Literature.

The Adopted Daughter.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SPURNED BRIDE.

For some time poor Amber continued to call for help and beg to be released, but at length she realized the utter futility of such pleading, and sank into a chair, endeavoring to collect her thoughts and evolve a course of action.

That she had been thus abducted by the orders of Blair Moreland seemed to her an idea almost too stupendous for belief—and yet it was impossible to doubt the fact, after the assertion the valet had made.

She thought of her pupils, of Lady Moreland, of the stain that would rest upon her reputation because of her strange disappearance, and of her probable loss of situation in consequence, if she should ever regain her freedom, and her brain swelled almost to bursting, and she could only moan in her anguish.

After a while, however, she grew calmer, and endeavored to command her thoughts.

The first question that occurred to her was how to discover a plan of escape, and while she was considering this, she heard a key grate in the lock, the door softly opened, and a lighted candle was thrust into the room.

Before she could move or speak, the door was closed again and locked.

Amber stepped forward, picked up the candle, and proceeded to examine her prison.

It was a moderate sized square room, furnished in the style common to first-class mansions twenty years ago. The chairs and sofa were covered with crimson damask that had lost its early vividness of color; the floor was of polished oak, laid in a regular and pretty pattern, that looked like the finest mosaic work; and a massive table, darkened by age, occupied the center of the room.

There were two windows, but they were carefully guarded by a strong network of wire, which Amber found it impossible to detach.

Continuing her investigations, Amber noticed a door at one side of the apartment. This door stood ajar, and the girl pushed it open and passed through the aperture.

She found herself in a bed-room, furnished much like the little parlor adjoining, but containing in addition a low French bedstead, draped with white.

There was a window to this apartment, but it was also guarded by network.

There was another door at the side of this chamber, opposite to the parlor, but on trying it, Amber found it securely locked.

As the maiden's anxious glances took in all these things, her heart sank in her bosom, and she murmured:

No way of escape! Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?

She seated herself in a chair in the parlor, with that despair upon her lips, and sobbed aloud. The tears seemed to relieve both heart and brain, and she gave way to them unrestrainedly,

All the miseries of her lot rushed over her soul in that moment, convulsing it to center.

Her unrequitted love for Sir Ralph—the supposed fact of his speedily approaching marriage with Blanche—her lonely position in the world, and her dark future—all these things added tenfold to her anguish at her present terrible danger.

She was suddenly aroused from her weeping by the sound of uneven footsteps ascending the stairs, and the next moment Mrs. Glosson entered the room.

Tears, eh? she said, setting down a little tray of food upon the table. There's no use in crying, Miss. You'll only make yourself sick, without doing yourself a particle of good. I have brought you up some supper, according to Tamley's orders he left. He thought you might be hungry after your long ride.

Amber made no reply.

He said, too, continued the woman, that you had hardly got the effects of the chloroform he was obliged to give to you, so here is some strong coffee that will soon restore you. Here's a bottle of nice wine, too, if you like wine.

I don't want anything to eat, said Amber, repressing her tears and recovering her calmness, although her lips quivered with emotion. I can not eat.

What! not the oranges, nor the toast, nor the wine? I assure you, Miss, the wine is of the very best. Tamley only brought one bottle, and he called it green seal.

As she spoke, Mrs. Glosson gazed wistfully at the wine she extolled.

It was evident that she had a weakness for such things.

I can not eat! again said Amber.

Very well, responded the woman. I won't argue with you, if you don't want to eat. I'll just leave the things, so that if you feel hungry during the night you can help yourself.

She retreated to the door, and seated herself beside it continuing:

It's rather lonely down stairs, Miss, an' if you've no objection, I'll sit with you awhile. There's no use in burning two candles just yet. I s'pose you are not afraid of seeing the ghost, Miss?

What ghost?

They say the Italian lady, Mrs. Claenville, walks here. This is the very room she was murdered in by her husband. You can see some blood stains on the floor, for they aint ever been washed out. Blood never will wash out of wood, they say.

Involuntarily, Amber glanced at the few discolored spots on the polished floor, which her garrulous jailer pointed out as blood-stains.

This was her favorite room, continued Mrs. Glosson, and it was pretty enough before the trees grew so thick around the windows. Her son, Mr. Claenville, liked it the best of any in the mansion. He occupied it when he was here two years ago. I shouldn't have thought he would, and his mother murdered here, too. But he aint English, if his father was. He takes after his mother's family, I suppose. He appears to fairly hate England and the English. I didn't like his looks, I'm sure—'twasn't honest, like the English.

Amber continuing silent, Mrs. Glosson, after a short pause, remarked, in a confidential manner:

So, Miss, you have the good fortune to have been fallen in love with by a live lord? He must have plenty of money, and I consider you are a fortunate young woman.

Amber was disgusted with her tormentor, but she managed to conceal her dislike as she said:

"I was brought here against my will, as you know. I was drugged so that I could not even resist. I have not fairly recovered from the weakness consequent upon the drug. Tell me whose house this is, and what it is?

