The Canadian Champion

AND COUNTY OF HALTON INTELLIGENCER.

VOLUME 27. MILTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1887. NO. 18.

CHART,

FECTIONER

IN : SEASON

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and get some cakes, bread and some bakes, he makes, very O.

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Men, Women & Children

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$225	$125	$ 65
250	135	75
275	140	80
325	150 6 oct.	100
400	175 6 oct.	125

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ADOPTED DAUGHTER

BY ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOVE HE'ER FORGETS," "PASSION AND PRIDE," ETC., ETC.

"What a suspicious pass you have become, Lora. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners,' I am afraid. I was only warning Nugent to stand to his colours, and be ready for action as soon as the flag of truce was withdrawn."

Lora looked bewildered, but a perception of his meaning came slowly to her mind, and she said, with sweet and impressive gravity:

"I place faith in the assurances my father has given me, and I mean to trust him, Uncle George—at least until I have good grounds to do otherwise. I have told Frank that I love him, that I will marry him, and no other; and he knows me well enough to feel sure that I will keep my word. If the flag of truce is withdrawn, that of rebellion will take its place; for I will not be deceived, tampered with, and finally disposed of, to suit the wishes of one capable of such wrong. But it is best for me to believe in my father as long as I can, Uncle George."

"You are right, perhaps Lady Bird; and I am sorry that I spoke so flippantly. Keep fair weather between yourself and the Mogul as long as possible; but when the bow-string and sack are imminent look to yourself—that is all. I beg your pardon, my dear; I really did not mean to say that—but you are not easily scared, and when real danger threatens you will always prove true grit."

Lora changed colour, but she laughed at his last words, and said:

"I should be a poor creature indeed if I could not fight in my own defence, girl as I am."

Grafton drew his wife away, leaving the lovers to confer together alone a few moments.

When they were in their own room, Mrs. Grafton asked:

"Why was it necessary to shake Lora's confidence in her father, George? She will find him out soon enough for herself, poor child!"

"Because, with his usual infernal skill, Ford is playing the part of the underhand plotter to these unfortunate children. At first he tried to wear his mask to me, but when he saw that I penetrated beneath it, the true man came out. Julia, he pretends to be bewitched by his daughter, yet he is planning to get her in his power and ruthlessly bend her to his will. *That* does not give her to Nugent, as you can understand. You must circumvent Stephen Ford, Julia, and do it before he has time to outwit you."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASKET OF PEARLS—LORA'S DELIGHT.

The brief interview in the parlour proved the parting one between the lovers. At the end of half an hour, Grafton looked in on them, and said:

"Your father bids me say to you that you must be ready to leave on the five o'clock boat, Lora, and it is now nearly dinner time. You will stay and dine with us, Frank."

The two, wrapt in their dream of perfect love, scarcely heard at this summons, and Nugent hastily said:

"Thank you, but I must decline your kind invitation. I promised my mother to return home by one o'clock, and let her know the result of my mission here. She is quite ready to claim her daughter, and I must let her know that the chances are in favour of such a denouement."

Grafton nodded, and briefly saying: "Go to the old lady; it is better so," he disappeared from the doorway.

"*Must* you go, Frank? Shall I see you no more before I leave?" asked Lora, tremulously.

"I fear not, dear. I have gained as much from your father as I dare hope for in the present. He tolerates my pretensions, Lora, that is all; and it will be best for me to do nothing to annoy him further to-day. But you shall see me before many weeks have rolled away; and, in the meantime, we can correspond with each other, as, of course, that will be permitted. Keep a good heart, dear love; for I may come to join you as the possessor of such wealth as will induce Mr. Ford to give you to me without the delay he spoke of."

Lora shook her head doubtfully.

"Papa does not believe that you will get the fortune, and, oh, dear, you may have a fever in that horrid climate, and—and never come back to me all."

"My dearest, have no fears on my account. I will take the best care of myself, and not linger in New Orleans longer than is absolutely necessary.

"What message shall I take from you to my mother, Lora? She loves you dearly already, and, as my promised wife, she will think even more tenderly of you than heretofore."

"Then she will not be jealous of me because you love me best, Frank? She is such a dear old lady that she will understand, I dare say."

"Yes, she fully understands—and she will have no such mean feeling toward her daughter in affection, as well as in law."

