

CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.
My life was just a tangle—what had it been—what was it—what was to follow?

CHAPTER VII.

'Well, Letitia, your protegee thief is let off scott free,' said grandfather on the morrow, coming in, after having gone down to the justice. 'Now banish him completely out of your mind and heart and forget him—I command you.'

'Will you do this, grandfather? I asked. 'No; but I'm not an infatuated girl, bent on spoiling—some would say—slandering—her life.'

Before I could reply to this, my cousin Oliver came and asked me to ride with him, which I did, all through the glowing harvest fields.

He told me how Mr. Maitland comforted himself, when told he was dismissed. He answered, with a curl of his haughty lip—

'I am innocent of that of which I have been accused. The crime rests with those who accused me wrongfully, and I shall not let the matter fall to the fall to the ground.'

'So, it seems he died them,' said I with inward exultation.

'Yes; with a disdainful defiance, equal to that of the Marseilles. I can but think there is some mistake somewhere, or that he is a consummate actor. Heigh-ho! a man mustn't utter all his thoughts.'

Thus my cousin dismissed the subject.

After this followed a dead calm—how dead only they who have gone through a like experience can know.

My chief delight was to sit in the old carved chair, in the western window of the gallery, beside my unfinished portrait, and dream and wonder whether it would be always so.

My poor little bauble ring seemed to be always whispering, as it flashed and shimmered on my finger, of that sweet past, come to such a bitter ending.

Ending? Nay it was not ended, for a fortnight only had glided by when Jeane almost took away my breath, as well nigh breathless herself, she came rushing along the gallery to where I sat, in the west window, crying—

'Childie, childie, here is your ring! Then, whose is that on your finger?'

'Ay, whose indeed?'

I felt myself grow pale to the lips.

There it was on her palm, the shimmering flashing thing!

'It was in the pocket of that soiled gown you thrust away out of sight; and no wonder, Miss Lettie, bedraggled as it was, after your pacing the dewy garden that night,' went on Jeane.

I knew full well what right she meant. It must have slipped off my finger, some how, in my hysterical frenzy.

And—oh, the shame, the agony of it!—had even been tempted to think that that last lingering hand clasp of his was but a feint, a trick to slip the ring from my finger.

All this I whispered to Jeane, my head on her shoulder.

'And now, what ought to be done?' I questioned.

'Well, your grandfather ought to know and have the matter sifted. Faulty as he perhaps, proved to be in the affair, it seems he was no thief.'

'But then, Jeane, this—what does it all mean?'

'I don't know, Miss Lettie,' said she, and, kissing me, she sent me down to my grandfather.

'Grandfather, see, my ring is found! I buried it, and kneeling at his side, and this is—this is—what ring is this?'

He knitted his brows and bent over the two rings as I laid them in his hand.

How was I to know what was to follow—how was I to know?

'It must be—it must be, that—so far he got, and then he uttered a wild, bitter cry like of which I hope never to hear again, and sank away into a swoon.'

The house was in confusion; a doctor came, my cousin summoned others from town.

Oh! the dreary, miserable days which followed, during which my grandfather lay pitifully moaning out his pain, of the hall of which, the doctors assured us, he was not conscious.

I trusted he was not, I prayed he was not, lingering by his side, chiding myself for having rushed to him so abruptly with my tidings.

But how was I to know?

Oh! grandfather, grandfather! I cried, again and again; but they came no sign that he heard: no lifting even of his eyelids.

The doctors spoke of his fine constitution, and of not giving up hope; and they were right, for at the end of a fortnight, he was conscious, could smile into my face when I bent over him; and at last his speech came back—poor, muffled words they were he uttered, at first, but still they were words.

'Keep him free from care and anxiety and he will recover,' said the medical men.

Free from care and anxiety! His eyes seemed always seeking, seeking; his poor faltering tongue always muttering over that about which we others were forced to be silent, for a time.

'Bring him—the ring, the ring!' he reiterated, over and over again.

'It must never be,' said the doctors, when we talked of sending for Mr. Maitland. 'Keep him free from all excitement—it will kill him.'

'Kill him?' said my cousin one day testily 'it will retard his recovery! It is impossible, if we evade his request, as we are doing,' and haphazard, as Jeane would have expressed it, he put the question—'Do you want to see Mr. Maitland, uncle?'

