

The Widow's Lodger.

...and many an engineer many times repeated to Martha as to the cure she was to take of him.

"Sit with him, Martha, and take a book, or a little needle work till I return, there's a good girl, and be sure you do not leave him, not for one moment."

"No, madam," said Martha, "not for one single instant, bless his heart!"

"Have you a book?"

"I don't care for reading just now, thank you, madam; I am embroidering a smoking cap for my young man and I will get on with that."

"You remind me, Martha," said Mary, taking a hat-crown from her purse, "this should be your evening out, but you will not mind, you can have to-morrow instead."

"It does not matter a bit," said Martha, with magnificent indifference, "he is sure to call, and cook can answer him. Young men must be taught that they cannot have all their own way. I never encourage such nonsense."

Mary only smiled. What difference in this respect was there between mistress and maid after all?

"That will buy you a pair of gloves," she said, "and do take care of baby. Put the cot by the bedside, and you can sit at the window; it will be more lively there."

It proved much too lively for Martha. Mrs. Coombes, not being wanted in the kitchen, came up and told Martha she was going out just for a few minutes, and she went. Mr. Barker's man had been out all the afternoon. Mrs. Little had gone in a bath chair to the other side of the square, and Mr. M. P. Parker was shuddering over a vivisection article in the "Lancet," and there at the window upstairs sat Martha, embroidering the smoking-cap for her young man to wear in the garden on Sunday mornings. It was pretty work, and the subject interested her. Still the time went slowly, hour by hour, and baby slept like a little angel, so Martha said to herself, and wondered who could think of leaving him, even for a moment.

And just then she saw her young man walking disconsolately along the pavement opposite, smoking a dejected pipe, and looking wistfully at the windows. He had rang the bell, and been answered civilly by Mr. Parker, who told him in all good faith what he believed—that there was nobody at home. He had a great respect for Martha's handsome young man, though he thought it a pity that such a figure as Martha's should be wasted on the working classes. If he married her himself, and educated her, nobody would know in a few years' time that she was not a lady born. But then this handsome young man of hers—an engineer—had a dark, determined face, with a thick, closely-cut Roman beard, and was made of nothing but lavers and muscle.

"I know the cook is out," Mr. Parker said, "and Martha must be, for I have rang several times within the last two hours and the bell has not been answered; but if you like to sit in my room and wait, you are very welcome. I have nothing to offer you but some lime juice, or citrate of magnesia, or saline, unless you would prefer barley water. You are very welcome, Mr. Phillips."

"Thank you, sir; you are very kind, but I won't intrude. If I wait about I may see her and save her the trouble of coming in. Much obliged to you, sir, all the same."

He lighted his pipe and began walking up and down, throwing his coat open wide as he grew morose and reckless with waiting, and driving his hands deeper into his trousers' pockets as dejection set in.

"I should like to know what she is up to," he said to himself. "Having a lark with me, perhaps. She is fond of that sometimes. She may try it on once to often. I have a good mind to furnish a couple of rooms next week, and stick the banners up; that would about fetch her and put an end to her tricks."

He had been counting the paving stones more than an hour before he arrived at this state of mind. He felt gloomy and savage, and would have been glad if somebody about his own size had run up against him. He looked at the house from basement to garret, and saw nothing except a head that might have belonged to a shaggy old lion, in blue spectacles at the drawing-room window. Attracted by that singular head, he looked again, then looked higher, then saw Martha. He could see that she was making signs to him, but could not understand them, so he beckoned her down. The signs were repeated, and he shook his head. The girl looked at the cot irresolutely; baby still slept like a little angel. There could not be any harm if she went down, just for a minute. So she put on her bonnet carelessly, with the strings loose, and went.

Mr. Phillips—glad as he was to see the face he loved so well, how well only those who understand the great heart of the intellectual working man can tell—was still inclined to be a little sulky; he heard her explanation moodily, and put his pipe in his pocket instead of flinging it into the middle of the road, and he did not speak until they were in the shadow away from the lamp-light, and then sulkeness and anger vanished as he crushed her to him with an arm like a vice, as strong as his love for her.

"Look here, my girl!" he said, "I shall not stand any more of this! I furnish a couple of rooms and stick up the banners next week, so now we take a turn round the square, and have a quiet glass somewhere?"

"What the baby, Fred?"

"I'll tell you a little longer, anyhow, it won't fall out of the window, or set his foot on fire."

Mr. Fredrick Phillips, the engineer, was not to be cowed when he fixed his mind upon an object; he settled himself down, and worked with a will until that object was accomplished, a quality often possessed by men in his station of life, who must live by their strength of mind and muscle. Martha quite forgot to teach young men that they could not have all their own way, and that she never encouraged such nonsense. They walked round the square more than once—more than a dozen times, talking about two rooms and the banners and the hundreds-and-one things that can be spoken of and dwelt upon by young persons who have intentions of entering the holy bonds of matrimony.

