

The Widow's Lodger.

Continued from Fifth Page.

sign of her emotion.

"Mamma told me I might come, and I was so glad darling. I came at once. You were out, and hearing baby was here, I intruded upon Mr. Parker. He was good enough to give me a cup of tea."

"I take one," said Mr. Parker, eagerly; "she found me in the most absurd position."

"Nothing is absurd that is done in kindness," said Margaret, quickly; "he was simply playing with baby, as I should have done, and I thank you very much, Mr. Parker."

Miss Allenby gave him her hand with the freedom of an old friend, and then the fair vision went upstairs accompanied by Mary and the baby. Struggling with a wild desire to steal the teacup she had drunk from, he kissed the place her lips had touched, and seizing his hat went for a walk round the square. Where he went after that he could not have said, but he was gone three hours, and when he returned Miss Allenby was talking leave of Mary at the door.

"I am so glad you are here, Mr. Parker," Mary said; "I was wondering what we should do. It is so late for my sister to be out alone; will you kindly see her to Orthorpe Square?"

CHAPTER VIII. A MYSTERY.

Mr. Parker never forgot that memorable walk. With Margaret's hand upon his arm he felt a manhood and a dignity within him such as he had never experienced before. They resumed their conversation almost at the point where baby interrupted it with the spoon, and Margaret took pleasure in bringing out the thought and sense that were only kept back by the diffidence he had found unconquerable till now.

"If I never see you again," he said, as they parted; "if we are never better acquainted than we are at present, I shall always remember this day. You have taught me to have more confidence in myself. I shall never forget that you, with your beauty and high position—so far above me as you are in everything—considered me good enough to sit with and walk with."

"You will see me again," Margaret said. "I shall be very often at my sister's now. I have to thank you, for you saved me from a great disappointment. I could not have seen baby, or stayed with him, had the room belonged to anyone but yourself."

They said good-night, and a cab drove up at the moment. A gentleman alighted—a tall, stout, heavily-built man, at whom Mr. Parker, at a distance of ten yards, stared in bewildered amazement. He looked at his feet, expecting to see a ponderous felt shoe covering a gouty foot, and saw instead a shapely boot on a foot of the proper size. He looked from his feet to his face for a pair of blue spectacles, and saw instead a pair of clear, bright eyes, and then this gentleman went up the few steps with an alert, powerful stride, carrying the weight of his erect figure with ease and dignity. Mr. Parker saw him raise his hat to Margaret, and distinctly heard her say:

"Uncle Michael!"

"I am going out of my mind," Mr. Parker said to himself. "I must be that beautiful creature has turned my brain. I am going out of my mind, or else I have seen a ghost, Uncle Michael! Why it was Mr. Barker without his gouty foot and the blue spectacles! Uncle Michael!—but these people may be wonderfully alike. Stand! I shall run against a post presently and hurt myself. Uncle Barker—Michael I mean, the most extraordinary thing I ever saw."

He told Mary when he reached home, and she listened with a gravely amused smile. Had not Mr. Barker told her that he and Uncle Michael were something alike? It was no mystery to her, but Mr. Parker could not get over it.

"He was so much like the old gentleman upstairs," he said, "that when he looked at me—and he certainly did look at me—I half expected to hear his terrific voice roar at me."

"I daresay you will see him here," Mary said, "and then you can judge for yourself how much resemblance there is. You took Miss Allenby home safely?"

"My dear lady, you do not know how much pleasure you have given me," he said, thoughtfully. "I never met anyone, except yourself, who understood me as your sister does, or cared to. What a noble creature she is!"

"As good," Mary said, "as she is beautiful. She has a very high opinion of you, Mr. Parker, and her friendship is worth much to any man or woman. I would accept anyone on trust whom she had faith in; her instinct is so quick and true."

That sense of manhood and dignity never left Mr. Parker again. It would have fared badly with his riotous friends had they attempted to play their unseemly jests upon him now. He stood upon a different footing in the house, and Miss Allenby, who came nearly every day, rarely passed his door without stopping to say a few words to him. Perhaps in mercy for him she never stayed too long; she knew the poor fellow was steeped to the heart in love for her.