It's the Haunted House, Miss, and I'm it's housekeeper. The master is in Italy. I've taken you in as a boarder, and Tamley says I'm to be paid liberal for keepin' you.

Mr. Moreland is going to pay you well, is he? asked Amber, after a brief pause. Suppose I should pay you better to let me go?

The woman looked interested.

Amber marked the glitter of her cold, glassy eyes, and drew her watch from its pocket, displaying its enameled case thickly set with diamonds, and said:

"This was the gift of a dear friend who is dead, but I will give it to you, chain and all, if you will set me free immediately. See! it is worth a hundred pounds.

The old woman eyed the glittering ornament with longing eyes, but shook her her head as she replied:

Them dimuns are most likely paste. Governesses at your age aint apt to carry a hundred pounes on them in that shape, much less to give it away to get away from a real lord. No, Miss, I can't be deceived—I'm getting well paid as I am. I now all about cheap jewelry, which my late brother used to wear a plenty, and look like a lord with it, too.

But these diamonds are real, I assure you, declared Amber. Look at them for yourself.

If they are real, keep them, returned Mrs. Glosson, in a tone meant to be sarcastic. Real dimuns are not as plentiful as I could wish, and it's well to keep a store of them by you.

Amber replaced her watch in her pocket with a hopeless feeling, and said despairingly:

If you will not free me for money, do so for the sake of humanity. You are a woman, as I am. For the sake, then, of our common womanhood, release me, I implore you.

The woman smiled.

I beseech you by the memory of your own girlhood! cried Amber, with despairing earnestness. I am a poor girl, with only my good name. I work for my living, but should I remain here, even this one night, I should lose my situation. I would not be believed when I should explain the truth. Young ladies are not carried off so often as to make my employers believe me. Even this night's captivity here will blast my reputation for life—prevent my obtaining employment—and cause me to be regarded with suspicion always. Then have pity upon me—let me go!

Her wild pleading brought no look of pity to the coarse face of her jailer.

I can't do it! declared the woman. It's impossible. But there won't be any need for you to go back to your situation, Miss, for the young lord, as is to be, will take care of you as if you were a queen. He wants to marry you, and take you to a fine house, where you can order your servants and keep a carriage, and have company, and dress elegant. Tamley says my lord is that captivated that he would grudge at nothing to please you, and you ought to be rejoicing instead of acting like a mad woman. It isn't every poor governess can marry a lord.

Amber again attempted to move the heart or the cupidity of her jailer, even offering to allow her to show the watch to a jeweler, but the woman persisted in believing her diamonds paste, and peremptorily refused to touch them.

No, you can't get away from here! she declared. Bribing will do no good. I shall just mention your offer to my lord, though, and he'll pay me extra for resistin' the temptation, and she smiled. No, I shall be firm. You'll thank and reward me for it when you become my lady.

Amber shrank from the repulsive face of Mrs. Glosson, and her look of despair deepened.

It was terrible to be in the power of such a woman.

I'll leave you now, said Mrs. Glosson, after a period of watching her lovely captive. You must be tired and want sleep. I think I'll go to bed, too. You'd better make up your mind to your fate, Miss.

She left the room, locked the door, and Amber heard her descend the staircase, muttering as she went.

The night that followed was to Amber the longest she had ever known. She walked the floor with hurried footsteps until her limbs ached with weariness.

The candle burned down, its light going out in a sudden flare and sputter, and the morning light came in through the grated windows.

The girl sat at lengthby one of the windows, her face pressed against the strong network, her lovely features looking in the dim light as though carved from marble, and as the dimess of the scene grew more monotonous and dreary, her eyelids drooped and she slept.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCHEMERS IN COUNCIL.

Blanche Longley was seated in a handsome boudoir at Sir Ralph Courtney's town house. A scheming expression was in her blue eyes and a calculating look on her fair face. She was thinking of her kind host and how to draw him on to the desired point of a proposal—a task which notwithstanding all her hopefulness and prospect of success, required to be conducted with the greatest delicacy and caution.

Her apartment was adorned with luxurious beauty, which well became her fair race and blonde hair; and every appurtenance, however insignificant, showed wealth and taste. Blanche reveled in these things, and as she nestled on a silken couch in her favorite position, they seemed rightfully to belong to her—she looked so lovely, so gentle, so like a fairy princess.

As she sat there wrapt in meditation, a faint tap was heard upon the door, which opened, giving admittance to Jasper Longley.

"Well, how are you?" was his greeting, as he advanced toward her. "You look comfortable, I must say!"

Blanche started with surprise at his appearance, but made no effort to arise and greet him.

"Oh, it's you, Jasper?" she said, languidly. "Take a seat. How are you getting along?"

"As usual," he replied, dropping into an easy-chair near her. "What a pretty little den!"

He glanced around the apartment admiringly, noting the pretty French paper on the wall, the think, mossy carpet covering the floor, the silken couches and chairs, the handsome pictures, the Sevres vases, the cut glass scent-bottles, and finally his gaze returned to the pretty figure of his sister.

