

IN SPITE OF HIS BIRTH.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The discovery of this other robbery, and the mysterious absence of the young man, whom he loved as if he had been his own son, with the terrible circumstances attending it, and following so closely upon the death of his sister, proved too much for Mr. Lawson's failing constitution; and the next morning when the breakfast bell rang, he did not respond to it promptly, as was his custom.

A servant was sent to his room to call him, but receiving no answer to her rap upon the door, the girl ventured to look within, whereupon she turned and ran shrieking to Mrs. Heatherton that "Mr. Lawson was in a fit."

The "fit" proved to be a serious stroke of paralysis, and a physician was instantly summoned; but though every effort was made to save the man, he had no strength to rally from it, and died that afternoon.

For Miriam felt as if the last link which bound her to life was severed, when the final struggle was over, and she saw the physician close the eyes of him who had been no true a friend to herself and Ned.

Mr. Lawson had evidently realized that his end was near, for once, when he came to himself for a few moments during that memorable day, he turned to Miriam, who had not left his side after his condition was discovered, and murmured with difficulty, in an inquiring tone:

"He has not come," Mrs. Heatherton returned, in a low, hopeless tone. A look of pain leaped into the eyes of the dying man.

"The dear boy is innocent," he faltered through his drawn lips—"soil of honor."

Then after a moment he added, with even greater difficulty:

"Will—private drawer—safe. Ned is—have—all."

These were his last words, and it was greatly to be regretted that no one heard them save Miriam herself, as she came to Mr. Lawson alone in the room with him just at that moment. In less than three hours he was dead.

Who can describe the sorrow and suffering of the next few days? They were like a horrid nightmare, that delicate, heart-broken woman, who had been so sadly bereft, and afterward she often wondered how she had ever lived through them.

The last sad rites were performed over Mr. Lawson with no one to mourn him save the pale, sad woman who had been such a comfort to the lonely old man, and a sun-beam in his home during the last few years of his life—unless we except Thomas Heatherton, Benjamin Lawson's sister's husband, who had been notified of the death of his brother-in-law, and had come on from New York to attend the funeral, and for other purposes, which will appear later.

When Mr. Lawson's physician introduced Miriam Heatherton to her proud father-in-law, the man, for a moment had appeared somewhat disconcerted at the unexpected encounter; then quickly recovering himself, he bestowed a cold nod upon her, and from that moment until after Mr. Lawson was borne out of his home, utterly ignored her presence in the house, except when it was absolutely necessary to consult her upon certain arrangements regarding the services.

When all was over, Mr. Heatherton constituted himself the executor of Mr. Lawson's affairs, and demanded of Miriam the keys to his safe.

"As my wife, as Mr. Lawson's nearest relative and legal heir, her death makes me her successor, and it devolves upon me to settle his estate," he remarked, in a pompous, overbearing tone.

Miriam flushed, and wondered what the man would say when he should find the will of which Mr. Lawson had told her.

But she quietly replied:

"The safe is not locked; it was forced and robbed only a night or two previous to Mr. Lawson's death during his absence in New York."

"Ha!" sharply exclaimed Mr. Heatherton, while he suspiciously searched the woman's face; "did the thieves get much?"

"I cannot say, not knowing what the safe contained," was the brief reply, though Miriam flushed, for the clergyman had returned from Mount Hope with them at Mr. Heatherton's request, and she was wounded at being treated so superciliously in his presence.

"Hum!" and a frown darkened his brow. "Probably the rogues were after money only, and doubtless we shall find his private papers untouched. I will examine its contents at once; and will you, Mr. Hall, turning to the clergyman, "kindly remain as a witness while I do so."

"Had Mr. Lawson no legal adviser?" the gentleman inquired of Miriam, before replying to Mr. Heatherton.

"I think he was in the habit of attending to his own business affairs, as he was a lawyer himself," she replied. She was upon the point of adding that Mr. Lawson had told her he had made a will; but checked herself, thinking that the fact would be revealed when the gentleman examined the contents of the safe.

Mr. Hall consented to assist Mr. Heatherton in his duty, and the two men at once repaired to the library, where they were escorted during the remainder of the day.

The hours which followed were long and anxious ones to Miriam, and she found herself dreaming to any real harm had befallen her son, though he may be forcibly detained until the real rogues can get well away, if I can be of any service to

you, at any time, I beg you will call upon me."

"You are very kind," Miriam murmured, tremulously.

"You must let me know your address when you get settled, and my wife shall come to call upon you," the clergyman continued, her pale, sad face, appealing more forcibly than the wildest manifestation of grief could have done to his kind heart.

"My address—when I get settled," she repeated, in a faltering tone, and with a startled look.

"Yes," her companion explained, "Mr. Heatherton thinks it will be advisable to dismiss the servants and close the house, until he can dispose of it to advantage."

"Close this—Mr. Lawson's house?" questioned Miriam, putting her hand to her head with a puzzled air, as if she did not comprehend, though the shock which went through her, nearly deprived her of all her strength.

"Yes, that is what Mr. Heatherton said. By the way, is he not a relative of yours—your father's name?" said Mr. Hall, regarding her curiously.

"He is the father of the man whom I married," the wretched woman replied, with pale lips.

But she was wondering what it could mean—this closing of the house. Mr. Lawson had told her that he had a will in the safe, and he was to have all his property. Those had been his last words, while he had distinctly stated, during that conversation with her before his departure for New York, that he had made her will six months previous, and, saving a few bequests, Ned was to have his entire fortune.

"Knowing this, she had felt sure that Mr. Heatherton would find a will, and that, though Ned should never be heard from again, she, as his heir, would at least have a comfortable home for the future.

