

FOR THE THIRD TIME.

CHAPTER IV.

Through a long vista of gorgeous rooms, athwart the glitter of gas and the gleam of jewels and the wild sweet music of a German waltz Mr. Wildair went to meet his fairy princess. He had seen her several times since the night at the play but he was now to meet her at a West-end party; a magnificent affair, where the creme de la creme of the West-end assembled in dazzling toilets and where the young lawyer was almost unknown. "But any friend of dear Miss Earle's," quoth Mrs. Goldham, the giver of the feast, when asked for an invitation, "must needs be welcome;" and so Mr. Wildair received a card, and went in all the purple and fine linen the noblest sex dare don, and looked the handsomest man in the rooms.

Miss Amy Earle thought so as she glanced his way under cover of her fan, while flirting animatedly with the son of the house. She was looking wonderfully pretty herself—a very sea nymph in pale green silk under misty white and with emeralds glimmering on the exquisite neck and arms. So enchantingly pretty and so delightfully rich what wonder if the bright little heiress was the triumphant queen of the night ever surrounded by the handsomest and most eligible men of the room and receiving flattery enough to turn forever a dozen such silly little heads?

George Wildair's heart sank all at once as he watched her receiving her perpetual incense as a princess might; and his high hopes suddenly fell.

"What if I should miss again?" he thought with a sickening feeling of apprehension. "What chance has a poor fellow such as I am, among those millionaires, and sons of millionaires? And yet little Amy isn't the sort of girl to marry for money. She is of the sentimental kind, that elope with the coachman, and think love in a cottage the height of earthly bliss. What is it the grand old cardinal says in the play 'In the vocabulary of great men there is no such word as fail' Courage, mon ami! You'll win the heiress yet! Victory sits at my helm!"

Mr. Wildair paid his respects to his hostess, and then sought out the belle of the ball. She received him with her brightest glance and most bewitching smile.

"See what radiant faces they wear!" some one said to Mrs. Sterling. "They tread on thrones just now instead of dull earth. No one ever looks like that except young ladies and gentlemen in their first ecstasy of engagement. My dear madam, your occupation, like Othello's, will soon be gone."

Mrs. Sterling frowned angrily. Yes, there was no mistaking the meaning of those rapturous faces. "He has reason to congratulate himself, no doubt," she thought bitterly. "He has secured the heiress and her money, but she pays a life-long penance for this mad folly. He is not a good man—the selfish and false, and mean to the core of his heart. Heaven knows I love the child dearly, and would save her if I could, but one might as well talk to the wind that blows, and hope to change it, as to a romantic girl in love."

Mrs. Sterling was wise in her penetration. That night, or rather next morning, in the gray and dismal day-dawn, when they reached home, Amy came peeping timidly into her room. The elder lady sat quietly drooping herself for bed, very grave, very grim.

"Please may I come in?" the little girl said, falteringly.

Mrs. Sterling looked at her. How fresh, how sweet, how innocent, how young she was in her fresh dainty ball-dress, with that timid flush on her cheek, and that wistful, humid light in the starry eyes. All the mother's heart within her went out in infinite compassion to the orphaned heiress.

"Yes, my little one, come in and tell me all about it. Ah, my Amy, do you think I am quite blind?"

Amy hid her hot face in the matronly lap.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling, how good you are! I didn't know how to tell you. Yes, very falteringly, 'I am engaged.'"

"To George Wildair?"

"Yes, to George. Oh! You don't know how dearly he loves me—you don't know how bitterly he feels—the difference between my wealth and his poverty. As if it mattered, you know, which of us had the money, so that we have it. If he had the throne of the universe he would lay it at my feet. And John—dear old John—he will be pleased will be not. Mrs. Sterling? They were such old, old friends, George and he."

Mrs. Sterling smiled, then she sighed.

"I hope so, dear—poor John! But tell me, my child, do you love this man? Really love him, as a woman should love the man she is to marry?"

Miss Earle gave a hysterical little laugh, keeping her flushed face persistently hidden.

"Of course I do. Would I accept him else? He is so delightfully handsome, you know; and he waltzes divinely; and he talks like the hero of a novel. What more could any reasonable girl desire?"

"Oh, forgive me! But if you can forget in your great kindness, the difference between us, I cannot; I cannot forget that you are Dorothy Hardenbrook's heiress, and that I am a penniless lawyer. I cannot forget that I love you, and that I am mad for my pains!"

"George!"