"Yes the room is lovely!" she declared with rather more vivacity than usual. "Would you believe it—Sir Ralph had it fitted up expressly for me. He said he thought the blue forget me-nots on the wall paper and carpet, and the blue silk furniture, would be becoming to my complexion."

Jasper arched his eyebrows.

"Indeed!" he ejaculated, depositing his feet upon a cushion. "Well you have made progress! Why, I thought he was to be away from Courtney Hall the whole year—and yet you seem to have made a splendid impression upon him!"

"He was away," replied Blanche, "and I led the dolefulest sort or life with Mrs. George, the lady housekeeper; but the other day he came home, and I prevailed upon him to usher me into society."

"So he told me," said Jasper. "He called upon me this morning and said you were here. He did not know you had dropped me a note yesterday, but was polite enough to invite me to spend the season with you here, and pressed upon me a handsome loan, which I was induced to accept. From these indications I concluded your designs were working nicely, and so came up to talk over the matter with you."

"I am glad you did," said Blanche, adjusting the lace frill at her wrists. "Did he say anything particular about me?"

"Nothing, except that you wanted to see more of the world, and all that. Has he proposed?"

"No," replied Blanche, "but then, he is pretty near that point. He thinks I am the most artless and innocent girl he ever saw, yet with a depth of character and soul—"

Jasper interrupted her by a laugh.

"You play your cards well," he said. "I should like to witness one of your interviews with the baronet. You are an uncommon woman, Blanche, and it will be your own fault if you are not Lady Courtney before the season is over."

"I shall be!" declared his sister, a look of deep resolve mantling her face. There is no possibility of failure!"

Jasper leaned back still further in his chair and surveyed his sister critically.

"By the way, Blanche," he said, after a pause, "that golden head of yours and your blue eyes are wonderfully taking to many men. You will be a star in the fashionable world. Have you thought, with your face as dowry, you may look higher than a simple baronet?"

"Of course, I've considered all these things," returned Blanche. "I'm not likely to underestimate myself, my dear brother. I've looked over the peerage books, and came to the conclusion that I cannot do better than marry Sir Ralph. His magnificent and uncumbered fortune, his grand, courtly air, his handsome face and stylish appearance, quite counterbalance even a grander title. Besides," she added, "I love him."

"Love him!" repeated her brother. "Is it possible? Why, Blanche, I thought you had no more heart than a fish!"

"That shows how fallible you are in your opinions," returned Blanche, quietly "But I don't allow my heart to interfere with my plans. It is, of course, subservient to my head.

"I believe you there," said Jasper. "But it doesn't seem possible that you, with your innocent looks, should have had the past you have! Have you never repented or felt sorry for sending Amber away from Courtney Hall?"

Blanche shook her head.

"Why should I?" she asked. "Have I not gained by it?"

As she said so, her blue eyes glittered, and her beauty seemed concealed by a mask of dangerous resolution.

Her brother regarded her with mingled pride and fascination.

"I should not like to offend you, although I am your brother," he said, speaking out his thoughts. "Still," he added, smiling, "you may be as harmless as you look. But to consider our plans, Blanche—what do you propose to do next?"

"Give a grand party" was the reply, "and enter society under the auspices of Sir Ralph and the chaperonage of Mrs. George. I shall dress like an heiress and attract attention!"

"And then?"

Blanche's eyes sparkled as she said:

"And Sir Ralph will fear that I shall marry some one else, and will propose without delay. I see it all as plainly as though it had already happened. He is not quite satisfied with me—but he begins to think that his ideal is too unreal. I know I shall win him. He will never find a lovelier woman than I am, if I do say it!"

Jasper smiled strangely.

"So I should have said a year ago!" he said, carelessly. "But I had not then seen the vision of beauty that dawned upon me last evening—or rather yesterday afternoon."

"What do you mean, Jasper?" demanded Blanche, sharply, her vanity piqued by his remark. "You have seen a prettier woman than I? How did she look? Some fat Dutch beauty, I'll warrant, or else one of those swarthy brunettes—"

"Not so," said Jasper, with a tantalizing smile. "The lady I saw was scarcely seventeen, in the first flush of womanhood with a slender, graceful figure, with fairy-like movements, and a face that would drive a saint distracted!"

"You are enthusiastic," remarked Blanche, coldly. "You give a very indefinite idea of her looks. Was she fair or dark? Describe her."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Jasper. "No description could do her justice. The faintest flush of pink stained her clear and delicate cheeks, her perfect lips were bright as scarlet coral, and her eyes were like purple pansies, but lustrous as stars; her hair had a golden glimmer about it, as if it had been powdered with gold dust. Her beauty was bewildering, intoxicating!"

He drew a long breath, and seemed to recall the beauty he had described.

"It is evident that this dainty beauty has one admirer," sneered Blanche.—"Where did you see her?"

"I met her by appointment."

"You met her by appointment?" cried Blanche, in astonishment. "Who is she? What is her name?"

"She is a governess, and her name is Amber Courtney."

Blanche started as though she had been stung.

"Impossible!" she ejaculated. "Don't I remember how plain she was? I see—you are joking!"

