

WHEN THE CIRCUS COMES.

My heart it gits 't' throbbin', with a thrillin', happy glee,
'N the days o' way back yonder comes a-rushin' over me;
I can see the clown a-winkin'—hear the rattle o' the drums;
Feel like whoo-hoo! glory, when the Cir-
Cus Comes.

I git all in a quiver, jest don't have a bit o' sense,
When I see them purty picters bein' plastered on the fence:
'N in my quiet slumbers I can hear the rat-tat-tum.
Of the music, 'n the playin', when the Cir-
Cus Comes.

There's a kind o' fellin' that never will be laid.
'Tween me 'n roast goobers, 'n reddish lemonade,
For they bring a recoleekshun o' the bustle 'n the hum
O' the sleepy little village, when the Cir-
Cus Comes.

—Atlanta Constitution.

THE OLD MILL MYSTERY

By Arthur W. Marchmont, B. A.

Author of "Miser Headie's Secret," "Madeline Power," "By Whose Hand," "Iza," &c., &c.

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CHAPTER XI—CONTINUED.

Mary was the first to recover her self-possession, and rose from the ground with a feeling of intense thankfulness to God for the escape which she had had from death. Gibeon Prawle was unable to rise for some time; but Mary, when once she had satisfied herself that he was unharmed, felt that she need not stay longer with him.

"You can get home now, Gibeon, can't you?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied somewhat faintly. "Are you going?"

"Yes, I want to get home. Mother will wonder where I am, and this explosion will frighten her."

"Those men tried to take my life," exclaimed the girl, shuddering. "I had done them no harm, and should have done nothing. But now I shall make no promises."

"Don't bring me into it, lass," whined the man. "Let me be a witness to bear out what you say. I know all the details. I could fix it on the others there."

The girl's lip curved in her scorn at the man's cowardice.

"I have saved your life for you; for the rest, you must take your chance with the others."

"Spare me, Mary; for God's sake don't bring me into it," he called to her as she walked away, and when she did not answer he fell back on the ground and almost wept in his alarm and anxiety.

The girl's nerves had been sorely shaken by the events of the night, and she was anxious to get home. The path lay near the scene of the explosion, and as she passed she met numbers of people of all classes rushing out from the village to learn the cause of the commotion.

For a moment she stood amongst them, listening to the expressions of alarm and wonder that were freely indulged in on all hands as the people clustered round the site of the explosion.

Presently, to her astonishment, Mary recognized Hamer. He was moving actively about, searching everywhere among the debris, indulging in loud exclamations of astonishment and curiosity as to what had happened. After awhile, Mary observed two more of the men, whose manner and looks were in striking contrast to the easy indifference of Hamer. They were pale, and it struck the girl that they were searching for what they feared to find. They stood for a moment in conference, and the girl judged from Hamer's gestures that he was endeavoring to reassure the other two.

When they separated, Mary moved to a point where she could intercept them, and then she approached them unobtrusively.

Just as she reached them she overheard Hamer say to the others:

"Nonsense, men. Go away and sink your fears in a pot of ale, and find some Dutch courage if you can't manage any of your own. How the devil can either of them have escaped? The girl hadn't a notion of the plant, and she was bound hand and foot, ever if she had; while that white-livered coward, Prawle, couldn't have got back his few silly wits in time to tell her anything. What chance do you suppose you would have had if you'd been nursing that machine? Why, there wouldn't be any way, how I know not, it was frustrated."

Mary was silent.

"But there is another matter I want to speak of. As the brother with the people is now over, there'll be no need to take such care where the hands lodge. You have done well to keep Savannah Morbyn here so long, but now she can look for some other place."

"Are you going to keep her on at the mill?" asked Mary.

"You would not have me turn away those who stood by me in the time of trouble, would you?" he asked, not quite at his ease. "But there is no reason why she should not get lodgings elsewhere."

"I don't wish to turn her out," said Mary. "Mother and I are used to having her now in the house, though at first I was a little scared at her going on at times. She's a bit queer."

"Eh? How do you mean a bit queer? What does she do?"

"Oh, she doesn't do anything," answered Mary, with a feeble laugh. "But she says curious things."