Meanwhile, baby had awakened, contentedly enough at first; stretched himself, rubbed his eyes with dimpled knuckles, looked at his own chubby feet as if he had never seen them before, and then set up a wistful cry for mamma. Finding it disregarded—a thing he was not used to—the cry grew plaintive, then tearful, and finally broke into a wail that pierced through the house. This would not so much have mattered, but in trying to clamber from the cot to the bed he overbalanced the swivel and fell heavily to the floor.

Mr. Barker had heard the cries, and naturally thought the child would be attended to; but after the fall, the cries still continued, and he went to the door and listened; then it occurred to him that the child was alone. He had seen the cook go out, and he had seen Martha go out—very little took place that old gentleman did not see—still, to make sure, he rang the bell firmly. No reply came, so he roared loudly downstairs:

"Here, you, cook! Susan! Sarah! Hang it all, is there anybody at home?"

"No, sir, but me and you, sir," said a timid voice from the hall; "but if anything is the matter, I will come up. I am partly a doctor, you know."

"Ah! all the rest an' idiot," growled that incoherent old gentleman. "Go in, an' let yours'elf out of sight. Partly a—boo!"

Mr. Barker went in, and the eccentric lodger went up stairs—so softly and swiftly that his gait must have been entirely disregarded. He had removed his spectacles, and baby, stopping his wailing as the door opened, saw a healthy, hale, benevolent old gentleman, with a world of tenderness in his rugged countenance. The boy stretched out his little arms and cooed lovingly at him.

"Artie so fitten," he sobbed; "want mamma."

"Does he then, poor little man?" said the old gentleman, as naturally as if he had soothed and talked to a dozen children of his own. "Mamma's coming presently; but what on earth am I to do with you in the meantime? I have nothing up stairs but my preserved ginger and a pot of tamarinds. You shall have them to play with. I only hope to goodness they will not disagree with you."

He carried the child into his own room, and sat with him on his knee. The little fellow made himself quite at home. He patted the powerful hand face that was bent over him with a look he did not understand. Mr. Barker kissed the tiny dimpled hands and arms a thousand times, and pressed the velvet baby-check softly to his own.

"You do not know, my little man," he said, with a slow and sorrowful movement of his grey head, "how much you are like your father; he would always come to me, even from his cradle, and you are like him."

Master Artie did not know anything about that; he wanted Mr. Barker's watch and chain, and he had them; he took a fancy to his diamond rings, and he had them as well, paying a willing bird-like kiss for each. The old gentleman propped him up securely in a big easy chair to a table with the table, and set the tamarinds and preserved ginger before him with a silver spoon and a few wine biscuits, and then he brought out a bottle for himself.

"I think," he said, smiling at his infantile guest through some unfallen tears, "that as we get along so well, we had better have a glass of wine to retter, or you—you may dip the biscuits in it; I shall like it all the more."

And that was the picture Mary saw when, having knocked quietly several times, she opened the door and peeped in. Some instinct she could not define just then made her close the door again in silence, and leave them to themselves, undisturbed.

CHAPTER V. THE UNFINISHED LETTER.

Some minutes passed and the two remained—the child and the old man—just as Mary had seen them. Mary wondered very much at the strange spectacle; she had heard from Mr. Parker where to find her boy, having gone to his room when she found the cot empty. Her first idea was that the housemaid had taken him with her, but Parker told her in a hushed and awe-stricken whisper:

"Most extraordinary thing in the world," he said; "he roared at me like an old lion when I asked if anything was the matter, and was quite uncomplimentary when I told him I was a doctor, and then he went up to baby's room, and came down stairs without limping or stumbling a bit. I peeped, as true as you are here, Mrs. Allenby, and there was the little fellow in his arms, quite contented—partly and I

old gentleman walked in, entirely forgetting his gait, as true as you are here, most extraordinary!"

Mary did not think so; she had long since suspected that a world of kindly feeling lay concealed under her eccentric lodger's rough and disagreeable manner. He had tried to avoid her ever since he first came into the house, but he did not always succeed. She was light-footed and quick, and ran against him by accident, when she could not by any possibility get out of her way, and on these occasions, in the surprise of the moment, his bearing and the involuntary courtesy of a well-bred man; and it had occurred to her that if he would be less slovenly in his dress, have his shaggy hair and whiskers properly attended to, and put those horrid spectacles aside, he would be a rather handsome old gentleman, of an unusually distinguished type.