"Far from it," declared Jasper. "if I always speak as truthfully as I do now, I shall be a model of goodness!"

Blanche saw that her brother was in earnest, and she became suddenly serious and startled.

It seems strange to you, I don't doubt," said Jasper, after a pause, "but I expected it. I foresaw it. I have watched her developing into the splendid being she now is. Nevertheless, I too have been astonished at the rapid change in her appearance."

"You met her by appointment?" said Blanche, her incredulity disappearing as she marked her brother's earnestness.

"I did. I received your note in the morning, stating that you were to come to town, and implying that Sir Ralph had been induced to see your worth, and so on, and I immediately wrote to Amber, requesting her to grant me an interview on particular business. She did so, and we met."

"And your business?" said Blanche, anxiously.

"Was to inform her that Sir Ralph had proposed to you, and that your marriage was soon to be celebrated. She bore the tidings as I expected—nearly fainted, but recovered herself, and then bore it in that silent, awful way that is worse than any tears or groans."

"Then she loves him yet?" inquired Blanche, her face darkening.

"Loves him!" repeated Jasper, with a frown. "She adores him. You ought to see the color come and go in her cheeks at the mention of his name. Her head is subservient to her heart, I believe; although, to speak the truth, your intellect can't compare with hers."

"Nonsense!" said Blanche. "What cultivation has she had? She was only a child when she left Courtney Hall."

"Nevertheless she is cultivated and refined. I dare say she has had all the benefit of being taught by the masters who attend her pupils, for she once told me that she was required to remain with them in all their lessons."

"It is strange," remarked Blanche, pettishly, "that you could not get her to marry you. Why don't you urge her?"

"I have done better than that," observed Jasper, in a pleased tone. "I have been patient and tender, and believe she will consent. In fact, if any eyes said 'Yes,' Amber's did last evening. So you may soon have to congratalate me on my wedding."

Blanche's good humor seemed to return on hearing this statement.

"I'm glad of it," she declared. "Still you must not be so certain. If she's so beautiful, she may aim to win a title, notwithstanding the mystery about her birth.

Jasper smiled.

"I imagine," he said, "that if Sir Ralph were to behold her, his scruples about obeying his father's wish would vanish, and his ideal would be realized."

"And she loves him?" cried Blanche, springing from her couch and bending close to her brother. "Oh, Jasper, they must not meet! Tell me where she lives."

The dangerous expression in her eyes decided Jasper to do nothing of the kind and he informed her to that effect, adding:

"I can take care of myself and Amber, too. You have only to look out for Sir Ralph."

"But they might meet in the street—at church—"

"There's no danger," broke in Jasper. "The girl has true delicacy, and would avoid him. Besides, I defy Sir Ralph or any one else to reoognize in the brilliant girl of to-day the homely, unformed child of a year ago. Do your best to hasten a marriage with the baronet, and I'll soon present you with a sister-in-law."

Blanche returned to her couch, but with a dissatisfied expression on her countenance.

She had prided herself upon her unusual beauty, upon her glittering hair, her soft blue eyes, her unsunned complexion. and now to be told that her face was plain compared to the face of a being whom she had injured, filled her heart with bitter and angry feelings.

She began to feel insecure—unsafe. She had begun to attract Sir Ralph by her beauty, and was not afraid to compare herself with any of the belles of the season, but now she experienced a strange fear as she thought of the obscure Amber and pictured her as Jasper had described her.

Her brother watched the changing expressions of her countenance for several minutes, congratulating himself that he had kept Amber's whereabouts from her, and then he proceeded to give her an idea of their interview, and soon succeeded in restoring her to calmness.

"It is for my interest for you to marry Sir Ralph," he said thoughtfully. "It is quite possible that Amber may hold out until your marriage is celebrated. Use all your arts then, Blanche, and hurry on the affair."

Blanche nodded in silence.

A pause succeeded, during which Jasper drummed lightly upon the arm of his chair, and hummed a popular tune in the most care-free way, while his sister knitted her brows in thought.

At length she broke the silence, saying: "I should think you might explain to me this mystery about Amber's parentage. Tell me who she is, Jasper—that's a good brother."

Her caressing tone had no effect upon her relative. Artificial as he was, he liked genuineness, and he well knew that Blanche's affection for him was mostly assumed, so his manner was cool as he answered:

"I'll tell you all that after I'm married. Has Sir Ralph promised you a party?"

"No, but I'm sure I have but to ask for it. Do you suppose he opened his town house to keep me in seclusion?"

She consulted her watch, and added:

"I asked him for an interview at three o'clock, and its five minutes past. He's probably awaiting me in the study, so I must bid you adieu. I'll send you a line this evening to let you know my success, and of course you'll come to my party?"

She arose, adjusted her costume before the mirror, and gave an admiring glance at her reflection.

"You haven't asked me if I'm coming here to stop," said Jasper, arising; "but if you had, I should have said I don't know. I like the independence of chambers, but of course I shall call often upon you, and attend your parties and balls. Manage your interview with Sir Ralph with your usual prudence, and if possible bring him to your feet. *Au revoir.*"

He lifted his hat jauntily, stood beside his sister a moment before the mirror, and then took his departure.

