

A PRECIOUS PEARL

CHAPTER I.—(Continued.)

Mrs. Calverne was a charming hostess. She herself conducted Audrey to her room—a pretty apartment, hung with blue silk and white lace. The long windows looked over the grounds that led to the river, presenting a most exquisite view. In the room there was everything that a girl's heart could desire. The toilet-table was covered with marvels of glass, Dresden china, and ivory, and with most elaborate scented bottles. A pretty couch was drawn near the window. There were books, flowers, pictures, statuettes.

Audrey looked round in wonder. This was magnificence compared with the plain, bare aspect of her room at the rectory.

"I hope you will spend many happy hours here," said Mrs. Calverne.

Audrey was delighted with the size, the magnificence, the picturesque beauty of the house. She was delighted, too, on the day following, when Mrs. Calverne—who was almost royally generous in her liberality—took her out shopping. To Audrey's simple imagination her hundred pounds seemed almost inexhaustible. It bought so much—everything that a young lady could desire. There was nothing forgotten—evening dresses, ball dresses, walking costumes, gloves, fans, Parisian shoes, pretty ornaments—yet in the purse Mrs. Calverne handed to her there was left a handsome supply of gold.

"A hundred pounds goes a very long way," said Audrey, thoughtfully.

She was well pleased; and on the morning, when Mrs. Calverne's friends and visitors arrived she felt quite at home and at ease among them.

Mrs. Hamlyn gave one keen comprehensive glance at Audrey when they were introduced and then she smiled at Mrs. Calverne.

"We shall hear of something before very long," she said.

That same evening Mrs. Calverne seemed highly delighted with a note that she had received.

"Sir Roche Villiers is coming," she said. "I hardly hoped to see him."

Miss Hamlyn looked up with a gleam of pleasure in her dark eyes.

"Coming here, is he? I have been given to understand that he is most difficult to please. I repeat my prophecy—we shall hear of something before very long."

Mrs. Calverne made no answer; she was looking at Audrey with an intent, serious gaze. She shook her head slightly.

"I am afraid it will hardly do," she thought to herself, "yet few girls have ever had such a chance."

Before three days had elapsed the party of guests were complete and they had before them the prospect of a beautiful month—July, in all its glory of flower and leaf.

CHAPTER II.

The London season had almost ended to an end and the participants in it had nearly all gone their different ways. For some the season ended in the chime of wedding-bells; to others it had brought regrets and disappointment.

One who had been perhaps more brilliant, more popular, more sought after and admired than any other, sat alone in his house near Hyde Park. The table before him was strewn with notes of invitation with dainty envelopes with papers still unread, periodicals still uncut; the warm sunlight fell upon his face, which was shaded by his hand—a face that at once attracted attention.

There was something at once brilliant, gentle and strong about this man. Looking at him, one saw by the handsome thoughtful face that his breast held a life story. It was half revealed as though they had sealed a secret; it was told in the dark, keen, blue eyes, in the whole expression of the face. He was above the ordinary height, with strength and grace combined—a man who could never have even passed through a room unnoticed.

Most men envied, all women admired, Sir Roche Villiers. He was rich; he owned a magnificent estate—Rowen Abbey—he possessed a magnificent mansion in London, called Roche House, he had a villa at Cowes, a large estate in Wales. His baronetcy was one of the oldest in England. Fortune had lavished some of her richest gifts on him. He had a fine, clear, keen intellect, a brilliant, vivid fancy, the soul of a poet, the mind, the taste and instinct of an artist; he was a brilliant orator, an accomplished courier. He was one of the leading members of the House of Commons, and was a power in the land although he had not yet reached the age of thirty. He was sought after, flattered, and admired; no one had a word to say against him. And he won the love of women by the eloquent beauty of his face, as well as by his marvelous talent, tact, grace, and wit.

The room in which he sat was spacious and handsome. The sunbeams lingered on a thousand beautiful things, but those same sunbeams brought no smile to the face of the man to whom everything brought only weariness. He put away his thoughts and gave the whole of his attention to the letters lying on the table. One after another he read them, and wrote on each the same word, "Declined."

until he came to Mrs. Calverne's letter.

"I will go there—I always enjoy a visit to Richmond."

He wrote an acceptance—it was the same letter which gave such delight to the fashionable widow—and then the old air of weariness and gloom came over him.

