



CHAPTER XIV.

Journey's End.

Harrigan dined alone. He was in disgrace; he was sore, mentally as well as physically; and he ate his dinner without relish, in simple obedience to those well-regulated periods of hunger that assailed him three times a day, in spring, summer, autumn and winter. By the time the waiter had cleared away the dishes, Harrigan had a perfecto between his teeth (along with a certain matrimonial bit), and smoked as if he had wagered to finish the cigar in half the usual stretch. He then began to walk the floor, much after the fashion of a man who has the toothache, or the earache, which would be more to the point. To his direct mind no diplomacy was needed; all that was necessary was a few blunt questions. Nora could answer them as she chose. Nora, his baby, his little girl that used to run around barefooted and laugh when he applied the needed birch! How children grew up! And they never grew too old for the birch; they certainly never did.

They heard him from the drawing-room; tramp, tramp, tramp.

"Let him be, Nora," said Mrs. Harrigan, wisely. "He is in a rage about something. And your father is not the easiest man to approach when he's mad. If he fought Mr. Courtland, he believed he had some good reason for doing so."

"Mother, there are times when I believe you are afraid of father."

"I am always afraid of him. It is only because I make believe I'm not that I can get him to do anything. It was dreadful. And Mr. Courtland was such a gentleman. I could cry. But let your father be until tomorrow."

"And have him wandering about with that black eye? Something must be done for it. I'm not afraid of him."

"Sometimes I wish you were."

So Nora entered the lion's den fearlessly. "Is there anything I can do for you, dad?"

"You can get the witch hazel and bathe this lamp of mine," grimly.

She ran into her own room and returned with the simpler devices for reducing swollen eye. She did not notice, or pretended that she didn't, that he locked the door and put the key in his pocket. He sat down in a chair, under the light; and she went to work deftly.

"I've got some make-up, and tomorrow morning I'll paint it for you."

"You don't ask any questions," he said, with grimness.

"Would it relieve your eye any?"

He laughed. "No; but it might relieve my mind."

"Well, then, why did you do so foolish a thing? At your age! Don't you know that you can't go on whipping every man you take a dislike to?"

"I haven't taken any dislike to Courtland. But I saw him kiss you." "I can take care of myself."

"Perhaps. I asked him to explain. He refused. One thing puzzled me, though I didn't know what it was at the time. Now, when a fellow steals a kiss from a beautiful woman like you, Nora, I don't see why he should feel mad about it. When he had all but knocked your daddy to by-by, he said that you could explain. . . . Don't press so hard," warningly.

"Well, can you?"

"Since you saw what he did, I do not see where explanations on my part are necessary."

"Nora, I've never caught you in a lie. I never want to. When you were little you were the truest thing I ever saw. No matter what kind of a licking was in store for you, you weren't afraid; you told the truth."

There, that'll do. Put some cotton over it and bind it with a handkerchief. It'll be black all right, but the swelling will go down. I can tell 'em a tennis ball hit me. It was more like a cannon ball, though. Say, Nora, you know I've always pooh-poohed these amateurs. People used to say that there were dozens of men in New York in my prime who could have laid me cold. I used to laugh. Well, I guess they were right. Courtland's got the stiffest kick I ever ran into. A pile driver, and if he had landed on my jaw, it would have been dorme bene as you say when you bid me good night in dago. That's all right now until tomorrow. I want to talk to you. Draw up a chair. There! As I said, I've never caught you in a lie, but I find that you've been living a lie for two years. You haven't been square to me, nor to your mother, nor to the chaps that came around and made love to you. You probably

didn't look at it that way, but there's the fact. I'm not Paul Pry; but accidentally I came across this," taking the document from his pocket and handing it to her. "Read it. What's the answer?"

Nora's hands trembled.

"Takes you a long time to read it is it true?"

"Yes."

"And I went up to the tennis court with the intention of knocking his head off; and now I'm wondering why he didn't knock off mine. Nora, he's a man; and when you get through with this, I'm going down to the hotel and apologize."

"You will do nothing of the sort; not with that eye."

"All right. I was always worried for fear you'd hook up with some duke you'd have to support. Now, I want to know how this chap happens to be my son-in-law. Make it brief, for I don't want to get tangled up more than is necessary."

Nora cracked the certificate in her fingers and stared unseeing at it for some time. "I met him first in Rangoon," she began slowly, without raising her eyes.

"When you went around the world on your own?"

"Yes. Oh, don't worry. I was always able to take care of myself."

"An Irish idea," answered Harrigan complacently.