"Dearest Amy, my love, my darling, let me tell you all my madness now, then I wish me forever from your bright presence, if you will. I loved you in those days long ago when you were no heiress, but my dear little playmate. Your image, pure and bright as those shining stars up yonder, has been with me ever since. And when I meet you in your dazzling beauty, in your unutterable kindness, is it any wonder that the old love grows even at first sight, too much for your feet, not daring to ask for your love, but to implore your forgiveness for telling you mine. Pardon my mad presumption, my love, my queen, and then I wish me forever."

The eloquent voice died out; he knelt on one knee before her, his head bowed to receive his doom, his face divinely handsome in the pale moonlight. Amy's whole face flushed with rapture as she looked. This was love, this was devotion, this was the dream of her life! Claude Melnotte raving mad for love of beautiful Pauline, could not have wooed more romantically than this. And he was so handsome, too, with the face of a Greek Apollo, and the tongue of a masculine siren! Miss Earle stretched out one tiny hand a-gitter with rings, and lifted her lover up.

"Rise, George; just think if anybody came in and caught you, you know. And, oh! please don't say such dreadful things! I don't want you to go away forever."

"Amy! Oh! for Heaven's sake don't deceive me with false hopes now! Be merciful, and bid me go."

"The pretty lips pouted.

"It seems to me you are very anxious to go, Mr. Wildair. Of course you must if you insist upon it; but mind, I don't bid you."

"Amy!"

The ringed white hand fluttered out again and nestled into his.

"You great silly, George! to think that my foolish fortune could make any difference in me. Ah! don't go, George. I don't want you to leave me forever."

And then the pretty head, "sunning over with curls, dropped on his shoulder, and George Wildair, half delirious with delight, clasped her in his arms, and held her there—a triumphant conqueror.

Miss Earle and Mr. Wildair were long in returning to the ball-room, so long that people were smiling significantly, and whispering prophetically when they did return.

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on velvet. There was no hard-hearted father or flinty guardian to lash the smooth flow of love's tide to frenzy—Miss Earle was her own mistress. Mrs. Sterling might disapprove, but she had no authority to forbid the wooing.

The engagement was announced, and the young barrister was envied and hated by half the young men in London. Eclipsed belles lifted their drooping heads now; the heiress had retired from the ranks, and there was balm of Gilead for their bruised hearts once more.

July wore away. London became insupportable, of course, and Miss Earle fluttered away with the other butterflies to Scarborough. Mr. Wildair followed faithfully.

The marriage was fixed for October 5th. There was to be a magnificent wedding, a gorgeous breakfast, and a trip to the continent. The wedded pair would spend the winter and spring abroad, and return with the June roses to their London mansion.

September passed, October came. On the fourth of the month, the "night before the bridal," everything was ready. In the heiress' dressing-room lay spread out in splendid array, the magnificent wedding-robe, the veil, the wreath, the orange blossoms. In the heiress' drawing-room Mr. Wildair sat, bending devotedly over her, and talking as men do talk on their wedding eve. Both were radiantly happy and hopeful. No shadow of the awful doom hovering over them darkened that blissful hour.

It was late when Mr. Wildair departed. He lingered, lovingly, clasping the little hands, and kissing the sweet, girlish face.

"Go to-night," he said, "for the last time, my darling, my queen. It was a cloudy, overcast night. The moon, pale and watery, the sounding clouds and raw wind threatening rain. George Wildair walked briskly away in the direction of his chambers. The cats that rattled past him were filled with people from the theatres; he preferred the brisk walk to the crush and discomfort of an omnibus. He seemed to walk on air.

"At last," he said, drawing a long breath; "at last, health, and ease, and luxury, and every delight this world has to give, will be mine. At last, after bitter disappointment after dismal drudgery, after dull despair—at last in spite of Dorothy Hardenbrook!"

He stopped suddenly, like a flash of light on a dark sea. He had forgotten her as completely as he has as though she had never existed. Now she arose before him as she had stood that night long ago, when she had risked a fortune to meet him, pale and menacing.

"When I prove false to you, I pray God that I may die!"

He had uttered the terrible invocation himself, and solemn and awful came the memory of that stern Amen! which had responded. The cold drugs started out on George Wildair's brow.

"Great Heaven!" he thought; "what a false, forewarned wretch I am! I deserve the doom I invoked, and I Isabel Vance is still living, Isabel Vance is just the woman to stab me to the heart with her jealousy!"

He was near the Temple. He had turned the corner of the street, and was searching in his pockets for his latch-key, when the figure of a man started out of the shadow of the houses and confronted him. The light of the lamp shone full upon George Wildair's face.

"To-morrow is your wedding day, George Wildair," said a deep, stern voice; "but to-morrow's sun will surely rise on a widowed bride. Traitor! perjure thee for my jewelry."

