

## REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

BY MARY CECIL HAY.

## CHAPTER II.—Continued.

But those who live much alone are keen to detect another's presence, even when they are not looking for it. Horace, thinking his landlady had sought him, turned his head absent as he played. But when he saw who had entered, he rose, closing the piano with fingers which were not very steady, though a moment afterward he faced his visitor with the utmost ease.

"Rohan," this visitor said, with a laugh, as he offered his hand, "you could not hide from me that first sensation of pride and disappointment. I felt in a moment how Ahab must have looked when he so politely greeted Elijah with the rather unnecessary interrogation, 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?'"

"You have found me," observed Horace, coolly, as he drew himself a chair opposite to his already seated visitor, and sat astride upon it, leaning with both hands upon the back of it.

"Yes, I have found you," Steven Pratman said, with a shrug, pleased smile. "We lawyers soon find a man when we want him, and I want you. But first tell me how you are. I don't ask how you are getting on, for I feel as if I knew. Fame you refuse to accept, by keeping your works secret; and as for your finances—why, you have only yourself to provide for."

"Only myself," assented Horace, without troubling himself to wonder why an old friend should apparently enjoy this notion of solitude. "I never spend money upon any one else. Why should I?"

"And you mix in no society now," continued the lawyer, almost seeming to relish his aggravating remarks, "being equally too proud to join that to which you were so long accustomed, and that into which your present choice of profession naturally throws you. Pleasant, isn't it? As pleasant as the Bastille."

"I can picture to myself circumstances under which the Bastille might be pleasant to a man," observed Horace, in a careless, pausing way.

"But no circumstances," returned the lawyer, uncompromisingly, "under which a man might regret to leave it—eh, Rohan?" he added, in sudden and unexpected earnestness.

"I've not traced you, and disturbed you here in your solitude only out of curiosity, or to indulge a little characteristic quizzing. No; I have come to you to-night with news which will change the whole tenor of your life. Your proper place and position are your own again, old fellow. The law has restored you your birthright, and I don't believe even you yourself will be so glad to be at Hilton Guise once more as I shall be to see you there."

One start Horace had given, while his face flushed almost like a girl's; but the next moment he was sitting again in that indolent attitude of his, with a stillness which in Stephen Pratman's eyes had always seemed peculiarly characteristic of him.

"I mean it," the lawyer asserted, with a nod which was intended to be the death blow to all doubt. "Hilton Guise and all your father's property are yours, dear fellow, at last. Come, don't sit there like a study in shadows. Do you fully understand me?"

"No."

"Then listen," Mr. Pratman continued, wondering why Horace's manner recalled so vividly to his memory the wretched day when he had to break to him the news of his father's unjust will. "Your late father's step-daughter who inherited everything under his will, has herself gone over to the majority. She died in Nice last Monday—she has been consumptive for years, I find—and like a sensible girl, had previously made her will in proper form, knowing that she could not live. Poor girl! I remember her as such a tiny, delicate child, yet such a spirited little thing too. You recollect her?"

"I recollect one thing," said Horace, in haughty quietness. "She was her mother's child."

"Yet that is the one fact which a man might be excused for doubting," returned Mr. Pratman, with a smile. "I found it hard to believe even from the first; harder still when I saw how keenly and terribly—child as she was—she felt the injustice done to you; harder still when she left the home, and took to her bed, with such real anguish in her childish petulance, that she would never go back to Hilton Guise; harder still when she ignored my wise advice to her, on the death of her mother, to return to take her place in the step-father's home as his acknowledged heir; harder still when, though legally possessing the magnificent estate, she coolly left it vacant, and pursued her own humble, insignificant career; and hardest of all, Rohan, now that, in one of the humblest and most orthodox of little wills, yet with all legal exactness—poor girl! It is surprising to me how a young lady, who has hitherto shown such slight knowledge of, or respect for, law, and with no legal relatives, should have bequeathed so circumstantially the property she has never claimed."

"Were you in Nice, then?" questioned Horace, with a sternness in his voice which sounded almost cruel.

"No, I'm sorry to say the latter did not reach me in time—by some fault I suppose, in the foreign offices. I was really disappointed. If I had only heard in time, both you and I could have gone over and paid the last possible respect to the girl who so generously, though eccentrically, ignored that will, and yet so justly restored everything to you at the last."

"But the old robbery—" began Horace; then he stopped and rose, and stood beside the window in the deepening twilight, very still and grave.

"The old robbery, as you quite justly call it, Rohan," put in the lawyer, cordially, "was not hers, poor little girl!"

"Don't trouble yourself to ejaculate so many poor girls," remarked Horace, with an impatience which his old friend, who knew him so well, was even glad to see. "You do it to elicit pity and forbearance from me. I have neither to give."