Blanche polished her curls with her brush, gave a delicate scent to her cambric handkerchief, assured herself that her lavender robe was faultless, and then swept down stairs to the baronet's study.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ARTFUL DAMSEL.

Sir Ralph was in his study punctual to his appointment, when Blanche entered, and he handed her a chair, saying with a smile, and resumed his seat. "Well," he said, after a pause, "what is it that you want, fair cousin?"

"Oh, dear," sighed Blanche, "my courage is all gone! I'm almost sorry I ventured in here."

Sir Ralph believed her embarrassment to be genuine, and thought how lovely she looked, while he exerted his tact to elicit from her the object of her visit. He was soon made aware by the prettiest acting in the world, that Blanche had a desire common to innocent and inexperienced maidens—namely, to have a coming-out party.

"It must look foolish to you," she said, hanging her head; "but I've seen so little English society, Sir Ralph, and I've read so much about it."

"I am glad you have been frank enough to express your wish," said the baronet, in his grave way, "and I shall be only too happy to grant it. In fact, Blanche, I have already spoken to Mrs. George on the subject, and, if you are suited, the party shall be given in a week or so. You can send out the invitations to-morrow."

Blanche's eyes sparkled with genuine delight.

"How good you are," she cried, grasping his hand. "How kind of you to think of my happiness! If I only knew how to repay all your goodness—"

It trembled upon Sir Ralph's tongue to ask her to become his wife, especially as he marked her eyelids droop, and her face flush under his earnest gaze; but he resisted the impulse, and said, instead:

"You overrate my attention Blanche. I have done a brother's duty."

"A brother's!" cried the girl, with consummate acting. "Oh, Sir Ralph! That is," she added, appearing to recover herself, "I didn't mean—excuse me—oh, what am I saying?"

She covered her face with her jeweled hands, and as the baronet looked at them he was reminded of another pair of hands, daintier and whiter—those belonging to Amber.

The reminder was but momentary, and his generous soul was filled with pity for Blanche, who had apparently so artlessly revealed her love for him.

Again the temptation beset him to offer her his hand, but the swift reflection that she had not yet gained his heart decided him, and with true delicacy he pretended to misunderstand her broken exclamations, and said:

"So you think I am presuming, to call myself your brother, Blanche? Then let it be cousin. But you mustn't be too grateful for a cousinly attention. I shall be pleased to see a little company myself. I have no wish to become an ascetic or recluse, but like to entertain my friends occasionally. By the way, I called upon Jasper to-day."

Blanche was almost choking with chagrin at the failure of her bold experiment, and her face was pale with suppressed emotion as she said:

"So he said. He has just left me."

Sir Ralph exerted himself to restore to his fair guest her equanimity, and soon succeeded; but a sort of constrain crept over their conversation, and Blanche soon left him, proceeding to her own chamber.

"I fear she loves me," said the baronet, pacing to and fro in a perturbed state of feeling when he found himself alone. "In fact, I'm sure of it. What else could mean her glances, her blushes, her exclamations? What am I bound to do in the case, as a man of honor? I do not love her as I wish to love the lady who may become my wife, but I esteem her highly, and with a brotherly affection. I wish she were married to some one who would love and appreciate her as she deserves—the dear, artless child!"

He carefully reviewed his entire conduct toward her, and even his rigid conscience acquitted him of blame in the matter of gaining her affections, yet still his thoughts lingered on the subject and he could not drive from his mind her prettily confused air.

"I must be more circumspect," he resolved. "I will watch her carefully, being guarded in my manner toward her, and if I find that her happiness is irretrievably dependent upon it, I will offer her my hand. "Perhaps," he added, bitterly, "all my dreams are futile. I may have pictured as my ideal wife a woman who has no existence. And yet at times the vision haunts me of a being all noble, all pure and good, who would love me with a strong, all-enduring affection, who would be my wise counselor and friend, and my loving wife—but it's only a dream."

His eyes moistened, and his noble features worked with emotion, but he collected his thoughts, musing:

"One thing is clear—Blanche, good as she is, is not the realization of my ideal, I shall probably, however, decide to marry her, if I am not flattering myself in thinking she loves me."

The days passed quickly, and Blanche absorbed in preparations for the *fete*, saw little of the baronet. When they met at the table, however, her manner was deprecatory and subdued, the surest way, as she knew, to touch his generous heart.

The evening assigned to the party came around, and the mansion was all ablaze with lights. Garlands adorned the walls in profusion, giving a gala air to the splendid apartments. Perfumes and music floated through the atmosphere, and every sense was charmed and delighted.

The noble guests, in gorgeous costumes, began to arrive early, and the in-rolling tide did not cease until a late hour.

Sir Ralph, Blanche, and Mrs. George—the latter, a matronly lady of excellent presence—did the honors, and Blanche quite excited the baronet's wonder by her serene self-possession, as well as charmed him by her dress,

She seemed to bloom out with a sudden splendor, and he could not but admire her.

