

THE RECTOR'S SECRET.

OR

LOVE CONQUERS ALL.

A STUDY FROM LIFE.

BY J. R. ABARBANELL.

CHAPTER XXII.—Continued.

As may be naturally supposed, the dispatch caused the greatest excitement to Walter.

He at once returned with it to his mother's house, and abruptly announced to her his intention to return to New York with the first steamer which sailed the very next day.

To his mother's question of surprise he related all that had occurred between him and Blanche.

"And you love her still?" asked Lady Buford, when he had concluded.

"I worship, I adore her," excitedly replied Walter. "I have tried to see forgetfulness of her by putting the broad expanse of the ocean between us. But in vain. Absence from her has only made my heart grow fonder. I could not survive, were she to be no more."

"Which is not very complimentary to me," laughed his mother. "Where are all your fine protestations of filial love, poured out in this very room not half an hour ago? Suppose I exert my rights as a mother, and refuse to let you separate yourself from me?"

"You intend to do so," cried Walter, aghast.

"Undoubtedly," replied the countess, with a merry twinkle in her eye.

"But Blanche is desperate; she is going to kill herself."

"And my despair at the thought of parting from you, so soon after having found you, goes for nothing. Oh, you young men! What is a mother and her anxieties compared to a love-sick young girl! Now that I have kept you on the tender-hook of suspense long enough," she added, with the first really happy laugh she had indulged in for years, "I give you my gracious consent to go to New York, on condition that you will take me with you."

"My dear, darling mother," cried Walter, impulsively embracing her, "you overwhelm me with happiness. But will you really accompany me to America? Your leaving will be so abrupt. It will excite comment, especially on account of your known sentiment against our poor country."

"I am too happy to care for any comments. Now that I have found my son, I care not what the world may say about me. I long to revisit my native land. Besides, I want to see who this girl is who has entranced your heart. I can understand her position perfectly well. She has been putting on airs when she rejected you, and is now heartily sorry for it. Perhaps she won't have any objections to your marrying her when she comes to know that your mother is a countess."

"But suppose, mother," said Walter, after a thoughtful pause, "suppose you—should meet my father?"

"I would treat him with freezing contempt," she replied. "He is now nothing more to me than a stranger. Whatever feelings of revenge I may have had against him are dead and gone. I live henceforth only for you and Ethel. But why think about that man? Heaven alone knows whether he is alive or dead. I do not anticipate meeting him. Rather do I look forward to an introduction to and personal acquaintance with your foster father. To him I owe a deep debt of gratitude, and it will be worth the trip across the ocean to be able to express my heartfelt thanks to him for all that he has done for you."

"Then it is settled. We leave London for New York to-morrow."

"It is settled."

"Do we travel alone, or will Ethel accompany us?"

"That depends on Harold, I should say," replied the countess, with a smile. "If he makes one of the party, all the inducement in the world would, probably, be insufficient to keep her back in Europe."

"I will speak to Harold about it. No doubt he will embrace this opportunity to visit his parents and introduce his bride to them."

"Then all of us will go. What a happy family we will be, to be sure."

And so it was arranged. Walter easily enough explained to Harold the motive of his sudden departure. It was not so easy to tell why the countess was going without betraying the secret of their relationship, and this, of course, Walter could not and would not do. He put it down as a mere whim; and Harold, fearful of even a temporary separation from Ethel, fairly jumped at the offer to make one of the party.

Ethel, after declaring that she could not to save her life get ready in time, set to work so vigorously and with so utter a disregard of all the proprieties which demanded that a nobleman's daughter, and more especially one who was to be a bride, should do absolutely nothing, that her trunk and baggage were packed the first. Two days later all London was thrown

and respected me until death deprived me of him, is a mercy for which I have to thank Heaven, not you, who basely married me under an assumed name, then cowardly abandoned me at his father's behest, and vilely permitted that father to find, I know not what flaw in the ceremony, to braid me and my offspring with shame. Forgive me? Never!"

"Ah, if you could only know the agony of that time," he piteously continued, "the remorse I have suffered since then. Reared by a stern parent to regard him with terror rather than love, it was through fear of him not through any intention of wronging you, that I married you under a false name. As to what occurred afterward I was his victim as well as you. On learning of your supposed death I spurned his wealth, which was the cause of all our woe. In a rage he bequeathed it to a charity and then died, carried off by a stroke of apoplexy. The profession I had chosen I abandoned to devote my penitent heart to the service of God. I married again; I thought I was a widower. My wife knew your sad story, as I told her all. She joined in my desire to name our child Mabel after you. She revered your memory, as I did, to the day of her death."