They had almost given Uncle Michael up for the night when he arrived in Orthorpe Square; but everything was ready for him. Mrs. Allenby had tried her best to remember what she could of her brother-in-law's tastes and habits; she

had prepared the large front room on the second-floor as a bedchamber, and put some solid, handsome furniture in the room behind it, for him to read or write or smoke in—not that he had ever been a favorite of hers, but he was her late husband's brother, and he was rich; the pains she took to please him were not entirely based on selfishness.

Nothing could have pleased the old man more than did the unexpected meeting with Margaret at the door. No sooner had he raised his hat than she said "Uncle Michael!" and threw back her veil to kiss him with a glad welcome in her eyes. "I should have known you anywhere," she added, softly—"you are so like my father."

"Oh! bless you, my child," he said; "this is worth a thousand welcomes in."

He had looked with dread and distaste upon the prospect of a formal and prepared reception, and he knew that Margaret's was genuine. Accustomed as he was to expect an interested motive in everything said and done for him, it was a relief to see the innocent and eager gladness in the beautiful face of his young niece. It was nothing but the truth that he was like her father—the resemblance between them was striking when they were young, and it grew more pronounced as they advanced in years.

The girl led him in, and set her mother's preparations for a stately reception in disorder by taken him into the drawing-room hand-in-hand.

"I met him at the door, mamma," she said, "and knew him directly. Is he not like father?"

"Very much," Mrs. Allenby said, softening in voice and features at the resemblance. "More even than he used to be; if, Michael, you had returned a few years sooner."

Some unexpected chord was touched by the resemblance, for her eyes filled as she looked at him and kissed him.

"Well, well, Charlotte," he said, with a short husky cough, "it is these few years that do the mischief, and I am older than he was, you know. I thought when I came back we should both retire and smoke our pipes together, but it was not to be. You have borne the wear and tear of this life well, and your children are all a mother could desire. This," and he turned to the tall young lady standing waiting to be spoken to, "is surely my niece Victoria?"

"Yes, uncle," said Tory, kissing him at arm's length, as it were.

"If you are always as sparing of your words and your kisses," he said, with grim good temper, "you will never give any man the headache. There is one who should be here whom I miss very sadly, Charlotte."

"My poor boy, Arthur."

"Aye, and that wife and child of his, are they here?"

"No," said Mrs. Allenby, regretfully. "She did not come. It would take too long to explain now, but you shall hear everything in the morning."

"I shall not be here in the morning. I have rooms at the Langham."

"Your rooms are ready for you here, Michael, and you will not, I hope, think of leaving us."

"Do start, uncle," Margaret said, as he hesitated, "if only for a few days."

"Well, if you will undertake the care of a troublesome old man, it is your own fault mind; but I shall require looking after. I have given my man a holiday."

"Let me take his place," said Margaret. "I used to wait upon father always."

"I hope he paid you good wages if he gave as much trouble as I do. Can you undertake to look through my letters, sift them, answer those that are worth answering, put the others in the fire without burning the wrong ones, read to me, fill my pipes, put on my slippers, mix my grog, and take care of my loose cash when I come home late—from the club?"

"I will try," Margaret said. "You have only to tell me what to do."

"That's a good little girl," he said, "I think we shall get along together,"—and slight as the indication was it did not escape the elder sister's notice,— "and since we have the night before us, you can tell me how it is that Arthur's wife declined to be here. You told her I was coming home. She must have known I should like to see Arthur's boy."

"Margaret wrote to her for me," said Mrs. Allenby, in the same tone of regret for another's folly. "Here is her reply; and Margaret has just left her. There were, I may tell you, differences between us. I objected to the marriage. Her father was a disreputable old literary hack; went to tavern bars and that sort of thing, and the girl herself, as I have heard, had not altogether a good reputation. I hope it is not true. Still, I declined to receive her until your letter came, and then, for the boy's sake, I made up my mind to overlook all unpleasant matters, and Margaret wrote to her at my request. There is her reply."

CHAPTER IX. A RECONCILIATION.

Had Michael Allenby only depended on his respected sister-in-law's word for it, he might not have believed her, but there was nothing except the truth in his niece Margaret's voice and eyes. She spoke, too, in a tone of regret as to Mary's obdurate conduct, and there was the plain unmistakable fact of the letter sent in reply to the one Margaret had written at her mother's request.

He spoke very decidedly when he said he would not go to Crammore Square, and Mrs. Allenby was secretly glad; but she had her part to play, and played it well.

