



CHAPTER XII—Continued.

There was a dreary lapse of silence, but during its reign the gleaming, scintillant eyes of Beatrice Mercer told that their owner was not idle.

She was thinking, plotting, preparing to act. Her quick mind grasped the situation readily, the situation she had anticipated, and which she had some prepared to meet. She held the remedy—gold—her friend, the father of the man she loved in his dire straits, to earn an honored family name from reprobate—would it not win the gratitude of the delinquent son, and gratitude pite, and pity, love?

She had other final resources in reserve. She had prepared plans calmly, systematically. This was but the first step. Oh! she could not fail.

She arose and stole to the door; she peered in. There sat the stern-faced, implacable lawyer, the fatal documents spread out before him. There, too, wan-faced, wretched, lost, shrank the father of Raymond Marshall.

She stepped boldly across the threshold of the room. Not until she had reached the table and her shadow fell across it did lawyer and victim glace up with a vivid start.

"Madam!—why—" began the former.

"I have come to purchase those documents."

Her hand pointed to the pile of notes and securities, almost touching them.

In profound wonderment the lawyer regarded her. With a gasp of hope, suspense, dread, Colonel Marshall stared at her pale face.

"You have come—" repeated the lawyer, vaguely.

"To buy those documents!"

"Why—I do not understand—by what right."

"Are they for sale?"

"To Colonel Marshall or his authorized agent, yes, but to a stranger—"

Beatrice Mercer turned to the bearded Colonel.

"I am no stranger, but a friend," she half-whispered in his dumbfounded ear.

"To save you," and then aloud: "Colonel Marshall, you authorize me to act for you?"

The half-stunned Colonel could only nod like an automaton.

"Ten thousand dollars is the amount, I believe," went on Beatrice, calmly.

"There is the money. See that it is right."

She had flashed a heap of bank-notes of large denominations before the lawyer's sight. She took up the papers on the table.

"This is the forged \$2,000 note, I believe?" she said, selecting one from the many papers, "Colonel Marshall, it shall never trouble you again."

With two twists of her dainty but supple wrists, she severed the fatal document in twain.

"These other papers I shall keep for a day or two. The amount is correct," she demanded of the lawyer. "Colonel Marshall, you are free from debt and dead alike. I trust we all know how to keep a secret. I would like to speak a few words to you alone."

In the silence that followed, he witnessed some strange scenes in his professional career, but the denouement of the present inexplicable one left him speechless.

Colonel Marshall, like one in a dream, followed the woman who had mysteriously saved him from ruin and disgrace from the room.

Then, realizing that he had been snatched from the brink of a precipice, he reeled to a table in the outer office for support, and burst into tears.

"Woman, angelic deliverer!" he fairly sobbed. "Who sent you here? You have saved to me all I hold dear on earth. My tears, my prayers shall be yours till my last breath. I shall teach my own son to repay you. You shall repay me dollar for dollar. What can I say, what can I do to acknowledge, to repay this stupendous obligation that crushes, stuns, mystifies me?"

"One single favor."

"Name it—oh name it."

"Ask no questions, feel no obligations. I only ask that to-morrow evening at dusk you come to the hotel and to the apartments of Miss Leslie, and bring your son Raymond with you."

She was gone like a flash with the words. The Colonel stood staring after her as if she were some wrath. His eyes closed and he swayed like one in a dream. He hastened after her a minute later to demand a more bold explanation of her strange intercession in his behalf, but when he reached the street, like the fairy in the story-books, she had disappeared utterly.

Beatrice Mercer had hastened back to the hotel. Her face was flushed, her eyes hopeful, exultant, as she laid aside her wraps.

"So far is all well," she murmured, confidently. "Now for the most difficult part of the plot."

When Dr. Simms came, she led him to a sofa, and for over an hour in low, earnest tones she conversed with him.

She told him all her plots, all her desires. She startled him with her boldness and shrewdness, she dazzled him with the promise of magnificent rewards.

"What a son you have!" he ejaculated, arising at last, "and all for the love of a man whose heart is buried in the grave of that lost, drowned girl. Beatrice, is the game worth the candle?"

"I will have it so!" she cried, wildly. "Without Raymond, Marshall, what is wealth to me? You will help me?"

"To the last!"

"You can give me the medicine to procure the effect I desire. You will help me to repel the counter impost?"

"Yes. Wait till I go to my office."

