24	25	10 a.m.
2	Oakville	R. Balmer	6	3	5	3	11	3	10 a.m.
3	Georgetown	L. Grant	12	16	11	7	17	9	9.30 a.m
	Acton	J. Matthews	13	11	13	8	16	11	10 a.m.
	Campbellville	S. R. Lister	11	6	10	0	9	8	9 30 "
	Burlington	W J. Bastedo	5	2	4	2	10	2	11 "

General Sessions of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury, Tuesday 8th June, 14th December, at 1 p m.
County Court Sittings, without Jury, Tuesday, 6th April, and 5th October, at 10 a m.
County Court Sittings—Formerly Terms—Monday, 4th January, 5th April, 5th July, and 4th October at 10 a.m., each day.
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LADY ISABEL'S ATONEMENT.

A SEQUEL TO EAST LYNNE.

But my lord held her tightly. He had carried her heart by storm, and he would not relinquish the "vantage-ground" until the conquest was complete.

"Let me tell Mr. Carlyle when and where I shall take his treasure from him, sweet?" he asked, looking down into her shy, dark eyes. "Let me name the 'day of days' before we leave this lovely spot. May I set it, Isabel? May I usurp your prerogative and tell you when our wedding-day shall be? Look in my eyes, sweet, and let me have my way. It shall be on New Year's day, Isabel—we will begin a new year and a new life together. Shall it be so? Look up, love, and answer.

"I have no will but yours, Lionel," she answered, gravely. "It will be very sweet to begin the new year together."

He drew her slender jeweled hand through his arm and led her back toward the drawing-room.

"God deal with me as I with thee after the new year dawns," he murmured, solemnly; but it was well for Lord Lionel Beresford that the prayer was never answered. "We will leave the palace at once, Isabel," he added. "I have taken the brightest jewel—why should I stay to waste time upon the others?"

Ten minutes later they made their adieux and left the royal presence, and as they went down the palace steps to the carriage the soft echo of the music floated to them. The band was playing a dainty ballad of Auber's. My lord caught the pretty tinkling melody and hummed it as they passed under the shining lamps:

"Oh, love, my love, I loved you
In those sweet days of yore;
Oh, love, my love, I loved you,
But false as fair I proved you—
And though, through all, I loved you,
I loved my honor more."

In after days Lord Beresford recalled that moment, and he wondered what fate had tempted him to hum those pretty prophetic words when he went down the steps in the springtime of his bliss, with Isabel Carlyle leaning lightly on his arm.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

Lady Rosamond Mount Severn received the news of the betrothal with the wildest of wild joy.

She embraced Isabel and kissed her with a rapture that quite won her heart and added a fresh joy to the glory she had won.

"Oh, my darling, I cannot express to you how enraptured I am," she cooed, laying her kinswoman's cheek against her heart and kissing its blushing beauty again and again. "Oh, love, you will be one of the grandest ladies in all England. Isabel, Countess of Beresford. Ah, dear, I was a true prophet when I said you would be *Lady* Isabel yet. Such a conquest, one of the proudest and noblest men in all the United Kingdom. Oh, love, you ought to be very happy."

"*I am* happy, Rosa, dear," murmured Isabel, drawing back and standing under the sparkling chandelier in the corridor of my lady's grand house. "I never was so happy before—I never knew the world was so beautiful. Lionel has gone into the library to tell papa. It is to be on New Year's day, and—and, Rosamond, you must be just the same to me then as now. You must come to Ravenswood and spend a whole year with us. Lionel told me to ask you, and—and you will like to come, will you not?"

"Would my lady like to come? With the work she had in hand the invitation seemed like a blessing.

"It would be my dearest wish, Isabel," she said, sweetly. "After our brief life in the world of fashion, could I bear to be separated from you? Lord Lionel Beresford owes me an apology for stealing my little sister from me."

"I may tell him then that you will come? And oh, Rosamond, you shall be my first bridemaid and design my wedding-dress for me. Lionel likes crusted white, and I mean to have my dress it. The world seems so bright when love glorifies it."

My lady turned away with a covert sneer. Nothing on earth was half so beautiful as revenge, she thought, and she would have revenge on the child of the woman who caused her those seventeen years of imprisonment in the bleak Welsh villa—revenge on her, and on Lord Lionel Beresford that he had chosen Isabel over her.

The news of the engagement spread very rapidly. There was no need to tell her grace of Arleigh; she had learned it from Lady Beresford's lips before they quitted St. James', and recollecting what Isabel had said last night, recalling the words she heard on the stairway at Arleigh Towers, she believed, with the Countess of Beresford, that my lord was going headlong into ruin.

