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*T. E. D. Nash*

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LOVE AND VENGEANCE  

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*or* LITTLE VIOLA'S VICTORY  

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*A Story of Love and Romance in the  
South; also Society and its Effects*



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❦ ❦ ❦ BY T. E. D. NASH ❦ ❦ ❦

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**BY**

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*After dinner*





## CHAPTER I.

### A Social Event.

In a stately mansion in a fashionable portion of one of our principal cities, a fete was at its height. Carriage after carriage was whirling up to the grand entrance depositing its occupants. The house was all ablaze with light. And the merry tinkle of silvery laughter was borne out on the summer air to passers-by, who involuntarily stopped to gaze at the gay scene. A beautiful night overhead. A pleasant night under foot. A silvery moon had just risen and was casting long shadows on the green turf at the side of the house, near which a fountain tinkled musically. Around the corner of Mrs. Warrington's mansion a balmy breeze was blowing gently. While the song of a nightingale bird in a neighboring cedar tree all tended to make it a typical southern summer night in June. Take a peep on the interior.

In a mansion on Pennsylvania avenue a fete is at its height. Carriage after carriage whirl up to the grand entrance. The house was all ablaze with light. And the merry voices of beautiful and superbly dressed ladies and gentlemen were borne out on the summer's air to passers-by, who involuntarily stopped to gaze at the gay scene.

There was a long salon bedecked with all kinds of tropical plants. Lovely ladies moved to and fro and coquetted prettily with handsome gentlemen.

At the door of the entry stands Mrs. Warrington, receiving her guests with customary grace. She is a

handsome woman about forty years of age and bore a smile and pleasant word for everyone. Her beauty, wealth and high birth all tend to make her one of the ringleaders of Washington society.

Among the guests that she is engaged in welcoming was a tall, fashionably dressed gentleman. He stepped into an ante-room, and, after a moment, returned to Mrs. Warrington and asked nervously in a low tone: "Has Miss Hawthorne yet arrived?" "Yes," she replied. He turned on his heel and made his way with some difficulty through the crowd. Bertram Heathcourt, for that is his name, was about thirty years old and one of the handsomest men in Washington. His curly hair, that was admirably worn, brushed away from his high, intellectual brow; blue eyes and amber-hued mustache that half covered a firm, but expressive mouth; broad shoulders, muscular limbs and an upright bearing, made him a fine specimen of manly beauty. He was the only son of the late Col. Heathcourt, his mother having died shortly after his birth, threw him on his own resources. He managed to get a first-class education, and, being an energetic young man, had taken to journalism, and consequently was editor of "The National Record."

While wending his way through the crowded salon he felt a fan tap him lightly on the shoulder. He turned with a look of pleasure in his eyes as he bowed low before a beautiful girl. She was superbly dressed in black velvet and diamonds that suited to perfection her splendid brunette beauty.

"I was just looking for you," he said, and, with her hand laid gently in his arm, they were moving slowly along.

"The music is beautiful. Will you give me this waltz?"

"Yes if you wish it," she said lightly.

The next moment they were floating down the long salon to the time of the dreamy music.

"Ah! That was delightful," he said, as the music suddenly ceased and he led her to the conservatory.

"Mona, at last I have the opportunity of relating and relieving my mind of a weight that it has carried for days and weeks. "My darling," he cried passionately, "have you not seen that I love you with all my soul? I know that I am not worthy to kiss the hem of your garment. But if you would only love me a little, I would make you so happy. You are not indifferent to me. Will you become my wife?"

Her lovely face had slowly become paler and paler. Her lips had become compressed.

He watched her in evident alarm.

"Mona! Good heavens! Are you ill?"

Recovering herself with a supreme effort, she was just about to reply when there was an interruption. A haughty woman arrived on the scene.

One glance was enough to tell anyone that it was the mother of the girl.

"Mona," she said sharply (when she saw the love-like attitude in which her companion was bending over her), "I have a severe headache, and I think I shall go home." With a distant bow to the young man, she turned to leave the conservatory.

With a sigh of relief the young lady rose and together they all passed out. With gentlemanly courtesy he saw after their wraps and assisted them to their carriage. When he was assisting the young lady in he pressed her hand and whispered, "Tomorrow

I shall call for my answer." He stepped back from the curb and the elegant equipage swung around and dashed down the street. He stood and watched it until it disappeared around the corner. "I wonder why she grew pale and trembled so. Surely she couldn't have been angry at what I said," he muttered, as he was ascending the steps. Torn by conflicting hopes and fears he soon grew weary of the gay scene, and, bidding his hostess good-night, left the house.

#### Bertram Too Poor.

When Mrs. Hawthorne and her daughter reached home, the former requested the latter to come to her as she had something to say to her. Half divining what was to come, Mona followed with sullen silence. Mrs. Hawthorne motioned her daughter to a seat, and, standing before her, she asked in a harsh voice: "What was that man saying to you when I arrived, as I believe, so opportunely?"

A deep blush was the only answer she received.

"You do not speak! Answer me. Was he engaged in some of his silly nonsense?"

"He was making me an honest proposal," was answered haughtily.

"And you dare listen to him?" exclaimed the mother, trembling with passion, and after all I have said to you on the subject, too. And when there is Col. Clayton with a princely fortune awaiting you. And you are ready to throw away yourself to a beggarly editor who hasn't enough to keep a woman of your extravagant tastes in pin money."

"But, mother, I love him dearly, and——"

"A fig for love," interrupted the mother harshly. "It is all silly nonsense that you will get the better of soon. There is no such thing as love when there is nothing on which to found it but grim poverty. Wealth first, love and everything else will follow."

"But, mother, Bertram will be rich some day. His business is good and he is energetic and he is sure to succeed."

"Yes, and be as old as the hills when he does succeed," retorted the mother. "Where will all your beauty be by that time?"

A little shudder passed over the girl, not unnoticed by the sharp eyes of the mother, and as she observed it she knew the right chord was struck. "You will be a pretty, faded, washed-out thing by that time," she continued with a wicked leer.

"While your friends who will forsake you as soon as you become poor, are riding, driving, or going to balls and attending operas, you will be at home nursing dirty brats, scrubbing, washing or doing something else equally disagreeable to one of your fastidious taste. I would rather see you dead than married to Bertram Heathcourt." And after delivering this stinging speech she dismissed her daughter with a haughty wave of the hand. She knew her daughter well enough and felt confident that her words had left a deep impression on her mind. So she smiled complacently, went to bed and was soon sleeping sweetly and dreaming that she was a grand duchess with more silk, jewels and money than she could use.

Not so. The words uttered by Mona's mother had left a deep impression on her mind; one not so easily eradicated.

Being the daughter of a selfish mercenary woman

of the world, brought up to consider the Almighty dollar above everything else that was noble, and who was used to making one dollar go as far as three, so that she might keep up impressions, it was but natural that the picture drawn by her mother was not very pleasing to her taste.