But she was not prepared for the change she saw as she peeped in; the proudly handsome countenance, with the shaggy grey hair swept back like a lion's mane from his massive brow, was singularly impressive and full of kindness; his eyes, no longer covered by those hideous blue glasses, were such as would win a child's love in an instant; what then had Mr. Joyce meant by saying that the sight of one drove him out of his mind; one of his mild jokes, perhaps. Mr. Joyce prided himself on being a humorist.

She waited some time, expecting the bell to ring, but it did not, and she went upstairs again. This time she knocked loudly enough to be heard, and the well-known voice growled out, "Come in."

Mary entered very timidly, and the old gentleman did not look up. He could not put on his spectacles, for the child was playing with them.

"Don't you think," he said, in the same growl, suppressed for the child's sake, "you shamless baggage, that you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself, prowling round the square with a man smoking a pipe, and leaving this dear little fellow here? You will find your boxes at the door in half-an-hour, if I have any authority in the house."

He might have said more, if Master Artie had not dashed the hideous blue spectacles on the table with a force that broke them, and uttered a loud cry of "Mamma!" Perceiving his mistake, the old gentleman rose with a very grave and kindly bow. He was taken off his guard, and the accident to his spectacles had vexed him, but he retained his self-possession.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I thought it was the servant. She left this little fellow here alone upstairs, and he had a sad tumble on the floor, but he is not hurt. How is it, Mrs. Allenby, I was allowed to think you had no children?"

"Not by my wish, sir," said Mary, feeling wonderfully at home with him. "I wanted Mr. Joyce to tell you."

"Well, well, it does not matter; you see we are quite friends; you need not take him away for a minute or two. Take a seat, please, since you are here; the boy and I do not want the banquet all to ourselves. Give me those glasses, Master What's-your-name, or you will cut your fingers."

"I am so sorry he has broken them," said Mary, sitting down; "he has been very troublesome, I am afraid, and you have such an aversion to children."

"Some children, my dear madam, Joyce should have told you that. I detest them as a rule. They detest me, as a rule. Do you know this little fellow is the first one, almost, who did not shriek out with fright at the sight of me?"

"He does not take to strangers generally."

"Follows his instincts perhaps, as I do. What did you say his name was?"

"Arthur Michael."

"After his father, I suppose?"

"And his uncle—his father's uncle, I should say—my husband was very fond of him."

"Drink some wine, please, and take some preserved ginger; it's very good. Let me see, Michael—Michael—you surely cannot mean old Mike Allenby, of Barbadoes, a cross-grained, disagreeable old brute, a nuisance to himself, and a bore to everybody about him."

"Sir," said Mary, taking up her baby with tears of indignation in her eyes, "I do mean Mr. Michael Allenby, of Barbadoes, and you are telling wicked stories of one whom next to me my husband loved before anyone in the world—a noble, just, and generous man, who did good for its own sake, and countless grateful hearts have to thank him for his thoughtful kindness, though they never knew him by sight or name."

"I beg your pardon," he said, rising to detain her. "Pray do not go. People take different impressions, you know, and that was mine of him. I have no reason to complain of him; he was the best friend I ever had—I can say that without reservation; but I must say that he was intensely disagreeable to me at times. Pray sit down again, and give me the baby; I want to look at him again, since he is named after old Mike. We were the best of friends, my dear; people said we were a good deal like each other—hardly a compliment to either of us. I wonder, Master Arthur, what you would think of old Mike?"

The baby hugged him round the neck, patted his face and forehead, and finished this little ebullition of feeling by trying to fill his mouth with ginger.

"Thank you, highly gratifying, no doubt. I hardly know what old Mike would think of that. How old are you, Mrs. Allenby?"

"Twenty-three."

"So young and pretty," he said, almost

to himself. "I hardly wonder, poor child!" and he smoothed the baby's curly head. "Do you know, my dear, it is strange? I often heard old Mike speak of your husband, but never of you. Did he know Arthur was married?"

"No, sir, poor fellow he was writing to him when he died. I have the letter still—unfinished."

"The letter said—unfinished. Heaven bless my!" and the old gentleman trembled with some strange emotion. "Why, he may have wanted something done—that I could do. As old Mike's friend, my dear, is it too much to ask you to let me see that letter? I am an old man, my dear, not quite a stranger, and I wish it very much."

He asked this so eagerly, earnestly, and sadly too, that Mary looked at him in surprise.

"Scarcely," she said, "as Uncle Michael's friend, Mr. Barker. Yes, you shall see it. Do you ever correspond with Uncle Michael?"

"Now and then, and he would be pleased to know of this. He often used to wonder why his boy did not write. He always spoke of your husband as his boy. Bring it, please."

Mary went to her bed-room and took the letter from the old-fashioned desk, where it rested with other relics sacred to the dead. When she returned Mr. Barker had the baby fold closely in his arms, and looked as if he had been crying.