"Oh, I am so glad to know that! Say everything that is nice and sweet for me; for I shall be glad to claim your mother for my own when the right time comes."

The two had arisen, and were standing beside each other. Nugent, for the first time, assumed the privilege of a betrothed lover, to draw her to himself, and kiss her on lips, brow, and cheek, and Lora made no resistance to the caresses which made her heart flutter wildly, and tears come into her eyes. They might be the first and the last she should ever receive from one she now knew was dear to her as her own soul.

At the last moment she put her arms around his neck, and kissed him in return:

"This is the seal of love that shall never fail you, Frank. Take it with you as a talisman, and a proof that to you alone I will belong in time and in eternity. If I have been tantalizing before I knew how dearly I love you, I am making up to you for holding you at arm's length so long."

"And never was man more sweetly rewarded for the doubts and fears he was made to suffer," was the rapturous response. "My own—my precious darline, I will claim you for my own, in spite of all the opposition that may be made. We part now, but not for long; and when we meet again, our fate shall speedily be decided. One more kiss, my angel, and that must be the last."

The lover tore himself away, and Lora rushed up to her own room to weep bitterly a few moments, and then to hasten to obliterate the traces of emotion, while tender smiles dimpled around her mobile mouth.

She loved—she was beloved—and for the present that was happiness enough in spite of the painful parting which had just taken place.

As Nugent stepped from the door he found Ford in the portico awaiting his appearance. His face wore its ordinary deceitful calm, and with a smile he meant to be genial he said:

"I would not interrupt that sentimental parting, Mr. Nugent, and by that token you may know that if affairs can be suitably arranged, I am ready to accept you as my son-in-law."

"Thank you," said Frank, dryly; "but if I am to understand by a suitable arrangement that I am, under the contingency of the appearance of Miss Ross, to claim a portion of her inheritance as the only price at which litigation can be avoided, I must again repeat what I have already said—that I will neither ask nor accept anything from her. I am surprised that you should refer to this question again, Mr. Ford."

"Then you care for my daughter much less than you have lead her to believe," replied Ford, laying aside his bland manner and frowning heavily. "*You* in love! Pah! In love with such a girl as that, yet refuse her father the assurance that you will act with common prudence in such an affair as this! If the heiress to the Ross fortune is found, could you not impugn the chain of evidence that will be necessary to indentify her, and bring so many doubts and delays to bear upon the other party that they will be only too glad to compromise and give up half to secure the speedy possession of the rest? Excuse me, Mr. Nugent, but I shall really think you a 'laggard in love' if you do not avail yourself of this chance to place your union with Lora beyond a doubt."

"If we both live, I consider my union with her beyond a doubt already, Mr. Ford. It would certainly never take place if I degraded myself by such a course as you would have me pursue. After taking such advantage of a helpless young girl, I should never dare to ask my betrothed to clasp in hers the soiled hand which had grasped money legally belonging to another."

The face of the listener underwent many changes as the young man thus spoke. He was pale as death as he replied:

"After what I said to you this morning it is a strange thing that you regard your position in my family as so very secure, Mr. Nugent. Your proposal was only accepted on conditions, and you must surely understand for yourself that the concession afterwards made to my daughter meant nothing more than a ruse to gain time to win her over to my own views."

"And if you failed in that, she was to try love and a cottage? I think you pledged your word to that, sir."

"Well—yes—there was some such nonsense spoken."

"You will find that neither she nor I regard it in that light, Mr. Ford, and that is why I am so confident of my position in your family."

"Very well, young man; it is to be a trial of power between us? Of power over a silly, romantic young girl, utterly ignorant of life, and ready to run her career of folly with the giddiest of the crowd. She shall have her fling, Mr. Nugent, and at the end of the two years' probation how much that is sweet, lovely and feminine do you expect to find in the heart of the *blase* woman of fashion? How willingly do you suppose the creature I mean to steep in luxury will consent to give up all her state, all her pride, to become a household drudge in the humble home you could afford her?"

As this picture was drawn the young gent's turn to grow pale; his heart contracted painfully as he listened, and he felt within himself that this man was of the demoniac tribe—that he was capable of luring his own daughter to the debasement of soul and sense, that he might separate her from the man she loved, solely because the man was not gifted with wealth, and would stoop to no baseness to attain it.