Standing at the window she heard the noise of vehicles plying over the stone-paved street, coming from Mrs. Warrington's ball, she thought with a shudder that all this would be denied her if married to Bertram Heathcourt.

"I cannot give up wealth and luxury," she cried excitedly. "I should die if I had to do it. Oh! Bertram, why are you not rich? I—I love you so, and we would be so happy together, only—only you are poor and I cannot be the wife of a poor man, I—cannot." Throwing herself down by the side of her bed the proud and haughty woman gave herself up to the fierce battle of grief that was being waged within her.

She lay there until the tolling of a neighboring clock belched forth the hour of two. Slowly rising she proceeded toward her wardrobe. It was quite evident that the better instincts of her heart had been vanquished, there was a cold, hard expression in her black eyes, her full lips were drawn tightly together; her fair forehead was distorted by a black frown. "I will reject him," she muttered harshly, and in that decision she brought a world of trouble and heartaches to the door of more than one unsuspecting soul.

#### Retribution.

Bertram Heathcourt arose early the next morning and, after partaking of a light breakfast, proceeded

leisurely down to the office. On arriving there he took up the morning paper and was glancing over it when there came a tap on the door of the office. A messenger came in hastily and, asking if he had the honor of standing before the editor, handed him the telegram. Wondering what it could mean he hastily tore it open and read the following: "Come immediately to Heathcourt Park, B—ville station. I am dying and wish to see you."

"Yours,

"Richard Heathcourt."

Very much perplexed he rang for his assistant, and, after informing him of his intended departure, left the building. Hailing a passing cab he entered and was driven rapidly to the depot. Purchasing a ticket he seated himself in the car and was soon on his way to B—ville. When he left the train at B—ville he found a carriage from the Park awaiting him. He was whirled swiftly along over the smooth road toward his destination.

Heathcourt Park was a rare old place. Its huge tower and broad piazza that extended all the way around it. The wide gravel paths separating the green turf that extended out to the deep woods on the opposite side and down to the sleepy river in front, with great old cedars and elms under which were numerous rustic seats scattered here and there in picturesque confusion, all tend to make it a lovely country dwelling, and one of the finest estates in Virginia.

Bertram could not suppress a cry of admiration as he was whirled up to the broad entrance. He was admitted by a servant in gorgeous livery, who conducted him to the sick chamber.

Several persons were in the room, they moved about with muffled tread and spoke in hushed whispers. Bertram took them to be nurses.

On a bed, half covered in the coverlid, lay the sick man, his face pale and pinched, the lips purple, the eyes had a vacant look. In spite of himself Bertram could not suppress a shudder as he gazed on the awful face. Nerving himself to his task he slowly advanced to the side of the bed, took one of the cold hands of the dying man in his, and said, in a low tone: "Sir—Mr. Heathcourt I have come. I am truly sorry sir, to see you so ill. I hope you will be better soon."

The sick man turned his head slowly upon the pillow and let his eyes rest on the face of the young man. And into his own there sprang a look of terror mingled with remorse, as he said huskily:

"You sorry for me! Me! And I have done such a great wrong to you and yours." Bertram looked at him in astonishment. He thought the old man was wandering in his mind. He turned to request one of the nurses to summon the physician, but the old man seemed instinctively to divine his intention, for he caught him hastily by the hand and said: "It will do no good. I am dying now—dying. I have sinned, and sinned times without number against my God. Retribution has at last fallen on my guilty head and all that is left for me is atonement for my sins. He paused as if exhausted. Bertram stood quite still, but his face showed signs of conflicting emotions—surprise, doubt, perplexity. Presently the old man drew him down and whispered, "Tell them to go out, I have something to say to you." Bertram did his bidding. The nurses who had all this time been standing with open-mouthed amazement, left the



room rather reluctantly. When they passed out Bertram closed and locked the door, returned to the bed and waited in silence.

"Prop me up," said the old man, which was done, and the old man told a remarkable story, which was told with many pauses and gasps for breath. The substance of which is as follows:

"My father," began the very sick man, "was a very rich man, and also a proud one—very proud. I had a brother that was two years my senior. When we were young we loved each other very dearly, but I soon began to develop traits of character and habits that he did not approve, and naturally he took me to task about them, and after he found out that I still persisted in them, he threatened to acquaint father of them. For this cause I began to find fault of him.

About this time there lived in the village a beautiful girl, the daughter of a poor working man. She was the most beautiful creature you ever saw. Poor Doris! I fell desperately in love with her and finally asked her to become my wife, and she refused. Half blind with fury and unrequited love I demanded of her the reason why she would not become my wife, and she told me that she loved another. I told her by the right of my great love I ought to know the fortunate gentleman. She then informed me that it was my brother. Fierce rage and hate sprang up in my heart against my innocent brother, and I determined to be revenged—to kill him. I went toward the wood and sat down under a tree called the "Old Elm," developing my plan of revenge. Late that night I came home and entered the house softly and crept up to his room. Fortune favored me; his door

was unlocked. I crept to his bed, drew back the curtains of the bed, and by the dim light of the lamp which was turned low, gazed long and earnestly into his face. It wore a peaceful smile, and the thought entered my mind that possibly Doris and he had met and for all I knew to the contrary, exchanged confidences. The thought added fuel to the fire of my jealous wrath and almost maddened me. I raised my hand in which gleamed a sword, a present from my father, and a moment later he would have been in eternity, when the moon, which had previously been obscured by a cloud, bursted into the room with a flood of mellow light and shone on him. His hands were folded on his breast and between his fingers something white was shining. I looked more closely and saw that it was a letter. It might be from Doris Thorndyke, the woman we both love, thought I jealously, and with jealous haste, but with due caution I managed to possess myself of it. By the light of the moon I read:

My Own Fleming:

You know that I could refuse you nothing. You are all the world to me. My love. My life. Yes, I will meet you by the "Old Elm," and go with you to the city. Do you think it can be done? Oh, Fleming dear, suppose your father should know it, he would disinherit you for marrying the daughter of a poor working man, and clandestinely. He would never forgive you. Oh! Why am I not rich or why are you not poor? I would rather be your wife—yes, although you were a tiller of the soil—than the wife of any other man.

Yours,

Doris Thorndyke.

"And there it ended. So that is the extent his love making had gone. She was to become his wife. I ground my teeth with rage, but suddenly a dark scheme entered my mind. I started guiltily and looked strangely about, and, stepping to the window, raised it softly to let the balmy air blow over my heated brow, that I might think—think."

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## CHAPTER II.

### A Love Competition Between Brothers.

The old man paused from sheer exhaustion. The young man sat with pale face and eyes dilated with horror; the pallor having been renewed since the mention of the name Fleming. A terrible suspicion had entered his mind, one that took his breath away; that almost unmanned him. After a few moments' pause the old man continued:

"Directly a triumphant smile broke over my face. I would let him marry her. I knew my father would disinherit him if he did, and I would be the only heir. I would be the master of the Park—a thing which I had always dearly craved.