"I loved him, father, with all my heart and soul. He was not only big and strong and handsome, but he was kindly and tender and thoughtful. Why, I never knew that he was rich until after I had promised to be his wife. When I learned that he was the Edward Courtland who was always getting into the newspapers, I laughed. There were stories about his escapades. There were innuendoes regarding certain women, but I put them out of my mind as twaddle. Ah, never had I been so happy! In Berlin we went about like two children. It was play. He brought me to the Opera and took me away; and we had the most charming little suppers. I never wrote you or mother because I wished to surprise you."

"You have. Go on."

"And I had never paid much attention to Flora Desimone, though I knew that she was jealous of my success. Several times I caught her looking at Edward in a way I did not like."

"She looked at him, huh?"

"It was the last performance of the season. We were married that afternoon. We did not want anyone to know about it. I was not to leave the stage until the end of the following season. We were staying at the same hotel with rooms across the corridor. This was much against his wishes, but I prevailed."

"I see."

"Our rooms were opposite, as I said. After the performance that night I went to mine to complete the final packing. We were to leave at one for the Tyrol. Father, I saw Flora Desimone come out of his room."

Harrigan shut and opened his hands.

"Do you understand? I saw her. She was laughing. I did not see him. My wedding night!" She came from his room. My heart stopped, the world stopped, everything went black. All the stories that I had read and heard came back. When he knocked at my door I refused to see him. I never saw him again until that night in Paris when he forced his way into my apartment."

"Hang it, Nora, this doesn't sound like him!"

"I saw her."

"He wrote you?"

"I returned the letters, unopened."

"That wasn't square. You might have been wrong."

"He wrote five letters. After that he went to India, to Africa and back to India, where he seemed to find consolation enough."

Harrigan laid it to his lack of normal vision, but to his single optic there was anything but misery in her beautiful blue eyes. True, they sparkled with tears; but that signified nothing; he hadn't been married these thirty-odd years without learning that a woman weeps for any of a thousand and one reasons.

"Do you care for him still?"

"Not a day passed during these many months that I did not vow I hated him."

"Anyone else know?"

"The padre. I had to tell someone or go mad. But I didn't hate him. I could no more put him out of my life than I could stop breathing. Ah, I have been so miserable and unhappy!" She laid her head upon his knee and clumsily he stroked it. His girl!"

"That's the trouble with us Irish, Nora. We jump without looking, without finding whether we're right or wrong. Well, your daddy's opinion is that you should have read his first letter. If it didn't ring right, why, you could have jumped the traces. I don't believe he did anything wrong at all. It isn't in the man's blood to do anything underboard."

"But I saw her," a queer look in her eyes as she glanced up at him.

"I don't care a kiddle if you did. Take it from me, it was a put-up job by that Calabrian woman. She might have gone to his room for any number of harmless things. But I think she was curious."

"Why didn't she come to me, if she wanted to ask questions?"

"I can see you answering them. She probably just wanted to know if you were married or not. She might have been in love with him, and then she might not. These Italians don't know half the time what they're about, anyhow. But I don't believe it of Courtland. He doesn't line up that way. Besides, he's got eyes. You're a thousand times more attractive. He's no fool. Know what I think? As she was coming out she saw you at your door; and the devil in her got busy."

Nora rose, flung her arms around him and kissed him.

"Look out for that tin ear!"

"Oh, you great big, loyal, true-hearted man! Open that door and let me get out to the terrace. I want to sing!"

"He said he was going to Milan in the morning."

She danced to the door and was gone.

"Nora!" he called, impatiently. He listened in vain for the sound of her return. "Well, I'll take the count when it comes to guessing what a woman's going to do. I'll go out and square up with the old girl. Wonder how this news will harness up with her social bug?"

Courtland got into his compartment at Varena. He had tipped the guard liberally not to open the door for any one else, unless the train was crowded. As the shrill blast of the conductor's horn sounded the warning of "all aboard," the door opened and a heavily veiled woman got in hurriedly. The train began to move instantly. The guard slammed the door and latched it. Courtland sighed: the futility of trusting these Italians, of trying to buy their loyalty! The woman was without any luggage whatever, not even the usual magazine. She was dressed in brown, her hat was brown, her veil, her gloves, her shoes. But whether she was young or old was beyond his deduction. He opened his Corriere and held it before his eyes; but he found reading impossible. The newspaper finally slipped from his hands to the floor, where it swayed and rustled unnoticed. He was staring at the promontory across Lecco, the green and restful hill, the little earthly paradise out of which he had been unjustly cast. He couldn't understand. He had lived cleanly and decently; he had wronged no man or woman, nor himself. And yet, through some evil twist of fate, he had lost all there was in life worth having. The train lurched around a shoulder of the mountain. He leaned against the window. In a moment more the villa was gone.

What was it? He felt irresistibly drawn. Without intending to do so, he turned and stared at the woman in brown. Her hand went to the veil and swept it aside. Nora was as full of romance as a child. She could have stopped him before he made the boat, but she wanted to be alone with him.