"I wonder," said Sir Roche Villiers, the possessor of thirty thousand per annum, "if there is anything in this world which would make me feel like my old self again, light of heart, hopeful, trustful, sanguine? Could anything give me a desire for life, take from me the rank sense of ill-usage restore my faith in my kind, in the love and the truth of women, the honor of men, I would give my fortune for them and consent to stand penniless in the world if I could regain what I have lost. Why should my heart have lost its youth, my life its spring? Other men are happy until they die—and I was happy for only a few short months."

The day arrived on which he left his home and went to Richmond where a warm welcome from the graceful widow awaited him. He never forgot the day. It was rich and warm with the glory of July, but the radiance of nature brought no smile to his lips.

Mrs. Calverne received him with the graceful warmth that made her so popular; she said kind pleasant things to him, she hoped a few days of change, rest, and bright companionship would do him good. He thanked her; but when, after a short conversation she went away to order some luncheon for him, he walked to the window and stood looking absently over the green lawn with its wealth of rose trees.

Mrs. Calverne's return aroused him. He knew that he had the usual society routine to go through. While he drank the claret cup so perfectly prepared, and admired the cool, tempting fruit set before him, he asked who were his fellow-guests. Mrs. Calverne answered brightly that they formed a pleasant and well-selected party.

"I have a belle, a beauty, an ingenue, a wit, and yourself. Could anything be better?"

"No," he answered with a smile.

"When you have rested a little, and care to go out, you will find them all in the grounds. Miss Hamlyn and Miss Brooke like the bank of the river. I think you will be pleased with Miss Brooke; she is something quite fresh."

He raised his eyebrows a little—as though anything in this weary world could be fresh to him! He forgot all about Miss Brooke the next moment, and enjoyed his cigar in peace, he presently strolled down to the river bank. Then and there he saw the rector's daughter.

He had prayed only a few hours before for forgetfulness; now he hoped that no time, no thought, no trouble, no sorrow would ever take this new memory from him. He bore the picture with him until he died. The tall slender girl standing idly by the river bank watching the stream, every line and curve of her figure clearly defined against the blue sky, her two white hands idly clasped, was as perfect a picture as artist or poet could suggest. A smile, half thoughtful, half proud, played around her lips. Her fair, sweet loveliness revealed no trace of human passion, there was nothing to mar the calmness of girlhood.

It was quite a new type of beauty to him, rich in its brilliant coloring, proud in its half-haughty grace, pure in its dreamy loveliness.

He stood quite still, a man who sees some wonder of the world for the first time, spell-bound by the beautiful purity of the unconscious face. What happened as he watched it he never quite knew; the sun took a more golden gleam, the river seemed to flash into light and song, a deeper green fell on the rippling leaves, sweeter fragrance came to the flowers.

As he looked at Audrey his life seemed to grow complete; something awoke in his heart and soul that never died again something that gave him back his youth, his faith, his trust—that took away his doubts, fears, and dismay. He watched her intently, while the moments passed unheeded, and then he murmured to himself that he had found the spring of the waters of Lethe at last.

He roused himself suddenly as from a sweet sleep. He was obliged to pass by the spot where she stood, for he saw Miss Hamlyn in the distance. As he drew near, the girl raised her face and their eyes met—only for a moment, but that same moment held the fate of two souls. He hurried on and found Miss Hamlyn noting the capabilities of the smooth, green tennis ground. When he spoke to her, he had the look and manners of a man who was dreaming.

"He speaks to me," she thought, "but he does not even see me."

And then he asked the question that trembled on his lips.

"Who is that lady standing on the river bank, Miss Hamlyn?"

There was a demure smile in her eyes as she raised them to his.

"This is Miss Brooke, Audrey Brooke—or 'l'ingenue,' as Mrs. Calverne calls her."

"Audrey Brooke," he repeated slowly and to his excited fancy it seemed that the surging wavelets re-echoed the name.

"Audrey Brooke," he said again; and Miss Hamlyn smiled with the superiority of a young lady quite above such weakness as love.

"I will introduce you to her, if you like," she said.

Mechanically he followed her, and in a few moments he was bowing, while a fair face was raised to his—raised for an instant, and then the dark eyes fell. It seemed to them both that in one glance their souls met.

CHAPTER III.