But Mr. Hall's words indicated that no will had been found; that Mr. Heatherton intended to take charge of Mr. Lawson's property, and she would thus again be thrown out homeless and alone upon the world.

The thought was torturing to her. To be obliged to leave this lovely home, and all the dear familiar objects, by which she had been so long surrounded, drift back, perhaps, into poverty-stricken lodgings, such as she had occupied when Mr. Lawson had first found her!—how could she bear it?

Then her occupation and its remuneration would be taken from her, and with the burden of anguish and suspense which she was suffering, it seemed as if she could not do battle for herself again out in the rough world.

Truly, it was "hard times" for the delicate and sensitive woman.

"Your husband's father," the clergyman exclaimed, after an astonished pause, during which Miriam's mind had been occupied with these troubled thoughts.

But he suddenly checked himself, as he flashed upon him that there was some mystery surrounding these two lives regarding which he must not appear to be too curious.

"Yes," Miriam briefly and coldly replied.

"He is dead, Mr. Heatherton tells me," Mr. Hall continued, and wondered at the peculiar look which came upon a moment in his companion's eyes.

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WHO IS WHO IN CHINA

The following extracts from a memorandum prepared last autumn for an English friend by the Chinese reformer, Kang Yu Wei, says the London Times, made me from my home and friends—made me an outcast—and for years I struggled with poverty and hardships, in the effort to rear the child of my supposed shame. I never, from the moment of his heartless desertion, knew real comfort until my boy was fourteen years of age, when Mr. Lawson found us and brought us here to his home where we have been as kind as a father to us. I know, and here Miriam Heatherton's clear blue eyes looked straight into the face of her father-in-law, carrying conviction to their dauntless hearts, "that he intended to provide handsomely for our future, for he told me so only an hour before he left New York last week, but since no proof has been given of course I cannot prove this. However, I intend to make the most of what rights are mine, that his wishes in this respect may be carried out as far as possible, and I do not propose to be turned homeless into the streets of Boston. With all due respect for you and your claims, Mr. Heatherton, I repeat—intend to remain where I am until I can see that I shall fill your cup again."

"No," was the brief and unceremonious reply, for the man was too amazed and non-plussed by the pluck of the girl, and official rank, to be able to say more just then.

"Then if you will kindly excuse me," Miriam remarked, as she arose from the table, "I will give the cook her orders for the day."

She was moving toward the door, with the easy, graceful carriage of the perfect lady that she was, when Mr. Heatherton recovered himself sufficiently to say:

"Look here, madam, if you please." Miriam stopped, turned, and stood quietly waiting for what further remarks he might have to make, and she established something to keep up such a comfortable as this, he blurted out, coarsely, "Who do you expect is going to foot the bills?"

"I shall be glad to make no unnecessary expense," she quietly returned, "but the place, and all it contains, needs care to prevent it from deteriorating in value. With the aid of one servant, and care for nothing myself, I can attend to everything. Of course the taxes, insurance, and necessary repairs will have to be charged to the estate until it is settled by the courts."

The man flushed angrily again.

He had not been prepared to have the tables turned upon him like this, and had he not been instinctively ashamed to do so, he would have sworn roundly, to relieve himself of his wrath.

"I shall see a lawyer to-day about this matter," he sulkily muttered.

"Very well, sir; if the law decrees that she shall remain here, I shall of course be obliged to submit to its power," was the unflinching rejoinder.

"Can I do anything more for you, without degrading her in any way?" Mr. Heatherton impatiently arose from the table and abruptly left the room, while Miriam went to her own apartment, and there gave vent to her overcharged feelings in a flood of tears.

She was so supremely wretched, so filled with agony and suspense over Ned's uncertain fate, so lonely with her dear, kind mother, to whom she had become so deeply attached, while the future appeared so unsettled and foreboding, that she seemed scarcely worth the living.

For herself she would have preferred to give up the battle and relinquish all right and title to the property of her old friend to Mr. Heatherton; but, while there was any hope of Ned coming back, she was determined to maintain her position and secure all that she could.

The law might decide against her, but she would at least make an effort to carry out, as far as she could, what she knew to be Mr. Lawson's wish.

(To be Continued.)

A BOXER PLACARD.

Specimen of the Methods of Working Up Anti-Foreign Feeling.

Writing recently from Tien Tsin, the correspondent of the London Standard gives the following specimen of the inflammatory placards posted by the Boxers in the northern province:

Gods assist the Boxers.
The Patriotic Harmonious Corps;
It is because the Foreign Devils disturb the Middle Kingdom.

Urging the people to join their religion.

To turn their backs on Heaven;
Venerate not the Gods and forget the Ancestors; the Foreign Devils will Men violate the human obligations; Women commit adultery.

Foreign devils are not produced by mankind.
If you doubt this, look at them carefully;
The eyes of all the Foreign Devils are bluish.

No rain falls, the clouds are getting dry;
This is because the Churches stop the Heaven.

The Gods are angry;
The Gentils are vexed;
Both are come down from the mountains to deliver the doctrine.

This is not hearsay.
The practice will not be in vain.
To recite incantations and pronounce magic words.

Burn up the yellow written prayers;
Light incense sticks;
To invite the Gods and Gentils of all the grotesque (hubs).

The Gods will come down from the mountains.
The Gentils will come down from the mountains.
To support the human bodies to practice the boxing.

When all the military accomplishments are fully learned,
It will not be difficult to exterminate the "Foreign Devils" then.
Pull aside the railway tracks,
Push out the telegraph poles,
Immediately after this destroy the steamers.

The great France
Will grow cold and downhearted;
The English and Russian will certainly disperse.
Let the various "Foreign Devils" all be killed.
May the whole elegant Empire of the great Ching dynasty be ever prosperous.

If we knew as much at 60 as we imagine we do at 16 what a wide old world this would be!

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