Her robe was of filmy lace, dead white in hue, over a white silk slip, with a heavy white sash at her waist. Her arms and neck were bare, but lost nothing by contrast with her costume, and were further set off by a necklace and bracelets of pearls. Her golden hair shone in glossy curls, and her only head-dress was a bunch of blue violets at one side. A similar bunch nestled in the lace of her corsage

But the baronet was not the only one to perceive her beauty or be charmed by it. Young men with and without titles and fortunes clustered around her like bees around a blossoming rose, and setting aside the fact that she was assistant hostess, she was pronounced the belle of the evening.

Sir Ralph contemplated the lively scene with a great deal of pleasure. There were many among his guests whom he had not seen for years—before his studies abroad—and there were others with whom his acquaintance was brief or trivial, but owing to his tact and excellent management all were social and happy.

As he left a group of friends to move among the brilliant company, he was tapped on the arm by a jeweled fan, and turning, he beheld Lady Moreland leaning upon the arm of her husband.

The Morelands had returned to town two or three days previous.

Her ladyship was attired in white moire, and wore a head-dress of feathers that sparkled with diamonds. The same jewels were scattered over her neck, waist, and arms so profusely that she looked as though she had been plunged into a bag of diamonds and they had adhered to her person.

His lordship looked small and thin beside his resplendent wife, but, nevertheless, seemed to have taken courage, and appeared to be enjoying himself.

It was evident that he was immensely proud of her ladyship, and he was continually on the watch to intercept admiring glances that might be cast at her.

"I hope that you are enjoying yourself, Lady Moreland." exclaimed Sir Ralph. "I haven't seen Mr. Moreland here this evening. I trust he is well."

"He is, thank you," responded her ladyship in her stately manner. "He will be here later in the evening. By the way, I have something to say to you Sir Ralph. My love," and she turned to her husband, "I will take a turn through the rooms with our host, while you see some of your friends."

His lordship released her arm with an expression of mingled jealousy and displeasure, and looked after her pretty form as she sailed off, leaning upon her handsome host.

"What a lovely creature your ward, Miss Longley, is," said her ladyship, with an expression which she meant to be arch. "Rumor says she will be Lady Courtney, so I suppose you are pleased to see what a success her *debut* is. Everybody is talking about the new star that is rising upon our social circle."

Sir Ralph smiled, and contradicted the report of his engagement to Blanche.

"Of course you'll say so," said her ladyship, tapping his arm again with her fan. "Men always do."

The last remark was accompanied by a smile which was intended to render the words complimentary.

"I have no present intention of marrying," responded the baronet, quite gravely, as he skillfully conveyed his companion through a thicket of spreading robes. "But to change the subject, I am quite disappointed in not seeing the Marquis of Ardencout here this evening. I was quite in hopes that he would come."

"My brother is not at all well this evening," returned her ladyship. "The marchioness remained at home on his account. I am commissioned to tender you her regrets."

The baronet expressed his sorrow at the indisposition of the marquis, and her ladyship continued:

"I have a singular affair to relate to you, Sir Ralph. For a year or so I have had in my family as governess to my daughters a young relative of yours, a Miss Courtney—"

Sir Ralph started.

"Amber in your family!" he exclaimed in astonishment. Is it possible?"

It was now her ladyship's turn to be surprised.

"Didn't you know it?" she inquired. "I supposed, of course, you did. I thought it very singular that your late father should have made no provision for her after educating her and bringing her up in luxury."

Sir Ralph colored, remembering his father's wish for him to marry Amber, and thus endow her with fortune, and he briefly replied that he should have settled a sister's portion upon her, had she not suddenly disappeared.

"Indeed!" commented her ladyship. "She was very young, and I shouldn't have employed her, only that she would be a safe associate and governess for my girls. A mother has to be so guarded, Sir Ralph. And really Miss Courtney was far beyond her years in knowledge and steadiness!"

The baronet bowed.

"But she had another qualification, very unsuitable for a governess," said Lady Moreland. "She is, without exception the most beautiful girl I ever saw!"

Sir Ralph smiled.

"You amuse me," he said. "My father shared the same illusion as your ladyship, and talked of the poor girl's beauty."

"But really she is," persisted Lady Moreland, as they passed beyond the range of Jasper Longley's vision, for Jasper had been anxiously watching them, and wondering if her ladyship was communicating to the baronet that Amber was in her employ. "She was very plain when she came, but she has developed into a beauty. Your lovely ward, Miss Longley, is quite plain in comparison with her. Then she was graceful and fascinating, so that when my poor boy came home from India, he fell immediately in love with her."

"And so your ladyship is about to be presented with a daughter-in-law?" said the baronet, with one of his rare smiles, while his countenance beamed with joy and relief at having the mystery of the girl's fate solved. "She shall have a marriage dowry worthy of a Courtney, Lady Moreland."