"She said she did not love him—she said at Arleigh that she would crush his mother's pride," murmured her grace, with a sigh. "Ah, well! The Earl of Beresford were better dead than wedded to Isabel Carlyle. She is an arrant flirt—a girl without principle, and the star of Beresford sets in shame at last."

Mr. Carlyle received the news of the engagement with a very grave face. He could not but feel the honor that was done him—he liked Lord Beresford, and he would have chosen him out of all the world on whom to bestow his darling's hand—but he remembered last night's interview in the library, he remembered that my lord was the proudest man in England, and he shuddered, thinking of the history of the miserable past.

"God help and guide me—I ought to tell her all," he muttered, as he walked up and down the library floor. "It is due that she should know the shame upon her mother's memory, but how can I tell her—oh, Heaven! how can I blast her life? If I tell her, she is too noble to keep it from Lord Beresford—she will go to him, she will tell him all, and he—will he accept her then? Will he take the shadow of such a sin, and give it the spotless name of Beresford. Oh, I must speak with Isabel—I must know how the chance of a separation would fall upon her heart."

All night he paced up and down the library floor fighting that bitter battle between love and duty; and day, looking in at last through the eastern windows, found him pacing still, and the battle not yet decided.

Nine o'clock brought Isabel and Lady Rosamond down to breakfast, and his haggard face and bloodshot eyes met them over the crystal and silver.

"Oh, papa, are you ill?" asked Isabel, in alarm. "You look as though you had passed a sleepless night. What is it, papa, dear? Does anything trouble you?"

"Will you expect me to give my darling up without a thought," he answered, evasively. "It is very hard to feel that I must be second in your thoughts forever after. *Apropos* of nothing, what is on the *tapis* for to-night. Do you go anywhere this evening, ladies."

"We are due at Lady Lexboro's, papa—have you forgotten," smiled Isabel.

"I had forgotten—yes," he replied. "Lord Beresford accompanies you, I believe, and the engagement is to be made public immediately, is it not."

"Yes, papa—Lionel says he never likes mystery or concealment. He thinks it is better the world should know the truth at once."

Mr. Carlyle shut his lips and looked down at his plate with an expression of pain.

"When you are dressed to-night, come to me in the library before you depart for Lady Lexhoro's, Isabel," he said, chokingly. "There is something I wish to speak to you about."

Lady Rosamond looked up shirtly, and the spoon she was holding clashed down on her plate. She had a vague suspicion of his meaning—coupled with those haggard, bloodshot eyes, the words could have but one significance, namely: that he meant to tell Isabel all—and a terrible death palor crept over her fair blonde face.

"He must not do it. Oh, Heaven! if he tells her now my revenge will be lost," she murmured, under her breath. "She would go to Lord Beresford, she would tell him the secret, and he—ah! he loves her so he would forgive, even though the deed were her own. No, no! The secret must never be told until after the marriage—he must be led to believe she wedded him, concealing the shame, of her own free will—to tell it now would be ruin to me. I must avert it—I must by some plan to interrupt it. I am to meet Pierre Blonshar and Afy Hallijohn to-night, and nothing must come to mar the glory of my revenge."

All through the breakfast hour that thought kept circling through her brain, and she watched her chance to avert the calamity. Mr. Carlyle took his after-breakfast smoke in the library—she escaped from Isabel and the duchess of Arleigh and hurried down the hall-way.

"May I come in, guardy," she laughed, opening the door and peeping into the room. "Isabel and her grace are planning wedding finery, and I am left to amuse myself. I'm not *de trop*, am I."

"Certainly not, child—come in at once. I was just thinking of you," he answered, laying down his cigar, and lifting his hollow eyes to her face.

My lady glided into the room, and flitting lightly forward, dropped down on a low ottoman at his feet.

"Thinking of me, guardy, and looking so solemn?" she cooed, clasping her slender hands on his knee, and lifting her violet eyes with a sugary smile. "Have I been doing anything wrong that you look so pained and worried?"

"No—but I have," he answered, huskily. "Rosamond, I am in torture."

"About what, guardy dear?"

"About Isabel and this grand match. I have not slept a wink all night thinking of it," he said, with a smothered groan. "You know the story of the past; you know what a load of shame it is for a girl like Isabel to bear. My God! Rosamond, it is death to tell her and yet she ought to know—*he* ought to know that her mother made a false step and died a social outcast, before he makes my child his wife. It is my duty to tell the shameful story, but how can I do it—how can I kill my darling in all her spotless innocence?"