I determined to kill two birds with one stone, rob him of his birthright and be revenged on him for my disappointment. I closed the window, and returned softly to the side of the bed and replaced the note. Then, lowering the light, I left the room and retired.

The next day passed without any unusual event. About seven o'clock in the evening I took up my position in a thicket near the "Old Elm" and waited events.

I had not long to wait. A carriage came hurriedly up the road and turned into the wood, and after driving a few paces, stopped. About half an hour later there was the sound of skirts and I saw Doris coming. She was attired in a dark suit with a heavy cloak, over her face I could see a veil. A moment later there was the sound of another person, and the next instant a man appeared. In spite of the heavy ulster which he wore pulled up to his chin and soft hat that was pulled down over his eyes, I recognized the upright bearing and princely carriage of my brother, Fleming, and I could scarcely keep from rushing out of my cover and slaying them both as I saw him take her in his arms, murmuring low, impassioned words of deathless love to her.

I controlled myself with a mighty effort and, as they walked hurriedly over to the hack, entered, and were driven rapidly away. I left my hiding place, and as I walked home my heart was filled with triumphant exaltation.

The next day my brother returned and I knew by the happy light in his eyes which he could not conceal, that he was the husband of Doris Thorndyke, and the knowledge almost drove me mad.

"I asked him why he wasn't home last night. Something in my voice made him look up quickly and give me a keen glance. And when he replied he had stayed in the city with one of his school fellows I smiled mockingly and turned my face that he might not see the triumphant look in my eyes. The next day I went to Washington and hired a detective, who had little trouble in tracing Doris out. We found out she was staying in a pleasant little cottage in the suburbs of the city. After I had been home

about four days my brother suddenly announced his intention of going fishing for a week with some friends. My father readily gave his consent and my brother left early the next morning. Now was my time to strike. It was the hour for which I had so patiently waited. I told my father at breakfast that I should like to have a word with him in the library. He complied, and when he had lit a cigar I began my story. I told him how the village was ringing with the strange disappearance of a beautiful girl, how I had witnessed the meeting between her and my brother, and wound up by telling him where he would find him and her.

My father's face was terrible to see. He rang for a carriage and bade me prepare to accompany him. We were finally on our way and soon arrived in the city. Engaging a hack we were swiftly driven to our destination.

We found Fleming and his wife in the garden, with his arm around her waist, examining the flowers. But I need not tell you of that meeting. My father abused him, heaped up reproaches upon him, cursed him and wound up by forbidding him ever enter his house again, also informed him that all letters would be sent back unopened. I saw by the reproachful look in his eyes that he knew I had betrayed him. We finally left them and when we had arrived home my father retired to his room, from which he never left. He never recovered from the shock, and soon after died. Then I had things my own way. I went to Washington and engaged the same detective to abduct Fleming's wife. I would wring his heart as mine had been wrung. He should be made to feel as I had felt, I said. The detective did his

work well, and after I had her in my power, I dispatched a letter to him telling him that his darling wife had eloped with me, and by the time he received it we would be for out at sea. I knew that would throw him on the wrong scent. I simply had her placed in a private asylum, where she finally died of a broken heart. Poor Doris! Poor young thing! Previous to this occurrence a son had been born to them, and placing the child in care of friends Fleming went to Europe in search of his wife, and after a year of fruitless search returned to this country. He finally went into the banking business and for years did well. When the war broke out he enlisted at the call for arms and went out to fight and returned with well earned laurels.

For twenty years he was known all over the South as Col. Fleming Heathcourt. He was your father, Bertram, and I am your uncle."

#### Bertram's Amazement.

The old man sank back on his pillow, completely exhausted. When he had uttered those last terrible words, Bertram sprang to his feet pale as death.

"You!" he gasped, "you, my uncle! Great heavens, I see it all now. That's why my father never mentioned your name. That's why his brow always darkened when my mother's name was mentioned. And—my God! he died without knowing that she was true to him!—that she loved him to the last!" And, whirling around suddenly, he hissed: "You traitor! You peace-breaker! You—you destroyer of a loving household. You—"

The old man interrupted him with a feeble wave

of his hand, as he said huskily: "Bertram, I am dying."

"True, true!" said Bertram, brought to his senses by the rebuke, and carried away by the intensity of his emotion, he sat down and buried his face in his hands, he wept as only a strong man can weep, great heartrending sobs shaking him from head to foot.

When the storm of emotion had spent itself the old man said feebly:

"Bertram, I have sinned and sinned deeply. I have wronged you and yours terribly. Can you ever forgive me?"

Bertram looked at the old man on whom the death damp was swiftly gathering, and whose eyes were fast glazing, and a great pity sprang up in his heart for him. After all it was the demon of jealousy that had taken complete possession of him. He pitied him and said earnestly:

"I forgive you, indeed I do, as I hope to be forgiven."

An almost immediate light of happiness shone in the old man's eyes and he turned on his pillow toward Bertram and died.

The next day Mona Hawthorne was all in a flutter; she could not stay in one place ten minutes at a time. She walked from room to room and then to the garden and then back to the house.

The mother watched her for a while in perplexity. Then she seemed to arrive at a solution of the mystery. She thought that her daughter had been thinking the matter over and had decided to reject the "beggarly editor."

A surmise which, to say the least, was not very far from wrong, as the reader can testify.

Mona had just arisen from the piano when there came a quick, sharp ring at the bell. Her heart leaped like a wild thing. The blood surged through her veins like electric fire. She heard someone enter the room and raising her drooping eyelids she encountered the admiring gaze of Col. Philip Clayton. At that instant she almost hated the man. She had been hoping in spite of herself that it might be Bertram, until she had looked up and found that it was not Bertram. She did not know nor did she realize how much she did love him. She loved him with a love that was her doom. She shuddered as she realized what her future would be without him.

Recovering herself with an effort, she calmly extended her hand and motioned him to a seat.

After a few commonplace remarks a painful silence followed. She watched him curiously. He fidgetted in his chair, ever and anon pulling out a handkerchief and clearing his throat.

After he had done this about half a dozen times, she broke the silence.

"We seem to be dull," she remarked with a nervous little laugh. The Colonel tried to smile, but made a rank failure of the attempt.

The Colonel was very much affected by that frown that on entering the room he had seen come over her countenance.

He wanted to declare himself but was afraid to do so. He did not know in which form he had better put it. Finally he said, in sheer desperation, "Miss Hawthorne, I came over to inform you that I love you—have loved you dearly for two years, and to ask if you will not accept of my hand and my heart.

