

Literature.

LADY OF ATHONTON HALL OR THE MILLINER'S FORTUNE CHAPTER III.

THE SEVERING.

One night more beneath the beloved roof of Atherton Hall—one night more of liberty—and then Winnifred was to go forth from his blessed shelter, to dwell in a stately mansion of her husband, Maplewood was a sea-side residence, a few miles above the ancient town of Plymouth, and so far away from Boston, that Mr. Winnifred would not be at home more than twice a week, and for this Winnifred felt grateful.

This last night in the hills of her childhood, she had demanded solitude; her maid was forbidden to intrude, and she asked of Mr. Winnifred, as a special favor, immunity from his society.

The night was bitter cold; the snow fell fiercely from an angry sky, and the icy north wind whirled over the earth as though bent on an errand of destruction. For a couple of hours Winnifred paced the chamber restlessly; at last she paused before a window, and throwing open the casement leaned out into the darkness.

The fury of the storm filled her with a wild delight. It was like the commotion in her own soul. She threw a shawl over her head, and stepping into the corridor, listened intently to satisfy herself that the household was wrapt in slumber.

Then she glided down the back staircase, untraced the great bolts of the outer door softly, and emerged into the cold and gloom. The piercing wind of the shiver, but the freshness and freedom of its breath gave her a mad strength, and she went on down the lawn, heedless of the drifts whose billowy whiteness obstructed the pathway.

On and on, her hand pressed hard against her heart, she flew; she had reached the pine copsewood at the foot of the meadow, and was losing herself in its depths of shadow, when an outcroched human arm stayed her progress. A voice, strangely familiar, said:

"Winnifred! Winnifred! where are you fleeing?" "Let me go! Let me go, Gerard Middleton! I am in no mood for company!"

"You shall not go until I tell you of the life wreathed and heart broken of the terrible agony which another than yourself is enduring! Oh, why, why had I not been born a peer, or you a pauper?"

"It was not so decreed. And wherefore ask that question? It could not have changed my fate!"

"Winnifred, our stations in life are different; a wide gulf separates; but before God we are equal. As a friend, as an equal, I ask you to do love this man whom you have wedded?"

"Love him? It is desecrating the holy word of love to speak it in connection with his name."

"Winnifred! I cannot tell you by your new title—my query more. Deem me what you will, I must relieve my heart of this crushing burden of doubt. Loving him, do you love another?"

"In being loved! Oh, why, why had I not been born a peer, or you a pauper?"

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The calm, blue eyes of the girl were lifted to his in earnest sympathy. She stroked back the bright hair from her temples with her soft fingers, saying simply:

"I am sorry, Gerard." "Yes; I know you are, my child, and so I have come to you to pour out my distress. I am but a boy—nineteen years have just passed over me, and yet I have all the strength and passion of manhood!

"I have awakened to the joy and sorrow of life—I have known the honey and gall of existence—I have loved!"

"She started, blushed, and then turned white as December snow." "I have loved one as far above me as the stars are above the earth! A proud, beautiful, but tender-hearted girl! And for all her wealth and pride and beauty she loved me in return!"

"Ruth's disengaged hand shaded her face; she did not look up as she said: 'Well?'"

"She loved me, but by the command of her father—her dying father—she wedded a man whom she loathed! My fate is black, but it is morning light compared with hers! Only think of it, Ruth; compelled to cling for life to one for whom she feels only aversion and hatred!"

"And you loved, Grace—you loved her deeply and strongly as you will never love again? You will keep unto her, and her only, as long as time with you shall endure!"

"He marvelled at the singular brilliancy of those blue eyes; he wondered at the blush which made her cheeks like damask roses—but oh, so full of comprehension is man! He understood it not."

"Yes, Ruth, I loved her thus! No other woman will ever enter into her place in my heart; no other footprint will wake the echoes of that sealed chamber where her love is buried. Henceforth, I ignore the existence of Love; I live only for Fame and Fortune!"

