

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

before on similar occasions. Truth to tell, Violet had felt very relieved that she had only one wall to spare for this man.

Deeply against her will had he come to the hall, and when she had seen Mr. Derrick approaching, she wished she had insisted on remaining at home, despite her mother's entreaties.

He belonged to the old life, and she could never talk to him without a pain and constraint that nobody else guessed or understood.

But Roger was not going to let that miserable constraint prevail between them this evening.

He asked her if she would sit out the waltz with him, rather than dance it, for there would be no chance of bringing out what was in his heart if they were merely gyrating round the ball room like the rest.

Violet reluctantly consented, fearing that they would have very few subjects in common upon which to converse, and rather dreading the long silences that would fall between them; but as Roger conducted her to a retired seat in the corridor that led out of the conservatory, she plunged suddenly into the subject that fled his mind, resolved to use the few minutes reserved to him to the very best advantage.

"Miss Traill, he began, 'I have made up my mind to speak to you to-night upon a subject that has not been mentioned between us for years—years that have seemed very long to me. Do you remember a conversation we had a short time before you left Ledsbury—a conversation in which I told you of a change that had come over your manner to me? I asked you if I had done anything to annoy you; if you had ever heard any malicious story of me that I could explain away; but you said you had heard nothing, and that I had in no way offended you. Miss Traill—Violet—when I met you first—

Violet interrupted him. Her face had become pale, and her voice sounded shaken.

"I remember the occasion quite well Mr. Derrick; but do you think there is any use in reverting to these old days? she returned hurriedly, yet cold.

"Those old days are ever present with me, Violet, and ever will be," he replied. "I have thought of them all the years that we have been parted from each other. When I first met you—when you were the bright, gay girl of society, yet with such a sweet and tender nature that you were beloved by everyone who knew you—I acknowledged your supremacy, my heart went out to you. I grew to regard you as the one woman in the world for me, and to love you. What—oh, tell me what, was that cloud that came between us? Without any apparent reason, your warmth, your cordiality vanished. You became like some icy statue; you seemed to avoid me—you know and admit all this do you not?"

"It would be useless to deny it," he acknowledged in a low tone, charged with pain.

"Then won't you tell me what occasioned the change?" he pleaded. "I loved you, but you froze me by your altered manner. I asked for an explanation, you would not give it; you were cold and haughty, or seemed so to me, in my bitterness and bewilderment; then my pride rose, and I determined to take little more notice of you and give up my warring my thoughts upon you. I left Ledsbury on a holiday, and when I returned—in a voice that told of the suffering he had endured in that hour—I found that you and your mother had quitted the town, and had left behind you no trace of your whereabouts. I made enquiries from one or two of the closest of your friends, and then, learning nothing that would aid me in my quest, I left Ledsbury myself. Since then, though I have wandered far and near, I have never found another Violet Traill—never turned my thoughts to any other girl."

"Nay," Violet interrupted in a tone of surprise. "My sisters, I cannot say which one, but that you care for one of them—"

Derrick laughed, carelessly yet bitterly. "Your sisters! One does not love that stamp of girl, or, at least, a man of my calibre does not," he exclaimed. "I mean no disparagement to them, Violet, but my liking for their society is explained by the fact that they were your sisters. Surely you must have guessed that? I met them once or twice when I first came here, but they in no way attracted my attention—they were like hundreds of others—until their name was mentioned directly to me, when it aroused my interest in a moment. I discovered from them subsequently that they were your sisters, and that is the explanation of the friendship I began and have continued with them. It was all on your account. And now there is one question I want to ask you—will you be my wife?"

He stopped, and stood before her, waiting for her answer, his eyes fastened upon hers.

All his heart was in his handsome face, and Violet's sank as she read what he felt.

"No; it is impossible," she said. "Impossible!" he echoed. "But why? Could you never care for me? What is the mystery—the secret that divides us?"

"I did not say any secret or mystery divided us," she interrupted hastily.

"Then it is that you dislike me personally? It is as I once said, I vexed you or you heard some tale, some report—"

"You did not vex me, nor did I hear any false tale of you," she responded.

"But you did not hate me from the beginning, Violet! For months we were friends."

There was reproach in his tone and also entreaty.

Violet looked terribly harassed and very pale.

She glanced on all sides of her, as though longing for a way to escape.

"Why do you now, every time that you see me, treat me with such constraint, such reserve? Why do you shut yourself up, and, as your sisters tell me, wish them to shut themselves up also? Why do you

raise up a barrier between us by your manner, you used to be as gay and natural in your ways as a child?" Roger demanded passionately. "I love you with all my heart. Is there no hope for me? Violet, can't you explain anything?"

"No; I cannot," she replied, with a kind of forced and desperate resolution. Much may seem mysterious to you Mr. Derrick, but I am afraid it must remain so. I cannot marry you. I have tried to avoid you in fact, it is my wish to avoid everyone. Believe, it would be the better, the easier the more sensible way to think of me no more, to forget past days. I cannot be your wife, neither can I tell you anything, and it will always be the same. I can say to you only one thing—tears were in her voice and anguish in her heart—"remember me no more."

