

TANGLED SKEIN

Mrs. ALEXANDER

CHAPTER XIII.

Mrs. Callander 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, somewhere on the Riviera, where it might be supposed Colonel Callander 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 distract herself about the sister and children of a woman who had so turned her son against her that the desperate grief of the mourning widower refused consolation from his own mother?

Callander 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. Callander 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 mountaineers 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 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.

"Callander has given them the slip. He is off by himself to Paris. I found a note from his men of business at my room 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 more thoroughly same condition. Callander 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. Callander sent him a note, saying that he wanted no companionship. Egerton could not, I think, have accompanied him. His 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 Callander."

"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 relatives; 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 Callander'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

selected 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 "Mama," 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.

Hashtening one dim afternoon up Pall Mall, and looking out for an empty room, 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 room in the Albany. I am thinking of trying a little elephant shooting in Africa if Callander 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 bad business for so small a chap. His aunt never leaves him. It would be an awful shock to Callander 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 flighty Miss Oakley has stuck so steadily to her role of comforter?"

"Her heart is better than her head," returned Standish. "Henrietta 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 consult of which you wrote to me. I don't understand why they have not made more diligent search for that fellow you all suspect—Pedro."

"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 bowing 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."

"Don't mind me," returned the other.

Standish had hardly left the room when Miss Oakley entered it; she was richly dressed, with abundance of black fur on her cloak and round her throat, and looked very handsome.

"She is a dear, Mr. Egerton, I am so glad to see you. I could hardly believe my ears when Collins said you were here. But do you know you are looking frightfully ill? You don't mind my saying so, do you? You ought to go away to some warm, cheerful place. Really, the gloominess of winter in England is quite sufficient, don't you think so?"

"I cannot return the compliment, Miss Oakley! You are looking remarkably well! It is an age since we met. I am sorry I cannot see Miss Wynn, and for

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 Callander would have been sure to say he died from neglect. I am very fond of Aunt Callander; 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," said 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.

"No—no, thank you," said 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.

"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 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 you 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-bye for the present, Paul—till to-morrow."

Dinner passed heavily enough. Whatever 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 Incredulous 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 Milliyun'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?"

"I cannot return the compliment, Miss Oakley! You are looking remarkably well! It is an age since we met. I am sorry I cannot see Miss Wynn, and for

THE DAY WE CELEBRATE

TEN LITTLE FINGERS.

Ten little fingers toying with a mine—
Bang! went the powder, and then there were none.

Nine little fingers fixing 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 five.

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

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

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

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 there 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 wad 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.

"I will try," said Tom.