The sharp report of a pistol rang out on the midnight air. Policeman X 77, strolling leisurely along the next street, sprang his rattle and rushed for the spot.

Under the gas lamp a man lay extended stiff and cold, and still, the life-blood pumping out at every breath.

"No living creature beside was to be seen along the whole length of the silent street."

X 77 lifted up the wounded man. The dulled eyes turned upward, pointed to his man's face, the dying tongue uttered one word:

"Isabel!"

No more. The head fell back, one last convulsive throes, and George Wildair was a cold corpse.

CHAPTER V.

"I wonder if I shall see him to-night?"

The August roses were all in scarlet bloom around that fair northern beauty, deep in the heart of the most beautiful part of that beautiful country, Cumberland. It stood quite alone, an imposing structure of red brick, buried in a wilderness of trees. So high, so dark, towered those oaks, and gloomy elms and grand old firs, that the green gloom of the woods was dusky, and the moss-blazing mountains had been called Fir-Tree Hollow, once upon a time; but when it passed into the hands of Miss Amy Earle, that romantic little lady had rechristened it immediately as "Blackwood Grange."

"It is as isolated and lonely as poor, dear Mariana's 'Moated Grange,'" the young lady said. "A murder might be done in the depth of yonder woodland by a second Eugene Aram, and no one the wiser. It's a dear, delightful, dismal old place, and I mean to make it my permanent home."

This sultry August evening, Miss Earle straddled alone at the drawing-room window, gazing out, with dreary blue eyes, at the exquisite summer prospect. A velvet lawn, a brilliant flower-garden, with a splashing fountain, and bees and butterflies blooming in roses and lily-beds; swelling meadows; rich with golden harvest, and dense black slopes of woodland down to the shores of the Dove. A lovely prospect in the hush of the summer sunset, the sky all pearl and azure, and in the far west a gorgeous flame of lurid gold.

The golden-haired heiress stood looking at this splendor of earth and sky, with eyes that saw nothing of its radiance. Very pretty she was looking in her summy white muslin, with blush-roses in her breast, and the nimbus of amber hair rippling down to her slender little waist.

grave, and another man was the "him" of Amy Earle's thoughts this August sunset.

She had been very sorry, unutterably shocked, at her betrothed's tragic death; there had been womanly weeping and hysterics—but she had never loved the dead man with any very passionate devotion after all. The hysterics passed, and Mr. Wildair was buried, and Miss Earle retired in haste and bombazine and the seclusion of the great Cumberland mansion, and became a most hopeless prey to ennui and sensation novels. They had buried him, and no one else had been found to the mysterious and awful death; and, now, scarce a year after, he was forgotten. He had been a selfish Sybarite all his life, and there were few to regret his tragic end.

Amy Earle had spent a very dreary winter. The snow had fallen thick and high around Blackwood Grange, and the wild winds had howled through the leafless trees. The roads were utterly impassable. Society became a memory of the past. Mrs. Sterling and her ward found life as hopelessly dull as her ever did Mariana in her Grange. Their only visitor was the clergyman of St. Jude's, and occasionally a flying visitation from John Sterling. Dr. John Sterling, with his cheery face and hearty voice, and loud, hearty laugh and genial good humor, came like a sunburst in upon their darkness; and Amy grew to count the days of his absence drearily, and wish "dear old Jack" would only come and live with them for good. And Mrs. Sterling listened in secret exultation.

"All will come right in the end," she thought. "She will marry John yet, and both will be happy. He loves her, I know, and she is learning every day to love him."

"But 'man proposes—' You know the proverb, John Sterling himself dashed all these hopes to the ground.

It was a tempestuous March night; the wind howled and the snow fell, and the darkness was as the darkness of Erebus. The young doctor was plunging along the blacked road from St. Jude's in fur cap and overcoat, and armed with a stout stick. He knew every inch of the way, and no tempest that ever shrieked through the earth was fierce enough to keep him prisoner. He plunged along resolutely, with the sleet slashing in his face, and was within a quarter of a mile of Blackwood Grange, when a belated wayfarer started out from the shelter of a tree and faced him.

"I have lost my way," said a peculiarly clear and melodious voice. "I want to go to St. Jude's. I am almost perished—will you kindly direct me?"

John Sterling stopped and tried to see the man's face, but the darkness baffled him.

"It is three miles from here to St. Jude's—too far for any man on such a night. You had better come with me; I think I can insure you a stranger's bed in this room."

"You are very good," the stranger answered. "I accept your offer with thanks, indeed, Dr. Sterling."

