

PROVIDENCE?

The waves were blue and the sun was bright,
As the waves and the sun quite often are,
And little birds sang with all their might,
As I sailed merrily over the bar.

My little canoe fairly danced with glee
As the light breeze gently caressed the sheet
And bore her along toward the open sea,
Where the sky and the water seemed to meet.

My craft was a sentimental one.
For 'twould never trim except with two,
So I put in the bottom a heavy stone,
And sighed to myself that it needs must do.

But there came before me a phantom face
As I gazed at the stone with a dreamy stare,
For it couldn't in any way take the place
Of certain live ballast I wished were there.

Then I sighed and thought what a happy lot
Would be mine if that soulless stone were
out.

And she in its place—but she was not—
So I sighed again and came about.

But alas! for the vision of my adored,
I was rudely wakened from my semi-sleep,
My spirit changing place with centerboard,
While I found myself in the briny deep.

Oh, the sun was bright and the waves were
blue,
But I'll thank the gods until I'm gray
That I took for ballast in my canoe
A stone, instead of a girl, that day.

—George L. Buttrick, in Detroit Free Press.

THE OLD MILL MYSTERY

By Arthur W. Marchmont, B. A.

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

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CHAPTER XXVII.

"YOU SHALL NOT LIVE TO BELONG TO ANOTHER MAN."

For a moment he made no attempt to go near her.

"Why do you madden me in this way, Mary?" he asked. "Am I so hateful to you that, when I seek thus to be alone with you, your only feeling is loathing? Is it so unpardonable a crime that my love should urge me to bring you here? All my wrong is that I love you."

"Love! What can you know of love, when you seek to force it with an iron padlock? Love trusts and does not threaten. You know nothing of love."

"Trusts," he returned, impatiently. "And have not trusted? I have 'trusted' too long, and nothing has come of it. Now I will act."

"Why have you changed like this to me?" asked Mary, with more gentleness. "You said that it would make you happy to see me happy, and you promised to help to prove Tom's innocence. What have I done to change you or to anger you?"

"You have done nothing. Nothing you could do would anger me. But the time has come when I must act. You could not understand if I told you. Mary, I swear to you I love you with all my soul. There is not a wish nor a thought, however light, however wild, I will not try to satisfy, if you will only be my wife. Will you not listen to me? I do not ask you to love me at first. I know that may be hard—perhaps impossible. But while love is love, such a passion as mine must make an echo in time. Will you trust me?"

He spoke with eager, earnest pleading, and made as though to take her in his arms.

"Keep away from me! You forget I am the plighted wife of another man."

He stopped, let fall the hands which had held toward her, and stared at her with love, disappointment and rage battling together for mastery in his gaze. Slowly the color ebbed away from his cheeks, and he grew deadly, dangerously white and stern.

"Is that your final answer?" he asked, his lips moving at first with no sound issuing from them; while his voice at length sounded hoarse and deep, hollow and nervous.

"If it were my last moment on earth I would say the same," answered the girl, with compressed passion. "I loathe the very sight of you."

He made no reply to this, but continued to gaze at the girl. An expression of sadness dimmed the fiercer light of his eyes, but he went whiter, even than before. Then a great sigh, almost a sob, burst from him, shaking his broad frame and making him quiver like a struck woman.

"Then may God have mercy on me, for you shall not live to belong to another man."

The awful stillness in the room, the man's moving agitation, his solemn earnestness and the despairing determination in his voice showed Mary that the danger which threatened her was real enough, and that if she was to escape her wits must be quick in finding a plan.

After he had spoken the man leant back against the wall, folded his arms across his chest and gloomily looked at the girl. Mary moved away, and by slight and almost imperceptible degrees placed as great a distance as possible between them, watching him all the time like one watches a dangerous animal.

It was a time of fearsome suspense, but the girl forced herself to keep up her courage and tried to think how she could possibly escape. She ran her eye quickly but stealthily over the two doors to the room. There was one behind her, but this she felt sure he had locked before he had trapped her in the office. The other he had locked when first he had thrown the mask off his conduct, but the key remained in the door.

Could she reach it? If she could do that and then get out of the room her chances of ultimate escape in the large rooms of the mill would be much greater.

But Gorringe stood right in the path, blocking the way completely, and she could think of no plan to lure him away. He himself removed part of the difficulty. With another deep-drawn sigh he moved from where he stood with his back to the wall, and the sound of the slight movement sent a thrill of cold to the girl's heart.

Then suddenly a plan, fully formed, rushed into her mind. Close behind her were several packets of cotton, and near to it a large bundle of waste. Towards this she moved, as if scared by him; and when he opened a drawer

of the table and bent over it in search, as Mary supposed, of a weapon, the girl seized some large handfuls of the waste and the cotton and heaped them on the standard gas lamp which lighted the room, thus shattering the glass and extinguishing the light.

She rushed to the opposite side of the room, and, throwing a couple of the packets of cotton where she had been standing, so as to make Reuben Gorringe think she was hiding on that side, she ran quickly and softly to the door from the side where he would not expect her. To her intense relief she found the key without difficulty and had turned it and opened the door before Gorringe had reached her.

Just as she was rushing out of the room she felt his hand on her arm. But she tore it away from him, and, pulling the door after her with all her strength, crushed his arm and caused the hand to relax its hold. Then she fled rapidly through the next room, which was the outer and larger office, and sped out into the darkness of the mill.

She had formed a plan in thought; namely, to try and make her way to a window overlooking the lane which ran along one end of the mill—one of those by which Tom had been accused of breaking into the place. To reach this, however, she would have to pass through a long room filled with spinning machines, down a flight of stone steps, through the blowing-room and across one of the smaller weaving sheds which was close to that.