"Let the dead past bury its dead, George Curtis," she said, after a thoughtful pause. "We are no longer anything to each other. Chance has, for the moment, brought us together again, but our lives are cast in different spheres. There is the door; leave the room. Go out into utter oblivion and forgetfulness."

"I humbly obey," he murmured, with bowed head, as he turned toward the door. "It is your right, it is my punishment. But, oh, Mabel," he added, in tremulous tones, "if I could only bear away with me the consolation of your forgiveness."

"I cannot forgive," she coldly replied. "It is enough that I am willing to forget. One consolation I will give you, though, perhaps, you are not entitled even to that. Know that our child lives—"

"Lives," interrupted the rector, with a burst of sudden, unexpected joy. "He lives—"

"Yes; thanks to a worthy gentleman who has reared him as a son. It was not for me, his mother, to destroy his innocent young life with mine. You may share the debt of gratitude I owe to the man who has made our child an honorable and honored member of society, but I would not advise you to make yourself known to your son, for he shares with me the contempt in which I hold you."

"I will never attempt to discover his identity," mournfully replied the rector. "It will be hard, but—"

Here the door was abruptly opened and Walter appeared on the threshold of the room.

He had been half way to the rectory when he remembered that he had forgotten, in his room in the hotel, some presents he had brought along for Mabel. He hurried back to the hotel to get them; and passing through the corridor the clerk informed him that a gentleman—from his appearance a clergyman—had called to see him, and was then in the parlor with Lady Buford.

Not doubting but that it was his foster father, he rushed into the parlor and impulsively threw himself into the rector's embrace.

Lady Buford was fairly petrified with astonishment.

"Mother," cried Walter, as soon as he could come to words. "Have you expressed your gratitude to my more than father? Have you told him how your heart swelled with joy and thankfulness to him, when you found that I was your son and owed him all that I am?"

The rector and the countess stared at each other in blank amazement. "What is this?" exclaimed Walter, surprised at their demeanor. "Why do you look so curiously at each other? Has not Lady Buford told you that she is my mother? Do you not know, mother, that this gentleman is Rector Wainwright, whom you were ready to go down on your knees and pray for Heaven's blessing on his venerable head?"

Lady Buford sank on the sofa entirely overcome.

"A glass of water," she gasped, "I—I am fainting."

The rector tried to fetch it for her from the water cooler in the corner, but his legs refused their office, and halfway across the room he dropped into a chair.

Walter looked at the two beings, each one so dear to him, in a state of utter perplexity. As yet no suspicion of the truth dawned in his mind. He took the glass of water to his mother and, kneeling down, presented it to her lips. She drank a few drops and it greatly revived her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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BAD C. P. R. WRECK.

CARIBOU, Me., June 20.—The through C. P. R. train from Edmundston to Aroostook Jct., of seven freight cars, two passenger, and one baggage car, broke through the second span of the Grand Falls bridge over the St. John River this morning. The whole train went into the river. Conductor Henderson was hurt and a commercial traveller named Hiram Smith of St. John was injured seriously. General Passenger Agent McKenna of the C. P. R. had his shoulder broken and was internally injured. J. O'Neil, engineer, was seriously injured. A number of passengers were slightly injured. The train was heavily loaded with passengers from the graduation exercises at Vauburn College. It is believed that Engineer Smith will die and there is little hope that Henderson will recover. It is thought several others are seriously injured. The bridge is 75 feet above the bed of the river. The water is 15 feet deep. The engine and freight cars were piled up in the river, passenger coaches standing on end upon the wreck. The engineer and fireman went to the bottom of the river with the engine, but in some way managed to extricate themselves and cling to the wreckage until picked up before they were swept into the current of the falls half a mile below the bridge. Wrecking trains have been sent to the scene of the accident.

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TWO WOMEN KILLED.

NEW YORK, June 22.—Mrs. Lenebky, and Mrs. Michela Anderson both Swedes and residents of Brooklyn, were killed on the Coney Island Creek trestle at an early hour this morning by a Brooklyn Rapid Transit trolley car. The Rapid Transit company recently increased its rate of fare to Coney Island from five to ten cents.

The two women and Emil J. Swanson, their escort, refused to pay the extra five cents to reach the island and were put off a car at a point about a mile and a half from their destination. They started to walk and were on the trestle when a car overtook them. Swanson jumped and saved himself but the women were caught in the car's fender and dragged nearly 200 feet. They were dead when the car stopped.

Police Captain Hardy, of the Coney Island station has ordered the arrest of the conductor, who put them off the car on which they had been riding and of the motorman on the car that struck them.

Children Cry for CASTORIA.

At a meeting of St. Martin's church in Montreal last night a resolution adopting free seats carried and Rev. G. Osborne Troop withdrew his resignation as rector.

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