Sir Roche could not explain the be-

ginning of his love for Audrey. A new, beautiful life, had suddenly sprung up within him; flowers bloomed where in arid desert had been; the funeral pall which had covered earth and sky fell away; he who had thirsted so long drank deep of the sweet waters of content. Daily companionship with her enhanced her radiant charms, and one bright day he told Audrey that he loved her, and asked her to be his wife. He could not recall the words in which he had proposed to her, or the manner in which she had accepted him. He remembered the sunlight of the summer morning, the fragrance, the shade under the tall green trees, the humming of the bees. He had not slept all night for thinking of her—she had risen early. He saw her at breakfast time, looking more beautiful than ever, in a cool, blue muslin dress, with white lace. He had tried hard to be content and to persuade himself that he had no right to seek to make that pure, young life one with his.

"Yet, why not?" he asked himself. "Shall a man suffer all his life and lose all his life, because of one mistake?"

He tried to find a chance of speaking to her when breakfast was over and the visitors, in little groups, were discussing their letters and plans for the day. He had no opportunity just then; but, on going down to the river bank shortly afterward, he caught a glimpse of the brown hair and the blue dress under the shade of a lime tree. He did not wait then to ask himself any questions, to review past scruples, he said to himself that she was the good angel of his life, and that he would do his best to make her his own. He went to her at once, his heart on his lips—he loved her with a wonderful love—and he asked her, if she would be his wife.

To neither of them did the memory of that time ever return very clearly—it was all a blinding glare of golden sunlight, a sound of sweet music.

When she raised her fair, startled face to his, he knew that he had won her, for he read her love in the dark eyes that dropped so shyly from his. Yet his happiness was so great that he could hardly believe it.

"You will really be my wife, Audrey?" he said. "Say it again, darling—it seems to me so much too good to be true. You always appear to me more than mortal; I can hardly believe that I have won you. You really love me, Audrey?"

"Yes, I really love you," she replied.

"And you will be true to me until death?" he continued.

She raised her pure, fair face to his.

"Yes," she answered, "in the highest sense of the words, 'I will be true to you until death.'"

"I feel as though I had plighted my troth to an angel," he said. "My darling, I should never be very surprised to see you suddenly take wings and fly away."

She laughed a little, sweet laugh of perfect content.

"I feel more like a happy young girl than an angel," she said.

"But are you happy, darling?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "I am happy."

And then they talked of the future that lay so bright before them.

He told her of his splendid old home, Rowen Abbey, the large estate near King's Wymon, of his numerous tenants and dependents.

"I have neglected my home," he said; "it is three years and more since the great gates of the abbey were opened. They tell me that moss has grown in the courts and weeds in the gardens."

"But, why," she asked, "have you neglected it?"

His handsome face grew dark and moody.

"Do not ask me," he said. "My past has not been a happy one. I will tell you this, darling—I have neglected my duties, I have not been near my home; I have neglected my tenants; I have taken no interest in anything."

"But why," she persisted, "tell me why?"

He was silent for a few minutes, during which he asked himself should he tell her, or should he not? If he told her, the chances were that he should lose her; and he clung to her passionately, but because he saw in her the means of amendment, saw how she could help him to lead such a life as he had dreamed of years before, and had longed for always. He could not risk at all by telling her; besides, what could it matter? He would be a true, faithful, loving husband to her—he would make her very happy; for the rest, his story related only to an old-fashioned prejudice, at which the wise children of this generation laughed.

"Why was all this?" she asked gently. "Why did you neglect everything, and care for nothing, Sir Roche?"

"Darling, you must not call me 'Sir Roche.' I have never known the beauty of my name until now. Say 'Roche' that I may hear all the music of it."

She half-whispered the name, and then he answered her. He took both her hands in his and kissed them; but he did not look into her face as he said:

"I had a friend, one whom I loved and trusted. This friend deceived and betrayed me. The deceit was so cruel, it blighted my life, and I lost all interest in it until I saw you."

Her hand stole gently to his shoulder, her dark eyes dim with unshed tears, were raised lovingly to his.

"I will never deceive nor betray you," she said. "You shall have one love true and faithful to your life's end; I will make up to you for all you have suffered. But, Roche, you must have loved your friend very dearly to have suffered so much."