In an hour he returned. Deep and subtle must have been the plots of the fair and false siren, for, as he handed her a tiny phial, he said:

"I will only repeat it. When Raymond Marshall comes to see you to-morrow, it will be as you desire, all the pity of his heart cannot fail to go out to the woman who has saved his family from penury and disgrace, for to all seeming, through the agency of that potent drug, you will be a dying woman!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUTLE PLOT.

"All is ready!"

"Everything. My housekeeper, whom we can trust, will act as nurse and in the next room, I will receive the Marshall, when they arrive and pave the way for you."

"Make no mistake!"

It was the afternoon of the day succeeding that which had witnessed Beatrice Mercer's strange act of generosity. Beatrice herself, in proper persona, the disguise she had hitherto adopted

TRUE AS STEEL

BY

Mrs. ALVAN JORDAN GARTH.

THE LATE'S MYSTERY

now abandoned, lay upon a couch in one of her sleeping apartments.

She was looking disfigured, but there was a change in her from her ordinary appearance that was most remarkable.

Her face looked thin and wretchedly white, her eyes heavy. As she lay back on the pillow, her labored breathing and hectic cheeks seemed to indicate a hot, burning fever.

A hot, burning fever she had, but produced by artificial means. This ruthless schemer had paused at nothing to accomplish her ends. To further her schemes an assumption of mortal illness had been necessary, and her worthy coadjutor, Dr. Simms, had not prevaricated when he told her that the contents of the little phial he had given her the day previous would bring about the result desired.

These two had plotted well in unison, and as he entered the outer room of the suite he assumed that grave, serious expression of face that the average physician wears while attending a patient in the last extremity.

He opened the door with warning noiselessness as there came a tap finally.

A servant stood there, two persons at his side.

"Gentleman to see Miss Leslie, sir," he announced, withdrew, and Doctor Simms ushered his two visitors into the room and pointed to chairs, his serious manner evidently surprising them.

Colonel Marshall was the one, his son Raymond the other. The former was all curiosity and excitement. As to Raymond, as he sat gazing vacantly at the floor in his hollow cheeks, haunted eyes and dejected bearing, generally told that the present visit had no interest for him.

"Doctor Simms!" ejaculated the Colonel. "Why I came to see—"

"Miss Leslie?"

"Yes."

"Miss Leslie is a dying woman, Colonel Marshall."

"What!"

With an incredulous gasp the Colonel started to his feet.

"Yes, she has been ill for some time. I was summoned yesterday afternoon. I found her fevered, almost delirious. She asked me to receive her."

"Doctor, you amaze me! This strange lady—"

"Has an iron will even in death. She has explained everything to me. She insists upon seeing yourself and your son, even in her dangerous condition. I told her that the shock might kill her, but she insists."

"Doctor! I am at a perfect loss to understand this lady's remarkable generosity in my behalf—the mystery surrounds her."

"Here are the notes she took yesterday. She bade me destroy them in your presence."

"Wait! Don't! I really cannot accept all these favors from a stranger."

The Colonel spoke too late. The documents were blazing on the hearth. He was a free man! A stranger had liberated him from all the financial entanglements of the hour.

"Doctor!" he panted, "this mystery is maddening. Who is this lady?"

"You will be surprised when you know. Come, you, too, Mr. Marshall," to Raymond.

He advanced to the door of the sleeping-room and tapped lightly. The maid opened it. Awed, startled, Colonel Marshall stood in the center of the apartment, gazing dubiously at the figure lying on the couch, its face turned from him.

Quite as curious and interested for the moment, Raymond Marshall looked up, too.

"Miss Leslie has asked me to explain to you why she has interested herself in your behalf," spoke the Doctor, in calm, measured accents. "Her act has been one in a measure of atonement, of compensation for a wrong done a member of your family."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Colonel with a start, "she must be, then some relative of the wretch who robbed me—who encompassed me in all this trouble, my father partner!"

The Doctor had handed to Raymond Marshall the newspaper which had first set Beatrice on the trail of Edna Deane. It chronicled her death at the snow-laden bridge. So accurately did it describe Edna and her attire, that, as Raymond Marshall perused it, with the word "drum" as a correct or refined word to express the act either of soliciting or selling merchandise.

He Found the Title.

Wilkie Collins had written the last chapter of his "Woman in White," and no title for the book had been decided upon. The day of publication approached, but the title still eluded him. One morning he took himself off to Broadstairs, determined not to return until it had been found. He walked for hours along the cliff; he smoked a case of cigars, and all to no purpose; then, vexed and much worn out by the racking of his brains, he threw himself on the grass as the sun went down. He was lying facing the North Foreland lighthouse, and, half in bitter jest, half unconsciously, he began to apostrophize it thus:

"You are ugly and stiff and awkward, and you know you are—as stiff and awkward, and you know you are—as stiff and as weird as my white woman—white woman—woman in white—the title by Jove!" A title had been hit upon, and the author went back to London delighted.