"Of course she is very young," the lady said, "and her character is naturally obstinate, still I have no wish to say or think anything unkind now. We must not expect too much of her. We have to remember her early training and lamentable surroundings, and so every allowance is to be made for her. Above all, there is Arthur's boy to be considered."

"Yes," said Uncle Michael, "that is to be considered first of all."

"It is bad enough that she should have the care of him, even while he is so young," the lady went on; "but when he grows older, and begins to understand things, it would be dreadful for him to think of himself as the child of a lodging-house keeper, and not what one would call a respectable lodging-house either—wild young medical students who keep dreadful hours, and elderly bachelors from Heaven knows where; a disreputable untidy old person, who takes snuff and keeps a negro servant."

"You are mistaken, mamma," Margaret said quietly; "there is but one medical student in the house—a sweet-tempered, simple-hearted gentleman; if he were otherwise George Hyde would not make a friend of him. As for the elderly gentleman, I just long to see him. Mary literally loves him, and baby is never happy out of his rooms, and the negro servant—that is so absurd—he is a handsome creole or mulatto of the lightest brown. I wonder who could have told you such things?"

"I heard it from the servants, my dear."

"Servants, my dear mamma; you know how they let their tongues run away with them. I should never speak of them as reliable authorities."

"Now I do not agree with you there," Mr. Allenby said, with a smile of kindly humor at his niece. "I have found that you generally can rely on the statements of most servants, if you repeat those statements; but you should be an authority, as you are so frequently at the house. Still, as your mother correctly observes, it would never do to let the little fellow grow up to think himself the son of a lodging-house keeper; but the thing is, how can we bring this obstinate young lady to reason?"

"If there is no other way," Mrs. Allenby said, "I will see her myself. She will scarcely carry her ill-breeding so far as to refuse to see her husband's mother."

"Mary is not ill-bred, my dear mamma," said Margaret's tranquil voice; "but you would scarcely expect her to overlook, or forget, our neglect of her for so many years, and be reconciled just when it suits us."

"Her good-breeding has not improved you," Mrs. Allenby said, with a bitterness she could not suppress. "You treat me with no respect, and contradict me at every word."

"I am very sorry, mamma, and the girl's lips trembled; but you are under a misapprehension, and I like you to know the truth. If you go you will be received with courtesy, and after a time you are sure to be good friends."

"What would you have me do?" and the lady turned to her brother-in-law. "Understand me that I do not know whether I shall ever learn to forgive or like this girl, and if I go it will only be for the sake of Arthur's boy. Of course I do not know what time may do. She may be very lovable. Arthur found all his happiness with her, and Margaret is entirely taken by her, as you see. What would you have me do?"

"I think," the old gentleman said, slowly, "I should go. It would be a very womanly and graceful thing to do. The kindness in such a concession would not fail to bring its own reward. You may learn to forgive and like each other in any case you will be doing what is right, and that is always good; for it is so easy to go wrong, to let pride and stubborn temper lead us on, step by step, till it is too late to return."

He spoke with some solemnity and a touch of sadness too, as if he had some such memory to repent. Mrs. Allenby took her cue from that.

"I will go," she said, "to-morrow. I will not let her pride and stubborn temper lead me, step by step, into wrong until it is too late."

"Why not write first, or let Margaret inform her of your intention? She will be prepared then, and in a better frame of mind, perhaps."

"I will write, and Margaret can speak to her as well. We will leave nothing undone since you desire this reconciliation."

"I do."

Mrs. Allenby wrote that evening, and set the letter before him to read. There was no fault to be found in it; the tone was conciliatory and kind, though the lady had not abated a jot of her dignity. Mary was wondering how to answer it when her eccentric lodger arrived, though it was quite early in the morning—so early that Mr. Parker, who was standing at the window reading his paper while waiting for his breakfast, saw the old gentleman alight from his cab, blue spectacles, gout, and all complete, and asked himself if he was beginning to have temporary attacks of insanity.

"I would swear to the figure," he said, "and the carriage of the shoulders when getting down from the cab; but then, the gout as bad as ever and those hideous spectacles, of course it cannot be, and perhaps I am going wrong. I had better read up Forbes Winslow's treatise on soothing syrup—symptomatic mania, I mean. I wonder if a little music would do me good?"

Thinking that it might, he began to tune his violin, and after an interval of about a minute, something came thum-

dering down the stairs. He did not know whether it was a chest of drawers or the piano, but his heart leaped up into his throat, and when he ventured to look out he found it was only a huge arm-chair.