"Nora!"

She flung herself on her knees in front of him. "I am a wretch!" she said.

He could only repeat her name.

"I am not worth my salt. Ah, why did you run away? Why did you not pursue me, importune me until I wearied? . . . perhaps gladly? There were times when I would have opened my arms had you been the worst scoundrel in the world instead of the dearest lover, the patientest! Ah, can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, Nora?" He was numb.

"I am a miserable wretch! I doubted you! When all I had to do was to recall the way people misrepresented things I had done! I sent back your letters . . . and read and re-read the old blue ones. Don't you remember how you used to write them on blue paper? . . . Flora told me everything. It was only because she hated me, not that she cared anything about you. She told me that night at the ball. She was at the bottom of the abduction. When you kissed me . . . didn't you know that I kissed you back. Edward, I am a miserable wretch, but I shall follow you wherever you go, and I haven't even a vanity box in my handbag!" There were tears in her eyes. "Say that I am a wretch!"

He drew her up beside him. His arms closed around her so hungrily, so strongly, that she gasped a little. He looked into her eyes; his glance traveled here and there over her face, searching for the familiar dimple at one corner of her mouth.

"Nora!" he whispered.

"Kiss me!"

And then the train came to a stand, jerkily. They fell back against the cushions.

"Lecco!" cried the guard through the window.

They laughed like children.

"I bribed him," she said gaily. "And now . . ."

"Yes, and now?" eagerly, if still bewildered.

"Let's go back!"

THE END.

Forehand Beetles.

Several farmers were sitting around the fire in the country inn and telling how the potato pests had got into their crops. Said one:

"Them pests ate my whole crop in two weeks."

Then another spoke up:

"They ate my crop in two days and then sat around on the trees and waited for me to plant more."

Here a commercial traveler for a seed house broke in:

"Well, boys," he said, "that may be so, but I'll tell what I saw in our own warehouse. I saw four or five beetles examining the books about a week before planting time to see who had bought seed."

Brittle.

Little Elsie (after being lectured)—

"Mamma, the commandments break awful easy, don't they?" — Boston Transcript.

Bracelets.

In the middle ages, bracelets were state ornaments and worn only by the sovereign.

Love.

Knowledge is the parent of love; wisdom, love itself.—Augustus Hare.

BOOST U.S. SCHOOLS

To Tell Foreign Student of Educational Advantages Here.

Dr. P. P. Claxton, Commissioner of Education, Authorizes Preparation and Publication of Bulletins Giving Details.

Washington.—Convinced that one of the results of the present European war will be to interest foreign students in opportunities for education in the United States, Dr. P. P. Claxton, United States commissioner of education, has authorized the immediate preparation and publication of a special bulletin describing, for the use of foreign students, the facilities for professional and collegiate study in higher institutions of learning in this country. The bulletin will be printed in several languages.

"This is America's opportunity," declares Commissioner Claxton. "Thousands of students who have been attending universities in Europe will be obliged to look elsewhere for higher education, not only this year, but perhaps for years to come. Many foreign students are already coming to us, many more will come as the result, direct and indirect, of present events."

"We have now a supreme opportunity to demonstrate our capacity for intellectual leadership. Whether the war continues three months or three years, our opportunities and obligations to take the lead in education and civilization will be the same, and America should respond by offering the best opportunity in the world for her own students and for those who may come from other countries."

"In the case of South America this student migration will be facilitated by the opportune opening of the Panama canal. Students from the western coast of South America will find it alarmingly convenient to go via the canal to educational centers in the United States."

"Within the last two decades the increase in opportunity for graduate study and research, and for professional and technical education has been very remarkable, much greater than most people even in America realize. The recent raising of standards and the better equipment of medical schools, the large endowments and appropriations for all forms of engineering, the marvelous growth of our colleges of agriculture, the development of colleges and schools of education, and the rapid increase in income of all the better colleges make it possible for this country to take the lead in education in a way that would have been impossible even at the beginning of the century."

PUSH BUTTON, CHIMES RING

New Automatic Device, Operated by Electricity, Innovation in Belfry in New York.

New York.—The bells of the tower of the Roman Catholic church of the Most Holy Redeemer, East Third street, near Avenue A, are now rung by electricity, a device having been invented by means of which the pressing of a button in the sacristy starts the chimes.

For more than two years Mr. Robischung, the inventor of the device, has been working on the model of this invention. The idea was first suggested by the rector of the Holy Redeemer church, who is regarded as an expert in applied science.

The five bells weigh almost six tons.

The inventor first tried the experiment of ringing a bell weighing from 20 to 30 pounds.

"It is equally unreasonable to define

WRECKED BY BOMB FROM A ZEPPELIN