"You know," Mr. Pratman went on,

"how for a year and a half I have been advertising and using other means to trace Evelyn Carmichael. Well, all the time she knew this, and eluded me, while she lived in the quietest and most simple way with an old school-fellow."

"As she is dead," said Horace, quietly, "need we speak of her to-night?"

"Yes, we need," replied the lawyer with calm persistence, "for I want you to write a few lines to the Miss Heringhams who sent me these particulars, and who, of course, wished me to attend the funeral. For years Evelyn Carmichael has had a home with her—even for one whole year since I sent word to Miss Carmichael that the Hilton Guise property was all hers—and I can quite understand that she received untold kindness at the hands of this friend, considering how penniless she chose to be, and what a charge Evelyn must have been in her delicate health. This Miss Heringham is a girl like Evelyn herself—the very same age, I think she says, and that would be four-and-twenty. The two girls lived alone since the death of Miss Heringham's mother, never long residing in one place, I believe, and always seeking warm countries, escaping English winters and springs. But it was all of no avail, you see, as Miss Carmichael died in Nice last Monday. Now, Rohan, let us speak of something else. Don't you want to question me as to Hilton Guise? No? Well, certainly you will see all for yourself soon enough now, so it's no use worrying you with particulars. I've done all I could through the non-occupancy, but now I'm delighted to think how soon my old friend will be back in his rightful place. I expect that the welcome you will receive will astonish you. Now, my good fellow, rouse yourself, and come and sup with me at the Temple, to celebrate this."

"Not to-night," said Rohan, with no cynicism at that moment in his quiet tones. "You have brought the past back too vividly; and I cannot quite forget the little child who—whose death you tell me of."

"Whose death," supplemented the lawyer, cheerily—for the life of him he could not help saying it just then, as, in a flash of memory, he saw the backward years of Horace Rohan's life—"is but a tardy act of justice."

## CHAPTER III.

A wide and undulating park, which the great hand of Nature had made exceedingly beautiful; and, among its ancient trees, a lofty Tudor mansion, which the skillful hands of a man had made so replete with comfort, and so strong and spacious, that the artistic beauty which it lacked could scarcely be deplored. Three tiers of broad, smooth terraces running along the western side of the house, and on the highest of these a gentleman waiting on this August morning very patiently, looking round, with a shrug, gratified smile, upon the wide, rich view of park and pasture land.

"The right man in the right place at last; not a doubt about that." So Steven Pratman spoke to himself, as he leaned his arm on the stone balustrade.

"I'm glad indeed that we have him here again, but yet I'm not quite satisfied. That intense reserve of his is unnatural at his age. Why, bless my soul, he's ten good years younger than I am, and I look upon myself as a young man still at five-and-fifty! And then his avoidance of all woman—he, a rich young bachelor, to whom every mother and daughter in Sussex is trying to offer a friendly hand—is absurd! It's unnatural, and riles a man like me, who looks calmly on and sees exactly how things ought to be. Here I come down to find everything guided and managed by a master-hand—works and improvements originated, of which even I should never have thought; the tenants benefited in every way; the laborers treated with a consideration which, at any rate, they don't deserve; the servants worshipping their taciturn master like the feudal retainers of old day; and then into the perfection of everything he comes with that disdainful, solitary way of his. I declare all my friendly plans for his own personal welfare seem—from the way he receives them—actually to merit the slightest derision which he so lightly and so carelessly bestows upon them. Well, my only hope is in time—baffled nature's sweet restorer, if I may be allowed to improve an idea of Young's. Here he is."

It was not the author of the "Night Thoughts" whose approach Mr. Pratman hailed so heartily, but the squire of Hilton Guise, who, giving his horse to a groom, walked quickly up the terrace steps to join his friends, his shoulders and his tall riding boots covered with dust, while not a little had found a hiding place of its own on the dark refined face.

"You did not expect me over again so soon I suppose?" questioned the lawyer, as the two friends shook hands.

"Would it surprise you greatly to hear that I have come to Hilton this time on business that is not yours? But, before I go into that, I want to hear what you have been doing lately—something quixotic, I'll wager. By the way, of course you have given up that idea of renewing Berriotti's lease on the old terms? Why, the land is worth half as much again as it was when your father left it to him!"

"I know it is, and he deserves to benefit by that."

"Why, it's not his doing?"

"Nor is it mine; so, when convenient to you, Pratman, he is to have the lease. Now, come in to lunch, and ask me what you choose afterwards."

So the meal was taken, with only pleasant friendly conversation to accompany it. And, even when at last the two gentlemen sauntered out again to the west terrace, Stephen Pratman seemed only to be continuing the idle chat, when he drifted skilfully into the subject Horace Rohan always so studiously avoided.

