

**CHAPTER XVII—Continued.**

These last days of July a strange restlessness had taken possession of Violet Tempest. She would not read or occupy herself in any way. Those long rambles about the island, to wild precipices looking down on peaceful bays, to fuzzy hills where a few scattered sheep were her sole companions, to heathery steps that were craggy and precipitous, and dangerous to climb, and so had a certain fascination for the long wanderer—these rambles, which had been her chief resource and solace until now, had suddenly lost their charm.

"The day after tomorrow he will be married," she said to herself, on the morning of the 20th. "By this time, on the day after tomorrow, the bride will be putting on her wreath or orange blossoms, and the church will be decorated with flowers, and there will be a flutter of expectation in all the little villages, from one end of the Forest to the other. A duke's daughter is not married every day in the year. Ah, me! there will not be an earthquake or anything to prevent the wedding, I dare say. No, I feel sure that all things are going smoothly. If there had been a hitch of any kind mamma would have written to tell me about it."

She was supremely lonely. Nobody wanted her. She stood quite alone amidst a strange, unfriendly world. "Except poor old McCroke, I don't think there is a creature who cares for me, and even her love is tepid," she said to herself.

She had kept up a regular correspondence with her old governess since she had been in Jersey, and had developed to Miss McCroke the scheme of her future travels.

"I wonder if you would much mind going to Africa?" she wrote, in one of her frank, girlish letters. "There must be something new in Africa. There is Egypt for us to do; and we, who are a walking encyclopedias, will be able to tell all about the pyramids, and Pompey's Pillar, and the Nile. We have heard of Africa we might go to India. I know you are a good sailor; you are not like poor mamma, who used to suffer tortures in crossing the Channel."

The slowest hours, days the most wearisome, long nights that know not sleep, must end at last. The first of August dawned—a long streak of red light in the clear gray east. Vixen saw the first glimmer as she lay wide awake in her big old bed, staring through the curtailed window to the far sea line, above which the morning sky grew red.

"Hall, Rorie's wedding—!" she cried, with a little hysterick laugh, and then she buried her face in a pillow and sobbed aloud—sobbed as she had not done till now, through all her weary exile.

There had been no earthquake; this planet we live on had not rolled backward in space; all things in life pursued their accustomed course, and time had ripened into Roderick Vawdry's wedding-day.

"I did think something would happen," said Vixen, piteously. "It was foolish, weak, mad to think so. But I could not believe he would marry any one but me. I did my duty, and I tried to be brave and steadfast. But I thought something would happen."

She rose at seven, feeling unpeckably tired, dressed herself slowly and dawdily, thinking of Lady Mabel. What an event her rising and dressing would be this morning—the flurried maids, the indulgent mother, the pure white garments glistening in the tempered sunlight, the luxurious room, with its subdued coloring, its perfume of freshly cut flowers, the dainty breakfast tray on a table by an open window, the shower of congratulatory letters and the last delivery of wedding gifts. Vixen could imagine the scene with its every detail.

And Roderick? What of him? She could not easily picture the companion of her childhood on this fatal morning of his life. She could not imagine him happy; she dared not fancy him miserable. It was safer to make a great effort and shut that familiar figure out of her mind altogether.

"If it would rain, or blow, or thunder," sighed Vixen, with her hands clasped about her head, "the change might be some small relief to my feelings, but this everlasting brightness is too dreadful. What a lying world it is, and how Nature smiles at us when our hearts are aching. Well, I suppose I ought to wish the sunshine to last till after Rorie's wedding, but I don't, I don't, I don't!"

And then she flung herself face downward on the grass and sobbed as she had sobbed on her pillow that morning.

"It rends my heart to know we are parted forever," she said. "Oh, why did I not say 'Yes' that night on the plantation? The chance of life-long bliss was in my hand, and I let it go."

The wedding bells must be ringing by this time. She fancied she could hear them. They beat upon her heart. They would drive her mad. She tried to stop her ears, but then those wedding chimes seemed ringing inside her head.

She remembered how the joy-bells had haunted her ears on Rorie's twenty-first birthday, that day which had ended so bitterly in the announcement of the engagement between the cousins. How well she remembered her despair a dissolution that night, the rage that possessed her young soul.

"And I was little more than a child then," she said to herself. "Surely I must have been born wicked. My dear father was then living, and even the thought of his love did not comfort me. How idiotically fond I must have been of Rorie! Even so many years have come and gone, and I have not cured myself of this folly."

She got up from the grass, plucked herself out of that paroxysm of mental pain which came too near lucidity, and began to walk slowly round the garden paths, reasoning with herself, calling womanly pride to the rescue.

"I hate myself for this wickedness," she protested, dumbly. "I did not think I was capable of it. When I was a child and was taken to the dentist did I ever whine and howl like vulgar-minded children? No; I braced myself for the ordeal, and bore the pain as my father's child ought."

That evening Vixen did not hear the bell inviting her to weak tea and bread and butter. The ringing of those other bells obscured the sound. She was sitting with her book before her, her eyes

"And Lady Mabel? She is with you, of course?"

"Not the least bit in the world. To the best of my knowledge, Lady Mabel—I beg your pardon, Lady Mallow—is now on her way to the fishing grounds of Connemara with her husband."

"Rorie!"

What a glad, happy cry that was! It was like a gust of sudden music from a young blackbird's throat on a sunny Spring morning. The crimson dye had faded from Violet's cheeks a minute ago and left her deadly pale. Then the bright color rushed back again, the happy glow broke into the gladdest smile that ever Rorie had seen upon her face. He held out his arms, she clasped her to his breast, where she rested unresistingly, infinitely happy.

(To be Continued.)

MOST SOUTHERLY HOME IN U. S.

New York Man's Tropical Paradise at Lower End of Florida.

The most southerly mansion on the mainland of the United States is being rapidly pushed to completion by W. J. Mathewson of Ligon's Neck, R. I., says the New York World. Seven months ago the newspapers mentioned the departure of the Mathewsons for Cocoanut Grove, Fla., the fact being added that they were to build a new home there. Mr. Mathewson is too modest to venture an estimate of what the place will cost him, but an ultimate outlay of \$200,000 is a conservative figure.

"Red sky at morning, we'll be rained upon," cried Vixen, with dry lips.

"Thank heaven there will be rain today! Welcome changes after the hot, arid skies and the cruel sun, mocking all the miseries of this troubled earth."

"She felt almost as wildly glad as the Ancient Mariner at the idea of that blessed relief; and then by and by, with the changeable light shining on her face, she fell into a deep sleep.

Perhaps that morning sleep saved Vixen from an impending fever. It was the first refreshing slumber she had had for a week—a sweet, dreamless sleep. The rain, forecast by that red sky, fell in soft showers upon the verdant Isle, and the grateful earth gave back its sweetest perfumes to the cool, moist air. Violette awoke and found the general temperature was normal.

The general scheme of the architect has a mile south of the Cocoanut Grove post office, the land being on either side of the highway. On the roadside sides are walls of rock masonry, along the top of which pineapples have been set at regular intervals. Most of the land will be used for growing fruit. Within a stone's throw of the house, Mr. Mathewson will be able to gather bananas, oranges, grape fruit, pineapples, figs, dates, coconuts, apricots and tropical produce in general.

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Some of the rarest trees are flourishing on the property.

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