Yes, yes, faltered the poor, trembling tongue.

'You shall see him,' promised Oliver; and grandfather thanked him by pressing his hand.

But Mr. Maitland was not to be found.

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CURE SICK HEADACHE.

He had sailed for Australia, we heard from a fellow painter of his in London, who, however, was not sure to what part, and so the matter had to remain in suspense for a time, while further inquiries were made.

It was near Christmas when he came in person, in answer to a telegram at last despatched after him.

'What does he know? Who will be proved to be?' I questioned of my Cousin Oliver, during that blank waiting time before he came; and he answered—

'I scarcely dare to hope, but there is evidently some mystery about this second ring to be divulged, for that it is the old family ring, supposed to have gone down in the wreck with your Uncle Lionel, there can be but little doubt, and that is what I believe your grandfather thinks. There is a surprise in store for us all, Lettie, you may be sure.'

And now, here was Mr. Maitland come at last to clear up the mystery.

My Cousin Oliver saw him first, while I waited on the tenter books of a thousand emotions, if that could be.

My poor lost love!

How it pleaded in my heart to be heard and cherished!

But I could not in honor give up this true but cousin of mine, who had been a true but what of comfort to me during my grandfather's illness, and whom I had promised my grandfather to marry.

Ay, more to go back from my promise might even cost the dear old man his life. If the sudden shock of finding he had been accusing an innocent man, blasting his reputation, together with the knowledge that there was another ring in the world like the one he supposed to be lost, brought on a fit, much more would my thwarting the dearest wish of his proud old ambitious heart be likely to throw him into another—ay, even to snuffing the silver cord of his existence entirely.

'Well, Lettie, Mr. Maitland's story is a startling revelation, but it has a sort of aftermath of pleasure to the poor old man upstairs,' said my cousin Oliver, coming to me in the Lady's Garden, whither I had strayed to gather some Christmas roses for the vase, in my restless impatience.

'Aftermath of pleasure,' I stammered. Would it be an aftermath that I could share in; a something to cut the knot binding me to this staunch, true cousin speaking so composedly?

The thought brought a blush to my cheeks.

'Guess who Mr. Maitland really is?' said he, smiling quizzically down at me.

'I can't,' I returned. 'Not my uncle Lionel?' I added.

'No, not your uncle Lionel, but his son.'

'Then—then,' I stammered, clinging to his arm.

'He is the heir, and I am a nobody with me joy Lettie.'

I could not do that under the circumstances, but, somehow, I inwardly wished myself joy.

The course of true love must run smoothly at last, for self will assert itself. And young love is proverbially selfish, as our elders, who have been through it all themselves, tell us.

There was grandfather to be told the wonderful truth, and upon good, unselfish Oliver devolved the task, according as time and season allowed.

How I waited and listened for every sound while the tale was being told him! And, at last, there came a footstep, and Mr. Maitland entered the library.

There followed a pause of uncertainty.

Another step.

It was my Cousin Oliver.

'It is all right, Lettie, there was no undue excitement on the part of your grandfather; he had more than half guessed it all. It will end with a sort of poetical justice, like a well written novel, with only poor me left out in the cold.'

He motioned to Mr. Maitland, who came forward, and took my hand in silence.

No need for words; both our hearts were full.

Oliver led the way to my grandfather's room, saw us enter, and shut us in.

Like two faulty children we stood, hand in hand, by the dear old man's couch.

'My child, this is new life to me, a life come back to me from the dead—from the depths of the sea.'

So grandfather expressed himself as I dropped on my knees beside him.

And what more?

This is what my lover told me, later on; that my Uncle Lionel never sailed in the ill-fated vessel, as my grandfather supposed, but in another, which carried him safe to Australia, he and his newly wedded bride.

He, in due course, a son was born to him, and his wife died.

Then under the name of Maitland, he reclaimed the world well-nigh through, with his boy; but he never came to England, where was his ancestral home, with a fond, remorseful father waiting with a late, but full forgiveness.

No, he never came home, but he fully forgave his father, when his own little son came to nestle in his heart.

When dying, he gave his son the fatal ring, yet did not divulge the name of his father; he gave him, however, the name of a firm of solicitors—his father's men of business, who would tell him all, if he desired to know.