"It is easy, perhaps, for you to say that," Roger ground out between his teeth in angry despair as she rose and turned to go back into the ball-room; "but you ignore that it is impossible for me to follow your advice. A man cannot forget at will. You have not felt love, or you would not speak so coldly. But I will promise you that, though I may not throw off every feeling as lightly and easily as you seem to think possible, I will not trouble you again—I will not persecute you, as I may seem or late to have done. Upon seeing you again after all these years, my love rose within me like a flood. The old feeling was weak and poor in comparison with it, though always strong enough to have saddened my life. I can only offer this apology for any inconvenience I have caused you. And now I will say good-night to you, Violet—good night, and good bye. I cannot forget you, but I will trouble you no more, and bowing to her, with pale and averted face, he turned away, as her partner for the following waltz hurried up, and left the gaiety, which contrasted so bitterly with the raging pain and despair within his breast.

#### CHAPTER VI.

It was several months later, and rosy June reigned in the land.

A garden-party was being held in the grounds of a pretty vicarage many miles from Mapletorpe, and Roger Derrick, as handsome as, though, perhaps, graver than, he had been in former days, had been very busy in making himself agreeable to the crowds of ladies who filled the lawns and walks.

But he was resting for a time from his labors—sitting upon a low seat outside the drawing-room windows.

Many of the guests had flocked inside the house for tea.

The drawing-room windows were open, and someone inside was singing a song that made Roger involuntarily draw his brows together, although the voice was sweet.

It rang out clearly, and he would fain not have heard the words—

If to remember me should give thee pain,  
Remember me no more.

He knew the song, Remember me no more, and how vividly it recalled those same words by Violet!

It did give him pain to remember her; but, alas! he could not forget her.

He was rising from the shadow of the wall to change his seat, when there was the rustle of a stiff silk skirt at his side, and a lady's voice accented him in pleased tones.

He turned and beheld a fashionably-attired matronly figure, whose round pleasant face was smiling into his.

"Mr. Derrick, I am sure! You remember me, Mrs. Oppenshaw? It is several years ago since we saw each other in Ledsbury, but we met several times, and I have not forgotten you, though perhaps you have forgotten me?"

Roger, however had not forgotten this lady, and even if he had, the very name Ledsbury would have awakened his interest.

"I remember you perfectly, Mrs. Oppenshaw," he responded readily. "I spent many happy hours in Ledsbury, and made many friends there. Unfortunately nearly all of them have passed out of my life, but whenever I meet anyone who reminds me of that time, I am delighted to claim their acquaintance."

"We must have a talk together," smiled Mrs. Oppenshaw. "It is a couple of years since I was there, but I may be able to give you news of some of the people you remember. Have you visited the neighbourhood recently?"

"I have not set foot within it for six years," answered Roger, with an echo of sadness in his voice.

"The last time I saw you," said Mrs. Oppenshaw, who was a good natured sort of woman, and remembered the elements of a romance with which this man, when younger, had been said to be connected, "you were asking me if I knew what had become of a Mrs. Traill and her daughter. Did you ever find out?"

"I have seen them since, but only lately," replied Roger.

There was such a repressed, strange ring in the tone of his answer, that Mrs. Oppenshaw, imagining she knew the cause of it, spoke again in a certain subdued, shocked voice that seemed to her to betide the subject.

"That was a very sad affair, was it not?" she ejaculated. "I knew nothing of it at the time, as of course people in sympathy with the poor girl tried to hush it up; but the Hunters, who were the closest friends—the people with whom I was staying when I met you, Mr. Derrick—have told me all about it, since, they had left the neighbourhood, and it could do them no harm."

"Told you what?" exclaimed Roger, turning round upon her quickly. "Then there was a mystery?"

"Well, there was a story, I don't know that there was much mystery," replied Mrs. Oppenshaw. "Have you not heard about it?"

"No; but I would give much to know," interrupted Derrick, hoarsely. "Would it explain why they left Ledsbury?"

"Certainly. It was the reason for their doing so," she responded, taking in his agitation, and fully crediting what she had heard of him namely, that he had been very much attached to lovely Violet Traill. "I am surprised you do not know it. I don't think there can be any harm in my telling you, then, for you were very anxious—"

"I was," put in Roger, "and I would give all I have to get to the bottom of this matter. Yes—as Mrs. Oppenshaw regarded him with astonishment—it means a great deal to me. Please tell me about it."

"Well, in plain words, it is an unpleasant thing to say—but, unfortunately, it is the truth—Mrs. Traill drank, drank in secret, nobody suspecting such a state of affairs," said Mrs. Oppenshaw. "She was a confirmed dipsomaniac, keeping all right for months together, and then suddenly breaking out. Otherwise she was as nice a woman as could be found."

"How she concealed the thing from everybody so long I don't know; but she had an old family servant named Hannah, and this woman lived with them, and, I suppose, managed so that the secret should not leak out. Poor Violet Traill—as pretty a girl as I ever saw, and a good girl, too—knew nothing about her mother's failing."