My lady's violet eyes grew very wide, and an expression of horror settled on her fair false face.

"Oh, guardy, you must not do it!" she said, solemnly. "It would kill Isabel—it would be murdering her in cold blood, and your truest duty is to shield her. No, no, you must not tell the terrible truth—we will be secret, and Isabel need never know."

"Yes, but Lord Beresford? Ah, Rosamond, he is the soul of honor and of truth."

"Why need Lord Beresford know, either?" purrsued my lady, warming up to her work with the dread lest her revenge should miscarry. "Guardy, it can do no good to tell it. He is very proud, and—and, even loving her as he does, he might shrink from making her his wife. Oh, guardy, that would be a terrible sin. She would fall dead the moment he left her, and her murder would be against your soul. No, no, no! It must never be. Lord Beresford must never suspect—Isabel must never dream. We who love her so dearly will carry the secret with us to the grave."

He laid his hand tenderly upon her head.

"God bless you, Rosamond; you are a faithful woman," he said, huskily. "But where is Isabel now? Find her and send her here. I shall not wait until evening. Better I should have the interview now."

My lady arose and went out like one in a dream, and the hunted, despairing, fearful expression of her eyes was not assumed.

"If he speaks I am lost," she groaned as she walked away in quest of Isabel, "If he tell the story I am robbed of my revenge."

Left to himself Archibald Carlyle sank deeply into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

Ten minutes passed—a light footstep ran down the luxurious corridor, a fresh young voice trilled the fag-end of a pretty love ballad—then the door opened quietly and Isabel flitted in like a sunbeam.

"Do you want me, papa?" she said, pausing on the threshold. "Rosamond said you did but you appear to be taking a morning nap. What a glorious morning it is. I never saw the sun shine so brightly. The world seems *couleur de rose* nowadays."

She bent laughingly over his chair and pressed a kiss on his wrinkled brow, quite unaware that, in the adjoining room, my lady knelt at the keyhole and watched and listened with bated breath.

"Dear old papa. What is it? a headache?" smiled Isabel, coming around and dropping on her knees before him. "Shall I sing it away? You used to say that my songs charmed away all pain. Shall I sing you one now?"

She knelt before him, her sparkling hands locked on his knee and her rich dusk face looking up at him full of purity and love and perfect bliss.

"Shall I sing away your headache, papa?" she said sweetly, and the answer she received chased the laughter from her lips, the love-light from her eyes.

He caught her locked hands in a passionate, anguished clutch, all stark and haggard he sat bolt upright in his chair, and looked straight into the fleeting rose-pink of her paling face. "Isabel," he said, hoarsely, "I owe you a duty—I owe God a duty—and it must be fulfilled. Oh, my child, my child, are you strong enough to bear a fearful blow?"

CHAPTER XXI.

"LIKE NO OTHER LOVE."

Isabel's wide, dark eyes expanded slowly; the playful smile left the sweet lips; the innocent merriment faded out of her dark, olive face, and a look of perplexity and doubt took its place. Her locked hands closed a little tighter on her father's knees, and her delicate brows arched themselves wonderingly.

"I—I don't think I understand you correctly papa," she stammered in a confused way. "You put your question so strangely. You say there is a duty you owe alike to God and me, and then ask me if I could bear a terrible blow; I should half think you were trifling if you didn't look so serious, and"—with a sudden gasp of pain—"oh, papa, you are not ill? You are not going to die?"

The big, dark eyes opened wider than ever as she spoke, and the locked hands shut themselves with a passionate intensity of pain.

"Papa, you have not been ill and been hiding the truth from me all along?" she said, huskily. "It isn't that, is it, papa?"

He leaned his head back on his chair, and closed his eyes with a smothered groan.

"No—it isn't that," he answered, chokingly. "It is something that touched your future happiness; my child—something I feel now that I should have told you long ago. If I had not been a coward, if I had not wished to save us both a bitter pang, I should never have known the sorrow and shame of this hour."

He stopped suddenly and covered his face with his hands.

"Isabel," he said, abruptly, starting forward again and speaking with a strange sort of solemnity—"Isabel, look up at me, my child, and answer me this question: Out of all this world's suffering, what would you consider the bitterest blow that could possibly befall you?"

He was looking straight at her—his face full of pain, his white lips twitching nervously. He did not have to wait for his answer; a solemn look came into the soft dark eyes upraised to his, a wistful expression crossed that lovely olive face, and looking up at him with the September sunlight shining in upon her, she gave him the answer he never after forgot.

