

# TANGLED SKELN

MRS. ALEXANDER

## CHAPTER XIII.

Mrs. Callender was deeply wounded and humiliated by her son's refusal to hold any communication with her. Her first care was that no one should suspect the estrangement. For this object, under the advice of her clerical counselor, she resolved to winter abroad, some where on the Riviera, where it might be supposed Colonel Callender would join her.

She spoke frankly to Henrietta Oakley, but to no one else. The sympathetic feeling for Dorothy, for her grandchildren, which seemed to soften and humanize her at first, hardened into her usual imperious coldness. Why should she distress herself about the sister and children of a woman who had so turned her son against her that the desperate grief of the mourning widow refused consolation from his own mother?

Callender bid both Henrietta and his sister-in-law farewell with more composure than they expected. He thanked them briefly for their kindness, and promised to write from time to time. When he was gone, the two weeping women took counsel with Standish, Henrietta describing the dowager's unfriendly aspect. It was then decided that Dorothy should take up her abode with the children, as soon as Mrs. Callender had left the hotel, while Miss Oakley went up to town, and, with the help of Standish, should find a suitable house for the winter, as Henrietta Oakley's last original idea was to devote herself to "that dear Dorothy and those sweet, motherless pets." To Standish she was quite confidential, and remarked with her usual amiable candor: "Of course, London is the best place for us. If Herbert comes back he will, of course, come to London, and if I want a little change, I can easily go to and fro. Then Mr. Egerton, after the first wretchedness of this terrible affair is past, will probably renew his attentions to Dorothy, who had much better marry him; and London is the best place for a trousseau."

"You are looking very far ahead," returned Standish, almost amused at her practical view of things in spite of her sincere sorrow. "It does not strike me that Egerton has much chance. Dorothy never liked him much, and now this cruel grief seems to have turned her in some inexplicable manner against him."

Ready money is the true Aladdin's Lamp. Before its potent touch mountains themselves and difficulties melt away. In two days Miss Oakley had found a suitable furnished house, large enough for her needs, and somewhat old-fashioned, in a street leading from Kensington Gore, near enough to Kensington Gardens to insure the children air and exercise, and sufficiently removed from the noise of the main roadway to be quiet.

Miss Oakley was solacing herself with a cup of tea after a long day's shopping and transacting various business connected with the house she had taken, when Standish, who had been with her in the forenoon, was ushered into her sitting room.

"What has happened?" was her question as soon as she looked in his face. "Callender has given them the slip. He is off by himself to Paris. I found a note from his men of business at my rooms when I returned after leaving you at the house agent's this morning, and on going there heard that he had started this morning, leaving very distinct directions respecting money matters, letters, etc. He had spent several hours with them the day before yesterday. He had a short codicil put to his will, and regulated some affairs; among other things he directed that in what concerned Dorothy I was to be consulted. Dobson, the head of the firm, quite laughed at the idea of his not being able to take care of himself. He said that, though terribly crushed and depressed, he never saw a man in a more thoroughly sane condition. Callender left an address in Paris, and will write from thence. He sent off old Collins to Fordsea. Dorothy will be horribly frightened when he arrives."

"And Mr. Egerton, what does he say?" "Egerton seems in a bad way. I went round to see him and found him very queer. Callender sent him a note, saying that he wanted no companionship. Egerton could not, I think, have accompanied him. A man, a German, says he caught a severe chill; at any rate, he is in a high fever, and more in want of control than poor Callender."

"How very dreadful!" cried Miss Oakley. "That poor Mr. Egerton has really too much feeling! One would not have expected it from him. Who is with him? He ought to have some one to take care of him."

"He has resolved to go into a hospital—into a private room, of course. He says he will be guarded there against prying relatives. He has no very near relations; but he seems nervously anxious to be shielded from them."

"How very strange! Surely he has some old housekeeper, some faithful nurse, who could come to him!"

"Probably, but not in London; he has no town house, you know."

"It is all so dreadful. Nothing but misfortune seems to follow us. I am quite frightened at the idea of Herbert going off alone."

"I am not sure, after all, that it may not be better for him to depend on himself, to be away from any who are associated with this terrible tragedy."

"I will get away as early as I can to-morrow, for I am sure poor dear Dorothy will be dreadfully distressed when Collins returns."

