

UNITED AT LAST

BY
MISS M. E. BRADDO



"Won't you drive in the park this fine afternoon?"

"No; I am fit for nothing now."

A maid-servant came in answer to the bell.

"You can take my bonnet, Jane," said Mrs. Walsingham, removing that floral structure, "and tell John I shall not want the brougham to-day. You'll stop to dinner, won't you, Gilbert?"

"He was sent on when the maid had retired.

"Mr. Wyatt is to be here, and Sophy Morton."

"How fond you are of the actor people. So Jim Wyatt is coming, is he?"

I rather want to see him. But I have other engagements this afternoon, and I really don't think I can stay."

"Oh, yes, you can, Gilbert. I shall think I had just grounds for my suspicion if you are so eager to run away."

"Very well, Clara, if you make a point of it, I will stop."

Mr. Sinclair threw himself into one of the low luxurious chairs with an air of resignation scarcely complimentary to his hostess.

The interval before dinner dragged wearily, in spite of Mrs. Walsingham's efforts to sustain a pleasant conversation about trifles.

The conversation dawdled on in a languid manner for a couple of hours, and then Mr. Sinclair went away to change his dress for the regulation dinner costume.

The smile which Mrs. Walsingham's face had worn while she talked to him faded the moment he had left her, and she began to pace the room with rapid steps, evidently troubled.

"Yes, there is no doubt about it," she muttered to herself, with suppressed passion.

"I have seen the change in him for the last twelve months. There is some one else. How should I lose him if it were not so?" Heaven knows what pains I have taken to retain my hold upon him! There is some one else. He is afraid to tell me the truth. He is wise in that respect. Who can the woman be for whom I am forsaken?"

He knows so many people, and visits so much, and is everywhere courted and flattered on account of his money. Oh, Gilbert, fool, fool! Will any woman ever love as I have loved you, for your own sake, without a thought of your fortune, with a blind idolatry of your very faults? What is it that I love in him, I wonder? I know that he is not a good man. I have seen his heartlessness too often of late not to know that he is hard and cruel and remorseless toward all who come before him and his iron will. But, too, he could be hard and remorseless.

As a wrong were done me. Let him take care now he provokes a passionate, reckless nature like mine.

Let him beware of playing with fire."

This was the gist of her thoughts during a gloomy reverie that lasted more than an hour. At the end of that time Miss Morton was announced, and came fluttering into the room, resplendent in a brilliant costume of rose-colored silk and black lace, followed shortly by James Wyatt, the lawyer, courteous and debonair, full of small talk and fashionable scandal.

Gilbert Sinclair was the last to enter.

The dinner was elegantly served in a pretty little dining-room, hung with pale green draperies and adorned with a few clever water-color pictures, a room in which there was a delightful air of quiet and repose.

"You have only come to cry off, then?" said Mrs. Walsingham, with a sudden contraction of her firmly molded lips.

"I suppose he is not coming," she muttered at last, tossing her white lace parasol upon the table with an angry gesture. "This will be the second disappointment in a week. But I shall not go to the concert without him. What do I care for their tiresome classical music, or to be stared at by a crowd of great ladies who don't choose to know me?"

She struck the bell violently, but before it could be answered there came a thundering double knock at the door below, and a minute afterward Gilbert Sinclair dashed into the room, bearing in his hand a beautiful bouquet of the rarest and most fragrant flowers.

"Late again, Gilbert!" cried Mrs. Walsingham, reproachfully, her face brightening nevertheless at his coming; and she smiled at him with a pleased welcoming smile as they shook hands.

"Yes, I know it's late for that confounded concert. But I want you to let me off that infliction, Clara. That sort of thing is such a consummate bore to a man who doesn't know the difference between Balle and Beethoven, and you know I have a heap of engagements on my hands."

"You have only come to cry off, then?" said Mrs. Walsingham, with a sudden contraction of her firmly molded lips.

"My dear Clara, what a friend you look when you like! But I wouldn't cultivate that kind of expression if I were you. Of course, I'll go to the concert with you, if you are bent upon it, rather than run the risk of anything in the way of a scene."

"But you know very well that I don't care for music, and you ought to know that."

He stopped, hesitating, with a furtive look in his red-brown eyes, and a nervous action of one big hand about his thick brown mustache.