She had been watching him since he first came in



and she saw something in his face that told her he would speak about marrying, and she had been puzzling her brain as to whether she should accept him now or wait until she had seen Bertram. If I accept him now, she argued, I will not have a chance to pledge myself to Bertram, and thus I fear I will show weakness in the interview with him.

So she was about to accept the Colonel, when he seeing silence, repeated his question. "Mona, darling, won't you be my wife?" "Yes, if you wish it," she replied quietly.

The Colonel was overjoyed. It seemed to be too good to be true. The possibility that she had consented to marry him for pecuniary reasons never for once entered his mind.

The Colonel was considered a very amiable man, and the catch of the season. The forty years which had passed over his head had left no visible effect about him, beyond a few threads of silver in his hair and an iron-grey mustache, which gave him a distinguished appearance. His firm, upright carriage, and military air made him quite a handsome man, and Mona would have considered herself a most fortunate woman if she only loved him. But despite his amiability, there was, at times, a cold glitter in his steel grey eyes and a curve to his well formed lips that showed that he could also be as hard and as cruel as fate, when the necessity presented itself.

Her mother went into hysterics when Mona told her of the engagement. She hugged and kissed her with a vehemence that nearly took away her breath.

"Oh! my daughter, my darling child," she exclaimed in great excitement. "You don't know—cannot realize how you have pleased me. It is the

dearest wish of my heart to see you married to a man of wealth and influence, so that we can take our proper position in society." And, sitting back in the velvet cushions of her easy chair, she smiled complacently.

Selfish woman. Her only aim, her only ambition was money. She would have betrayed her soul for the filthy lucre. She was now ready to sell her daughter to a man she did not love simply because it would be the means of securing her position in society.

That night, as she lay on her "virtuous couch," snappy, light-hearted, no thought of the terrible tumble this match was to make, entered her mind.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### A Mortal Foe.

It was a lovely afternoon about four days after the events narrated in previous pages that Mona, attired in her pretty cream wrapper, with costly lace around neck and sleeves, and a pink band of costly silk around her waist, was sitting in her private parlor, drawing over the latest book of fiction, when there came a timid tap to her door.

In answer to her summons the door was pushed open in a hesitating way and a young girl between eighteen and twenty entered.

To say that she was pretty would give a very poor estimate of her charms.

Viola Dunkirk was poor, but surely an American beauty, and Nature's hands did well its work. Beau-

tiful as a poet's dream, lovely as a sylph, with a sheen of golden hair that covered her well shaped head like a halo of light. Clear milk white complexion that gave token of every thought by little rushes of pink that ever and anon chased each other from brow to chin and from cheek to cheek. She was of that strange mixture of golden hair and dark eyes over which poets rave and artists go into ecstasies, and that which make a blonde beauty so unusually attractive. Her beautiful dark eyes shaded by long curling lashes, with such a sweet expression to her face, made her an object of envy to the fashionable belles for whom she worked.

"I have come," she said hesitatingly, in a sweet, musical voice, "to bring that lace you ordered last week." And she cast a pleading glance at Mona from the depths of her beautiful dark eyes.

"Very well. I will inspect them," replied the haughty voice of Mona.

Viola was a lace-maker. Her mother was a feeble woman, and her father, having died a few years ago, the support of her remaining parent fell on her young shoulders. They were very poor. The father was at one time well to do, but by the visitation of misfortune he had lost all, caused by some rash business venture. Viola, who had previously learned fancy work at school, managed to keep the wolf from the door by the use of her nimble fingers.

Mona had never liked the young girl. Her fresh blonde loveliness was in such strong contrast with her brunette charms that she could not but see the difference herself, and she was jealous of Viola's beauty. She always seized every opportunity to humiliate the poor girl.

Viola put down the rich lace carefully on the table, and waited "My lady's" pleasure. Mona, after reading about fifteen minutes longer, turned to the girl, who had been standing all the while, and asked her to bring the lace to her, which she did.

Miss Hawthorne looked it over carelessly and, with a scornful toss of the head, said, "it doesn't matter much anyhow; I suppose you've been in the business long enough to know what is required, and if you don't you get your pay just the same, so it is, I suppose, a matter of indifference to you." Having delivered this brief, cutting oration, she gave it a toss that sent it to the opposite side of the table.

The face of the girl flushed, and there were tears glistening in her dark eyes as she picked up the lace, and laying it once more on the table, said, "Indeed, Miss Mona, I do care. I wish you would examine the work and if it does not suit you, you know well what to do, and I will know what is required. I take a pride in my work. For it is all I have to support my widowed mother."

The sadness in the girl's voice as she uttered these last words somewhat modified Mona and she said more gently, as she took her purse and paid for the work, "Very well, it will suit, I think. You've always done your work well, and I presume there is no reason why you should change at this late day." And with a wave of the hand she was dismissed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The funeral was over, and the will had been read. It was simple. Beyond a few legacies, everything went to Bertram Heathcourt. He suddenly found

himself a rich man—a millionaire, with more money than he knew what to do with. He finished transacting business and started for the city to tell Mona the news. He arrived in Washington late in the afternoon, and as Mona did not live far he set out on foot. On reaching the house he stepped into the vestibule, gave a quick imperative ring and handed his card to the servant who came in answer to his ring.

"Not at home, sir," said he, curtly. At that moment Mona's voice reached his ears. She was singing in a clear musical voice, "Absence."

"But, man," said Bertram sharply, "I hear her voice and know she is at home."

"Not at home to YOU, sir," replied the servant. And it was evident that he had been previously instructed.

"Carry her my card immediately, and tell her I wish to see her," said Bertram sternly.

At that moment a voice which he recognized as Mrs. Hawthorne's, said:

"Who is it, Johnson?"

"It's Mr. Heathcourt, ma'am."

"What does the fellow want?" she asked sharply.

"He wishes to see Miss Hawthorne, ma'am."

"She is not at home to him," she answered shortly.

Bertram could scarcely believe the evidence of his own ears.

He turned away, but had gone only a few steps when he was overwhelmed by thought.

"Not at home" to him? What did it mean?

Then, like a flash, the remembrance of the little occurrence on the night of the ball came to him.

He could see it all now. He thought that he had

solved the problem. Her mother must have suspected that he was proposing the night of the ball, and supposing him to be a poor man, did not want any alliance between her daughter and a poor editor to continue any longer.

It did not occur to him that Mona did not wish to see him. He had seen that in her eyes when she looked at him that was different from that bestowed on any one else. He thought it simply the maneuver of a worldly woman.

"I must see her once more, if only for a moment," he muttered as he retraced his steps from the premises as far as the corner, and stopped as if in dismay.

"I will do it," he said after a moment, and, taking out a notebook, he tore a leaf and wrote a few lines. Calling a small boy who was passing and giving him a coin, he bade him carry it to the address marked thereon and wait for an answer. "Ask for Miss Mona, and give it to no one else," he said. The boy darted on his errand.