"Are you in pain, sir?" she asked.

"A twinge," he said, huskily, and looking at his foot in its huge, unshapely slipper. "Catches me now and then; but do not mind me."

He put the baby in the chair again, propped up carefully as before, and took the letter from Mary. He evidently did not depend upon the blue spectacles entirely, for he took a pair of handsome gold-rimmed glasses from his waistcoat pocket; but he did not seem to see clearly even with them.

"Is not the writing dull?" he said.

"Or is it my eyesight?"

"The writing, sir, I think. Poor Arthur was very weak when he began that letter. I will tell you, Mr. Barker, how it was written, and then you will understand it better. Poor Arthur married me without the consent of his mother and sisters. They are very proud people, and he might have done so much better. He used to attend my father."

"What was your father?"

"He did Museum work for literary gentlemen. He was a great scholar, and we were poor, and, from coming as a doctor, Arthur came as a friend, and when my father died he was very kind to me. Everyone was kind to me at that time. Even the gentlemen he did the Museum work for made a subscription, as a testimonial. It was very kind of them. They sent it to Arthur in a delicate way, as a token of their esteem for Mr. Leonard. We set up the monument at my father's grave with that money."

"Your name was Leonard?"

"Yes, Arthur had placed me with some friends then until we could marry. I knew he was making a sacrifice, but he would not give me up, and his mother could not forgive me. She would not receive me, and so, after a time, he would not visit her without me. He was rich then, and kept a carriage. She allowed him an income, but he would not accept it after that. And then he worked too hard, went everywhere on foot—and he was always delicate—and so at last he fell ill, and died. And, Mr. Barker, when his mother came here to see him, she told me I had killed him."

"Poor child, those words may come home to her some day. Were all his people equally unkind?"

"With the exception of his younger sister, Margaret—Daisy he called her. She would have come if she had dared."

"And she was the only one who showed you kindness?"

"The only one."

Mr. Barker nodded slowly.

"When we were at our worst times," Mary went on, "for we had some bad times—Arthur could not always get his money in, and a doctor must not ask—he thought of writing to his Uncle Michael."

"I wish he had," groaned the old gentleman. "Do not mind me, it is only another twinge—nothing would have pleased his uncle better."

"It was only at the last," Mary said, "that he made up his mind. If ever Uncle Mike comes to England, and you see him, Arthur told me, 'I know he will fall in love with you and take care of you, and while there is time I will write and tell him all about our marriage.' And that is the letter he began; it was never sent."

"Why?"

"I would not part with it. I would not send it; it would have looked as if I wanted something, and I could not."

"And it did not occur to you that you were wrong in letting your independence stand in the way of your duty?" Mr. Barker said, gravely. "That letter was intended for Michael Allenby, and you kept it yourself."

"I should not have known where to find him, sir."

"That is begging the question, my dear. Any West-Indian agent would have forwarded a letter to him."

"I did not think of that; and I meant to show it to Uncle Michael if ever we met."

"How could you hope to meet him when he did not even know you were Arthur's wife?"

(To Be Continued.)

The Fargo Convention.

FRIDAY.

In lieu of a detailed report of the last day of the convention it may be briefly stated that the committee on "Land Office Decisions" framed the most tentative, yet pointed resolutions, regarding the decisions of Sparks, which were adopted, unanimously; the committee on the "Trail, County Case" requested the intervention of congress requiring the Northern Pacific to pay for its surveys, in order to render its lands taxable; the committee on "Waterways" asked an appropriation of \$100,000 from congress for the headwaters of the Red, while the committee on "Admission and Division" reported as follows:

Steps having been taken at the seat of government at Washington, D. C., looking to the immediate solving of all questions of the division of Dakota territory and admission as a whole or part, with a view to avoid any embarrassments of our delegate in congress, and the members of congress, having these questions under consideration, and to avoid in any way hampering them in their actions,

He resolved, That this convention take no action whatever upon the question of admission and division, either or both, and formulate no further resolutions thereon, either recommendatory or advisory.

Resolved, That the citizens of the entire territory of Dakota have aided in its upbuilding to its present position of prosperity, and to all citizens alike is that name endeared; and it is the sense of this convention that the name of "Dakota" should be given to no section of the present territory to the exclusion of any other section.

Resolved, That all resolutions heretofore referred to your committee be hereby referred back to the convention with the recommendation that they be laid upon the table.

This report was adopted unanimously. A further resolution, to the effect that division on the 7th standard parallel should be had instead of on the 46th parallel, was adopted, whereupon the convention adjourned in peace and harmony. A more harmonious convention was ever held in Dakota, and no thing but good can come out of it.

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