"I don't doubt it," returned her ladyship, nervously, although inwardly wondering what could have induced Amber to leave so kind a relative, "but she refused Blair. The point at which I want to arrive is this. Three or four days ago, while we were still at Moreland Park, Miss Courtney went out and never returned. Our inquiries have availed nothing. No one appears to know anything about her."

Sir Ralph regarded her ladyship in bewildered surprise.

"Disappeared!" he repeated. "That is singular. Has Mr. Moreland no clew to her fate?"

"None. He is quite overcome by it. I have thought she may haxe eloped with some one. What else can I think? But why elope? She may have committed suicide—"

Sir Ralph shuddered.

"My father almost idolized the child," he said, with a broken voice, and remembering that fact, this news is a great grief to me. I shall put forth every exertion to find her. I thank your ladyship for the communication, but must express my regret that I was not informed earlier."

They conversed further on the subject and her ladyship spoke in warm terms of the girl's conduct while with her, and of her daughters' attachment to her.

And then, as Lord Moreland was observed following them with disconsolate glances, her ladyship rejoined her husband, and the baronet then went about among his guests, but with a heavy heart.

The supper was a success, and excited hearty commendation, even among that fashionable throng, and after the return from the supper-room the enjoyment seemed to wax higher.

It was then that Sir Ralph approached Blanche, offering her his arm, and said:

"My dear cousin, I have news of our lost one. Amber has—"

Blanche interrupted him with a cry of surprise, and he led her to the conservatory, proceeding with the story as told him by Lady Moreland.

It is impossible to describe the emotions that convulsed the heart of the girl as she listened to the recital, but she managed to conceal them from her companion, as she stood in the shadow of a blossoming orange tree, and expressed her sorrow in seemingly natural terms.

"Poor girl!" she sighed. "And how kind Lady Moreland was to take her as governess. I hope nothing has happened to her!"

"I shall search for her!" responded the baronet. "Our police detectives are very skillful, and no doubt her fate will be discovered. But we must conceal our gloom from our guests, Blanche. Let me conduct you to our friends."

He did so, and left her there, devoting himself to the company with great success, as Mrs. George was also doing.

Later in the evening, when many of the guests had departed and the rooms were greatly thinned, Jasper approached his sister's side and asked her how she was enjoying herself.

"Vastly," was the response. "By the way, Jasper, I've discovered one of your secrets—Amber was governess at Lady Moreland's."

"I suspected her ladyship was making some such communication to Sir Ralph," declared Jasper, with visible annoyance.

"And that isn't all," went on Blanche her blue eyes sparkling with pleasure at holding a piece of information of which her brother was in ignorance. "She has disappeared."

"Disappeared!" ejaculated Jasper.

"Yes, and as near as I can find out, about the time you met her by appointment."

She narrated what she had heard, but was appalled by the look that greeted her statement.

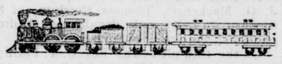
"Gone!" repeated Jasper, his face of a livid paleness, "where can she be? Perhaps this Blair Moreland had something to do with her disappearance. I'll find her, I swear it!"

He turned abruptly and hastened from the house.

The remainder of the evening Blanche was quite like a meteor among her guests. As Sir Ralph noticed her, he thought once or twice how speedily she seemed to have forgotten poor Amber, but he quickly made excuses for her in his own heart.

As Blanche had foreseen, her evening success had made the baronet proud of her, and caused him to feel a deeper interest in her, and as she laid her head upon her pillow that night her heart throbbed high with anticipations of her marriage with him.

(To be continued)



NEW BRUNSWICK RAILWAY.

(Operating 443 miles.)

SUMMER TIME TABLE.

All trains are run on Eastern standard time, which is 36 minutes slower than Saint John actual time.

COMMENCING JUNE 2nd, 1883, Trains will run as follows:

St. John Division.

DEPARTURES.

5 30 A. M.—From Water Street, St. John—Mixed accommodation for Fredericton.
6 30 A. M.—From Water Street, St. John—Boston Fast Express for points West, and for St. Stephen, St. Andrews, Houlton, Woodstock, and all points North and South.
4 30 P. M.—From Water Street, St. John—Express for Fredericton.
8 30 P. M.—From Water Street, St. John—Night Express for points West, and for St. Stephen, Woodstock, Houlton, and all points North.
1 00 P. M.—From Fredericton for St. John.
6 25 A. M.—From Fredericton, for points West, North and South, and St. John.
4 30 P. M.—From Fredericton for St. John.
7 00 A. M.—From Gibson, for Woodstock and points north.

ARRIVALS.

5 30 A. M., at St. John—Fast Express Train from all points West, and from St. Stephen, Woodstock, Houlton, and all points North
9 15 A. M., at St. John, Water Street—Express from Fredericton.
4 30 P. M., at St. John, Water Street—Express from points West, and from St. Stephen, St. Andrews, Woodstock, Houlton, Fredericton, and all points North and South.
8 00 P. M., at St. John, Water Street—Mixed accommodation from Fredericton.
4 35 P. M., at Fredericton from points West, North and South.
7 30 P. M., at Fredericton from St. John.
9 30 A. M., at Fredericton from St. John.
4 20 P. M., at Gibson, from Woodstock and points north.