"I shall say nothing if to-morrow evening all the men who were in the shed last night have left the village, never to return. Those who stop will find themselves in the hands of the police."

CHAPTER XII

"THEY SAY THAT TOM ROYLANCE IS A THIEF." On the following day Mary was unable to go to the mill. The strain and the excitement of the previous night had made her ill, and she had to keep her bed. In the evening she was worse, and for some days she suffered from a species of low fever. On the third day Savannah told her that the strike was over and that several of the more prominent strikers had left the village.

"Has Gibeon Prawle gone with the rest?" she asked.

"No," answered Savannah. "I hear that he's been round to Gorringe to beg to be taken back again. But, of course, he isn't to be."

"I should think not," cried Mary, "after having been the cause of all the trouble."

"Gorringe is in high spirits at having beaten the men," said Savannah. "He thinks he's done it all. That's always the way with your masterful men."

"I'm glad he's won," said Mary.

She had noticed a change in Savannah's manner towards her during the days she had been shut up by her illness and it had made her thoughtful.

"Why are you glad? Do you like him?" asked Savannah, quickly, looking keenly and searchingly at Mary.

"Like him? What has that to do with the strike? I am glad, because if he had not won the strike would have had to go on indefinitely. He would never have given in."

"Ugh! Sometimes I hate him!" cried Savannah, flashing out into sudden rage. "He's a devil!"

"Savannah!" exclaimed Mary, in astonishment at the other's quick vehemence. "Why, what has he done to make you say that?"

"I hate him!" cried the girl again, the anger flashing out of the depths of her dark blue eyes while her face crimsoned with passion. "I hate him! If I had a chance I'd kill him!"

"Savannah, what is it? What has he done to you to make you like this to him?" said Mary, gently laying her hand on the other's.

"What has he done? Why, he—But what is it to you?" she cried, snatching her hand from Mary's, and turning on her with quick impetuous fury. "What do you come sneaking and trying to catch me tripping for, and saying that which you think will give you a hold over me, with your fawning touch and your false softness? You are all false. You are all against me. You are all devils together. But you don't catch me tripping—not till I had my way and won my purpose. So don't you think it?" and with a loud, mocking laugh she hurried out of the room, leaving Mary full of wonderment and fear at her strange words and stranger manner.

But Mary in the days of her illness had a greater trouble than Savannah's eccentricity. Tom came only very seldom to the cottage to ask after her; and in all the week that she lay in bed she did not once see him.

She saw Reuben Gorringe before she saw Tom. He had called at the cottage every day when he had learnt of her illness and had brought her fruit and flowers and delicacies.

"You have been ill, indeed," he said, taking her hand, and looking into her eyes with a look of grave concern on his dark face.

"And you have been winning battles over the men," she said, and smiled, not very brightly, although the man's sympathy touched her.

"Yes, we have won. But it is as much your victory as mine," he said.

"Why? What do you mean?" This with a quick look.

"That you took the same side as I. If you had gone against me I should not have attempted to fight. You are all in to me still, Mary."

The girl's rather pale face flushed under the look which accompanied these words.

"Mr. Gorringe"—she began.

"Stay, I forgot myself, Mary. I am sorry. I won't offend again. I know what you would say. But the look of you so pale and weak and feeble made me forget myself and my promise—everything but my feelings. I am a selfish brute. But there's past. Forgive me." And he held out his hand.

She gave him hers for a moment, and then withdrew it. She could not be angry with him.

"Now tell me, are you really stronger? I want to know that particularly; I have reasons."

"Yes, I am quite strong."

"What caused your illness?"

"I scarcely know. A chill, most likely. Caught on the night when that strange explosion took place. Did you ever find out what that was?" asked Mary, shuddering involuntarily at the recollection of the time.

"Never. But I have my suspicions."

"What are they?"

"I believe an attempt was intended to be made upon the mill and that in some way, how I know not, it was frustrated."

Mary was silent.

"But there is another matter I want to speak of. As the brother with the people is now over, there'll be no need to take such care where the hands lodge. You have done well to keep Savannah Morbyn here so long, but now she can look for some other place."

"Are you going to keep her on at the mill?" asked Mary.