Ten minutes passed and then he saw the boy come out of the gate, and the next moment he had the answer in hand, and was taking in its contents.

What he read therein seemed to be a deathblow to his hopes.

It was this:

"Mr. Heathcourt.

"Sir—I cannot make it convenient to see you. What my mother did to-day in refusing you admission, she did with my fullest acquiescence. While I am writing this I will take advantage of the opportunity to refer to the question you asked some nights since, and say that I cannot comply with your re-

quest, for no other reason than that I am the betrothed wife of another—Col. Philip Clayton.

“What my feelings are concerning the matter it is not necessary to state. In the future I prefer that we may meet simply as acquaintances. It will save us both unnecessary pain, and oblige,

“Mona Hawthorne.”

He turned very white as he read it, and crushing the letter in his hand he turned on his heels, and with a scornful smile on his handsome face, walked rapidly down the street.

“So that’s the girl I’ve been wasting my time on—a contemptuous, mercenary coquette. I thought she was the embodiment of everything that was good, noble, generous and unselfish,” he muttered to himself contemptuously, grinding his teeth in chagrin.

How long he had been walking he never knew, nor which way, until he heard a shrill scream, and, turning, saw a young girl struggling in the arms of a man. It made the blood boil in the veins of Bertram as he saw her making frantic attempts to release herself. He flew to her rescue and, with one well directed blow from his muscular arm, the villain was felled to the ground.

Turning to the young girl, he said:

“I hope you are not hurt. I don’t think the scoundrel will molest you again.”

“Oh, sir! I thank you, so much! Mother is sick and I was just returning from the doctor’s when I met this man and he thought to take advantage of the growing darkness to insult me.”

“He will not trouble you more. I have settled him. Allow me to see you in safety to your home.”

And, with her little fluttering hand in his arm, they moved away.

The discomfited villain deliberately rose, brushed the dirt from his clothes, shaking his clenched fist at the retreating figures, hissed:

"I will repay that blow with interest. Curse you, I hold the trump card. I know you, Bert' Heathcourt, and I'll make you regret the day you ever saw Arnold Campbell. And you, too, Viola Dunkirk. You shall not escape me."

And, being dogmatic in the foregoing statements, turned and vanished in the gathering darkness, and the day came in which he kept his word.

#### Pretty Bessie Hartwell.

About a year previous to the ending of the foregoing chapter, there lived in a quiet portion of the Capital an old merchant by the name of Archibald Hartwell, his wife and daughter.

The head of the family was a pompous individual with a bald head, keen gray eyes and thin lips, that were most invariably compressed in a manner that was very suggestive of an iron will.

His better half was a thin, delicate woman, with a sweet face, and in spite of furrows on her forehead and lines under her brown eyes, she still retained the remnants of a once beautiful face.

The daughter is just the image of what the mother once was. A fair complexion, with red cheeks that rivaled the heart of the blush rose.

Brown eyes and hair, a sweet little mouth that successfully concealed two rows of pearly white teeth. Bessie Hartwell was a trifle romantic. And so it happened that when young and handsome men came



to pay court to her, in spite of the opposition by the father, and the appeals of the mother, she, having become affectionately attached to one of her admirers married. The father swore that he would disinherit her. But that had no material effect on Bessie. She loved her young husband, and for six whole months she was extremely happy.

Arnold Campbell was a handsome man, good bearing with dark hair and eyes, but the sinister lines about the corners of his mouth were effectually concealed beneath his long, drooping, black mustache. So that the innocent girl who was caught in his toils had nothing to warn her of the character of the man to whom she was joined for life.

When Arnold Campbell came from heaven knows where to Washington, the city was ringing with the praises of old Hartwell's beautiful and accomplished heiress. So he made up his mind to win her and her money bags for his own.

But the old man took objections. He was somewhat suspicious of him. Being a stranger and having nothing to recommend him but his handsome face, the old man swore that he was not good enough for his daughter.

He had a husband picked out for her.

Kent Howard was not handsome, but was honest and true as the day is long. He loved Bessie with a pure and unselfish love. She knew that he loved her, but she said she could never love him. It happened one night that he had to go into a disreputable portion of the city. As he passed by a gambling hell the door was opened and a man, held by three or four others, was fired out on the pavement. He arose bruised and bleeding, and, looking around, his

glance fell on Kent. He gave a start of recognition, and, turning, fled down the street as fast as his legs could carry him, but not before Kent had recognized the face and form of Arnold Campbell.

The next day he went to Bessie's, and, having heard of her infatuation for the young man, tried to dissuade her from such a rash step as marrying him, telling her of the occurrence of the previous night. She told him he was just giving advice for selfish motives—self-interest, as she called it. And wound up by telling him never to speak to her again.

Sad and disheartened Kent left her, and a few days later when he heard she had married him against the opposition of her parents, he departed suddenly to try his fortune in Australia.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the dining room of a cozy little cottage in the suburbs of the city, sat Bessie Campbell. On a table in the centre of the room was a neat set of tea dishes. A pot of tea and coffee is steaming on the heater in the kitchen and ever and anon she stirred the fire with housewifely precision.

"He is rather late to-night," she murmured anxiously. "I wonder what can be keeping——"

She paused, because she had just caught the sound of his well known steps on the pavement without.

"Ah! there he comes," she said gladly.

Directly he entered, his face dark as a thunder-cloud. She went up to him timidly (for of late she had often noticed just such a frown as this on his face) and putting her arms about his neck, tried to kiss it away.

"You are not looking pleased to-night, Army, dear. Why, Arnold, what is the matter?"

For he had cast her roughly from him, and there was a look on his face that made her shiver with a foreboding of coming trouble.

"What is the matter, Arnold? Oh, for pity sake don't look at me like that, you frighten me. What have I done?" she asked piteously.

"What have you done?" he echoed harshly. "What have you done? Shall I tell you. You have been the cause of all my blighted prospects. I might have been the husband of the finest and most well bred lady in the land, had you not crossed my path with your pretty face, and infatuated me."

White as death she cowered from that angry face, and trembling like an aspen, as he continued: "Now, I am tired of you. Yes, you may as well start. I am tired of you and we must part this night—aye, this hour, forever."

The hopeless misery and despair would have touched the heart of a fiend, but his hatred for her blinded him to her sufferings.

"Arnold, why did you marry me, if you did not love me?" she asked piteously. "Oh, Arnold!" and her voice was like the last wail of a lost spirit.

"Why did I marry you? Ha, ha! Why did I marry you." Silence followed for a moment. The laugh which had just ceased was one which made her blood run icy cold in her veins. "Why, indeed? Because I thought your old duffer of a father would finally forgive you and take his children (with a sneer) to his heart, and I would obtain the money bags that I had risked so much to obtain, but I have failed in my expectations. So I will have to make a change

in life. I will go to pastures new, where a man of my beauty can make life a success.