"Only this morning I was wondering, Rohan, whether you had ever had any reply to the letter of sympathy you sent to Miss Heringham after Evelyn Carmichael's death—the letter I had such trouble in persuading you to write."

"Reply?" repeated Horace, coolly. "It was not written to win a reply."

"You mean," laughed his friend, "that you left no loop-hole for any one

to reply to it. Well, *cheveu a son god*. But, for my part, I'm very glad to win such letters as Miss Heringham writes—even I, the rusty man of business."

"For pity's sake, Pratman," put in Horace, curiously, as the lawyer took an envelope from his pocket, "spare me the infliction of a woman's letter!"

"It's not crossed," observed Mr. Pratman, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes; "there are no blots, and, on the whole, very little objectionable spelling. Still, if you have any misgivings as to your capacity for comprehending it, I will put it back into my pocket."

"Why not burn it?"

"Because I am not a confirmed and cynical old bachelor like you, Mr. Rohan. I have a vulnerable point even yet, which will answer to a woman's shy and dainty touch."

"Well?" interrogated Horace, dryly, in the unexpected pause.

"Therefore I have not burned Miss Joyce Heringham's letter—yet," continued the lawyer, placidly; "and therefore I'm valiant enough to speak of it to you."

"Is there anything, then," inquired Horace, stiffly, which I can do for Miss Heringham?"

"Possibly," assented his friend. "In this letter Miss Heringham frankly expresses a wish to see the neighborhood in which her old friend used to live; and, as she has been recommended sea-air, she thinks a little sojourn here—"

"She is welcome," said Horace, with rather fierce haste. "I will go away and leave the house to her."

"My dear fellow," cried Steven Pratman, suppressing his involuntary smile, "do you think Miss Heringham would volunteer to billet herself at Hilton Guise?"

"Then, if not, of what use can I be?"

"I don't know yet," rejoined the lawyer, good-humoredly, "but we shall see. To begin you, of course know nothing about Miss Heringham, not having either seen or heard from her, so your advice in a general way is all I care to elicit. But, you see, I have both seen her and heard from her—I went to Nice, you know—so I am pretty correctly judge now of her line of conduct. She certainly would not more visit you at Hilton Guise than she would visit my bachelor quarters in Hilton."

"Perhaps at the Rectory," suggested Horace, feeling himself called upon to suggest something in his companion's pause.

"No," returned the lawyer, with a shake of his head. "The lady's of course, are strangers to her, and she is far too independent—"

"An independent woman," observed Horace Rohan, as a casual passing remark, "ought to be a stranger everywhere."

"I, too, think it a pity for a woman to be independent," returned Mr. Pratman, with a swift, shrewd glance into his companion's face; "because when they are entirely dependent upon us for everything they do and every thought they think, they are so very much more altogether charming."

"The rooms at Cliff Cottage are vacant," put in Horace, not too patiently.

"Are they? That's capital. I know Miss Heringham will be well attended to there; and she deserves to be."

"Why?" queried Horace, a little contemptuously.

"Because," returned Steven Pratman, with promptness as well as gravity, "she was very kind herself to another solitary girl."

"Did she tell you so?"

"Really, Rohan, this is too bad!" ejaculated the lawyer, genuinely vexed. "Do you think I could ever doubt it, after my visit to Nice, and after hearing what I have heard lately of the two girls' devotion to each other? But I suppose I shall never make you believe in a woman—About those rooms at Cliff Cottage, though, he went on, with a sudden change of tone; "I'm delighted to hear they are to be had, though the situation is a very isolated one."

"The rooms are very small, if you recollect."

"All the better," returned Mr. Pratman, quite cheerily. "Miss Heringham particularly stipulates for small rooms, to suit her income, she says, which is small too."

"Yet she shared it with Evelyn Carmichael," said Rohan, involuntarily.

"Yes, most generously. As long as Evelyn lived, I believe Miss Heringham would have given her a home."

"Given her a home? Given a home, in charity to the owner of Hilton Guise! What a disjointed world it is, Steven!"

"Dye think so?" questioned the lawyer, briskly. "I don't. Now, I've one thing more to say, Rohan. If Miss Heringham comes to Cliff Cottage, I know you will do all you can to make her stay there agreeable to her."

"Rubbish! A woman will without anyone's help, make things agreeable for herself, let who will suffer."

"How you do despise them, Rohan!" exclaimed Mr. Pratman, involuntarily.

"What wonder?" said Horace, heavily.

And his friend argued no more. He even echoed the question in his own thoughts—"What wonder?"—when when he looked back through the years of Horace Rohan's life, and saw that stronger than his youth, and hope, and manhood had been the bitter sense of injury and injustice, the very weariness of which was telling upon him now.

"For," assented the lawyer to himself, "we all know how deeply the shadows sink when the waters are dark and quiet."

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