"And if you do not hold that infernal row," roared the dreadful voice, "I will jump through the ceiling and annihilate you."

"Jump!" said Mr. Parker, recklessly, with all the voice he could muster, and opened his door about an extra inch and a half. "Jump!" he repeated, "who cares? You would not jump if you had the gout. I don't believe you ever had the gout; you left it behind you when you went upstairs for the baby! You leave it behind you when you please. Your blue frills are simply spectacles—I mean your blue spectacles are a fraud. I will not stand it, sir, I—I'll go for a walk, there!"

He carried out this heroic resolution promptly, as the girl brought in his tray, and he thought he heard the old gentleman coming. By the time he reached the street door, Martha spoke to him.

"Never mind him, sir," she said, stifling down a laugh; "it is only his way, and you gave him as good as he sent. Depend upon it, he won't do it when he finds you have got a spirit in you. Speak like you did just now. I was glad to hear it, and don't spoil your breakfast. Mrs. Allenby cooked it for you every bit, and made the coffee herself."

"I will, Martha," said Mr. Parker, when he was in his own room again; "why should I not? If he were not such a very old man, I would really speak to him. I would tell him how bad it is for him at his age."

Martha poured out his coffee soothingly, and he began his breakfast, listening meanwhile to the dreadful voice, but he only heard it in a deep bass laugh. It pained him rather, however, to think he heard Mary's musical voice laughing too.

"It is too bad," he said to himself, "I wish I had more command of my nerves. When people treat me like a fool, I feel like one. I am only myself, or what I wish to be, when I am with Miss Allenby!"

And it was too bad, Mary told the old gentleman so, and he admitted it.

"But," he said, "how can one help it when the fellow is so easily frightened? If he came up and demanded an apology, or told me that but for my age he would throw me out of the window, I should like him all the better. How can he hope to get along in the world with such a nerve system as his?"

"The poor fellow may have inherited it; I have heard Arthur say that is frequently the case."

"Yes, that's true," said Mr. Barker. "Nervous people should not marry. They never think what a curse they entail upon their children and posterity—men and women like our friend. They may be morally and physically brave when they have time for reflection, but the sudden sound of a loud voice or any unexpected incident deprives them of all self-possession and gives them a temporary paralysis of mind and body. I do not think you are nervous, my dear!"

"I went into the world very early, sir, and learned it thoroughly before I had time to be afraid of it."

"I know," he said, kindly; "your father was rather a helpless man, and you had to take care of him as well."

"He had been very brave," said Mary; "but the trouble he endured so patiently broke him down. No one but a brave man could have borne that trouble so patiently."

"Yes, that was him; he could endure, but he could not fight,—set a stern and savage front to the world, and beat or wear down all that came before him,—yet that is what must be done in these days by all who think life worth living; the others can only turn their faces to the wall and die. Have you," he asked, with one of his abrupt transitions, "seen your Uncle Michael yet?"

"Not yet, sir."

"How is that?"

"He has not been here."

"If you wait for that, I am afraid you will not see him," said Mr. Barker. "Do not set your pretty mouth so hard. He has been told that Arthur's mother wrote to you, asking you to meet him at her house."

"That is quite true."

"And you refused to go?"

"I could not go. After what I have told you, Mr. Barker, could you expect me to? I know it was out of no regard for me. She only wanted to let Uncle Michael see Arthur's boy, and I was an unwelcome but indispensable accessory. I could not and I will not," she added, passionately. "Can you, Mr. Barker, say that I am wrong?"

"My child," he said, very gently, "it is not for me to say what is right or wrong, for I know what my own pride and stubborn temper have done for me. Sinking that question altogether, saying it is only the boy they want to see, have some consideration for your Uncle Michael."

"Why can he not come here?"

"You see, dear, how difficult his position is. He could not very well come here since you have so distinctly declined his sister-in-law's fully expressed desire for a reconciliation. Do you see?"

"I did not think of that," said Mary, in perplexity; "but I do not feel as if I could go."

"Well, then, let him see the boy. George Hyde could take him—or Margaret. You would not mind that, especially as I should most probably be there."

"No, I should not mind much," said Mary, reluctantly.