But the young painter, knit to his art, never cared to seek out his father's relations even when in his wanderings he arrived in England.

Then, as it were, he came blindly to the Hermitage and his fate, saw me, and loved me with a love never to be quenched.

He never observed that the ring I wore on my finger was like the one he had locked away in his dressing case until that miserable affair of the missing bauble, and then, once free, in a half frenzy of indignation, he rushed off to London to the solicitors, learnt all, and sailed back to Australia, until his Marsden temper had had time to cool, and the ruling of Providence should direct him.

To make good his identity, he had a beautiful miniature of his father and mother in his possession.

'It is he—it is my own son, Lionel!' my grandfather would say, and he would sit for hours comparing it with that portrait so long shut away, but now hung once more in the gallery.

And what next? My Cousin Herbert, now my acknowledged lover, slipped that fatal ring of his, as I have called it, on my finger beside the other as we stood on the steps of the Lady's Garden on Christmas Eve, harkening to the bells.

'Heaven grant, dearest, that the course of our love may flow on sweet, and true, and tuneful, a life-long melody, like that of the bells ringing in Christmas joy and peace.'

Ay, dearest—once more the word thrilled my heart, dearest now and for ever.

AN OPEN LETTER

TO ALL SUFFERERS FROM ANAEMIA AND KINDRED TROUBLES.

Mr. Wm. Wilson of Sarnia, tells how he Regained Health After an Illness of Over Two Years.

Mr. William Wilson, who is well known to the citizens of Sarnia, Ont., writes: 'It affords me much pleasure to be able to add my testimony to the great benefit that I have derived from your famous Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. It is now a little more than two years since I became afflicted with anaemia. During that time I have received almost continuous treatment from medical men of the highest rank in their profession, yet apparently deriving no benefit. Indeed I continued to grow worse until I became unable to walk. I came to the conclusion that I was deriving no benefit from the treatment and decided to give it up. It then was the question, what shall I try? Having read the testimony of so many who had suffered in a similar manner and who had received great benefit from your Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, I decided to give them a fair trial.

It is now about three months since I commenced to take your pills and today I feel almost completely restored. Two weeks after I began to take the pills I felt a decided improvement. Three months ago when I began to take your pills my flesh looked like wax, and my face, feet and legs were badly swollen. These conditions have all disappeared and today my color is natural and my blood vessels full of good rich blood. It will afford me pleasure to recommend Dr. Williams' Pink Pills to any one suffering from anaemia or kindred ailments.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are praised amongst the highest in the land, as a strengthening and tonic medicine, whether for men, women or children. They are not like other medicines, nor can they be imitated, as is sometimes dishonestly pretended by dealers who offer substitutes. See that the pack bears the full name, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, and in cases of doubt send direct to Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., who will supply the pills post paid at 50c per box or \$2.50 for six boxes. These pills cure all disorders which arise from impoverished blood, such as muscular weakness, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, pains in the back, nervous headache, early decay, all forms of female weakness, hysteria, paralysis, locomotor ataxia, rheumatism and sciatica.

Easy for Him.

'You understand, of course,' pursued the lawyer 'what is meant by a preponderance of evidence?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the man whom he was examining with reference to his qualifications as a juror. 'Let me have your idea of it, if you please?'

'I understand it, I tell you.'

'Well, what is it?'

'Why, anybody can understand that.'

'I would like to have your definition of it.'

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That's all there is about that.'

'Well, what was the question I asked you?'

'You ought to know what that was. If you've forgot your own questions, don't try to get me to remember them for you.'

'I don't want to hear any more of that kind of talk, interposed the Court. Answer the questions addressed to you by the counsel.'

Judge, I did. He asked me if I knew what it was, and I said I did.'

'Are you sure you understand what is meant by the term "preponderance of evidence"?'

'Of course I am, Judge.'

'Well, let us hear your idea of it.'

'It's evidence previously pondered.'

STONE BALLAST SAVED LIFE.

It Has Decreased the Number of Persons Killed While Walking on Tracks.