"She was a great favourite in Ledsbury society, as you remember. Well, all went quietly on for years, when one night Mrs. Traill escaped Hannah's vigilance, and in her own house at a small dinner-party became most hopelessly intoxicated."

"Of course, Violet imagined everyone was pointing the finger of scorn at her mother. The poor girl retreated into her shell, and became a perfect recluse. A couple of months later they left Ledsbury abruptly. Of course, it was Violet's doing. From the moment she learned the terrible secret she constituted herself her mother's guardian, and never left her."

Roger Derrick's face had undergone many changes during the recital. "I thank you for telling me this—I thank you with all my heart," he said. "Mrs. Oppenshaw, I have loved Violet Traill ever since those old days, and I never learned until now the cause of the change in her."

He bade his companion a warm and grateful adieu, and took his departure.

Roger was hurrying down Summer Lane at Mapletorpe the next day when he saw a slender, graceful figure, in a plain black dress, approaching to meet him.

It was Violet; he knew her in a moment.

She carried a bunch of white roses in her hand, and as she recognised who it was that had stopped in front of her, the red blood rose into her pale face.

"Yes; it is I!" exclaimed Roger, seizing her unoccupied hand with a strange air of possession. "Violet, I have found out your reason for leaving Ledsbury—"

"Do not say anything more," cried Violet, shrinking back hastily.

"Only that I love you better than I did before—only that your angelic goodness and patience—"

"My mother is dead," said the girl, as though to stave off any harsh comment. "She died three months ago."

"Then, Violet, you cannot put forth any objection to my loving you, that is if you care for me at all," urged Roger passionately.

"I have always cared for you," whispered Violet. "But what was to be done?"

"Six wasted years! Violet, I would have helped you to bear the burden," said Roger tenderly and regretfully. "But, never mind, we will try to be happy now, my dear one, will not we?"

It was just at this moment, as they had turned to walk along together, hand in hand, looking into each other's face, with a loving, trustful glance, that they were espied by two plump, brown haired girls from the other side of the hedge.

"Good heavens! it surely can't be Violet! Derrick is making love to her?" they gasped.

"Why," exclaimed Christie furiously, "I was the one he liked."

"Nonsense, my dear," replied Kitty, "if he favoured one of us two it certainly was not you! At the most he only flirted with you. But, apparently, it couldn't have been either of us, for he never looked at us like that—now did he? Candidly confess."

And he never had.

They beheld a new Roger Derrick. With mortification and amazement they stood and watched the man for whom they had angled walking up the lane with the beauty of the family, and upon lovers' faces rested happiness and full content.

#### Bob Evans' Fish Story.

The public knows "Fighting Bob" as an incarnation of the American war spirit; and his picturesque and laconic candor on national issues is cherished as supreme expression of Anglo-Saxon independence and virility. For example, his statement, "it is to be found that the Spaniards blew up the Maine, there won't be anything but Spanish spoken in Hides for the next six months," gave him title, in popular estimation, to rank with Grant and Perry as a maker of immortal epigrams. To his familiars of the club and the mess and to presidents who have sought his companionship Evans has long been known not only as a hero of the seas, but also as the drollest of raconteurs. His repertoire of anecdotes is seemingly inexhaustible, says the Philadelphia Post.

Grover Cleveland has long been one of the admiral's friends and admirers. The sea warriors with was intensely retreating to the president, who, whenever it was convenient, insisted that Evans accompany him on his hunting, and fishing trips. One summer in the Adirondacks

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the members of the Cleveland party began to indulge in the ancient custom of exchanging dazzling fish stories. Dr. Bryan had caught in muskellonge so large that two men could lift into the boat, and they had to tow it ashore. The president preserved a dignified reticence, as befitted his rank, but he had heard of a local fisherman in that region who had hooked a wall-eyed pike so enormous that it had to be chopped into half a dozen sections before the mountain town grocer could weigh it on his platform scales.

When the president concluded the company turned half appealingly, half triumphantly to Evans. His reputation for never permitting a story to pass without adding it was now to be put to the test.

"I do not doubt these stories in the slightest," said he, "for I had the experience of my life on this very lake last year. A boatman was rowing, and I had been trolling for some time without results, when suddenly an ugly lurch in the line made our Peterbors craft career and tremble like a battleship under the recoil of a great gun. I was forced to let out the entire line to keep from capsizing, for that fish lashed the water and plunged about like a sea serpent gone mad. The whole line was not enough; that fish had a stronger pull than a successful politician."

and presently the boatman gave a cry—the fish was overcoming him. I sprang to the oars, and together we bent her outriggers, but our combined strength was boy's play against that watery demon. I had fought with tarpon on the coasts of Florida, but I never dreamed of encountering any such leviathan in a mountain lake.

"It was all we could do to steer clear of logs and rocks; our boat shot through the water; the spray drenched us. At last there was a merciful slowing down of speed, and we knew that our dragon was getting winded. Soon we could resist him. We rowed excitedly ashore, pulled in the line, got our gaffs ready for action, and before we realized it ourselves we had him safely beached."

"And how much did your fish weigh?" demanded President Cleveland eagerly.

"Weight?" responded Evans. "Oh, about three quarters of a pound."

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