"To be truthful, Bessie, I am in love with a pretty damsel—very pretty," he continued, very candidly, "and I don't want any encumbrance in the shape of a wife, you understand."

And he laughed pleasantly, unmindful of the fact that a heart was breaking.

Bessie had fallen into a seat and sat looking into the fire with eyes as black as night from suppressed excitement. Suddenly she raised her head and asked him in a voice that was calm, "At least you will let me have my marriage certificate—all in the world I have that will bind me to the old days."

A wicked thought shot through his subtle brain like light and he said, after remaining as if in deep thought:

"Yes, I will let you have it, but unfortunately it is in my other coat pocket at the club room. I lost heavily to-night. That is why I forgot it. At any rate you can have it. Meet me to-morrow night at ten o'clock at the old wharf, and you shall have it."

"Lost heavily!"

Then he was a gambler. This man whom she thought was the embodiment of everything that was noble and grand. And she had wronged, cruelly wronged poor Kent Howard. And he had loved her.

After a short silence Arnold said:

"I am glad to see you taking the matter so philosophically. You are still beautiful and you may yet make a great match and marry some wealthy old dog."

And, seeing the horror depicted on her face, at the

idea of marrying one man while she had a husband living, he laughed a low, mocking laugh, and just then Bessie looked up into his eyes and cried pitifully:

Under thy protection, Arnold,  
 Oh! let me live? Let me be thine own.  
 Growing to thee more utterly,  
 Unbearing and upborne, till outward things  
 Are only as they share in thee a part!  
 Look kindly on me, let me love thee more.  
 Bless me from the deep fullness of thy heart;  
 So that my love in its right strength may rise,  
 And nevermore pine, shrink and thrill.  
 Oh, love me, Arnold! Will'st thou love me still?"

Arnold then opened the door and vanished.

Alone! friendless! penniless! Not one friend in all the world to whom she could confide her troubles.

These were the thoughts that rushed through Bessie's mind and then all her pent-up grief burst forth in a flood of glorious tears, and, throwing herself face downward before the fire she wept until she was completely exhausted.

When she arose the fire had died out and the faint light shining in the window told her that day was breaking.

She arose and, arranging her disheveled hair, put on a street dress, and giving one last look around the place where she had known such supreme happiness, and oh, such misery! she slowly wended her way into the quiet dawn of the early morning.

## CHAPTER IV.

## Betrothed Casually.

When Bertram Heathcourt accompanied Viola to her humble little home, a little thrill ran through every fibre of his being as she turned her innocent dark eyes on him in bidding her good night. He could not understand the interest he had suddenly taken in a strange girl. He called the next day to inquire after the health of her mother. Every morning on going out on the piazza Viola would find a beautiful bouquet of fresh violets with her name attached to it. So often did they come that she had come to look for them regularly. But she would not acknowledge even to herself, that she knew from whom they came—that they came from the handsome young stranger whose blue eyes were always before her.

Every day Bertram could be seen at the cottage ostensibly to inquire after the invalid, but in fact to be in company with Viola, who had taken complete possession of his heart.

Yes, Bertram Heathcourt loved the girl with the strong, passionate love that comes to a man's heart but once in a life time, and beside which his infatuation for Mona had vanished into insignificance. She had taken complete possession of him. His every heart throb, every pulse beat was for her and her alone. Before he had known her a week he realized that she was the one woman in all the world for him.

He was surprised at the intensity of his love.

"What has become of my love for Mona?" he asked himself in dismay. "Can a man transfer his

affections whenever he wishes, and so easily too?"

No, Bertram, he cannot. But when a man loves he generally loves something that is good, noble and lovable, about the object of his love. And when all that is good, noble and lovable about the object dies, why, naturally, his love dies with it.

So it was with Bertram, he loved, or thought he loved Mona, for her nobility of nature, her uprightness of character and unselfishness.

And when he found that those virtues had ceased to exist his infatuation died, and he found that his every thought belonged to another.

And Viola? Well, she hardly knew her own heart. She could not understand this sweet, new happiness that had recently come into her life, that made the earth seem brighter, and her pleased with every thing in it. She had caught herself more than once watching impatiently for his coming, and blushed a rosy red, as she realized what she was doing.

"Pshaw! What right have I—a poor lacemaker—to think of the rich and handsome Mr. Heathcourt of Heathcourt Park.

"He only comes here to inquire after mother because he is kind and good, and likes to please. So I will not think of him any more."

But she did think of him again—times without number.

She could not cease to do so. Every way she turned, his frank blue eyes rose up before her. His musical voice rang in her ears. She tried to shake off the strange feeling, but could not. Dimly she began to realize that she had given her heart to him—that her heart had left her, irrevocably left her.

One afternoon she was standing on the stoop

watching the beautiful sunset. Her face wore a sweet, pensive expression. And she murmured over and over again:

"Bertram, Bertram. I wonder what he is doing now. I wonder what he is thinking of now. Bertram, I wonder if he knows how completely he has taken possession of my life. He is my world. I love him. I love you Bertram, my darling. Oh, God! how I love you."

"Then be my wife," whispered a low musical voice in her ear, as she was embraced passionately to the broad bosom of Bertram Heathcourt.

She had unconsciously been uttering her thoughts aloud, and she failed to hear the light steps of Bertram as he came quickly up the green walk and found out her little secret.

She lifted her eyes with a startled, frightened glance at his face as she lay close to his throbbing heart.

Love her! a poor working girl, and he a cultured man of fortune. She was speechless, terrified. She could have been satisfied to love him without any return, and would have been happy in the loving. She could scarcely believe her senses.

"Surely you must have seen, Viola, how completely my life is wrapped up in you," continued the low voice, in impassioned tones that thrilled her to her heart's core.

"Without you—ah, God would not be so cruel as to separate us—my life would be a blank. Speak to me, dear. Will you be my wife?"

"Your wife!" she gasped, breaking away from him and attempting to flee, but he caught her fluttering little hand and held it tightly.



"Your wife, and I—I a poor working girl! And you——"

"Yes! And you the only woman in the world for me!"

"You love me, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, very softly, "but——"

"Then nothing shall ever separate us."

\* \* \* \* \*

There was to be a grand opera at The Criterion Theatre. Mona and her mother had procured tickets. The theatre was crowded from pit to dome. Mona and her mother, escorted by Col. Clayton, occupied one of the boxes, and had in full view the play.

Mona looked lovely in a black silk, with rich black lace and diamonds on her shapely wrist, in her hair, and a costly opera shawl thrown carelessly around her shoulders.

Col. Clayton felt his heart swell with all a lover's pride, as he saw the admiration she had evinced.

At the end of the third act, a few acquaintances made their way into the box, and they all began chatting gayly.

Someone casually mentioned the name of Heathcourt and Mona felt her heart give a heavy bump, continuing rapidly, and in spite of herself, her cheek crimsoned.