This was not, however, the effect produced on Dorothy's mind by the sudden appearance of Callender's old servant; she was supremely thankful that, anyhow, Egerton was prevented from accompanying her brother-in-law.

With her suspicions, it seemed too painful anomaly that Egerton should be se-

lected as the consoling friend of the bereaved husband.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The first lengthening days of spring have a saddening effect on those who have suffered. To Dorothy, and, indeed, to her affectionate friend Henrietta, it was a melancholy period. The little ones had ceased to ask for "Papa" or "Mamma," and her guardian's visits were the only bits of sunshine in Dorothy's life. She watched with almost motherly interest the growth of the baby boy, the unfolding of the little girl's intelligence. But the supreme solace was the warm, thoughtful sympathy of Standish. Their conversations were always a source of tranquil pleasure, but when he did not come for two or three days, her sense of desolation was almost insupportable.

Meanwhile, Standish found his position improved, his prospects brightening, since his successful conduct of business confided to him in Berlin and Vienna, also the amount of work he had to attend to was greatly increased, so the time he could place at his ward's disposal was less than formerly.

Hastening one dim afternoon up Pall Mall, and looking out for an empty hansom, he came suddenly face to face with Egerton.

He knew the figure and bearing, but was almost uncertain as to the identity of the face, so changed was it in many ways. The large eyes were sunken, and had a pained, hunted expression. The cheeks looked hollow, the clear, olive tint had become a dusky pallor, a large mustache hid his mouth and altered him still more. "Why, Egerton?"

"Standish! I was on my way to leave my card at your lodgings to let you know I was in town."

"I am very glad to see you. When did you come up?"

"Yesterday. I am putting up at Long's. I have given up my rooms in the Albany. I am thinking of trying a little elephant shooting in Africa if Callender does not want me. I had a letter from him a couple of days ago. Which way are you going? I will come with you."

"Dorothy had a few lines from him, too, last week," said Standish, as they walked on; "he had been to see his mother at Nice, and spoke of returning to England."

"So he does to me. He is, for the first time, anxious to know what success has attended our efforts. I trust he will return quite himself."

There was an indescribable melancholy in Egerton's voice that struck Standish, and he felt some surprise as well as increased interest in his companion.

"How is Miss Wynn?" continued Egerton; "I have heard of her now and then from Miss Oakley, and I should greatly like to see her before I leave England if she will see me."

This was said in a constrained voice, with pauses and breaks, as though he forced himself to utter the words mechanically.

"Just now, I am sure Dorothy will not see you or any one. The boy is rather seriously ill with bronchitis—rather a bad business for so small a chap. His aunt never leaves him. It would be an awful shock to Callender to arrive and find no son. It is all very hard on such a mere girl as Dorothy. But she has more of a backbone than her sweet, pretty sister had."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Egerton, hastily. "Tell me, how is it that slighty Miss Oakley has stuck so steadily to her role of comforter?"

"Her heart is better than her head," returned Standish. "Henrietta Oakley has proved herself a capital woman. I have grown quite fond of her. She would make an admirable wife to any man who knew how to manage her."

"Oh, indeed!" with a languid smile. "Tell me more about the report of that consul of which you wrote to me. I don't understand why they have not made more diligent search for that fellow you all suspect—Padro."

"We suspect! Don't you? Come and dine with me at the club to-night and we will discuss it all; now I must go on to Miss Oakley's. I have not heard how the boy is to-day."

"Let me come with you. I must see them again." It seemed to Standish from the tone of his voice that the necessity was not an agreeable one.

"Come, by all means," he returned. They were soon bowling along towards Kensington.

Miss Oakley was not at home when they reached the house. But Collins, who remained as the factotum, protector and semi-dictator of the joint household, said that she would be in soon.

The gentlemen were therefore shown up to the drawing room, where a tea table was set ready for the absent mistress.

"I will go and see Dorothy, if you don't mind, Egerton," said Standish, after moving somewhat restlessly to and fro, looking at the papers and periodicals that lay about. "She generally mounts guard about this time, and the nurse, you remember, Mrs. McHugh—Egerton nodded his head with a slightly impatient movement—"goes to tea."

the cause—the little boy, Standish tells me, is seriously ill."

