

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

A Winning Hazard,

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

Author of "Her Dearest Foe," "The Wooing O'it," "A Crooked Path," &c., &c.

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CHAPTER VI. CONTINUED.

"I have brought you a cousin some half-dozen times, removed though bodily present."

"Who is it cousin Dick?" exclaimed Kate leaving her slender hand in his for another minute, while Tulloch stood, reddening under the gaze of two pairs of eyes.

"Ah! I guess," she went on, "it must be Jamie Tulloch! I think I remember him."

"Well, I cannot say I remember him," cried the flattered Scot. "I left you a wee girlie, and I find you—a—" he hesitated.

"A beautiful goddess," put in Travers.

"No! but what is a good deal better—a beautiful woman, if I may say it."

"Oh, Dick, give me that paper that I may hide my blushes," cried Kate laughing gaily, and catching the newspaper from Travers held it before her face for a second.

"Ah! Miss Carey, I'd have known you among a hundred," said Tulloch, turning to the elder sister. "I am sure I am delighted to see you! How is your father?"

"Remarkably well. He will be very sorry to miss you."

"Yes, indeed!" echoed Kate. "he is out," she added addressing Travers. "Just fancy his having a note from Mr. Wincks this morning asking him to call though it was the Sabbath, he wished to speak to him particularly."

"Ah, yes! No doubt your father's experience must be of great importance to Mr. Wincks," said Travers gravely.

"I wish he thought so," remarked Alicia slightly raising her eyebrows.

"You have been a long time away from your friends," resumed Kate, pointing to a chair and evidently handing Travers over to her sister. "How glad you must be to come back!"

"Yes, it's pleasant, but I am not come home just to idle and amuse myself. I am going to start business in the city."

"It must be delightful to have business to do!" said Kate smiling on him radiantly, and they continued to talk in a friendly fashion, Tulloch offering many compliments in rather clumsy style. Travers was a little surprised that Kate accepted them so frankly, though he acknowledged that Tulloch had a tone of rough sincerity not unattractive.

Tea was now brought in, but still Carey did not appear.

"What have you been doing with yourselves since I saw you," asked Travers.

"Nothing remarkable; Kate has had a great deal of copying to do, and Miss Golding came to tea with us last Wednesday, and took us for a drive to Richmond. She is very good-natured."

"Golding?" repeated Tulloch, who caught the name. "Any relation to Golding and Grimes the big china merchants?"

"I cannot tell you," returned Alicia. "Miss Golding is very rich; she lives with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, in Westbourne Terrace."

"Dreadful stupid common people, who are horribly rich," put in Kate. "The niece is not half so bad; I think she is rather nice by nature, though rather spoiled by her wealth."

"Her father is dead?" asked Tulloch, adding in a reverential tone. "She must be old Golding's daughter, and I fancy her fortune will run a good way into five figures!"

"It must be pleasant to make money," said Kate, pensively, as she had handed Tulloch a cup of tea. "I wish I had a shop."

"If you had a shop it is a toss up whether you would make money or lose it."

"I suppose so, and I am afraid I belong to that class who lose it," she returned; then with a little interrogative graceful bend of the head to one side, and a fascinating smile, she asked, "How do you set about making money, Mr. Tulloch?"

"Mr. Tulloch," he repeated with an admiring gaze. "Why do you put me off to such a distance, when you call Travers, Dick?"

"Oh! I have known him so well; he seems nearer—more than a cousin than you are."

"I can be as good a cousin as he is," cried Tulloch, eagerly.

"If you are as good as he is," said Kate, laughing, though there was infinite kindness in the glance she gave Travers. "you will be very good indeed. So to encourage you in well doing I shall call you—what is your Christian name?"

"I was christened James, but my friends generally call me Jamie!"

"Then Jamie, let me persuade you to take some bread and butter."

"That's right! I never liked my name so much before," he exclaimed.

"Did they teach you to make pretty speeches in India?" she asked. "You evidently studied more there than profit and loss."

"More profit than loss, thank God!" returned Tulloch, piously. "And I can tell you it's very good to hear a young lady speak seriously about money as you have done. Most of them seem to think it's of no consequence."

"Ah! if they only knew what it is to do without it they would take a different view of the matter."

"You're right! That's perfectly true," said Tulloch, with grave conviction.