His hesitation passed as quickly, and he rushed after her with the revolver pointed at her, and when Mary saw him approaching she cowered in a corner and screamed and covered her eyes, and, seeing his hesitation, broke away from him by a sudden and violent endearment.

Then came the sound of feet moving rapidly across the room, a slight struggle and a heavy fall.

"You villain! You lying, luring, cheating villain! Is this your love for me?"

It was Savannah Morbyn's voice, and when Mary opened her eyes she saw the man lying on the floor, bleeding from a fearful wound in the back, while Savannah, her face blazing with a light of mad rage, was standing over him, holding aloft the long blood-stained dagger with which she had struck him down.

Then in an instant her face changed and she began to laugh. Almost as suddenly, another change showed, and throwing the dagger away to the end of the room, Savannah burst into a storm of tears and threw herself beside the prostrate, wounded man, moaning and shuddering, and sobbing, and calling upon his name with many terms of caressing endearment.

Then Mary stole away quietly from the place to go for assistance, only half comprehending the meaning of the scene.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT IN THE MILL.

Faint and trembling with fright, Mary hesitated in doubt for a moment how to get out of the mill. Knowing that both the doors and gates were locked, she thought of the small windows through one of which she had before intended to try and escape.

Her limbs were shaking so violently that she scarce kept her feet, but she made a great effort to regain self-command, and reflecting that perhaps the issue of life and death depended upon her speed, she ran through the long work-rooms and down the narrow staircase to the corner, where the two or three windows were which overlooked Watercourse lane.

They were closed and fastened, but after a little delay she succeeded in opening one, through which she was able to escape. The rush of the cold night air restored her somewhat.

Without thinking to whom she should go—for she was still too dazed and frightened to think correctly—she ran instinctively in the direction of her own cottage. When she reached it there was a surprise in store for her. Gibeon Prawle stood by the door.

At the sight of him the girl's intense excitement broke her down. She burst into tears and stood clinging to his arm, sobbing hysterically, unable to speak a word and gasping, as if for air.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he asked, wondering and alarmed. "Has anything happened? What is it?"

Then she managed to tell him something of what had occurred and to urge him to go for assistance.

"Reuben Gorringe stabbed by Savannah!" he cried, in intense excitement. "How came you all there?"

"Don't stay to ask now," she said, hurriedly. "Go for help. Go at once. I cannot move another step."

"She's mad," he cried, breathlessly. "I've traced her. I came back to tell you; and with this he ran off at top speed for a doctor and the police."

The girl looked for a moment after him as he disappeared in the darkness, then tottered into the cottage and, feeling utterly prostrated and weak, had only strength to drag herself to her bed and sink down upon it exhausted, calling in a feeble voice to her mother to come and help her. When the latter came the girl had fainted.

Early the next morning Gibeon was at the cottage asking for her, and, although she was still faint and weak and ill, she dressed herself and went to him.

"You are ill," he said, when he saw the pale wan look on her face. "Can you bear to hear news?"

"I have come to hear it," she answered. "I can bear anything better than suspense. What happened last night?"

"I only know a little about that. I have other news—good news it should be for you. Can you bear to hear that? I was waiting last night to tell you when you found me here."

"What is it? About Tom?" As she asked this a light pink flush just tinged her cheeks, and her eyes brightened.

"Yes," he answered. "I have determined to tell the truth and risk all consequences."

"Thank God! thank God for that!" cried the girl, joyously, while the tears of gladness rushed into her eyes.

But the sight of her joy and the glad look on her face inflamed all the man's wild jealousy.

"By Heaven, lass, do you want to drive me mad even now?" he cried.

Springing forward, he threw his arms round her back to the wall, and the sound of the slight movement sent a thrill of cold to the girl's heart.

Then suddenly a plan, fully formed, rushed into her mind. Close behind her were several packets of cotton, and near to it a large bundle of waste. Towards this she moved, as if scared by him; and when he opened a drawer

of the table and bent over it in search, as Mary supposed, of a weapon, the girl seized some large handfuls of the waste and the cotton and heaped them on the standard gas lamp which lighted the room, thus shattering the glass and extinguishing the light.

"My God, how I love you," he cried passionately. "It is good to die like this."

Mary struggled with him, and would have screamed out in disgust and loathing and fear of him, but he smothered her screams with his kisses.

"Kiss me once, Mary, just once," he pleaded; but she struggled the more desperately to break away from him.

He held her firmly until, releasing her from his arms, he gripped her wrist and dragged her toward the drawer in which lay the revolver.

This he took out and then closed the drawer.

"One last kiss, my darling," he cried. "Twill be the last my lips will ever give yours receive."

Then he wound his arms around her, and for an instant renewed his madly passionate kisses.

"Good-by, my darling," he exclaimed, after a minute, and, moving back from where they had stood, he freed his right hand, in which he held the revolver.

Mary closed her eyes, knowing what was coming.

At that instant a slight sound broke the deathly silence of the place, and the man paused. The girl opened her eyes, and, seeing his hesitation, broke away from him by a sudden and violent endearment.

His hesitation passed as quickly, and he rushed after her with the revolver pointed at her, and when Mary saw him approaching she cowered in a corner and screamed and covered her eyes, and, seeing his hesitation, broke away from him by a sudden and violent endearment.

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The latter fear prevailed; and finding, after some minutes of absolutely intolerable suspense, that the sounds of Gorringe's movements came no nearer, she rose and moved as silently as a ghost across the forest of machinery in the direction where she judged Gorringe must be.

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