

# A LEGAL SECRET.

## CHAPTER IV.

One sunny afternoon, some days after the meeting between Rosa and Mr. Pilkington in the octagonal room, the two were seated side by side in the lawyer's carriage, and driving rapidly across the broad heath which led towards the gates of the senior partner's villa. Never had Rosa, pretty as she was, looked so pretty as she did to-day. She was leaning out at the open window in dreamy wonder. The expanse of blue sky over the great common was interspersed with fleecy clouds; their soft shadows floated over the heath, giving a changeful expression to the scene. Birds fled by with a flash from their swift wings; and frequently a lark would flutter upwards, and with its sprightly song bring tears of delight to the young girl's uplifted eyes. She longed to spring from the carriage, and run among the bushes of yellow gorse, and chase the white butterflies and gather wild flowers, as she had often done in childhood; for she felt as though she were again a child.

"Ah! there is my old home!" Rosa exclaimed, as she suddenly caught sight of the solemn sphinxes. "Are not those the gates?"

"My dear," said Mr. Pilkington's voice seemed to remind her that she was no longer so very young—"you have not forgotten, I hope, what I told you?"

Rosa bent her head and pouted her pretty lips. "I am to ask no questions!" said she in a slight tone of rebellion.

"Precisely. We are to ask no questions," and the old lawyer patted the young girl's hand approvingly. "There must be no manifestations of surprise. It is time that we began at our age to suppress our feelings. Are we not agreed on that point?"

Rosa gave him several rapid nods.

"We are apt to be impulsive, my dear, and consequently we must keep a guard upon ourselves. In good society—that is to say, among well-bred people—there never should be any undue display of sentiment. The impulse must be checked, for the great aim among cultivated people is to hide every sign of emotion."

The girl sank back in her seat. She could not utter a word, for there was a great lump in her throat that almost choked her. The situation was overpowering; with every turn of the carriage-wheels she realized more distinctly that her dream—the dream of her early girlhood—was coming true. Hide every sign of emotion? She felt crushed and broken in spirit, as if a heavy weight had been laid on her heart. This beautiful heath had been her playground; and beyond—where the great gates stood invitingly open—the rest of her dream lay, as it were, buried behind the green and massive foliage of shrubs and gigantic trees. The twelve years that had intervened, with all the wretched poverty and discontent that had arisen out of it—even Abel Norris, for whom she had so genuine an affection—had for the moment gone out of her life. Suddenly she looked up. They were driving in at the gateway. Through her tears she caught a glimpse of the grave sphinxes; and they seemed to be silently reiterating Mr. Pilkington's words: "It is time we began to suppress our feelings. Are we not agreed on that point?"

As they drove up the avenue, with its patches of sunlight shimmering through openings among the leaves—an avenue that seemed almost endless—Mr. Pilkington continued: "It is difficult"—and Rosa thought she recognized a touch of emotion in his voice—"I am ready to concede that—very difficult to suppress one's feelings—sometimes almost impossible. But you are a sensible girl. Had I not been convinced of that, my dear, should I not have acted differently?—You will not object." Mr. Pilkington added with a slight smile, "to remain in your own rooms until to-morrow? Remember! I do not insist; but I think, taking everything into consideration, that it would be advisable. Are we agreed on that point also?"

"It is what I would have asked: I long to be alone," said Rosa. "All that has happened—all that I now see around me—brings back to my memory that dear face—"

"Rosal! At our age? Remember!" The girl was silent, but she clasped her hands tightly together and bit her lips to suppress a flood of tears.

"You will be pleased, I think, with your rooms," said the lawyer cheerfully upon a choice bit of scenery; and should you be disposed to take a stroll in the grounds, my dear, pray do not hesitate. My suggestion merely referred to the house; we have a good many guests this evening. That is all I meant. And at dinner-time—as we have this company—you shall be served in your own little sitting room. Company is fatiguing—until one has learned to suppress one's feelings. Ah, well! all in good time."