"Well, then, that is arranged, so far. We will have a day appointed. Uncle Michael is rather erratic in his movements, and though he is supposed to be staying in the house he has quarters of his own elsewhere. Will you suggest this to your sister Margaret or Mr. Hyde, or when you reply to the letter you had this morning?"

"Did you know?" she asked, in suspicion.

"Oh, yes. I see Uncle Michael every day, and we talk over things; but I do not want my name mentioned, or any but yourself and George Hyde to know that Michael Allenby and myself are acquainted. How did you think of answering that letter?"

"I did not know. I was pondering over it when you came in. I would rather let Arthur go for a few hours than see Mrs. Allenby just yet. I want time. It would be so hard to meet her after so long a time and what has passed."

"Perhaps you are right. You require time to recover your mind; and it will not matter so much for a few days if Uncle Michael sees the child of his old favorite. Do not think, my girl, that he has an unkind thought of you. I have told him everything, and we would have been here long ago, but you see she stole a march upon us by asking you to meet him there. Of course, as he is ready to admit, she could do no more."

"And of course she made it appear that I was declining to meet him?"

"It did look a little like that; but much to his surprise, she rather made excuses for you, and then, as a second concession, she wrote the letter you have this morning."

"I always thought her a clever woman," Mary said, quietly—"one who would never put herself in the wrong. I will write to-day and tell her to come when she pleases."

"The child had better see Mrs. Allenby first," he suggested.

"If you think so."

"It will smooth the way, and soften all things down—show him that, although you are willing to please him, you have no idea of losing your own dignity. You will like Uncle Allenby when you see him, Mary."

"I am sure of that, sir."

"If, by any chance, he should be there this evening, and Margaret calls upon you, will you send the boy?"

"Will you be there as well?"

"Most likely. I shall not be far away."

"I will send him, then; but they must not keep him long."

"Name your own time for his return, and Miss Allenby—Margaret—will keep faith with you. Uncle Michael is in love with her. She must, from what he says of her, be something like you."

"Not a bit," said Mary; "Margaret is rather tall, and what men would consider very beautiful."

"In disposition, I mean, my dear; beauty is nothing, though it is as well for a woman to have a little of it, if only to set off her mind. Should I see Uncle Michael this morning, as I very likely shall, may I tell him you will send the boy this evening?"

"Yes, Mr. Barker. I will do whatever you think best."

"Thank you," and he kissed her soft cheek tenderly. "That old uncle will be rather jealous of me, I fancy."

"I may care as much for him in time," Mary began.

"Come—come," Mr. Barker interrupted; "that is high treason. If I told him that, I do not know what he would think. The boy is not up yet, I suppose?"

"Not yet. Would you like to see him?"

"Yes, but I will not have him disturbed. The Dutch, who are a prosaic people, say that children should never be awakened, for they talk with the angels when they sleep. Tell that young fellow down stairs I was very sorry to interrupt his music, but the sound of a riddle drives my gout out of its mind. Does he smoke?"

"I think so—cigarettes."

"Cigarettes! open that drawer in the cabinet and give him the big pipe you will see there; it is carved like a miniature, and holds nearly an ounce of tobacco. Give him one of those canisters of Latakia—that's it, and tell him I will come and have a pipe with him some day. He can accept it as a kind of burnt offering, and advise him not to make himself ill—with cigarettes."

[To be Continued.]

THE CHICAGO MILWAUKEE ST. PAUL R'Y

Is the Fast-Mail Short Line from St. Paul and Minneapolis via La Crosse and Milwaukee to Chicago and all points in the Eastern States and Canada. It is the only line under one management between St. Paul and Chicago, and is the finest equipped railway in the Northwest. It is the only line running sleeping cars with luxurious smoking rooms, and the finest dining cars in the world, via the famous "River Bank Route," along the shores of Lake Pepin and the beautiful Mississippi river, to Milwaukee and Chicago. Its trains connect with those of the Northern lines in the Grand Union depot at St. Paul. No change of cars of any class between St. Paul and Chicago. For through tickets, time-tables and full information, apply to any coupon ticket agent in the Northwest. R. Miller, General Manager; J. F. Tucker, Asst. Gen'l. Manager; A. V. H. Carpenter, Gen'l. Pass. Agent; Geo. H. Heaford, Asst. Gen'l. Pass. Agent; Milwaukee, Wis.; W. H. Dixon, Gen'l. Northwestern Pass. Agent, St. Paul, Minn.