"The worst blow that could come to me, papa," she said, slowly, "would be the loss of Lionel's love. I can think of nothing worse than that, for my life would have neither aim nor purpose, were he taken out of it. But why need we even dream of such a terrible thing, papa? Lionel loves me truly, and there will never be a shadow between us—never, he has promised it, and I believe him."

Her eyes softened and took on their old happy expression as she said that, and, looking at her then, Mr. Carlyle breathed a deep sigh, thinking of his own young love-dream and the beautiful earl's daughter who had shattered and spoiled it at its sweetest era.

"It is well that you so implicitly trust the man to whom you have given your heart, Isabel," he said, huskily, "for the lack of confidence between man and wife is the foundation of every earthly misery. Always remember that, Isabel—always remember that true happiness can only come out of mutual trust and peace out of perfect faith. Still, it is proverbial that true love never did run smooth, you know, and there really is no love that cannot fail us save that of our Heavenly Father. Lord Beresford is a noble man, my child—out of all others I had sooner give your life into *his* keeping—but Lord Beresford is only human, for all, and human loves often cloud and grow dim before the presence of obstacles such as chance may, any day, bring into our lives. Look at me, dear, and answer me a question. An obstacle to your wedded happiness *may* rise (we are none of us permitted to read the future, you know), and if such a thing should come to pass—nay, let us say, for the argument's sake, that there is an obstacle even now. Which would you prefer—to go to Lord Beresford and tell him of it now, knowing that he never again would look on you, or let chance reveal it and spoil your lives by robbing you of his love after you had been made his wife? Answer me this, my child—which of these would you prefer?"

She looked at him, smiling at what she thought the sheer absurdity of the thing.

"Of the two evils, choose the least," she quoted, lightly. "Such an obstacle could not possibly exist, but I think it better to tell Lionel before the wedding. It would be a terrible thing to go to him and proclaim the truth, knowing that he would go out of my life forever, but better that than loss his love when I had given him my hand as well as my heart. Still"—solemnly—"in any case the issue would be the same. It would kill me, papa, to lose Lionel's love. My heart would break the moment he left me."

"You only think that, Isabel. Time will teach you that hearts do not break under woe—they wither and ache and endure the pangs of memory. To break and die is a mercy not granted them."

"Mine would," she answered, with conviction, "I tell you truly, I should die if I lost Lionel's love. Other burdens I could bear up under—Heaven would give me strength, somehow—but the hour that took Lord Lionel Beresford out of my life would be the hour of my death. It is not a child's fancy's papa. I tried, as I lay in bed last night, to think what the world would be without him—I tried to think that he might change, that he might die—everything; but the end was all the same, and I know it as surely as we sit here now. If I lost him, if Heaven was cruel enough to take him out of my life, I should bow my head and die. He is the Alpha and the Omega of my world, papa. I should die, and want to die, if I knew I should lose him."

She had risen while speaking, and she stood before him now, her sweet, dark face uplifted, a strange, angelic smile hovering about her lips, and her little hands crossing themselves upon her bosom. When Archibald Carlyle next saw her in that position, he never liked to recall the hour she stood thus in the grand old library of my lady's London mansion.

"Isabel, you must not talk thus," he said, choking off a sob and trying to repress the cold chill that would come over him. "You have been reading some sentimental book, or you would not have such morbid fancies."

"The book I have been reading is my own heart, papa," she answered, solemnly. "If there was such a thing possible as an obstacle to our union, I would go straight to Lionel and tell him. After that I would die; but better then than to lose his love when I was his wife—better for him and for me that the obstacle should debar Isabel Carlyle from happiness than tarnish the honor and wreck the life of Isabel Beresford. In either case the end would be the same. This is like no other love, papa. If I lost it I should simply die."

She spoke very calmly, but every word went home to his heart, and looking at her as she said it, he felt within him that she uttered a prophetic truth.

"Yes, it would kill her," he moaned, bowing his head that she might not see the anguish of his face. "God help and pity me. Rosamond was right—I must not tell her. Better we should hold the secret than slay her in her youth and innocence. The world knows nothing—the truth can never come to light to darken her after life; let her be Lord Beresford's bride. My duty is to save my child, and the secret must be kept."

Isabel had been watching him intently, and sinking down at his feet again, she looked up in his sad old eyes.

"Papa," she said, in a grave, sweet voice, that had a treacherous waver in it, "papa, I have been thinking of something, and it is my turn to ask a question now. Will you look into my eyes and answer me truly?"