The carriage now drew up at the entrance to the villa. A flight of broad steps led to the front door, with vases full of growing flowers, and marble pillars on each side, like a temple. A large conservatory stood on one side, and the doors being wide open, Rosa caught a glimpse of the most beautiful exotic plants. A cry of delight rose to her lips. But a glance from Mr. Pilkington, who seemed to be repeating, "My dear! At our age! Remember!" quickly recalled her.

But Rosa at last found herself alone in her own rooms, with no Mr. Pilkington to restrain her expressions of joy or sadness. They were prettier rooms

than she had ever seen: a sitting-room with a bedroom adjoining. And her rapture increased when she found them tastefully decorated with flowers—doubtless gathered from that wonderful conservatory. Both rooms looked upon the park; and the girl stood for some minutes gazing out, lost in dreamy admiration at the scene. The windows gave upon a terrace with steps leading down into a garden; where all the brilliant colors of the rainbow seemed to be repeated in flower-beds of every size and shape. There was a paddock beyond this paddock there were wooded valleys and hills that appeared all the more reposeful from the rapid change of sunlight and shadow that passed over them.

Rosa unclasped the window and stepped out upon the terrace. The summer breeze touched her cheeks; the color crept into them like a blush; and her lips, half parted, drank in the balmy air. There was a wildness in the flash of her dark eyes. Was not this her old home? She flung her hair back over her forehead, as she had often done in her dismal home in Took's Court when giving way to her natural emotion; and she stood gazing about her like a captive fawn that has not yet had time to realize that it has gained its freedom.

But presently she fled down the steps and across the flower-garden, and entered a pathway beside the paddock leading into a wood. On she ran into the deep shade. Snatches of half-remembered songs escaped her and found an echo overhead in the songs of birds. The lawyer's admonition was forgotten. Her one thought was to review the scenes of her early days, to refresh the fading recollection of this old home, which was no longer thought of as in a dream. She came at last upon a bench at the end of a long pathway. It was a rustic seat, but a shadier spot could scarcely have been found. On the back of this bench, cut in the wood-work, Rosa discovered these initials: R.G.—S.T.; and underneath was inscribed the date. The carving had been executed thirteen years ago; and she remembered the boy who had done it. Had not this place been the favourite haunt of Rosamond Gage and Sidney Truagh in bygone days? There was no her of that. Few moments in her young life were more crowded with pleasant memories than those which had been passed in this sylvan spot. In a book of goblin tales whose author had been given her, it had been told that she had pictured the moonlight gambolings of airy sprites. And while she now sat her eyes closed in a light sleep, with wood became once more a scene in fairyland. Laughing imps looked at her in crowds from behind the trunks of trees and among the leaves and branches overhead; and some of them, growing bolder, danced into the pathway, and poised themselves on the bench before her, as if playfully welcoming her to their goblin home.

But where was the Prince, her devoted lover, who lived in this fairy wood? She listened. Was not that his footstep? Rosa started and opened her eyes. Had she been dreaming? The goblins had vanished; but the footstep was still in her ear. She glanced towards a patch of blue sky in the opening at the end of the path. It was like a chime of bells; for presently a figure at once recognized the figure as Sidney's. She ran to meet him as she would have done in childhood; no sense of restraint entered into her thoughts. It had been different when they met in New Square; for it was a vision—could never come true. Was not all this reality?

"Ah, Rosa, I thought I should find you here."

Rosa made no immediate reply. She walked at his side through the shady pathways, as if scarcely yet fully awakened. Her head was bent; but she knew that he was gazing down at her with deeper curiosity than when they had met in Lincoln's Inn. And he was more like the old Sidney that she had known in bygone days, when they ran here together with the light looked up at last.

"Do cultivate people," said she—"people who are taught to suppress their real sentiments—over come here?"

Sidney laughed. "The very place," he answered, "that they would be the most likely to choose. I come here—frequently."

"Not to dream, do you?"

"To indulge the wildest dreams!" was the reply.

Rosa's face became thoughtful. Did he ever dream of her? Did he ever recall, as she recalled them now, their sunny hours here together? How she longed to take his hand, as she had often done, and speak of those moments which could no more have escaped his memory than hers.