There was something so revolting in this view of Ford's character, that the young man turned suddenly on him and said:

"Is Lora really your daughter, Mr. Ford? or is she a child picked up in the wanderings of your early life, and only claimed as such for some purpose of your own? Excuse me, sir, but it seems to me that no true father could speak of destroying all that is sweet and pure in his own child as you did just now."

At the brusque inquiry thus put to him, Ford became extremely pale, but as Nugent went on, the hot colour surged to his face in scarlet waves, and he angrily said:

"How dare you put to me such a question as that? or express a doubt as to my right to control Lora's fate as only a father can? I propose to do nothing more by her than to show her the true meaning of life, and let her see for herself there is something more worth to be sought for in it than the mawby-pamby sentiment called first love. If she is fool enough to cling to that, she may take her own course, and I will 'whistle her down the wind, a prey to (*want of*) fortune.' As your wife, she will never possess a penny of mine."

"Be it so, sir; I accept her gladly without a penny, and only ask you to keep to the pledge you have given us. When the time for our union arrives, the decision will rest with Lora. If she elects to come to me, I shall know that all the corrupting influences you will bring to bear upon her have failed to taint the noble nature within her. If she refuses to redeem her troth to me, I must bear my heavy loss with such philosophy as a man can summon under such bitter disappointment. While this trial of principle is going on, however, I suppose that we shall be allowed to correspond, and that an occasional visit from me will not be interdicted."

With a grim laugh, Ford mockingly replied:

"How confident of final triumph we are, to be sure! and how disinterested in our views! Yes—yes—the correspondence may be carried on; the visits, if not too frequent, be made, that Lora may have no plea for running restive and breaking the reins before she is thoroughly tamed. Even after six months of such indulgence as I shall lavish on her, she will hardly consent to cast in her lot with that of a poor man. You will see—I have no doubt as to the result myself."

"Yes, we shall see who will win in the end, Mr. Ford," was the grave reply. "I can only trust and hope. I thank you for your permission to visit my betrothed occasionally, that I may see for myself what progress you are making toward the end you have in view. We may exchange letters every week, I suppose?"

"Oh, as often as you please. It does not matter. The sooner you exhaust the vocabulary of distressed lovers the better for my plans. If the change in the style of her missives does not soon show you how little a girl's fancies are to be trusted, I am no judge of feminine weakness. I think we fully understand each other now, Mr. Nugent, and I bid you good morning."

Ford turns abruptly and walked back toward the house, leaving the young man to unfasten his boat and make his way to his own home, carrying with him a doubtful and foreboding heart.

The thought of the ordeal through which his betrothed was to pass was odious to him, and he had conceived for her father a deeply-seated disgust, which amounted almost to abhorrence. That Ford was destitute of any high sense of honour was painfully apparent, and the young man shrank from the thought that to such a man belonged the right to control the destiny of the young and confiding creature he so ardently loved.

Yet she must go upon her path and abide the temptations that must assail her, sinking beneath them into a mere doll of fashion, or coming out pure as refined gold, her own lovely, noble self.

As Nugent had said, he could only trust and hope. By the time Ford reached the house he had perfectly regained his usual equanimity. He believed the game to be now entirely in his own hands. He had two months in which to bring Lora to her senses, as he phrased it, for it would take at least that time for her lover to accomplish anything toward the settlement of the business which would take him South.

Two months to him meant success. If he could not accomplish his views in that time, he would prove himself a much poorer strategist than he believed possible. He had managed many doubtful affairs before this one, and always with skill and profit to himself. Then why doubt his power now? He had only to bring a wilful girl into subjection, and then the thing was done.

When he thought of her he set his teeth and clenched his hands, muttering fiercely:

"My will shall be her law, as she shall soon find out after Mrs. Grafton leaves her to my sole guardianship. A sharp tussle we'll have then, my dainty Lora, and the victory will be to the strong, which I take to be myself. Ah! if they only knew!—if they only suspected! What did that boy mean by asking me such a question as he put to me just now? He is a fool about his own interests, but he's shrewd enough about other things, I fancy. It does not matter, though. I have the right to the obedience due to a father, and I intend to exact it.