"His voice took a hard, stern tone as he proceeded, and his face looked cold and gray as hammered granite. Ruth, pale, silent, leaned against the wainscot. He went up to her, alarmed by her still rigidity."

"What ails you, dear Ruth? Why do you stand there so like a frozen thing?" "I am cold; I drew near the fire."

"It is a bitter morning!" "Yes, truly; and your arms are bare. Let me wrap this shawl around you."

"Thank you, and now go on. I am listening." "I have little more to add, except that I am going away—where, I scarcely know; but I must flee from the place which holds her. I must not remain to tempt her and expose my own weakness. And now, Ruth, if, in after years you shall hear me speak of Gerard Middleton as a cold, loveless being, you will remember he once had a heart, but that a cruel fate took away its vitality and left it dead."

"Yes, I will remember." "That is well. I must go now, Ruth, and God bless you. It may be a long, long time until I see you again. God, in heaven, bless and prosper you!"

"He held her for a moment in his brotherly arms, kissed her cheek with affection, and went from the house."

And Ruth, staggering back to a seat, cried out in sharp despair: "Yes; he said it would be a long time ere we met again, and so it will! The length and darkness of the grave lies between then and now!"

CHAPTER IV. THE WAGES OF DESPAIR. Growing up to youth together, it was not strange that Gerard Middleton and Ruth Mowbray should be tenderly endeared to each other. Both were orphans, both were poor—both were struggling through the world to obtain a subsistence by manual labor. It was but natural, then, that their attachment should be strong, and their regard for each other deep and steadfast.

With Gerard this affection was that of a tender brother for a dear sister; with Ruth it was the all absorbing passion of her life. She never thought of happiness where Gerard was not; never dreamed of a heaven from whence he was excluded. Fully and entirely she loved him; her life she would have given, any day, for him to have saved him a pang; all her hopes and joys were centered around him. She never paused to think of the consequences of this ardent love; she would have blushed with veriest shame if it had been said to her, even in sport, You love this Gerard Middleton."

Yet in her true and loyal heart, she yielded up all on the shrine of the earthly idol. Fearfully had she been punished! The golden dream had vanished. The skies, lately so radiant, were gray and cold; earth stretched out before her a barren and dreary desert—there was no joy; no hope; no merciful grace there! Why should her hair be blanched white by the weight of years, and her eyes grow dim with age before the sleep of the grave—its sweet, dreamless sleep came upon her."

She had not the courage to look the grim future in the face! Her faith was small; her trust in God's gracious Providence weak. She said to herself she would go down to death, and thus rid her heart of its burden. There was rest in dust. There would be none to mourn for her; Gerard, perhaps, might shed a few tears, but they would dry soon, and her name would pass from his remembrance. One little plunge beneath the bosom of the sparkling river—a little chilliness as the great change crept on—a wondering of strangers over the drowned girl—and all would be over!

The night set in with storm clouds. There was a dull, sleet-bearing blowing; the tempest of yesterday had spent its fury, but the skirts of its garments yet trailed over the earth.

Ruth put her little room in order, trimmed the lamp, and lighted a fire in the chimney-place. You would have thought, from her scrupulous exactness, that a favored and welcome visitor was expected. When everything was arranged, she folded her shawl over her shoulders, and looked the door of the cottage behind her, she took the path through the snow, to the river.

She stood upon the high bank above the boiling flood—listened to the hollow murmur of the wind in the leafless trees, and the low gurgling voices of the waters as they hurried past.

A momentary trembling seized her—a cold hand seemed clutching at the warm fountains of her life—but she conquered the motion, for the grave was not colder than the world—the desolate, heartless world!

She lifted her hands to heaven and cried aloud—"God receive me!" The fatal spring was made—the earth

crumbled from under her feet—the chill air from the river swept up and made her shudder—but she did not fall. A strong hand held her back—a grave solemn voice said:

"Child! what would you do?" "I would die!" she said, simply. "Die! has God, then, called you? Do you dare go unrepentant into the presence of the Ruler of heaven and earth—the Lord of Hosts, who has forbidden man to toy with the life which He has given?"