"Did you think me such a prosy lawyer?" he continued. "Did you think that I never had one romance—an uncompleted one—in my life?"

"Yes," she replied with candour; "I thought you very matter-of-fact."

Sidney hastened to ask: "Why so?"

"Only because," she answered unhesitatingly, "Mr. Pilkington, is—or was your guardian. He must have taught you, for years past, never to give way to sentiment, to suppress all emotion, any feeling at all. At least," added the girl, "so I judge from what I have seen of him so far."

"Perhaps," said Sidney, "Mr. Pilkington has acted towards you so far matter-of-fact in Lincoln's Inn during office hours."

"But he was the same," said the girl, "when crossing the heath. He has such a horror of tears."

"There may be a motive. Are you not our client?"

Rosa suppressed a sigh. "Ah, yes; I had forgotten."

They now reached the edge of the wood. She caught sight of her window said Rosa, holding out her hand; "I shall not see you again to-day."

Sidney glanced inquiringly into her face.

"There is company this evening," said Rosa; "so Mr. Pilkington tells me; I have agreed not to appear. He is

right, I suppose," she added peevishly. "One must learn to hide one's feelings. Is it very difficult—I mean in society?"

"No. The difficulty is—But I'll tell you another time. Good-night."

Sidney stood watching the girl as she ran across the lawn. She waved her hand to him from the terrace, and then went in quickly, as if conscious of having done wrong. Would she ever subdue her impulse?

Since their tacit recognition of each other in Took's Court, on the first day of Sidney's visit, he had thought constantly of Rosa. Had not the little sweethearts of his boyhood grown up into a lovely woman, with all the old petulance and amiability that had characterized her as a child? He had found it no easy matter to remain silent on the subject of those early days, even when they met in Lincoln's Inn. How far greater the difficulty to-day, when they had met in the old wood, which recalled to him the early affection for each other? Perhaps Mr. Pilkington's influence had something to do with well as with Rosa's. Mr. Pilkington had been closeted a good deal of late with his junior partner; and Sidney had begun to show signs of greater earnestness and discretion. Could the time be far distant now when all the weight of responsibility, which Mr. Pilkington would fall upon his (Sidney's) shoulders? It was quite evident that some degree of caution—possibly bearing upon some legal secret—had been imposed upon him.

The dinner-party to-night at Mr. Pilkington's villa, given to distinguished clients, is quite superb in its way; though the noiseless manner in which the servants move backwards and forwards behind the chairs, and the mysterious style in which the butler removes the covers—as if there might be legal secrets under them—may express more than is intended. Not that any one exhibits the slightest sign that an anxious thought has a place in his mind. Every face is animated. Mrs. Pilkington's most of all. Even Mr. Pilkington indulges in pleasantries in his subdued way. He never awakens any recollection—never by look or word—of the oblong room with barred windows; his conversation is never suggestive of an octagonal room adjoining, where every one present has waited his turn more than once. There never was a better bred set of people—people who had accomplished the art of concealing emotion, to the complete satisfaction of Mr. Pilkington, and society at large.

It is only when all the guests are gone and that the old lawyer has retired to the library, that Sidney notices a change in Mrs. Pilkington. He is watching her, unobserved, from the conservatory. His face has an altered look. Presently—not without an expression of purpose in the action—he steps into the drawing-room. The glance which Mrs. Pilkington greets him is like a son to her ever since she became Mr. Pilkington's wife. "Sidney," she says, indicating a place beside her, "I have been wishing to speak to you the whole evening."

He sits down and takes the hand that she holds out tenderly towards him. "I have read the wish in your face," he replies. "It is not about Mr. Pilkington?"

"Yes; for my dear husband tells me," says she, "that you are going to take his place; that you have decided to retire. It is a grave responsibility."

"More so," Sidney answers, "than I imagined. There are many secrets."

"Do they trouble you?"

"One of them does; it requires such delicate handling."