"Curious that *he* should have told me of James Ross's death and of the will he made. I have been looking out for this succession for years past. I took pains to find out all about the rich uncle who was childless and in failing health. But for that, my pearl of price might have done without a setting, for *I* would never have expended a shilling of my hard-earned wealth upon her. She might have married her beggarly suitor and welcome, and I should not have put in my vote. She may do it, yet, after I have wrung from her the last shred of the wealth that is coming to her. I would have given her half and left her where she is, if that young idiot had not been so difficult to deal with.

"Oh-ho! Mr. Frank Nugent! We are very high-toned; we are the very soul of honour. Nothing unquestionable must soil our dainty hands. But we have done a very foolish thing to-day in giving over the lady-love we have chosen to the power of one who means now to pluck the last feather from the downy nest prepared for her. It is too late to repent. The thing is done, and I, for my part, am satisfied with the result."

By this time the wily schemer was smiling broadly, and he went forward with light steps and a heart exulting in the deeply planned villainy, which afforded him all the excitement of a skilful and uncertain chase, which if successful, would add to the ever accumulating hoards it was his delight to heap into a fortune that must make him the envy of his compeers.

Yet Ford was no miser. He loved money for its own sake, but he did not grudge it when spent upon himself, or fail to use it freely where anything was to be gained by doing so. To win Lora to love and confide in him he was ready to lavish it upon her without stint, but he intended to repay himself a hundred-fold for every dollar thus expended.

He had intended to open his campaign that morning offering a present he had brought with him, which he thought would have especial charms for a young girl. But the inopportune presence of Nugent, and what had followed his arrival, deprived him of the opportunity to present his costly gift. On reaching the house, he went to his own apartment and took from his satchel a casket, which he carried into the parlour, calling to Lora as he passed the staircase to come down and join him, as he had something to show her that would delight her eyes.

Lora started from a day-dream into which she had plunged while she watched the progress of her lover's boat across the river, after waving her handkerchief to him from the balcony. Her eyes still showed that she had been crying, but she threw a dash of cold water upon them, arranged her hair, and went down, curious to know what her father could have to display to her.

An expression of amazement and delight burst from her lips as she entered the parlour, for on the crimson cloth which covered a table Ford had drawn up in front of the large window, lay long ropes of pearls for the neck and arms, of a size and beauty she had never imagined before. These were fastened with medallions of diamonds composed of one large lustrous central stone, surrounded by smaller ones set in clusters. In the velvet case still rested the ear-rings and breast-pin, of equal elegance, which completed the parure.

If the tempter had studied the tastes of Lora from her infancy, he could have devised nothing so suited to them as these. She had not only the fondness for jewels very common among her sex, but a passion for them which was almost as strong as any feeling of her nature. At her own desire, she had studied the history of precious stones, and she knew the emblem of each one.

With a joyful cry she exclaimed:

"Oh, papa! are these for me? Did you really think so much of your little girl as to bring her so costly a gift as this?"

"To whom should I give them if not to you, my child?" asked Ford, smiling indulgently on her rapture. "But these, lovely as they are, are nothing to what you may select for yourself, if you only prove an affectionate and obedient daughter."

"If you give me such treasures, of course I shall love you with all my heart. I have an oriental taste for gems, and would like to cover myself with them, as the sultanas are said to do. Only Ma Julia says I am too young to wear them yet, even if she could have afforded to give them to me. Oh, dear! you must be very rich, papa, to be able to give me such costly things, and tell me I may buy others for myself whenever I choose."

"Oh! these cost but a trifle," said Ford, magnificently. "I paid ten thousand dollars for the whole set; and if you choose you may spend five times that amount in jewels. They are a good investment, for one can fall back on them in times of trouble. That is why the grandees in Europe buy so many. You are not too young to wear these, for I selected them myself with reference to your age and style of beauty."

"You dear, delightful papa! How shall I ever thank you for such liberality as that? Fifty thousand dollars spent for jewels!—and by *me!* It seems incredible!"

"Yet you may make it true at your earliest convenience, Miss Lora Ford," he replied, laughing. "As to the reward for the pearls—give me a kiss, and we'll settle about the others when they are purchased."

Lora seemed carried away by the delightful excitement of the moment. She kissed the smiling Mephistopheles who was making a bid for her soul, and then turned eagerly to the table, and said:

"I suppose that I may deck myself in all my bravery, that Ma Julia may see, when she comes in, how lavish you are in your generosity to me?"