"He is, indeed, but he is a shade better to-day. Dorothy has been so unhappy about him. It would have been terrible if Herbert had returned to find no baby boy, and Aunt Callender would have been sure to say he died from neglect. I am very fond of Aunt Callender; she has many good points, but she does fancy such queer things! I am dying to see Herbert again! Of course, it has been an awful blow, but men don't grieve forever. He is really a young man, and ought to throw himself into his career. And he is such a good fellow! You know my deep interest in him is of old date; won't you take a cup of tea?"

"No—no, thank you," and Egerton, who had started up and gone to the fireplace while she spoke, now sat down and kept very still while Henrietta insisted on giving him some tea, and cross-examined him as to his health, his life at his country seat, and a dozen other topics, while he answered in monosyllables and looked as if he were on the rack.

Meantime, Standish mounted the stairs to the day nursery, where he had generally spoken to Dorothy during the boy's illness. The little fellow had taken a severe cold, which turned to bronchitis.

"Oh, Paul, he is better!" exclaimed Dorothy, from the inner room, as soon as she heard his knock at the door.

"That's right; I thought the little fellow would pull through; he is a regular Trojan."

"He was in great danger yesterday, but the night was better, and now he breathes much more freely."

"And now, I hope you will take some care of yourself, Dorothy! You look as if you had not slept for a week."

"Not so long as that, but I should like a nice quiet sleep without any dreams," and she sighed.

"Are you still so frightened at night?" asked Standish, looking down into her eyes with a glance so wistfully compassionate that Dorothy felt the delightful sense of his affectionate sympathy send a thrill of pleasure shivering through her.

"No, I am less frightened, but I dream continuously."

"I have left a visitor with Miss Oakley," resumed Standish, placing a chair for Dorothy, while he stood by the high fender. "A visitor who wishes to see you."

Dorothy looked up with a startled expression. "Who is it?"

"Egerton; I met him just now by accident, and he came on here with me."

Dorothy rose, and came beside Standish before she replied; then she said in a low, rapid voice: "I cannot see him, Paul. You will not ask me, it is quite—quite impossible."

"I shall not ask you to do anything you don't like, Dorothy, but later on you really must get over this prejudice. You must see Egerton some day."

"I will try," she said with a kind of slight shiver, "but you must give me time."

"He was very fascinating at first," said Standish with a slight smile. "I remember your comparing him to various heroes—let me see—Don John of Austria, Sir Philip Sidney, and—"

"Oh, do not talk of that time, Paul; it was too—too happy."

"Forgive me, dear Dorothy," taking her hand, "I will not tease you to do anything you do not like; promise to come for a long walk with me to-morrow, if the boy continues to hold his ground. You must not play tricks with your health; you are not exactly a giant, my dear ward."

Dorothy made no reply; she stood very still, her hand in that of Standish, while he looked with grave, thoughtful consideration at the slight girlish figure, the half-averted, pathetic face, the sweet quivering mouth. It was sad to see the traces of sorrow on so young a creature, especially as there was some element in her sorrow which he could not quite make out. Standish sighed a short, deep sigh, at which Dorothy started from her thoughts, and withdrew her hand.

"I suppose I must go," said Standish. "If it is fine to-morrow, will you be ready for me at two? We will have a ramble round the gardens."

"Very well, thank you. You are very good to me, Paul. Can I ever show you how grateful I am?"

"Don't talk of gratitude. There can be no question of such a thing between us."

"Good-by for the present, Paul—till to-morrow."

Dinner passed heavily enough. What- ever subject Standish started Egerton let drop, though occasionally he seemed to spur himself to talk. It appeared to Standish the longest meal of which he had ever partaken. The waiter had placed the dessert before them when a telegram was handed to Standish, who, glancing over the lines, of which there were several, exclaimed with some excitement: "By heaven! we may get a clew at last! It is from Eastport. Some important evidence offered by a newly arrived sailor. Come, if possible."

(To be continued.)