"I ought to know what, Mr. Sinclair?" asked Clara Walsingham, with a sudden hardness of voice and manner.

"That it is neither good for your reputation nor mine that we should be seen so often together at such places as this Portman Square concert. It is almost a private affair, you know, and everybody present will know all about us."

"Indeed! and since when has Mr. Gilbert Sinclair become so careful of his reputation—or mine?"

"Since you set your friends talking about our being engaged to be married, Mrs. Walsingham. You have rather too many feminine acquaintances with long tongues. I don't like being congratulated, or chaffed—it comes to pretty much the same thing—upon an event which you never can happen."

"Never is a long word, Gilbert. My husband may die, and leave me free to become your wife, if you should do me the honor to repeat the proposal which you made to me six years ago."

"I don't like waiting for dead men's shoes, Clara," answered Sinclair, in rather a sulky tone. "I made you that offer in all good faith, when I believed you to be a widow, and when I was madly in love with you. But six years is a long time, and—"

"And men are fickle," she said, taking up his unfinished sentence. "You have grown tired of me, Gilbert; is that what you mean?"

"Not exactly that, Clara, but rather tired of a position that keeps me a single man without a single man's liberty."

"You are quite as exacting as a wife, more jealous than a mistress, and I am getting to an age now at which a man begins to feel a kind of yearning for something more like a home than chambers in the Albany, some one more like a wife than a lady who requires constant attention, especially playing the cavaliere servante."

She stood for a minute looking at him, with a sudden intensity in her face. He kept his eyes on the ground during that sharp scrutiny, but he was fully conscious of it nevertheless.

"Gilbert Sinclair," she cried, after a long pause, "you are in love with some other woman; you are going to jilt me."

She fixed her eyes upon Sinclair with a sudden scrutiny that took him of his guard. A dusky flush came over his face, and he hesitated awkwardly before replying to her very simple question.

Clara Walsingham's heart gave a great throb.

"That is the woman," she said to herself.

"Miss Clanyarde is very handsome," stammered Gilbert, "at least I believe that is the general opinion about her. She has been intimate with your friend Davenport ever since she was a child, hasn't she, Wyatt?" he asked, with an indifference of tone which one listener might have been tempted to assume.

"Yes, I have heard him say as much, the other day, when I was with him, and he was frightening you yourself," he answered. "I only put the question in a speculative way. Let us drop the subject. If you want to go to the concert—"

"I don't want to go; I am not fit to go anywhere. Will you ring that bell, then? I shall send the brougham to the stable."

"Would it grieve you very much if I were to marry, Clara?" he asked.

"Grieve me if you were to marry! It would be the end of my life. I would never forgive you. But you are playing with me. You are only trying to frighten me."

"You are frightening yourself," he answered. "I only put the question in a speculative way. Let us drop the subject. If you want to go to the concert—"

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"These acquaintances of the nursery are apt to end in something more than friendship," said Mrs. Walsingham. "Is there any engagement between Sir Cyprian and Miss Clanyarde?"

"Decidedly not."

Gilbert Sinclair burst into a harsh laugh.

"Not very likely," he exclaimed. "I should like to see old Clanyarde's face if his daughter talked of marrying a gentleman pauper."

"That is the woman he loves," Mrs. Walsingham repeated to herself.

No more was said about Sir Cyprian or the Clanyardes. The conversation drifted into other channels, and the evening wore itself away more or less pleasantly, with the assistance of music by and by in the drawing-room, where there were a few agreeable drop-pepers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

WHAT A ROMANCE.

The Old Capital of a Proud Southern State Sold to an ex-Slave.

Alabama's old capital, the city of Cahaba, was sold the other day at auction for \$550. In old days Cahaba, held in head high. It had grand inaugural fêtes. Great streets were laid out in the pine groves and large docks were erected. A Governor's mansion and a daily paper started. Fine dwellings sprang up as if by magic. A Brick storehouse arose as if by magic. A metropolitan air sat upon the woodland capital. It vaunted itself proudly, and spoke in friendly and condescending interest of the decay of neighboring towns and villages.

The town-lot speculator fastened himself upon the community. He laid out the pine groves into lots and sold them at fancy prices. Eligible sites for building purposes were sold at thousands of dollars an acre. Cahaba began to look even upon Mobile as a suburb, and saw the day when it would be as large as New Orleans.