"My father is staying a long time with Mr. Wincks," observed Alicia who was presiding over the teapot, and Tulloch, proceeding to make special inquiries about Mr. Carey's health and strength, Kate addressed herself in a confidential tone to Travers. "I am glad Mr. Wincks has asked papa to go to him privately, for I sometimes fear they will not get on so well together. They are so different, you see, and sometimes papa comes home from the

remnant of his property; and what a long life stretched out before this fair young creature, gifted as she was with a superb physique! Besides, there was her sister, to whom she was tenderly attached, to be provided for. "Tulloch, and will be, I successively man. He is bold but cautious. I have noticed that long ago," thought Travers. "He has certain sort corners, too, which men and women too may fancy they can manipulate. But they are mistaken, the softness goes a very short way below the surface. Kate was very gracious to him. I don't quite understand her swallowing all his nonsense so readily. She can be a reckless flirt, I suspect. I remember how she used to play with that contractor man at Llanogwen, though he was an ass not to see that he hadn't the ghost of a chance with her. Tulloch is more of a gentleman, much more, and her kinsman to boot, still I don't see her falling in love with him. She is not the sort of girl who falls in love easily; I don't fancy she would take to Tulloch, that is, I don't like the idea. Am I an idiot too? This won't do. I must not dream of impossibilities. Good God! Why is it that a fellow with a full purse has all the chances of existence, all the jewels in the diadem of life; and what a jewel Kate is! But she is well provided for, and tenderly protected, it is not much matter about anything else. I suppose I shall have to play sympathetic confidante and gooseberry picker. Anyhow I must see how far my man is in sober earnest. An old shikari like myself ought to be up to the dodges of such a game, though the social jungle is a little more difficult to thread than the real one."

The following morning Travers received a note from his Irish relative. "Dear Dick, I am sorry to have missed you. The girls tell me he has turned out a fine man. Bring him over to dinner on Wednesday, or the first day you can—a leg of mutton at seven and a hearty welcome. Tell him I suppose he can do without finery. You'll be glad to hear I have a grand job with Wincks; partu larly when we meet. Shouldn't be surprised if I play my cards well that he takes me on permanently, say as manager. Anyhow, I see the tide is turning. The girls send their loves. Luck ought to come, if it was only for their sakes.—Yours always sincerely, "Robert Carey."

Travers looked up his list of work and engagements, and finding he could manage to absent himself on the next Thursday evening he paid a visit to Tulloch, whom he caught as he was going out, and who accepted the invitation with readiness and joy. "By this time Carey had grown very confidential, and as Tulloch and Travers smoked the cigar of peace, detailed his plans for sharing the business of Boucher and Wincks, and establishing an Irish Parliament of considerable magnitude—for Parliamentary business chiefly—but also for private and general matters. Tulloch listened with profound attention, and then in his turn hinted at his intention of buying a house and furnishing it, and establishing himself permanently in London. He rather liked the idea of Mr. Carey's scheme, and if his kinsman saw his way to making a good thing of it he (Tulloch) would not mind advancing a couple of thousands to forward the business provided there was no risk. "Risk, my dear fellow!" cried Carey, his eyes sparkling. "It's as certain as that you are cutting the end of that cigar. It's a splendid opening! Old Wincks is a shrewd fellow, but he has no enterprise—no a shred! It was only the day before yesterday he said to me—"You are a clever man, and a good lawyer, Mr. Carey. How is it that you came down in the world?" "Faith I never could tell," says I, "luck was against me somehow, though I was an interesting fellow!" "Ah!" says he, "enterprising! just so: I never was enterprising. I suppose if you were a partner in this firm you would make my business spin prettily!" so you see the old fellow has some thoughts of it. I am not going to fancy things you know, but it looks like it; and if my friend Tulloch here was inclined to advance the capital—"

"It will be time enough to think of that," when papa is asked to join the firm, interrupted Alicia quickly. She had placed herself besides her father on the rather unsteady rustic seat, while Kate leaned on the back of it and the others stood before them. "Well, we'll see," resumed Carey, "things will be moving when I come back from Ireland, I'll be pleased to see the old country again. Why, it's nearly four years since we left—four hard years!" "Never mind, dear," said Kate stroking his cheek, "the worst is over now." She moved away as she spoke and ran up the steps to see if the table had been cleared and the room put in order. When she came down again, she found Travers waiting for her, and apparently in deep thought. He turned towards the end of the garden furthest from the seat and Kate mechanically turned with him. "Has anything annoyed you, Dick?" she asked looking earnestly at him. "No! There's nothing the matter, why should you think so?" "You were rather silent and quiet at dinner, that's all."

"Well, as you and Tulloch were able and willing to do all the talking, I thought I might rest on my oars."

"Why, Dick, I never knew you disagreeable before!" she exclaimed with a look of surprise. "Come Kate, that is too strong an accusation, I must not lose my character, though if I have been disagreeable once during these years, it's not a bad record," returned Travers, recovering his usual pleasant easy tone, and throwing away the end of his cigar. "Ah! Dick, your record is indeed a good one," she said, "you have been good and patient, and loyal to us, so, if anything ever does worry you, and it would be a comfort to talk about it, I'll listen as long as ever you like."

"Thank you," he said, meeting the sweet soft moist eyes up-turned to his with kindly seriousness "but I don't see the comfort of talking of one's troubles."

"You are right, I suppose. To bear it to conquer our fate, but it is a relief to me to talk of them, at least to some friends—yes, for instance. Yet I think I am a little stronger than I used to be."

"Well, Dick, I have grand news for you, our worthy principal, Wincks, is going to send me on a special mission to the old country. What do you think of that? There's a client of his has a fancy to buy an estate in the county Meath, and Wincks wants me to ascertain the particulars and see that everything is fair and straight. He has come to the right man when he came to me! I know every inch of the country—and I will get the real facts of the case for him."