"I am weary and heart-sick, good sir; and the tomb gives a dreamless sleep." "But the hereafter! Have you thought of that? the terrible hereafter! You are young and fair; your face is like the face of a child, why should you be weary of that life which you have just begun; and which strong men buffeted by a thousand storms cling to tenaciously?"

"I am wretched and alone. Not a tie of kindred; not a soul on whom I have the slightest claim for care or protection! I have none to counsel me; none to advise!"

"If you will permit me to stand to you in a place of a brother, I will be all that a brother should! said the young man gently—but for comfort in this trial, which you are evidently passing, you must look up to God, who alone can give peace to the troubled heart."

"I cannot look up! I have no courage; no strength!" "Strength will come in answer to prayer, my sister; and not death, but life is the season for offering the petition. Will you come back to it?"

His friendly hand drew her away from the icy brink of the river; the strange persuasiveness of his voice brought a feeling of feeling to her sore spirit. She saw with measureless terror the frightful doom from which he had saved her.

"I will go back!" she cried earnestly—"I will shrink from no evil! Only show me the way to light once more!"

It seemed that he knew her residence, for he led her up the path to the cottage which she had quit but a brief hour before. The lamp still burned brightly; the fire blazed cheerfully on the hearth. He seated her in a chair before the grate, removed her shawl with thoughtful care, for it was wet with snow, and then took a seat himself, on the opposite end of the hearth. During the space of silence which fell between them, so strangely brought together, Ruth had time to observe fully the face of her unknown guest.

The face was pale, its features finely though delicately cut; the curve of the nostrils indicated firmness and courage, but the mouth was tender and beautiful as a woman's. It was a face of spiritual strength and beauty—the face of one who had lived and suffered.

"You are Ruth Mowbray? I recognized you at once, from having seen you sometimes at church. And I am John Rutherford, the pastor of Windfall."

She knew now, to whom she owed her life—the young clergyman, whose burning eloquence had won so many weary ones to rest their burdens at the foot of the Cross.

She arose, and held out her hand to his. From the fulness of her heart she spoke: "Sir, you have saved my soul from death. For this I thank you. During the day and night which are gone I have been mad—but I trust the frenzy is over. Some time, to show you the truthfulness of my gratitude, and to prove to you that I had some cause for distress, I will confess to you what has never passed my lips. It will fill me with shame, yet I owe it to God for the sin I was about to commit against him."

"Ruth, my sister, I ask of you no confidence which it is not your pleasure to give; but when you are saddened and oppressed, come to me freely, that I may share the weight of the burden."

He looked into her eyes with calm serenity—his hand was upon the latch to go.

"You will be true to yourself—you will think of that terrible self-destruction no more! I can trust you."

He smiled upon her hopefully, opened the door and passed out.

Ruth fell on her knees, and while thanking God that she had been taken from temptation, she prayed earnestly for that peace which passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER V. MAPLEWOOD. The family mansion of Mr. Winnifred stood on a high bluff of land, some fifty rods from the coast. It was a widely picturesque situation commanding a glorious view of the long reach of the Cape Cod, and the gleaming bosom of Massachusetts bay.

The house was a large, old, rambling structure, brightened by numerous modern additions, and fortified on all sides by innumerable piazzas, balconies, and verandas, from all of which the bleak shores of Plymouth were distinctly visible. There were a few trees, such as flourish on sea-shore—trees of grand proportions, which had been beaten by the storms of many a winter.

The whole spacious interior of the house was fitted up in a style of grandeur rarely seen on this side of the Atlantic, and the room appropriated to Winnifred was, in itself, a miracle of magnificence. It was the entire size of an octagonal tower in the western wing of the building; and its southern winding opened upon the superb gardens and shrubbery, which were Mr. Winnifred's special pride.