"Put them on, by all means; I long to see how enchanting you will look in them. Do you know that you are a very lovely girl, Lora? Does not your heart beat with the thought of the triumphs you will win when you enter society? Such a girl as you must produce a sensation wherever she appears."

Lora's cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled with the newly aroused vanity so artfully appealed to. A bright smile parted her rosy lips, and she frankly said:

"I am glad to hear that you approve of me, papa, and I should like to be admired—that is, to a certain point, you know. I am engaged to Frank, and I must not let my head be turned by flattery from other men, if they should find me attractive enough to offer it."

Ford bit his lips with annoyance at this reference to Nugent, and coldly replied:

"I shall expect you to accept such attentions as are due to my daughter, though I have no wish to see you play the part of a flirt. You have a great deal to learn yet, Lora, and for the present, you must be guided by older heads than your own."

With a laugh, she replied:

"Of course I am as verdant as the meadows we see out yonder, but wait and Ma Julia to look after me I shall do well enough I dare say."

Lora had dressed herself for dinner as she thought her father would expect her to dress, and she now wore a rose-coloured muslin, with low corsage and short sleeves, her fair shoulders and arms covered only with a filmy lace jacket, which vailed without concealing their rounded beauty.

She deftly threw this aside, and wound the necklace around her throat, whiter even by contrast with the pearls, and coiled the bracelets upon her arms. The ear-rings were next thrust into the small, shell-like ears, and she gazed at her own image in the long mirror with the delight of a child mingled with the budding vanity of the woman.

Turning to her father, she naively said:

"I thought I was nice looking before, but these lovely jewels make me believe I am something more than that. What do you think, papa?"

"I can have but one opinion, Lora, and that is that

"'You are lovely—you are divine.'"

See—you have produced such an effect that even I, the most prosaic of men, am quoting poetry to do justice to your charms. You will win scores of lovers, my fair pearl of price."

With a toss of her head, she said:

"If I do, they may finish the quotation—

'But her heart it is another's—she never can be mine.'

Papa, don't try to make a silly goose of me. I shall have no lover but the one I have chosen for myself."

"You will have adoring slaves, then; you can treat them as imperially as you please, and they will still bow before your charms."

At this crisis Grafton and his wife came in the room together, and both exclaimed at the sight of the brilliant figure before them:

"Jupiter tonans, Lora! where did you get all that finery from?" exclaimed the former. "I am dazzled, bewildered, charmed by so radiant an apparition. Who the fairy godmother been here to turn our lily-bell into the queen of pearls and diamonds? You are stunning in your grandeur!"

Lora, in the buoyant gladness of her heart, made a pirouette, and then flung herself into Mrs. Grafton's arms, gleefully saying:

"Oh, mother, dear! am I not the most fortunate girl in the world to have such a father as mine, and such friends as you and Uncle Grafton? See what beautiful things papa has brought me, and he says I may buy as many more as I may take a fancy to. Isn't that splendid? I shall have as much money as I choose, with leave to spend it without stint."

Remembering the source from which so large a portion of Ford's wealth was derived, Mrs. Grafton could scarcely repress a shiver as she looked on this young and innocent creature, decked in the spoils gained at the expense of honesty and fair dealing. She coldly said:

"Your father is very liberal, Lora, but I expected better taste than this from him. Flowers, to one of your age, are a far more suitable and becoming adornment than costly jewels. My dear, I am sorry to see you so elated by a gift which can be of little use to you for years to come."

"But I *shall* wear them," cried Lora, half petulantly, releasing herself from Mrs. Grafton's embrace. "How can you speak so disparagingly of such a magnificent gift as this? Papa thinks they are suited to me, and he knows he lives in the world, and among rich people, I suppose, such ornaments are worn by as young girls as I am. Is it not so, papa?"

"Is the poison of vanity and worldliness already infused into the heart of this child-like creature, who has been so sedulously guarded from mean or sordid influences?" asked Mrs. Grafton in the silence of her own heart, and a keen pang shot through it as she thought of her own helplessness to shield its darling from the temptations about to beset her path. Lora must abide the fiery ordeal, and she must stand by with sealed lips, because the fatal secret of her husband was held by Ford, and might be used against him in an underhand manner, if she were guilty of any imprudence.