"Speaking of Heathcourt," remarked one young man with a drawl, "Edgar! he is a lucky fellow. Have you heard the news?"

"News?" echoed some one else. "No, let us hear it."

"Oh, it is just like a novel. Some old uncle or

cousin whom he had never heard about before, had done his father a great wrong when young, and in order to atone has left Bertram his wealth and one of the finest estates in——"

"Hello! By Jove! What is the matter with Mrs. Clayton? Mona? She is fainting."

It was indeed true. Mona had heard those terrible words, and the lights began whirling around, and there was a dull roaring in her ears, and without a word of warning she had fainted, and would have fallen had not Col. Clayton put out his arm and saved her.

Mrs. Heathcourt closed the curtains quickly, for of all things she dreaded this scene was the worst, and, hastening over to her daughter she bathed her face in eau de cologne, and directly she revived.

"Rouse yourself," she hissed fiercely, giving her a vicious pinch. "Do you want to lose all? Remember how much is at stake."

With a mighty effort she recovered her self-possession and said, with a ghastly attempt at a smile: "It is nothing only—only the heat is so oppressive. I think," she continued, turning to Col. Clayton, "that I will go home. It is so very hot."

He complied in moody silence, for a certain suspicion had come into his mind.

"Why did she faint at the mentioning of his name? He remembered the day when she had consented to be his wife, how carelessly she had consented, and also that look she had given him when he first entered the room.

"Can it be possible that she married me for my money? Oh, perish the thought. I would take my life on her honor. But why did she faint at the men-

tion of his name." The day came when he knew why she fainted, only too well, and he cursed the day he had ever seen her.

### Arnold and Mona Wreak Vengeance.

The whole city was ringing with the news of the impending marriage of the handsome young millionaire to the daughter of one of the poorest, but who was once one of Washington's most respected citizens. It was discussed at the table, in the clubs, and at all the social gatherings.

There are two persons the news had a very serious effect upon. Arnold Campbell heard it with all the chagrin and rage of a wicked man who sees his victim escaping from his clutches.

Mona heard it with the bitterness of death in her heart, and she realized that she had lost all that was best and brightest of her youth—her love. She also realized how happy she could have been with Bertram if she had not been such a fool.

That the very girl she hated and whom she had feared as a rival had won the love of the man who was all the world to her, increased her hatred tenfold.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night at ten o'clock Bessie appeared at the wharf, the place agreed upon, to obtain her marriage certificate. She had a haggard, careworn look about her which was pitiful to see. She walked slowly and feebly to the wharf and glanced around to see if her husband had put in an appearance. He had not yet

come, and Bessie set herself to the task of waiting. She stood up by one of the huge posts used to make the boats fast, and gave herself up to deep thought. How long she stood there she never knew. But a rustling sound reached her ears, and, turning quickly she had just time to give one piercing shriek, when a heavy blow struck her on the temple and she toppled over. There was a sudden splash and the waters closed over Bessie Campbell.

At the same time there came a hollow groan to the ear of the would-be assassin, and, dropping his instrument of death, he turned and flew down the road as if pursued by seven devils.

"It was a terrible thing to do," he muttered, when he had stopped to rest. "But it is better, for she was in my way. And I have sworn to possess Viola Dunkirk. She shall be mine," he continued fiercely. "All the opposition on earth shall not come between she and me."

"And there was no chance for me to do so while Bessie was alive.

"Uugh!" with a shudder. "How she did scream," he thought. "I would not like to undertake the job again." And he began feeling his pockets for his handkerchief, for great beads of perspiration had broken out over his face.

Suddenly he stopped short, pale as death, and, began feeling more hastily in his pockets in a nervous manner.

"It's gone," he gasped hoarsely, "and they will find it in the morning, and it will be all up with me when the body is found. And—great heaven!—the certificate was wrapped up in it. And then the hounds of the law will have a clew as to the motive for the

deed. And—and I cannot go back to look for it. That voice—that voice—I wonder—. Fool! fool that I was to bring it with me. I might have known that would be my luck."

The baffled villain beat his forehead and gnashed his teeth in a paroxysm of baffled rage.

Bessie had not been knocked senseless, her turning so opportunely, and the blinding flash of the lightning had made the blow less effective than it would have been under different circumstances.

As soon as she struck the water it had a revivifying effect upon her, and, being a good swimmer, she struck out boldly for the wharf.

Just as she was clinging to the wharf for dear life there came a hurrying of feet upon the pier, and half dead with fatigue and fright she still clung to one of the pier posts. There was another vivid flash of lightning, and by the light of it she saw that it was a negro bending over the side of the pier looking anxiously at the place where she had struck the water.

She felt her strength failing her, and when she saw it was not her husband she called in a weak voice for help.

"Bress de Lord," said a voice, "she is alive. Hold on tight, dearie, and youse'll be all right in a minnit." And the next moment she was safe on the pier.

Then all her strength seemed to fail her, and she sank into unconsciousness.

The old colored man, looking around for something to bathe her face, as he did not have a handkerchief, saw by the dim light of the moon, which had been previously hidden by clouds, something white a little distance away.

He stooped and picked it up, and saw that it was a handkerchief.

"Umph! what's dis?" he muttered as he felt something hard on the inside. "I'll just stick it in my pocket an' lave missus face and carry her home to de ole 'oman an' in de mornin' she kin see wot it is. Spec's its a letter some ob de white folks lost to-day, an' if 'tis, I can gib it to 'em in de mornin.'" And with this he went to bathing Bessie's face, and chafing her hands, and, as she didn't come around he stooped and took her in his strong arms and set out for his own little cabin, which he reached in a very short time.

Old Steve Jenkins, an old colored man who had lived with his wife in Washington for years, notwithstanding the blackness of his skin, had as good and true a heart as ever beat in human breast.

He had been standing in his cabin door, looking at the threatening clouds, and considering the advisability of going to an all night camp meeting about three miles distance, the voices of the attendants at which meeting was borne to him on the summer stillness, when, chancing to look around, he saw the figure of a woman plodding in the direction of the pier.

His cabin door was open, and the light from a wax candle was streaming out across the road, which afforded him a good view of her as she went on her way. It was such an unusual thing to see, and several persons having been found drowned lately, his suspicions were aroused. He thought the woman contemplated suicide. So he determined to be on the watch and prevent such an act, if possible.

So he walked along in the path behind, and saw

her make her way to the pier, and, after glancing around as if in search of some one, lean against a post in an attitude of deep thought. Steve took up his position in one of the empty freight houses and watched her curiously.

After the lapse of half an hour he was surprised to see a man come quickly on the pier, and, after glancing around, started softly toward the silent figure.

He began to think them lovers, and was just fixing to retrace his steps when he saw the man raise his hand that had something in it that resembled a "black jack" or "billy." As soon as he realized the intention of the man he stopped, as if rooted to the spot. Being stricken with horror he could not repress a groan when that blow was struck. Hence Arnold's hasty flight.