"Mr. Pilkington will advise you."

"He cannot, in this case. Among other secrets, distressful enough in their way, he has told me his own—the one that he hid from you."

Mrs. Pilkington glances at Sidney with surprise. "Has he told you that?" Her voice is scarcely audible. "Is it that which troubles you?"

Sidney's look confirms it.

"There's a moment's pause. 'It is the one, then, the secret contained in some correspondence in a packet of letters?'"

"Yes; that is the one," is Sidney's reply.

"Those letters are destroyed," she answers hurriedly. "I burnt them, Sidney, in my dear husband's presence. Did he not tell you that?"

"Yes; and your goodness of heart—your boundless confidence in him was almost more than he could bear! If you had only suspected of whom those letters spoke—that secrets they contained—you would never have thrown them into the fire."

(To be continued.)

**A JAPANESE VIEW OF ENGLAND.**

What a Newspaper of That Country Says About England's Greatness.

The Yoruza Choho, a Japanese journal published in Tokio, devotes a portion of its columns to discussions in English; this part of the paper has an article entitled "England's Greatness," which is as follows: "Thy greatness, O England, is not thy own making. Thou hast not stored for thyself coals in Lancashire and iron in Yorkshire. Thy commodious harbors of Liverpool, Bristol, Southampton, etc., were not dugged by thee. The warm wind that comes from the west and the fruitful rains which it brings are brought to thy shores by a power that is not thine own. Thou wast placed in the centre of the land hemisphere, and the whole world's turn toward thee. Thou art the world's mart and thy wealth is the world's. Then thy laws, literature and thinking, thy too, are not all thine own. What were thy Hobbes, Austin and Blackstone, had there not been Caesar and Justinian for thee? What were thy Milton and Shakespeare, had there not been Aeschylus, Horace, and Virgil, who unwittingly wrought for thee? What were thy Wyclif, Knox, Daniel and Paul, who preached for thee? Rome, Greece, Judea, Phoenicia, all contributed their parts to make thee great. Thou art the product of ages of human labor, from Abraham and Homer downward. The world demands from thee a service which is thy due. Thy fleet ought to be employed not merely to protect thy interests, but to right the world's wrong. Thy pluck and skill ought to be freely given to help the helpless, to rescue the perishing."

**SMART DOG.**

Col. J. W. Barnett, in New Orleans, told a story of an unusually fine bird dog that he once owned, the best dog, he said, that ever was in his possession. He had trained the dog with great care to know a bird by the feathers it dropped. Did a partridge drop a feather the dog would take the scent and find the bird's retreat. One day the Colonel hit a wild duck, but only knocked out a few wing feathers. The dog sniffed them and started away, but got no response, and at the end of an exhaustive search of the neighborhood went home, expecting the dog would come along later. But the dog didn't come home until a week afterward, when one day he appeared, thin and bedraggled, just able to trot slowly along the road, but carrying a dead duck. The Colonel had saved the wing feathers which he saw the dog last sniff, and upon comparison, found that they belonged to the duck the faithful dog had followed the quarry until he found its roosting place and nabbed it asleep.

**DIDN'T SCARE HIM A BIT.**

Old Milliums—Young man, my daughter tells me that you kissed her last night.

Perceval Tootles—Well, she wants to go around bragging about it, that's her privilege.



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**CURES GUARANTEED OR NO PAY.—CONFIDENTIAL.**

"The vices of early boyhood laid the foundation of my ruin. Later on a 'gay life' and exposure to blood diseases completed the wreck. I had all the symptoms of nervous debility—sunken eyes, emissions, drain in urine, fall out, bone pains, weak back, etc. Syphilis caused my hair to fall out, blotches on body, etc. I thank God I tried Drs. Kennedy & Kergan. They restored me to health, vigor and happiness." CHAS. POWERS.

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their christian and description the f claims a claim accounts or claim securities (if any) after the said day proceed to distribute deceased among th notice shall be required. And b be responsible therefor to any claim notice shall aforesaid.

Dated at Durh A. D., 1897.

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