Ford replied to his daughter's appeal by saying, with emphasis:

"I wish you to wear them at suitable times, and that is enough. Flowers are well enough on ordinary occasions, but in the state in which you will live as an heiress, jewels of price, even at your age, may be worn at suitable times."

"Well—well—this is hardly one of them, I fancy," broke in Grafton, "and as dinner is served, you had better put those costly things out of sight of the servants, Lora, and resume your sacque."

With a half sigh, Lora obeyed, and her father took the casket to his room and locked it in his satchel, before joining the others in the dining-room.

He partook of the delicious viands set before him, and drank his wine with great gusto, seemingly oblivious of all cause of mistrust on the part of his hosts, and apparently charmed with all his surroundings.

CHAPTER XIII.

VINE HILL AND ITS INMATES—FRANK LEARNS SOMETHING MORE OF STEPHEN FORD'S ANTECEDENTS.

Nugent crossed the river, which was lower than usual at that season of the year, and the current less difficult to stem, so he made fair headway, and soon landed beneath the shadow of a clump of trees, whose guarled roots were already bared by the action of the spring floods, ready at some future day to bend their stately heads before the sweep of the stream when it came down laden with ice and all the debris yearly seen by the dwellers on the banks of the Ohio.

The boat was fastened to a ring inserted in one of the trees, and the young man mounted the narrow path which lead to the level ground above. This extended a few hundred feet, and then swelled upwards in gentle slopes rising above each other to the summit of a lofty ridge, crowned with forest-trees:

On the terraces thus supplied by nature an extensive vineyard was planted, while on the level space below such cereals as suited the climate were cultivated. Wide green meadows lay on each side of the homestead, and in the rear of the house was a flourishing orchard and an extensive vegetable garden.

The house itself was a substantial structure, built of the stone dug from the hillside, but the walls were covered from basement to roof with tendrils of the grapevine, which eagerly accepted such support, giving in return their wealth of foliage to conceal the rough surface they adorned. A vine-draped portico was in front of the entrance, raised a few steps above the verdant yard below, which was shaded by a few lofty trees, and ornamented by groups of hardy flowering shrubs, planted without formal arrangement into beds.

The view from the portico was very pleasing, commanding a fine sweep of the river, both above and below, and the lovely valley on the opposite shore, with the encircling hills which shut it in on the landward side.

A large arm-chair stood on either side of the entrance, and in one of these sat an elderly woman, whose bright eyes, blooming face and lovely expression seemed to bid defiance to time. She was fair and attractive still, though her hair lay in silver waves above her low, broad brow, from which it was turned back and wound around her head in a coronal, which suited the grand style of her face.

Mrs. Nugent had evidently been a beautiful woman in her day, though that had long since passed away. She was now fifty-five years of age, and had given up all pretension to youth, though her heart was as tender and her affections as strong as in those youthful days when she had suffered through them, and grown strong to bear the burdens of life without murmuring against the Providence which had tried her.

Her marriage to the man she loved had been bitterly opposed by her family, and it was only after her parents became convinced that she would accept no other suitor that consent to her union with Robert Nugent had been reluctantly given. She was then thirty years old, but still admired enough to have made a more brilliant match. She was satisfied, however, with the lot she had chosen, and supremely happy with her husband, till death came to snatch from them three out of the four children born in their peaceful home.

Two sons died in their infancy, and were deeply mourned, but the heaviest blow came when her only daughter, in the early dawn of womanhood, was snatched from them by a fever which ran its course in a few days, leaving the parents heartbroken and desolate for a season.

But the return of Frank, the eldest-born, from the Eastern college, where he had graduated with honour, infused new brightness into the household, and both father and mother laid aside their grief for the lost ones, and made every effort to render his home happy to him. He was the one being now in whom all their hopes centred, and the young man himself felt that he must make no ignoble return for the tender affection which was lavished on him.

At the click of the gate latch Mrs. Nugent dropped the piece of work she held in her hands, and shading her eyes with one of them, looked out to see if the one she was watching for had returned.

A soft light came into her eyes as she saw her son coming up the walk, and as Frank drew near the house she intently scanned his face to discover before he spoke, how he had sped on the errand on which he had gone that morning.