"You would not have me turn away those who stood by me in the time of trouble, would you?" he asked, not quite at his ease. "But there is no reason why she should not get lodgings elsewhere."

"I don't wish to turn her out," said Mary. "Mother and I are used to having her now in the house, though at first I was a little scared at her going on at times. She's a bit queer."

"Eh? How do you mean a bit queer? What does she do?"

"Oh, she doesn't do anything," answered Mary, with a feeble laugh. "But she says curious things."

"I shall say nothing if to-morrow evening all the men who were in the shed last night have left the village, never to return. Those who stop will find themselves in the hands of the police."

"By the way, will you tell Tom that the new mule frames will be in early to-morrow, and that the earlier he can get at them the better?"

"I will if I see him," answered Mary, not meeting the other's eyes.

"Won't he be in, then, to-night?" "I don't know," she said, with a little hesitation. "If it's important you'd better leave word at his cottage."

"Oh!" was all the reply that Reuben Gorringe made; but Mary seemed to read in it plenty of hidden meaning. She blushed, and then, woman-like, began to make excuses for Tom.

"He has been so busy at the mill lately that he has not had much time to be here," she said.

"Nay, not at the mill," answered Gorringe, his heart beating high at the knowledge that Tom seemed to be neglecting her. "I have not kept him late once. He must have some other reason; some work at home, perhaps, he said.

But she understood the look he gave her when shaking hands, and she felt humiliated at finding herself in such a position.

When her mother came into the room she found Mary lost in her dreams.

"Why don't you marry him, Mary?" she asked, after awhile, when she heard that Gorringe had been in. "Why don't you marry him?"

"I should think not," cried Mary, "after having been the cause of all the trouble."

"Gorringe is in high spirits at having beaten the men," said Savannah. "He thinks he's done it all. That's always the way with your masterful men."

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"What has he done? Why, he—But what is it to you?" she cried, snatching her hand from Mary's, and turning on her with a look of grave concern on his dark face.

"And you have been winning battles over the men," she said, and smiled, not very brightly, although the man's sympathy touched her.

"I'm glad of it, that I am. I'll tell Savannah this very night what he's said, and the sooner she packs the better. And there's no reason now why we should keep her. Where is she now?"

"I don't know. Maybe with Tom's father."

"More likely with Tom himself," said Mrs. Ashworth, speaking at random in her irritation, and having no particular meaning for the words.

"Mother!" cried Mary.

"Mary," answered the mother, imitating her tone.

"If you don't want to drive me out of the room you won't say such things as that," said Mary, quietly. "They pain me."

"All right, my lass, I won't say anything more."

She was fond of the girl, and had no wish to hurt her feelings. But she was very anxious to see her married to Reuben Gorringe, and was thus very often a most injudicious advocate of the latter's cause.

She went now to the girl's side and bent over her and kissed her.

"I'm sorry I grieved you, my lass," she said.

"It's all right, mother," answered Mary, looking up, and smiling. "I know what you wish, but it can't be. I can't marry a man without caring for him. It goes against nature. Try not to wish it or speak of it again."

"She went out of the kitchen then, and thus the discussion ended, as all the talk on that subject did, by each keeping her own opinion.

The next two or three days were a time of great trouble to the girl. She recovered her strength quickly, though she was not able to go to the mill, and indeed was compelled to stop in the house. But what perplexed and worried her most was the fact that Tom Roylance only came once to see her, and then only for a short time, during the whole of which he seemed ill at ease and quite unlike himself.

Savannah Morbyn left the Ashworths' cottage on the day after Reuben Gorringe had spoken about it. She went away with scarcely a word, simply telling Mary that she was going, and where she had found lodgings.

Then came dreadful news.

Savannah had been to sit with Mary two evenings, and on the evening of the day before Mary intended to go back to work she came in a state of great excitement.

"What's the matter, Savannah?" asked Mary.

"Have you heard any news?" asked the other.

"News? How should I hear news? I have not been out."

"Has no one been to see you?"

"No."

"Have you seen Tom—Tom Roylance?" asked Savannah.

"No. What of him?"

"Nay. That's what I would ask you."

"What's the matter, Savannah?"

"Is anything wrong, Savannah?"

"What is it? Tell me quick. Don't

keep me in suspense. What is it?"