"Hallo!" cried John, "you know me, do you! I wish you joy of your eyesight, for it would puzzle a cat to see in this room."

"And who are you, my friend?" inquired Dr. Sterling.

"My name is Victor Latour—the new organist of St. Jude's."

"Oh, indeed! I have seen you, then, and heard you play. Very happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Latour, and I shall be happier when we get out of this confounded snow-storm. How came you belated so far from the village?"

"Miss Hotten, of Mount Hotten, is one of my pupils. I lingered over her lesson rather late, and set out to return, despite the entreaties of the family. I think I should have paid for my folly by perishing in the snow-drift, if I had not had the good fortune to encounter you. Your destination is Blackwood Grange, I presume?"

To be Continued.

TO YOUNG MOTHERS.

One often hears complaints from inexperienced mothers that after a few weeks the baby's flannels are so shrunken they are scarcely fit to use. I remember my own experience. I trusted to my hired girl to do this work and when the baby was three months old I had the pleasure of buying new underserts at a night-dresses; you may be sure that I was very careful how these were washed and dried. If these tiny garments are washed with pure soap, dried quickly, and well stretched there need be no falling.

The woolen threads have a multitude of tiny fibres which when wet become interlaced, and if the garment is dried without pulling and stretching, shrinkage takes place. As a matter of course, many do not locate a washboard for flannels. I do not find a washboard to be the least injury, and as it hastens the work, I am decidedly in favor of one.

Use water as hot as I can bear my hand in with comfort, and make a good strong suds of ivory soap, allowing the flannels to soak a little while, not more than half an hour. Pushing them into one corner of the tub, I add the suds enough boiling water to make it the original temperature, then rub them out as quickly as possible, rinsing in clear water equally as warm, wring very dry, then pull and stretch into shape, and also pin to the line in shape.

This last is especially necessary in the underserts. One would rather have the bottom of these garments shrink past the neck and sleeves, and the part that is lower down last. Use extra pins to keep the garment unstretched, and pull it several times while it is drying. Do not hang flannels out of doors in freezing weather, as anything that retards drying causes shrinking; iron upon the wrong side while slightly damp, pushing the iron hard to stretch the goods as much as possible.

CLOUDBUR THAN LONDON.

Esquimalt, in British North America, is the only place in the British Empire, according to a recent climatological report, that exceeds London in cloudiness. Esquimalt is also the dampest place in the empire, while Adelaide, in Australia, is the driest. Ceylon is the hottest, and Northwest Canada the coldest possession that the flag of England floats over.

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GAMES FOR CHRISTMAS TIME.

How to Spend a Merry Hour These Holiday Times.

During Christmastide the spirit of youth should be upon us and sedate amusements may give way to a general frolic in which all ages take part with equal gaiety. Rollicking games, then, which are rather in abeyance eleven months out of the twelve are revived now and lend an added jollity to the holiday time.

The secret of keeping up the interest and spirits of any little company lies in a knack of moving things along briskly. Nothing is so fatal as slowness and tedium. No matter how small or informal the gathering, some one person who has tact and a gift for managing should take charge, appoint herself a committee of entertainment, so to speak to see that every one takes part and that before the interest in one diversion begins to flag another is substituted. To be sure, it is quite as hard to keep up an incessant rattling change. People can be bored just as easily by too much sprightliness as by a deadly dullness. But have we not already said that the entertainment committee of one is to be a person of judgment. Then let us leave matters in her hands.

There are a number of pretty little games which require quickness and ingenuity. These are interesting, and, for a small party of bright and well-read people are most amusing. We find, however, that most people protest against being continually called upon to exercise their ingenuity. Even the astonishingly clever ones are sometimes quite content to be merely amused. So we will leave the games that call for rhymes, couplets, and a display of learning for another time.

JENKINS UP.

A game that has been in high favor this season is familiarly known as "Jenkins Up." What the more dignified title may be or if there is one, history fails to say. It should be played by at least eight people, and as many more as can be comfortably gathered about a reasonably large round table. Suppose ten are going to play. Then there will be five on each side. Captains, or leaders, are chosen by the respective sides, who it should be said, must be quick, lively and agreeable, for on these two much of the success of the game depends. The captain of one side then takes a silver half dollar, which presumably is the mysterious "Jenkins Up," and when the captain of the opposing side calls out "Jenkins Up," every pair of hands belonging to the side that has the half dollar is spread open, and held high in air. After an instant's inspection the captain of the opposing side—which let us call Side B—the side holding the coin being Side A—orders "Jenkins Down," and all the hands on Side A go under the table.