He lifted his bowed face and looked at her, and even then he was startled by the sight. Her big dark eyes were wide and solemn, her face had changed its wild-rose bloom for a faint pearly pallor, and her lips were twitching and working convulsively.

"Papa," she said, looking straight at him—"papa, you asked me when I knelt here first if I could bear a terrible blow, and then—then you began to speak to me of—of this dreadful thing—the loss of Lionel's love. Papa,"—solemnly, calmly, slowly—"answer me this: *Is* there an obstacle? Did you mean that when you spoke of a 'terrible blow?'"

"Isabel!"

"Answer me, papa; please. In either case it will kill me, but—but tell me if you meant that. Tell me, papa, *what* was the blow you prepared me to receive."

He drew away from her, sickened and stunned. He could not tell her the truth, and yet how should he explain those luckless words? For the moment his brain refused to act. If he could only gain time to think, if—

"Tell me, papa: Was that the blow you meant? or has this wild suggestion been false?"

He drew his breath with one great gulp of terror; he felt the color fading out of his face; he felt those truthful innocent eyes burning into his, and then—then Heaven averted the danger: A gentle tap fell on the panel of the door.

"Some one is asking admission, Isabel," he said, gaspingly. "See who is there before we speak."

Tristram, the butler, was there (she discovered) with a huge bunch of splendid Gloire de Dijon roses, with "Lord Beresford's compliments to Miss Carlyle." A special messenger just left it at the door.

Isabel took the roses with a little cry of delight and then, something sparkling like a hundred rainbows dropped out of the heart of the bouquet and swung to and fro on a slender golden cord.

"Look, papa," she cried, hastening back to her father. "It is the betrothal ring of the Beresfords. Lionel has sent it that I may wear it at Lady Lexboro's to-night. Oh, papa, papa, how magnificent it is. There is not a gem in all the Mount Severn jewels to compare with this."

And magnificent it truly was—a loop of emeralds crowned by one gorgeous diamond, and engraved on the inner side with the Beresford motto: "HONOR ABOVE LIFE."

She snapped the golden cord and slid the golden circlet on her finger.

"A fine heritage for a country solicitor's daughter," she said, laughingly. "Down on your knees, sirrah. The future Countess of Beresford commands it. Ah, papa, papa, to think how many noble ladies have been proud to wear this, and to think—" stopping suddenly and growing pale and solemn again—"Papa, shall I ever have the right to wear it? Answer the question I asked before Tristram came. I must not wear this ring until I am sure I may do so to the end. Tell me, papa, what is the blow you prepared me to receive? Will it prove an obstacle between Lionel and me?"

He had had time to think, and his new wore the first smile she had seen it bear to-day.

"Not unless Lord Beresford be different from what I hold him, puss," he said, feigning a light laugh. "In these noble families a large dower is generally customary with the bride. I have made some unlucky speculations of late, puss, and I owe it as a duty to all of us, that I should tell Lord Beresford his wife's dower cannot now be what I had hoped to give her."

She had drawn the ring off and laid it on the table. She took it up as he ceased speaking, and slid it on again.

"I may wear this, papa," she said, simply. "Money will stand as nothing in Lionel's eyes."

My lady crouching still at the door of the adjoining apartment, arose now and walked out of the room. The crisis was past, her revenge was assured, and that was all she cared to know.

"The engagement will be announced to-night," she murmured, with a queer, little smile, as she glided out into the broad corridor, and went softly toward the morning-room where her Grace of Arleigh was deep in the pages of the last society novel. "My lord will be vastly proud of his beautiful, fashionable bride-elect; the future Countess of Beresford will be toasted, and feted, and envied from one end of the kingdom to the other; but I wonder who will have a word of pity for her—I wonder who will toss her hand and smile at her coming, one year from to-day? 'Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion.' *Belle comtesse* I shall make even your servants shrink from you in horror."

And smiling still that cold, delibor ate, devilish smile of a traitress, my lady passed on and glided quietly away.

But the unconscious victim of her plots and pitfalls was enjoying her fool's paradise in the grand library, too happy to think or dream that there were serpents in the grass.

"Foolish papa, to worry and fret over my dower," she said, brightly. "Pray, sir, am I not prize enough that I must throw a fortune at Lord Beresford's head as an inducement to accept me? Confess, sir, that this is open treason, and then I will sing you a little trifle I have just learned."

"I cry *peccavi*, most noble countess, that is to be," responded Mr. Carlyle with mock gravity. "Standing in Lord Beresford's shoes, I should consider myself lucky to get Miss Carlyle without so much as a change of costume. There, that's enough, isn't it? Pick up the guitar, there, and let us have the new trifle.