The walls of this *bedroom* were hung with pictures, by the old masters, in frames of carved rosewood; the floor was laid with an exquisite pattern of crimson flowers, on a ground of pale brown velvet. The chairs and sofas were covered with the costliest *velours de Venise*, and the heavy silken curtains were looped back with bands of enameled gold.

The work table, mantle, and *etageres* were all inlaid with pearl—rare specimens of work, imported from a foreign country. There was a harp, and a cabinet piano in a gilded case, strown with choice pieces of music. Books there were in elegant bindings, with clasps of gold, and emitting faint odors of perfume, soft as the breaths of Araby's breezes; but Winnifred shuddered as she looked on the illuminated pages. There were volumes of her husband's choice; and, for the first time she came to the knowledge that she had wedded an infidel, one who denied the existence of God, and believed in no principle of the christian religion. In exquisite caskets though these books were held, their contents were a vile poison, and Winnifred brought up as she had been in the strict tenets of a christian church, absorbed the sight of these tokens of infidelity. Her soul loathed them as unclean things, which it would tarnish the lips to read, and stain the heart to comprehend. And she cast

them altogether into a cabinet, closed and locked the door, and flung the key far out of the window. If this was a superstitious error, it was on the side of truth.

A moment afterward, Mr. Winnifred entered the chamber. His eye fell upon the table where the books had been; he missed them, evidently, but made no inquiry for their fate.

"How does the arrangement of Mrs. Winnifred's apartment please her? he asked."

"Mr. Winnifred has taken unnecessary care in its appointments," she replied; "the prisoned bird does not mind water, or its cage be gold or iron!"

Mr. Winnifred smiled, his teeth glistening wittily through his black moustache. "The bird will beat its wings until from sleek weariness it becomes content." His voice was soft and smooth; its intonation resembled a strain of music, but there was a world of cunningly-laden sarcasm in the sweet tones.

A disinclined curt wreathed Winnifred's lips, but she vouchsafed no other reply; and, finding her disinclined for conversation of any kind, he bade her a courteous good evening and quitted the apartment.

Winnifred's life at Maplewood was that of many another proud, beautiful woman, wedded to a man for whom no love is entertained—a fate the hardest and bitterest that can fall to the lot of woman! A home without love—a union but in name—a wretched farce, to which death alone can draw down the curtain.

The house was always filled with distinguished guests, for Mr. Winnifred stood high in the social and political world; and eminent statesmen, poets, artists, and orators made up the coteries of his personal friends.

And among them all, Winnifred moved with her own stately grace and beauty—an acknowledged queen. The splendor of her attire, the brilliancy of her jewels, but, above all, the perfection of her loveliness, made her the envy of her own sex and the admiration of the other.

In truth, she was well fitted to preside over the establishment of Mr. Winnifred; and in all the circle of that gentleman's acquaintance, he knew of no lady whom he would have preferred to install in the place of his wife.

Winnifred was seldom alone with her husband—she carefully avoiding him except on occasions when such avoidance would have attracted remark; and at such time there was no confidence, no communion of spirit between them. They were out and water—the one had no affinity for the other.

In all things, Winnifred studied to obey her husband; his slightest wish was her law. She had said to herself that in expiation of her weakness in yielding to an unthought love, she would be to Mr. Winnifred a true, faithful and obedient wife. She felt for him no affection; therefore she was cold and calm toward him, and his demeanor to her partook of the same laughly indifference.

In one thing only did she defy him. When he requested her to give up her attendance at church—a wild and fanciful proceeding of which he did not approve—she replied not. Mr. Winnifred might do as he chose for himself; but as for her so long as she lived she would worship God after the manner of her ancestors.

And, looking into her sternly flashing eyes and flinty face, he knew that it would not be safe to urge the matter, so he allowed the subject to drop.