☞ Pullman Sleeping Cars on Night Trains, and Dining Room Cars on Day Trains, to and from Bangor. Berths secured at ticket office, Water Street—G. A. Freeze, agent.

No train leaves St. John Saturday night or Sunday morning.

A train arrives at St. John from the West Sunday morning and a train leaves for the West Sunday night.

Through connections are made from Boston on Sunday nights.

Connexion is made at Vanceboro with trains of the Maine Central Railway to and from all points West, at Fredericton Junction for Fredericton, and at Gibson by branch line, for all points North.

Tickets for sale in Fredericton at New Brunswick Railway Ticket Office, and at Messrs. J. Richards & Son's Ticket Agency, Queen street.

E. R. BURPEE, Gen'l Manager.
N. T. GREATHEAD, Gen'l Pass. and Ticket Agent.

St. John, N. B., June 2, 1883

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS.

CURE

Sick Headache and relieve all the troubles incident to a bilious state of the system, such as Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Distress after eating, Pain in the Side, &c. While their most remarkable success has been shown in curing

SICK

Headache, yet Carter's Little Liver Pills are equally valuable in Constipation, curing and preventing this annoying complaint, while they also correct all disorders of the stomach, stimulate the liver and regulate the bowels. Even if they only cured

HEAD

Ache they would be almost priceless to those who suffer from this distressing complaint; but fortunately their goodness does not end here, and those who once try them will find these little pills valuable in so many ways that they will not be willing to do without them. But after all sick head

ACHE

Is the bane of so many lives that here is where we make our great boast. Our pills cure it while others do not.

Carter's Little Liver Pills are very small and very easy to take. One or two pills make a dose. They are strictly vegetable and do not gripe or purge, but by their gentle action please all who use them. In vials at 25 cents; five for $1. Sold by druggists everywhere, or sent by mail.

CARTER MEDICINE CO., New York City.

HAGYARD'S YELLOW OIL CURES RHEUMATISM

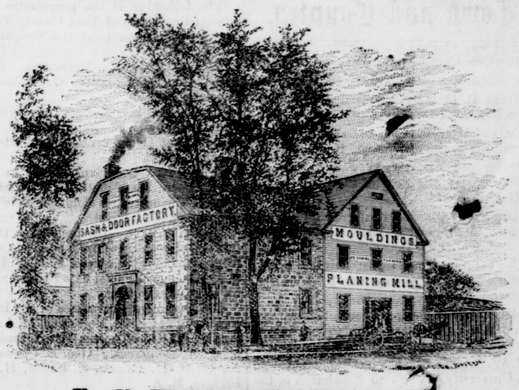
FREEMAN'S WORM POWDERS.

Are pleasant to take. Contain their own Purgative. Is a safe, sure, and *effectual destroyer of worms* in Children or Adults.

LAWN MOWERS!

For Sale Low, at

JAS. S. NEILL'S.



J. C. RISTEEN & CO.,

—MANUFACTURERS OF—

DOORS, SASHES, AND BLINDS,

—ALSO—

FURNITURE.

Moulding, Jig Sawing, Planing and Turning done to order.

Dressed Clapboards, Flooring and Sheathing constantly on hand

Corner Queen and Smythe Streets, Fredericton, N. B.

NEW MUSIC STORE!

WE HAVE NOW ON HAND A FINE STOCK OF

ORGANS and PIANOS!

which we will sell at low prices and easy terms.

CALL AND SEE THEM BEFORE PURCHASING, or write for PRICES.

Organs from $60 upwards.

☞ We have been appointed agents for the celebrated Chickering & Sons, and the Hallett and Cumston, and an number of other makers of Pianos, which w will sell on easy terms. Call and try them at the store.

J. F. McMURRAY.

Fire and Life Insurance.

English and American Companies, Old and Reliable.

Representing in Capital and Assets over $100,000,000.00.

Established 1803. Imperial, of London, England. Capital, $8,000,000.00
Established 1819. Ætna, of Hartford, Conn. Capital, $3,000,000.00
Established 1809. Hartford, of Hartford, Conn. Capital, $1,250,000.00
Established 1836. Northern, of London, England. Capital, $15,000,000.00
Fire Ins. Association (Ltd.) of London, England. Capital, $5,000,000.00
City of London Fire Ins. Co. (Ltd,) of London, Eng. Capital, $10,000,000.00
British Empire Mutual Life Assurance Co. of London, Eng. Established 1847.

Detached Residences in town and country insured for 3 years at lowest rates.

☞ Large deposits at Ottawa for benefit of Policy Holders. ☜

FAIR RATES and PROMPT PAYMENT of LOSSES.

JOHN BLACK.
Agent for York County

Office on Queen Street, over the Telegraph Office, directly opp. the Post Office.

PARSONS' PURGATIVE PILLS

MAKE NEW RICH BLOOD,

And will completely change the blood in the entire system in three months. Any person who will take 1 Pill each night from 1 to 12 weeks, may be restored to