A slight shadow fell over her own face, and she murmured:

"My boy looks worried and doubtful. I do wonder if the Graftons object to him as a suitor for their adopted daughter, for Lora herself, in spite of her late waywardness, must love him. Yet why? On what ground could they object to my Frank—my noble, good son?"

Before setting out for Glenvale that morning Nugent had not seen his mother. After his nocturnal serenade he had not slept till nearly dawn, and when he came down to his late breakfast Mrs. Nugent had gone with her husband to ride around the farm, leaving a message for him with the servant. In reply to this he had scribbled a few lines, merely saying that he was going to Glenvale to have his fate decided.

How solicitously she had watched for his return may be imagined, for she was the confidante of her son, and took the keenest interest in his success with the fair young creature who had won for herself a warm place in her maternal heart.

The young man came slowly forward, ascended the low flight of steps, and crossing the portico, kissed his mother as was his custom when they met for the first time in the day. Then throwing himself in the empty chair, he dropped his hat on the floor, and said:

"I am glad to get under shelter again. The sun is very oppressive on the river to-day, I can assure you, mother mine."

"Yes—the heat is intense enough to give one a sunstroke. I hardly expected you to return at this hour of the day, Frank. What has happened? Why do you look so discouraged? Your face tells me a story I can hardly believe after seeing you and Lora together."

"Oh! Lora is all right, mother. Don't fancy that she has been snubbing me. But something has happened at the Graftons, which will surprise you. I would have told you what took place there last night, if I could have seen you before I left this morning. It is the strangest thing that, in all these years I never knew that Lora's father was living, and might some day come to claim her from those who have loved and cared for her as if she was their own daughter."

"Lora's father! Why, he has been dead, is he? and where has he hidden himself all these years? I have known the family at Glenvale for the last twelve years, and I have never heard a single allusion made to such a person as still among the living. It is very singular that they should be so reticent to old and trusted friends like your father and myself."

"Yes—it struck me as strange that we had never heard Mr. Ford spoken of, especially as Mrs. Grafton has known for some time how deeply I was becoming attached to Lora. I think she should at least have given me a hint of his existence. As to her husband, he was so taken up, as usual, with his inventions, that he took little note of what was going on under his eyes, as one may say."

After a pause, Mrs. Nugent said:

"For years there has been some mystery in the Grafton family that I cannot comprehend. Maybe this Mr. Ford may be at the bottom of it. George Grafton used to be a blithe-hearted, genial man, but since he came to Glenvale to live he has changed so utterly that one would hardly believe him to be the same man we knew in New York. It was through him that your father was induced to come to the West, yet the friendly intercourse we kept up with them in our old home has never been as free as in former days. It was Mr. Grafton's fault, too, for Julia has always been the same to us. I can only account for the change in him by supposing that he is so much absorbed in the mechanical studies through which he hopes to make a fortune, no doubt, that he has lost his interest in social life."

"Perhaps," said Nugent, absently, for he was thinking more of Lora than of her friends, and he abruptly went on when his mother ceased speaking:

"I had better tell you my story from the beginning, mother dear, and something in it will astonish you quite as much as the unexpected advent of Mr. Ford, with his odious power to snatch from me the bride that was almost my own."

TO BE CONTINUED.

All lovers of the music-drama will be interested in the paper which William F. Apthorp, the well-known musical critic, will contribute to Scribner's Magazine for November, on "Wagner and Scenic Art," which is to be fully illustrated from the original Bayreuth sketches.

Scribner's Magazine will signalize the completion of its first year by the publication of a superb Christmas number. Its contents will be chiefly poetry and fiction, the literature appropriate to the season. The number of illustrations will be greatly increased, and will represent the best and most original work of American artists and engravers. The cover is to be enriched by a special border, printed in gold; but notwithstanding the fact the preparation of this number has necessitated, of course, a greatly increased cost, the price will remain as usual, twenty-five cents.

Dr. Sargent, of the Harvard College Gymnasium, will contribute to the November number of Scribner's Magazine a richly-illustrated article on the "Physical Characteristics of the Athlete."

Miss Olive Risely Seward, the adopted daughter of the Ex-Secretary, will tell in the November number of Scribner's Magazine a hitherto unwritten chapter of the diplomatic history of our country, regarding the abortive treaty with Denmark for the purchase of the island of St. Thomas.

The ancient Viking Ship discovered several years ago