Two years of this existence—it could scarcely be called life—and, outwardly, Winnifred was unchanged, save that her loveliness had ripened and grown more perfect. Envy, adored and flattered as she was, she was not a hour of happiness had she since the doors of Atherton Hall had closed behind her, when she had gone forth a bride.

The name of Gerard Middleton never passed her lips; with jealous care she kept her tongue from wandering after him; but close against her heart she wore a cluster of dead arbutus flowers—*As first and last given.* And those desecrated flowers told more than mere words.

Winnifred's twentieth birthday approached; it arrived, at length. The air was fragrant with spring's sweetest blossoms, but there was no festal joy at Maplewood. A night of wild doubt and anxiety, at times dizziness drew on; but with the morning light came a happy consummation.

Mrs. Winnifred was the mother of a fine boy! The father's delight was unexpressable. For the first time in his life a farm warmer than admiration swept through his being for his wife, because she had brought him this great blessing.

A son to bear his proud name, to inherit his vast fortune, to keep up the honor of his family!

Maplewood was thrown open in rejoicing. Langier, eccled around in lofty halls, lamps flamed, wine flowed, and in her darkened chamber languished the young wife, struggling with weakness—praying for her only child.

Who can fathom the depth of tenderness in the heart of a mother? Who can feel for that little helpless waif of humanity like her who has suffered to bring it into existence? Who care in like love, so gentle and tender? Who else on earth, so little child but its mother.

It was strange to see how Winnifred's proud heart softened and grew tender as an angel's toward that new being. When she was able to rise from her bed, she would sit for hours, gazing into its soft, dark eyes, and twisting its sicken rind about her fingers. The servant said that their mistress idolized the babe; and so it seemed, for never on any account would she permit it to sleep away from her breast, and no amusement was powerful enough in its attraction to draw her from the care of her son.

Mr. Winnifred named the boy William, after its paternal grandfather, but Winnifred stoutly said to him, the word had a westerly sound, she said.

Strongly as she was attached to Willie, her love met with a full return. Before he was three months old, he had learned to love her sheltering arms above any other resting place. He was piteously taken away from her but for a moment, and when a year had passed over his bright head, and he began to toddle carefully about from one thing to another, he would never quit the protecting cap of her hand, or go to the arms of strangers. He seemed to shrink from his father, and would kiss no one save his mother, either for threats or persuasions.

(To be continued.)

The death is announced of the Marquis de Vitray, one of the leading agriculturists of France.

EXHIBITION. T. W. SMITH, PLOWS. A PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION WILL BE HELD IN FREDERICTON ON THE 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th October next.

FISHER'S BUILDING, Queen Street, Fredericton, N. B. EUROPE CANADA, and the UNITED STATES. One of the best and cheapest stock of CLOTHS, CLOTHING, HATS, CAPS, AND Gents' Furnishing Goods.

NOTICE OF REMOVAL. C. T. WHELPLEY. WOULD respectfully announce to his friends and the public generally that he has removed THESE ROOMS BELOW THE OLD STAND, where with increased facilities to carry on a first-class Grocery Store, he hopes to merit a continuance of the very liberal patronage he received for the last twelve years.

ALLEN & WILSON, Barristers and Attorneys AT LAW. BECKWITH & SEELY, Attorneys-at-Law, Notaries Public, etc.

WAVEFLY HOUSE FREDERICTON. THIS well known hotel has been improved. JOHN R. GREY, Proprietor.

FUGG McMONAGLE, Solicitor, Corner, King's County, NEW BRUNSWICK.

EDGECOMBE'S BLOCK, York Street. WHITTIER & HOOPER, American and CANADIAN FLOUR.

ICE. ICE. ICE. THE subsera ice dealers, returning his sincere thanks to his customers for the liberal support given him in his ice undertaking, he would inform his old customers and the public generally that he has now on hand the largest and best lot of ICE in this city, and will be prepared to furnish, on reasonable terms, to all his old friends and as many new customers as will favor him with their patronage.

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