"Isn't it nice?" said Kate, in a low confidential tone. "First rate!" returned Travers, who was sincerely glad to hear of such a mark of confidence from Carey's employer. "Best news I have had for a long time." Kate gave him a little nod and a smile. "Ring the bell, Alsie," cried Carey, "here's Tulloch ready to pick the bones of the chair he is sitting on with hunger!" The bell was answered by a promising young man and a waiter. There was a piece of cream white cod and oyster sauce, and a piece of premium leg of mutton, round, plump, juicy, and delicately browned, followed by some pinky stewed rhubarb, and cream. The viands were irreproachable, and it the attendance was less perfect there was a bonnet jollity about the whole thing that was very enlivening. The jumping up for bread, the hunting in improbable corners for the corkers, the indiscriminate opening of beer bottles by the men, the benevolent striving to save "Matilda" unnecessary runs up and down stairs, gave a cheerful tonic to the entertainment. Then a joyous hospitality of the host. How he beamed upon his guests from behind the mutton, and dropped unexpected tit-bits and spoonful of gravy on the plates within reach, and made surprising "long arms" to those that were not, and pressed his guests to drink the beer and the claret, though "it was an insult to good wine calling such a mixture of ink and vinegar by the name of a decent liquid." It is not all written in the records of pleasant imprudence? It was a treat to dine with Carey. You felt that every morsel you swallowed invigorated your host. Alas! that the unalloyed gold of such a nature is so unfit for general circulation—that its flexible purity cannot bear the friction with baser and stronger metals.

It was a pleasant meal, and Tulloch seemed carried away by the spirit of his convalescence. His eyes dwelt on Kate with undiminished admiration—and Travers was half surprised, half annoyed, at the readiness with which she accepted his attention. "At last the girls suggested a stroll in the garden while the cloth was being removed. By this time Carey had grown very confidential, and as Tulloch and Travers smoked the cigar of peace, detailed his plans for sharing the business of Boucher and Wincks, and establishing an Irish Parliament of considerable magnitude—for Parliamentary business chiefly—but also for private and general matters. Tulloch listened with profound attention, and then in his turn hinted at his intention of buying a house and furnishing it, and establishing himself permanently in London. He rather liked the idea of Mr. Carey's scheme, and if his kinsman saw his way to making a good thing of it he (Tulloch) would not mind advancing a couple of thousands to forward the business provided there was no risk. "Risk, my dear fellow!" cried Carey, his eyes sparkling. "It's as certain as that you are cutting the end of that cigar. It's a splendid opening! Old Wincks is a shrewd fellow, but he has no enterprise—no a shred! It was only the day before yesterday he said to me—"You are a clever man, and a good lawyer, Mr. Carey. How is it that you came down in the world?" "Faith I never could tell," says I, "luck was against me somehow, though I was an interesting fellow!" "Ah!" says he, "enterprising! just so: I never was enterprising. I suppose if you were a partner in this firm you would make my business spin prettily!" so you see the old fellow has some thoughts of it. I am not going to fancy things you know, but it looks like it; and if my friend Tulloch here was inclined to advance the capital—"

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"When shall we manage that day at the Crystal Palace?" asked Tulloch. "The girls say you took them down in an open carriage and pair, or four, not sure which. Now I think pleasure coaxes to be pleasure when it costs too much."

"So do I," returned Travers, laughing, "but you see I didn't think it did, and we had a very jolly day. When you don't do a think often you may as well do it thoroughly."

"That's not the way to scrape money together," said Tulloch, sulkily. "I know that. But as I shall never have a chance of doing so I may as well enjoy what I can. I don't say it's wise. Yours is a good maxim. I dare say if I had a margin to work upon I would scrape and save heartily enough, but as I haven't, why, all I care for is to keep clear of debt."

"Why you'll die a miserable bachelor, then!" cried Tulloch. "A bachelor? Yes. A miserable one, certainly not. To be sure there are heiresses, discriminating heiresses, to be found, Jamie my man."

"And that's truth," said Tulloch, heartily. "Now you, lucky fellow that you are," resumed Travers, "have only to pick up the fairest charmer you can find, and throw congratulations of pelt to the wind."

"I'm not so sure about that," Travers. "It's uncommon handy to find a wife with a tidy little fortune. I'm not greedy—far from it, but I should like the woman I marry to have something of her own; and, by the way, I am invited to a big dinner at Anderson's. He is the London partner in Berry, Thomas and Anderson's, the great china merchants, on Wednesday; and I care I'll meet more than one twenty thousand pounder there."

"Go in and win, then; only make your selection—prudence, ambition, and a moneyed wife, or the girl of your heart-love and the world well lost. Don't play fast and loose with both, or take my word, you'll come to grief—decided grief." There was something very serious in Travers' warning tone. Tulloch changed the subject.

"As to your expedition. Miss Carey—Alicia says they would rather wait till their father comes back. I must say he is capital company."

(To be continued.)