## An Incredible Bride.

A wife's unjust suspicions were the cause of very strained relations recently between a young couple living in Columbia avenue, near 20th street. She got the idea into her head that her husband was deceiving her when he said, as he frequently did, that he was "going around the corner for the evening to see a friend." In an attempt to do a little detective work she bought a pocket pedometer, an instrument resembling a watch, which registers the distance traveled by the person who carries it. The next time her husband went "around the corner" she secretly slipped it into one of his pockets and awaited the result. When he returned that night she found that the telltale instrument registered nine miles. In vain he attempted to convince her that he simply had been playing billiards with his friend on the latter's private table, which was really the case, and that the machine had counted up the miles as he walked around the table. Her accusations led to a violent quarrel, which was settled only after several days had elapsed.—Philadelphia Record.

## Only One Explanation.

"Isn't it a pity that Millyun's only daughter is so homely?"

"Why, I thought you just said that you hadn't seen her since she was a little girl. How do you know she is homely?"

"How do I know? My dear sir, she's 25 and still single!"

# THE DAY WE CELEBRATE

## TEN LITTLE FINGERS.

Ten little fingers toying with a mine—Bang! went the powder, and then there were nine.

Nine little fingers firing rockets straight—Zip! a kick backward, and then there were eight.

Eight little fingers pointing up to heaven—Roman candle "busted," and then there were seven.

Seven little fingers, punk and powder mix—Punk was ignited, and then there were six.

Six little fingers for a "sizzler" strive—One went off with it, and then there were five.

Five little fingers loading for a roar—Boom! went the cannon, and then there were four.

Four little fingers with a pack made free—Crash! went a cracker, and then there were three.

Three little fingers found the fuse burned blue—Bombshell too previous, and then there were two.

Two little fingers having lots of fun—Pistol exploded, and then was one.

One little finger, fooling with a gun—Didn't know 'twas loaded, and then there was none.

## WHEN CUBA IS FREE.

ON'T touch it, Tom!"

"It would make a thundering report!"

"Never mind that—loading that gun was one of the last things father did before he left home."

"I know that," nodded Tom Wilson, looking pretty sober and solemn, "but it would make a thundering report!"

"You've said that twice."

"And I'd love to hear the old musket just once!"

"Maybe you will."

"To-morrow—the Fourth?"

"Who knows? Says father, when he rammed the last word home in the old revolutionary relic, 'We'll fire that off when Cuba is free!'"

"She's just as good as that, isn't she?" challenged Tom.

"Never you mind—we're going to mind father."

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A FAMILIAR NAME IN THE GLARING HEADLINES.

Besides that, duty engrossed the two boys the rest of that day.

Other fellows had nothing more arduous to do than prepare for "the biggest Fourth since the Centennial."

The Wilsons had, however, were "helping mother," and mere novices at labor, they had not learned the ropes yet.

Things had gone from bad to worse with honest John Wilson for several years back.

He had a glorious civil war record behind him—was one of the gallant Cumberland's crew, that fated ship that went down in a blaze of patriotic glory that set fire to a nation's hopes and ardor.

A long spell of illness had caused his getting behind in his payments on the neat cottage home.

"Tell you what, Nance," he had said to his wife along in the early days of May, "I've an idea."

"Tell it, John," encouraged his wife.

"I'm going to see my step-brother, Tracy."

"Down East?"

"Down East."

"Why not write?"

"I've done that and it did no good. No, I'll risk the powers of persuasion. He has thousands. But for a slip of the pen he would have been compelled to share them with me, and he knows it. I'll try and get him to take up the mortgage here, and ease us along till we can get the boys on their feet, earning and helping."

"And if he refuses, John?" suggested Mrs. Wilson anxiously.

"Why, then I suppose I'm sort of stranded."

"All your money gone, and away from home?"

"Well, maybe work is readier there than here. Never fear, Nance, I'll find a place somewhere."

Mrs. Wilson gave her husband a quick look.

There had come into his eye a certain stern, yet proud, sparkle she used to see, when, fresh from the war, he was wont to tell how he turned the tide of a naval battle off the Carolinas by "pulling the gun string just at the right minute."

She said nothing, however. She heard nothing more from him after his departure until about the first of June.

Then he sent the merest line: "I am looking for work in New York City."

Mrs. Wilson was uneasy. Wars and rumors of wars had set John restless for months before his departure.

His last word had been "Cuba." The solicitous wife trembled, prayed, waited.

Meantime, like deserving scions of a man with a heart of oak, her two sons, Ned and Tom, "pitched in."