The captain with an impressive show of manoeuvring and secrecy slips the coin in the hand of some one on his own side, of course, and that person should receive it without moving a muscle of his countenance, or otherwise betraying his trust, as side B must be kept in darkest ignorance as to the whereabouts of the half-dollar. The captain of B now orders "Jenkins Up" again, and the A hands, palms toward B but all closed, are once more thrown in air. "Jenkins Down" brings all the hands on the table-top spread out flat and with palms down. At this stage of affairs the B's must have their wits about them and their eyes like a hawk's. They must guess which particular A hand holds the coin, the object being to keep that hand in its place on the table until all the others are ordered off. The critical moment is when the last "Jenkins Down" is ordered and the hands have to be flattened on the table-top without rattling or clinking the coin. The guessing side must be misled as much as possible, the holder of the coin endeavoring to look as innocent as may be, and all the others assuming as great an appearance of guilt as lies within their command. Fifty points are usually called a game. If, for instance, there are four hands on the table when the coin is uncovered, that counts four for the side holding it. They retain it for the next round and so on until the guessing side succeeds in "locating" the coin and keeping the hand under which it lies on the table until the last moment.

MAGIC MUSIC.

"Magic Music" is the captivating title of a merry little old-fashioned game

for children. One person is sent out of the room while a small object is hid in some unlikely place. Then he is called in, a description of the object is given him, and he is guided in his search for it by the music some one plays upon the piano. When the searcher is near the object the music is played very loud, and more and more softly as he wanders away from it.

A POTATO RACE.

A Potato Race is great fun—particularly for the lookers-on. Two rows of potatoes, varying in size from very small ones to one or two that are clumsily large, are placed on the floor in parallel lines, the potatoes in each row being about two feet apart. Not more than six potatoes should be in each line. Two people are then given rather large wooden spoons and they are to "race" with each other to see which gets all his potatoes in a basket first. The basket should not be too far away, as the contestants can only pick up one potato at a time and deposit it, before he goes to the next.

ONE REASON WHY.

The disposition of the hour is slightly reactionary, and opposed to the advanced woman movement. People are beginning to ask what it all amounts to, saying that woman has been given a chance to distinguish herself, and then by statistics proving of how little value her labor is in wide fields, perhaps forgetting that centuries would not be too long a time in which to try the experiment, instead of decades.

The arguer misses the point when they leave out of the question the considerations that drive women into public or business life, and they choose lightly to assume that every woman who leaves the home does so because of a restless desire to make her mark in the world, to buckle on the armor with the independence of a man, and sail forth to conquer something, if it be nothing more than prejudice.

The real cause of women's labor is the neglect or incompetence of their natural providers. Two ideas are early inculcated into the female mind. One is to marry, and to marry for love, and the other is to be a mother, for such is the worst destiny of woman. It is from too close following of these teachings that the cities are filled with women workers. Girls marry incompetent men; the family income remains insufficient. As a result the wife is driven to securing labor.

Does any one fancy that it is from choice that she leaves her little ones and the pleasant natural cares of home to labor in other fields—that she prefers battling with the world, to being comfortably provided for while she lives a purely domestic and social life? Yet the railers would have us suppose that such is the case.

The sadness in such a woman's face and the bitterness in her heart should be a direct contradiction to any such theory. Let all who regard woman as a restless being forcing herself into departments unsuited to her reflect on these things.

MAKES HAIR.

Rustics who live on a bread-and-milk diet nearly always have heavy hair to an advanced age, while people who lunch and dine on meat rarely have after 25. The Italian Parliament for instance shows an unrivaled collection of billiard balls, while the Italian peasants—who rarely taste meat—always rejoice in heavy growths of hair. British peasants have hair almost as long and heavy as their wives. A very clever and well-known doctor claims that meat-eating and baldness come together, and he has often checked cases of falling hair by combining with local treatment a diet of milk eggs and fruit. Heavy growths of hair are also very common among vegetarians.

AN OUTSIDE VIEW.

First Domestic!—Does your new mistress move in society?

Second Domestic!—Well, if you worked for her awhile you'd think so. She don't know enough to last her over Sunday.

TRICK OF THE DOGS.

Amateur Sportsman—Your hounds all appear to be sick.

Backwoodsman—Oh, no; they're only playin' off sick; they think you want to borrow 'em to go shootin' with.

LOOKING FORWARD.

First Klondike Miner, amused—What made you get such beastly fat dogs to pull your sledges? Lean ones will go twice as far in a day.

Second Klondike Miner, sadly—Not when other provisions give out.