"I did," he replied, hoarsely. "But

we will not talk any more about it. I shall forget it in your love. My life will grow bright again—all the interest will come back. We will live at Rowen Abbey, and we will do all that I ought to have done, but have so sadly neglected; we will build schools for the children, almshouses for the old and infirm. We will do all the good we can, Audrey."

She listened to him in a trance of delight.

Considering his vast wealth, his ancient title, his large estates, he did not look like a lover assured of victory when he asked that same evening to speak to Mrs. Calverne.

"I think it but right," he said, "as Miss Brooke is staying under your roof, to tell you that I have asked her to be my wife, and that I have decided on going to see Dr. Brooke next week."

She looked at him half gravely, half sadly.

"You do not congratulate me," he cried.

"I am remiss," she said. "I beg your pardon, I do congratulate you. I think more highly of Audrey Brooke than of any girl I know."

"You are recalling those old-fashioned prejudices," he said impatiently; "surely you are more enlightened than to deem them worth a moment's thought?"

She shivered a little and drew her white lace shawl around her shoulders.

"Have you told her?" she asked.

"No," he replied, angrily. "Why need I tell her? She need never know. I dare not risk losing her, for if I lost her it would drive me mad."

"Will you tell Dr. Brooke?" asked Mrs. Calverne, after a pause.

"No; why should I? Why need I? It matters to no one. Let me forget it—that terrible ghost of a hated past; let me be good and happy with this pure angel—sent to me, I believe, by Heaven to save me from utter destruction."

"Do you think good ever comes from concealment?" asked Mrs. Calverne, presently.

"No, not as a rule—in this case, yes. Old-fashioned prejudices would be arrayed against new and more advanced ideas. I do not see the need, the wisdom, the advisability of referring to days gone by. Wish me happiness—wish me God-speed in my journey."

"I do," she said.

But long after he had left her the mistress of River View sat looking thoughtfully at the green trees.

"I hope I have done right," she said. "After all, it is a brilliant match for her; and what can a few old-fashioned prejudices matter?"

To be Continued.

DROPPED FROM MARS MAYBE.

Strange Message From Above That Exhibits Some Untranslatable Characters.

Scientists in Binghamton, N.Y., are puzzling over an aerial visitor that dropped in this vicinity early the other morning.

Prof. Jeremiah McDonald, who resides on Park avenue, was returning home at an early hour in the morning, when there was a blinding flash of light and an object buried itself in the ground a short distance from his premises.

Later it was dug up and found to be a mass of some foreign substance that had been fused together by an intense heat. It was still hot, and when cooled off in water was broken open. Inside was found what might have been a piece of metal, on which were a number of curious marks that some think to be characters. When opened the stone emitted a strong sulphurous smell.

The object was submitted to Prof. Whitney of the high school, who declared it an aerolite, but different from anything he had ever seen. The metal had been fused to a whitish substance, and is of unknown quality to the scientific men who have examined it.

Several have advanced the opinion that this is a message from another planet, probably Mars. The marks bear some resemblance to Egyptian writing in the minds of some. Prof. McDonald is among those who believe the mysterious ball was meant as a means of communication from another world.

ROYALTY INCOG ON THE WHEEL.

Bicycles are about as popular now in Germany as anywhere, even in the most exclusive circles. It counts many votaries in the imperial family and court.

That was seen recently while a number of Princes and Princesses were visiting at Chateau Friedrichshof when twelve wheels stood in the stables. Prince Henry, the Emperor's brother, is an enthusiastic bicyclist, and while visiting his mother the other day in Cronberg, he rode, incognito, so to speak, to Frankfurt on his wheel and presented himself in the shop of a dealer and repairer to wait until a much-needed change had been made in his tire. The dealer, who did not know him at first, chatted on about wheels and wheeling, and the Prince chimed in showing a thorough understanding of every part of the wheel.

STIMULUS TO EXERTION.

Yes, said the man, I realize that cycling is a great thing. I used to be sluggish before the cycling craze, but now I'm spry and energetic.

I didn't know you rode.

I don't. I dodge.

A PAYING PROFESSION.

Mr. Million—Humph? Want to marry my daughter? Newspaper reporter, I understand. I never heard of a newspaper reporter getting rich.

Mr. Quickpen—Oh, I have. I know of a dozen who have married heiresses.

ROUND THE WHOLE WORLD.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

Old and New World Events of Interest Chron- iced Briefly—Interesting Happenings of Recent Date.