'It has never appeared yet as an item among those published in reports of vital statistics relating to the railroads,' said a railroad official, 'but it is a fact, all the same, that the stone ballasting of railroads has been a great life-saver on roads that have adopted the use of that kind of ballast. I don't mean that it has lessened the dangers of travel to those who use railroad cars in their journeyings about the country but that it has taken in a great measure the perils of travel from those who use the tracks and not the cars in getting from point to point.'

'In the days of gravel and cinder ballast the roadbeds had become smooth and solid highways that were pleasant and easy for pedestrians, and the railroads were the popular routes not only for the professional tramp in his wanderings, but for mechanics, who found the railroad tracks convenient short cuts between their working places and their homes, and for farmers living near towns, who chose the hard roadbeds not only as nearer routes, but much more to their liking than the muddy, rough or dusty wagon roads for their trading trips, where a wagon was not required.'

'No matter how many of these pedestrians, whether tramps or others, might be run down by rushing and confusing railway trains, and such fatalities were alarmingly frequent, the ever-threatening dangers of the track were as nothing compared with its convenience and comfort, and pedestrianism of this kind not only was not scared off, but it actually increased. Stringent railroad orders against walking on the roadbed, enforced by strict police rules, could not effect this practice in the least, and the cars went on killing men, women and children with frightful regularity. But the invention of the stone crusher, without having this purpose at all in view, has accomplished what constant menace to life and limb never could have done. The dumping along the railroad tracks of rough and ragged bits of stone has changed them from smooth highways to jagged paths that cut the boots and hurt the feet, and make the course of the walker not only difficult and slow, but exceedingly painful.'

'It will tire a man more to walk a mile on a stone ballasted railroad bed than it will to walk ten on even the poorest turnpike or country highway, to say nothing of the wear and tear of footgear. The professional tramp is never so well shod that he cares to risk his feet to wounds his leather is powerless to prevent, and he hates extra exertion.'

'So with many anathemas on the economy that has covered the railroads with bruising and wearying stone, he shuns them and grumblingly seeks the longer country roads. Others and reputable people, who habitually use the tracks as pathways, have been forced to leave them with like regret, and they use hard language against the railroad companies. All reports say that tramps have greatly increased in numbers along certain country roads within the last few years, and many theories are advanced to explain it. But the right theory seems to have been unthought of.

There are more tramps on these rural highways because the railroads running through those districts have been ballasted with stone. Some people may think these railroads are not doing the tramp infested country a favor by their stone ballasting.'

Teaching Geography to a Professor.

Canadians are very touchy on the subject of climate, as Rudyard Kipling discovered when he somewhat thoughtlessly dubbed the Dominion 'Our Lady of the Snows'. When Arthur Stringer, the young Canadian poet and author, first went to Oxford, he carried with him letters from Professor Goldwin Smith of Toronto, to Professor York Powell, the distinguished historian of Christ church.

This old Oxford don, like one or two other Englishmen, had very vague ideas about Canada and somewhat surprised the young stranger by inquiring if he got along nicely on English roast mutton after living so long on frozen seal meat. The young poet gravely protested that he perhaps missed his whale-blubber a little, but the next day cabled home, and in less than a week the finest basket of autumn peaches ever grown in Ontario, carefully packed in sawdust, was on its way to Oxford. A short time afterward the young author was again dining with the Regius Professor of Oxford, and that gentleman produced at the meal a fruit dish loaded with tremendous peaches.

'Most extraordinary,' said the old professor, 'but these peaches were sent to me today, and I'm blessed if I know who sent them. From the South of France I suspect, so I saved a few of them for you, Stringer; they will be such a novelty, you know!'

The Canadian very quietly took a steamship company's bill of lading from his pocket, and handed it to the professor. The professor gazed at the bill, then at the fruit, then at the poet.

'I had some whale-blubber, too, Professor,' said that young man, 'but I simply had to eat that. These other things were grown on my uncle's farm in Kent County, Ontario, you know. He has two hundred bushels of them every year, and he sent me over a basket of little ones along with the whale-blubber.'

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'Your wife,' said the reporter, 'and the man with whom she eloped have been found in New York. They were on their way to Europe, but they lost their money and were stranded there.'

'Well?' said the man unmoved. 'Why—er,' stammered the reporter. 'We thought you might want the news and—' 'That is not the news. The news is that I have just sent them enough money to see them through.'