Is the Colonel Veracious?

"I fought a battle with one wooden cannon, and I won it, too," said Col. J. C. Gaylor, at the Lacledre. "It was during the Mexican war. I was sent out from Santa Fe with a scouting party of twenty-four men, and we were headed off near the Mexican line by 200 of the most villainous-looking greasers that ever cut a throat or shot a brave man in the back. We got into a wood-gorge and through a wood-gorge across the mouth of the I. I felt sure the Mexicans would make a rush for us that night, under cover of the darkness, and decided to fix up a surprise for them. We carried a small chest of tools with us, and in the outfit was a long-stemmed two-inch auger. We felled six tough oak trees, sawed off a section of the stems and transformed them into cannon. We loaded them with pistol balls and flint gravel, mounted them and waited. Just before daylight the Mexicans came. We waited until they were within fifty yards, then opened on them with our battery. They never saw such a hustling for timber in your life. Artillery was the last thing they expected to encounter, and when those wooden cannon opened on them they scattered like sheep."

"You did me no wrong except to torture me with a passing belief in the faithlessness of the woman I loved," he said.

"For love of you!" murmured Beatrice, fervently. "Raymond, I can tell you now, for I shall soon die. I was not to blame for my love, and I had not Edna's gentle nature to endure in silence. I loved you so hopelessly, yet so fondly!"

His eyes dimmed with tears. Love was surely no sin, even when hopeless. His great heart stirred with honest pity.

"I can die in peace, now," she said, "for your eyes tell me that I am forgotten. Raymond, good-by—good-by!"

Her eyes were raining tears. Oh, actress! soft and subtle! oh, hypocrite strong and confident! putting all the issues of life upon the frail cast of a die.

She turned her face to the wall, her sob causing the sympathetic Colonel to wince with honest pity. Raymond looked concerned, grieved.

"Can we do nothing to make her happier?" spoke the Colonel, deeply affected. "Can I not tell her how grateful I am—how some arrangement must be made for the repayment of the money advanced?"

"She would refuse to consider it," responded the Doctor. "But—no! I had better not mention it."

"Speak, Doctor!" urged the Colonel, eagerly. "You were about to make some suggestion?"

"It concerns your son. This morning the Reform Club decides that there will be no cessation of hostilities—Lines of the Chicago Platform to Be Followed Out."

President E. Ellery Anderson, of the Reform Club of New York, has just presented his report at the annual meeting of that organization. Mr. Anderson discusses the silver question, the anti-slavery movement in New York, the reasons for the opposition to D. B. Hill, the tariff, and the nomination and election of Grover Cleveland.

The club spent during the year over \$44,000 in tariff reform work. Of this amount \$39,900 was supplied from individual subscription and \$4,000 from dues of non-resident members. Mr. Anderson says:

"This work was carried on continuously, through speakers and lectures, through the constant distribution of tariff reform articles, which, through the Western Press agencies, appeared in over two thousand newspapers and reached every large number of readers, and through the instrumentality of its own publication—Tariff Reform."

"Your committee," he adds, "feels that a great step in advance has been taken, and that in the battle that has been fought for principle in 1892 the Reform Club has held the right of the line, and has contributed its full share to the result which has been achieved."

"Much, however, remains to be done. On some of the principles involved there is substantial accord. Free wool, free metal ores, free lumber, free coal and free salt command themselves to all tariff reformers. We all agree that duties which serve as bulwarks for trusts and monopolies, such as the 50 cents per hundred weight on refined sugar, while the raw material used by the refiners is on the free list, should be repealed.

"It would seem to be absolutely necessary to impose taxes upon very many articles with a view to obtaining the highest possible amount of revenue from them, which we would gladly see taxed much less if there were less need for revenue. It is probable that no adjustment of tariff rates upon articles now dutiable, whether high or low, could produce a sufficient increase of revenue to meet the necessities of the Federal Government during the next three or four years. In view of this difficulty several different solutions have been proposed. It has been suggested that the tax on whisky should be increased, whether high or low, could produce a sufficient increase of revenue to meet the necessities of the Federal Government during the next three or four years. In view of this difficulty several different solutions have been proposed. 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