It is estimated that the Manchester Ship Canal has saved the cotton trade £150,000 a year.

It is estimated that as many as 60,000 farmers and others in France make their living by the manufacture of Roquefort Cheese.

Botanists have found no fewer than 120 different kinds of flowers on Spitzbergen, most of them being unknown on the European continent.

Russia is said to own 30,000,000 horses, or nearly one-half of the whole number in existence. Most of them belong to the peasants of that vast empire.

Abyssinia's social code provides for a fair chance to young married couples by forbidding the bride's mother to visit her daughter till a year after the marriage.

One large agency in London employs women for bailiffs, putting them in charge where the victim of distraint is a woman or an elderly person who is not likely to make trouble for the custodian.

What is called malaria, after raging for four years in Central Asia, where it was attended by great mortality, has reached the Caucasus, and is spreading. The military hospitals report 400 cases a day each.

George F. Watts has presented to St. Paul's Cathedral, London, his allegorical painting entitled "Time, Death and Judgment." The dean and chapter have selected a spot to hang it, in the central nave near the north-west quarter arch of the dome.

An appeal has appeared in a Darmstadt paper asking all Hessian women to contribute toward a monument to be erected to the late Grand Duchess of Hesse, the Princess Alice, who, with the English people, was the favorite daughter of the Queen.

A John O'Groats to Land's End record for motor carriages has been established in England, the first carriage to make the journey having covered the distance in ninety-three hours. The time can easily be beaten when a record for speed is sought.

A celebration was recently held in Bontoise, France, for the coachman, Georges, who gained undying renown in Paris by his bravery in saving lives at the bazaar disaster in the Rue Goujon. There was a banquet and a public meeting, with speeches, from which Georges escaped at the earliest opportunity, and a presentation of a gold medal to him.

Verdi, who objects to hand organs, has an effective though expensive way of suppressing them at Moncalieri, where he spends his summers. He hires all the organs in the district for the season and stores them in his house.

A reporter of Le Figaro counted ninety-five instruments and the composer told him that it cost him \$300 a season to suppress them.

Gabriele d'Annunzio cannot become a member of the Italian Parliament, as his political opponents have shown that his record includes a sentence to six months' imprisonment for adultery, which makes him not only ineligible, but deprives him of the right to vote. In commenting on this Le Figaro asserts that such a law in France would be equivalent to suppressing universal suffrage.

Just before he died Lord Leighton referred with some bitterness to the fact that one of his earliest pictures, "Orpheus," had been generally ridiculed. When asked where the picture was, he said he was sorry that he did not know, as it would now be worth a fortune to him. After his death the canvas was found in the coal cellar, where it had been thrown among a lot of rubbish.

While England is fighting on the Afghan frontier Russia is building military roads in the Pamir region close to the boundary of India. One has just been completed over the Ak Baital Pass, at a height of over 15,000 feet. It can be used by carts, and was begun in July. Another has been made near the Karne Tata boundary, and it was intended to complete another before the cold weather set in at the Bordoba boundary in the Allai Valley.

An overhead trolley system for the conveyance of power to motor carriages on ordinary roads has been in successful operation for six months past at Greenwich, England. The system is the double wire one, as the circuit must be completed entirely by the wires. The motor is placed in the front of the carriages, and connection is made by a flexible wire winding on a drum.

Carriages can pass each other by an ingenious arrangement of rollers attached at intervals to either side of the conducting wire, the trolley being guided to the right or left as may be necessary.

Orthodox Greeks and Anglicans have fraternized in an unusual manner in Melbourne, Australia. Owing to the absence of a resident priest, baptisms and marriages among Russians at Greeks have been celebrated according to their rites by clergymen of the Church of England in the parish churches. On some occasions they have also administered the communion. The newly appointed archimandrite has not only ratified the ceremonies performed in the past, but has refused to administer holy communion until he receives permission to do so from the Anglican bishop of the diocese.

DANDELION FOR INSOMNIA.

A man who has tried it says that two or three dandelion leaves chewed before going to bed will always induce sleep, no matter how nervous or worried a man be.

THE

VEGETABLE

A very nice out meal, using a little of it together. It is among the tables.

Nuts may be eaten with the apples, and they may be eaten and celery salad and celery.

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