Cahaba's glory lasted about ten years. In 1850 the capital was taken from the town and removed to Tuscaloosa and thence to Montgomery. The reason for this was the impure air at Cahaba. The capital was all Cahaba had to call it to prominence. It gone, the town went back gradually into the insignificance from which it so suddenly had been called. The brick stores became empty, the streets grew up in grass and forests, and the proud families moved away.

The death-knell was sounded last week. At the stroke of the Sheriff's hammer the town was knocked down to Henry Freeman, colored, an ex-slave, for \$550 cash, in default of the payment of taxes. Henry got in his purchase seventy-two town lots, three brick stores, several cottages, and other property—fifty acres in all. What will he do with his purchase? He will plant cotton, corn, and rutabagas. He will train bean vines over the brick stores, or tear them down and use the brick to make barns and outhouses.

PEANUTS.

How They Are Grown and Made Ready for Market.

There were few peanuts grown in this country previous to the war. During that time they formed a considerable portion of the Confederate soldier's bill of fare, and when the war was over the Southern people were so impoverished that they turned their hand to the first thing that seemed available. Peanuts could be grown without great expense in preparation, and the first real crop of peanuts, in 1866, proved a great success. It is now estimated that 4,000,000 bushels are annually placed upon the market.

Peanuts grow upon a trailing vine with leaves much resembling small four-leaved clover. The small yellow flowers are shaped like the blossoms of some of the pea family. The soil in which it is cultivated must be light and sandy; after the flower falls away, the flower-stalk elongates and becomes rigid, curving in such a way as to push the forming pod well below the surface of the earth; if by any accident this is not done, the nut never matures.

They are planted in rows about three feet apart, and the vines spread until the ground is covered by them. Harvesting is done after the first frost, and the yield is often 100 bushels to the acre, making this a more profitable crop than wheat or cotton. The vines, with the nuts clinging to them, are torn up with pronged hoes, and allowed to dry in the sun for a day or two, and then stacked to cure. In about a fortnight the nuts are picked off, the empty ones, which are technically called "pops," being rejected. The picking is done by hand, and is slow work, as a dozen workers can pick only three bushels a day.

The Bill Made Redundant.

But even when grown and sold beyond this wide and unknown field of export and import, it will be found that the schedules of this bill that tariff taxes now officially ascertained and paid under existing laws, on the wants, necessities, and daily consumption of the laboring men, women, and children of the United States, have been reduced more than \$76,000,000 per annum. These reductions are as follows:

Chemicals..... \$1,000,000
Pottery..... 1,000,000
Glass..... 1,000,000
Mats..... 1,000,000
Wood..... 300,000
Tobacco..... 3,000,000
Musical instruments..... 3,000,000
Spirits, wines, etc..... 3,000,000
Cotton manufactures..... 8,000,000
Flax, hemp, and jute manufactures..... 6,000,000
Silk manufactures..... 12,000,000
Paper and pulp..... 300,000
Bundies..... 240,000
Transferred to the free list..... 12,170,000
Total..... \$76,570,000

To this must be added the further increase in the bill which is to be made for a full and ample revenue, largely in excess of present supplies, which to meet the requirements of the public credit. With such a beneficent and stupendous result plainly within the reach of the American people and almost ready for their eager enjoyment, it is difficult to conceive of any party, nor the set of men who constitute themselves a hindrance and an obstruction to its speedy fulfillment. Faults and imperfections can, of course, be alleged and pointed out; concessions are apparent which have been made in the bill, and in order to secure its passage, articles have been made dutiable under the duties of a small majority here, yet deeply as I regard the necessity for these changes. I do not mean to say that the bill will be rejected, but it will be voted down, and much more to the manufacturer as will be reconciled when it becomes a law. I will not stop to consider at this point the vast individual robberies committed in the vast individual robberies committed in the market, the untold and incalculable millions of blackmail levied by American manufacturers for their own pockets on their enforced customers when cut off from all outside competition; it is enough to say that we have liberalized America, that we have made more accessible to the traffic of the world, and, while not establishing free trade, we have made trade freer and more even-handed between the manufacturer and the consumer.

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