They found the ladder growing slim, and set at work to repair it.



They ran errands, sold garden truck, peddled papers, and this latter was no mean field of commercial venture during the prevailing war excitement in the village.

"Better have a quiet Fourth of July, boys," suggested their mother gently, the day before.

"All right," nodded thoughtful Ned cheerfully. "With father away, I suppose it's best."

"Yes," assented Tom vaguely, "but what a thundering report that old musket would make!"

Ned attended to the morning papers that arrived from the city.

Tom took in the "extras" that came in through the day.

The former was eating supper with his mother, the latter absorbed in reflections of the absent, almost the missing one, now.

Suddenly there was a terrific hullabaloo, comprised of shouts, firecrackers, hurrahings.

Ned ran to the window.

"For mercy's sake!" he ejaculated.

"What is it, Ned?" rather startled, and tremulously inquired Mrs. Wilson, arising more slowly.

"It's Tom!"

"He isn't hurt, or—"

"Acts as if he was crazy!"

Tom did. In full view, he was coming down the dusty road.

Trooping after him were a dozen or more vociferous youngsters with whom he had ever been a favorite.

They were making the welkin ring, and many a lad was burning his fingers in his ardor to help swell the commotion, and was using up the prized ammunition of the morrow.

Tom burst into the room, drenched with perspiration, panting for breath, but with eyes aflame with emotion and vitality.

"See here!" challenged Ned.

"No—look there!"

Tom flung his bundle of extras upon the table.

His mother nearly fainted. Even a casual glance showed at the top of the glaring headlines a name familiar.

"John Wilson,"—"hero"—"daring deed."

—oh, it was news from the absent one, but was it news of glory, but also of death?

"Father!" she choked.

"Is all right!" piped Tom. "Read here, Ned—read here! Father was 'looking for work'—say, mother! he found it!"

"Where? Where?" faltered the suspense-racked wife and mother.

"Battleship—you know what a boss gunner he is! Met the enemy, pulled another 'gun string in another nick of time' and—"

Coherent consideration of the news the paper gave proved that Tom had not exaggerated.

Skill and opportunity had combined to give John Wilson a chance to "knock out" a Spanish ironclad "at the right minute."

He had concededly turned the tide of favor leading up to the capture of a richly freighted consort.

"Prize money"—why, he can pay off the mortgage!" cried the exuberant Ned.

"Promotion—it will glorify his later days!" murmured Mrs. Wilson thankfully.

"Where's the gun?" demanded irrepressible Tom.

"Hold on! What gun?" interfered Ned.

"Father's old musket."

"Why—"

"We're going to celebrate!"

"No—he left orders—fire it off when Cuba is free!"

"Free!" fairly yelled the sanguine and excited Tom. "With such men as him peppering the foe, she's practically free already!"

"Well, I suppose—" began Ned, in faint demur.

Above all other reports that boomed in the morning of July Fourth, 1898, that fired by proud, patriotic Tom Wilson seemed to him the loudest ever was.

"Wonder if they heard that in Cuba?" he gloated.

"They're hearing some other reports from its owner, I reckon," smiled Ned.

"Say!" declared the ardent Tom, "didn't it make a thundering report?"

## The Grand Old Fashioned Way.

Get ready, boys, to make a noise On Independence day. For we're about to have it out In grand old fashioned way.

At dawn we'll raise our flag ablaze And watch it proudly fly. Its blue and stars and crimson bars Reflected on the sky.

Then while bells clang and anvils bang And cannon thunders roar We'll give the cheer that slaves may hear Upon the old world's shore.

We'll yell and screech and make a speech About our glorious nation And brag that we on land or sea Can wallop all creation.

## Fourth of July Poem.



A pistol toy Gave much joy, To small boy— Bang!



He'll no more fire— Went up higher, And the choir— Sang.

—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

## Old Glory.

To the true lovers of our country the American flag is the most beautiful emblem of a nation's glory that floats to the breeze. To its defenders in the past it means more than mere glory, as it symbolizes a union of States and hearts, purchased by blood and treasure freely given, for the country's welfare. Its contemplation brings to our memory the scenes of strife on land and sea, where Old Glory was ever in the van.

## UNCLE SAM'S FOURTH OF JULY INCUBUS.