When it was time to keep his appointment with Bessie he took his certificate of marriage and, wrapping it in his handkerchief, he put it in his pocket.

His object in doing this was to present it to her in case he should find her on the alert, and when she would reach out her hand eagerly to take it he would fell her to the ground.

So, arming himself with a billy, he set out, with the result known. He went to a hotel, engaging a room and retired. But that last scream kept ringing continually in his ears, and the fear that the lost certificate would fall into hands he did not desire it should, would not let him sleep until very late, when he fell into a deep slumber and slept far into the morning.

When Steve reached home he knocked on the door

and, seeing his curious burden, his wife uttered a cry of dismay.

"Sakes alive! Mercy on us! Wot is dat-ar you got, Stebe?"

"Just move an' let me come in, an' see wot you can do fur her while I make a fire an' heat up de room, an' den I'll told you all 'bout it." And depositing his burden tenderly on a well worn lounge, he soon had a bright fire burning. The wife sat chafing Bessie's hands and bathing her face. Steve, smoking his pipe, told the circumstances of the night.

"De lawd hab mercy," exclaimed Clory at the conclusion. "He sartainly must be a debbil to hit dis bu'ful crittur. Golly! How pale she is and how soft her lilly hands is. She suttinly must be a lady, she is so—"

Clory paused, for Bessie had opened her brown eyes, and sitting bolt upright, was staring around in bewilderment.

"Where am I?" she asked, "how came I— Oh, I remember all now. And you saved me. How kind of you! But, who are you?"

"Dat's all right, honey," said Aunt Clory, "but you'se in good hands. But youse mustn't 'zert yer-self. It'll be all de wuss fur yer. Jest lay down now and youse kin go ter sleep while you clothes is a-drying." And so saying, the good old colored woman hustled off and soon returned with dry clothing.

Steve stepped into the next room and Clory dressed Bessie in them, and when he returned she was sleeping like a tired child in the clean, white bed of Clory's.



## CHAPTER V.

## To Meet Only As Acquaintances.

A day or two after Mona had heard of Bertram's marriage she wrote him a note requesting an interview with him.

She was beside herself with impatience.

"I must see him again, if only for a moment," she muttered.

When Bertram received it a scornful smile passed over his face. "Poor thing," he said, musingly. "Poor thing. After all the wrong she has done me I pity her. But I cannot do as she wishes. It is better, as she said, that we meet simply as acquaintances. It will save unnecessary embarrassment."

So he penned her the following short note:

"Miss Hawthorne: I have just received your note and regret to state that a previous engagement prevents my being able to see you at the time named. Besides, I think it is better that in the future we meet only as acquaintances, and oblige,

"Bertram Heathcourt."

He could not resist the opportunity for such a retaliatory reply.

When he had completed the letter he despatched a servant to post it immediately.

He had been at Heathcourt Park about two days, having been called on business of importance.

When it was completed he started to the city, for he was longing for a sight of his loved one.

It was in the afternoon of the last day in July when Bertram arrived at the unpretentious cottage of

Viola Dunkirk. He found that lady under the arbor at the side of the house, stitching away at some fancy work that lay in her lap.

It was a beautiful picture as she sat under the shade of the green vines, with the evening light on her face, in her simple white robe, with red sash tied loosely around her waist and a spray of violets in her hair.

Bertram, standing under one of the great old cedars in the yard, drank in her every movement, and he could not but compare her to all the women of his acquaintance. Immediately a great wave of tender love came over him, stepping quickly up to her he took her in his arms and showered kisses on her eyes, brow, hair and ripe rosy mouth, murmuring words of passionate, deathless love.

"Viola! Viola! my love, my life, my all," he murmured, and his voice was full of impassioned fine enthusiasm. "Bless you! My life is crowned with its chief blessing. You are mine, Viola. Mine—all mine!"

Almost bereft of physical strength by her great love for him, she lay with her face hidden on the broad bosom of her impulsive lover for many moments. At last she raised herself, moved back a little, and looked up into Bertram's face, her own blushing in sweet confusion, and her eyes radiant with loving glances.

"Do you really love me so much?" she faltered, her eyelids drooping bashfully.

"Love you! Why, my darling, what would be my life without you. I shudder to think of it. Why do you ask, dearest?"

"Because—because you are so—so far above me. You are such a fine gentleman that I—I am almost

afraid to marry you. People will say that I married you for selfish reasons. But—but you know better, don't you, Bertram? You know it is because I—I love you more than I can tell. Oh! Bertram, if anything should happen to part us I should die. I love you so." And she cast her arms about his neck and sobbed happy tears. It was the first voluntary confession he had ever had from her lips—and he kissed her tenderly when she made it, as he he said:

"Nothing shall ever part us, dear."

And so these silly actions, of which lovers never weary, was kept up until the golden sun had sunk to rest and the clock in a neighboring church tower brought to Viola's mind other thoughts.

"How selfish I have been. I must go and look after mother, poor mother," she said sadly. "She seems to be getting worse. I have to be very careful of her. Any little excitement might prove fatal."

They had strolled on to the gate and were taking leave of each other.

"I want you to think a good deal to-night, dearest, for I want you to name the date the next time I see you."

The next time I see you! How many things can be done before that time! And in after days Bertram realized it.

#### Mona In Rage.—Mrs. Dunkirk Dies.

When Mona received Bertram's letter she and her mother were sitting in the drawing room. She read it over slowly, and her face became pale with suppressed passion. Suddenly she sprang to her feet, her face distorted with rage, and she hissed:

"It is all her fault. She has won my love from me. I—I could kill her with my own hand. Beware Viola Dunkirk, how you cross my path. You will regret it."

Her mother looked at her evil face with a sort of terror. She had never seen her daughter like this before.

"My dear Mona," she began, "you must not give way to passion like this. You must control yourself. It is too late to indulge in vain regrets. You have selected your own destiny. Now stick to it."

"I selected my own destiny? I! How can you say such a thing? Who was it that poisoned my mind against marrying Bertram? Who was it that told me to angle for Philip Clayton and forget the beggarly editor? The one I might have won from the first. It was only a matter of time, and short at that. You did—you, who never did love anyone but yourself, and don't even know the meaning of the term. And then you stand there and tell me I selected my own destiny. And her lips curled in with a haughty scorn.

The old lady winced at these homethrusts. She knew that every word was true, but it galled her to have her daughter to speak to her in that manner. So, rallying, she said sternly:

"Hush! how dare you speak to me like that, and I your mother, too. Then you must never speak of Bertram in that manner again. He is nothing to you—nothing. Just suppose Mr. Clayton were to hear of it, he would never——"

"I don't care a fig for old Clayton," blazed Mona. "I hate him, loath him. And it is as much as I can do to keep from telling him so sometimes. If it were

not for him and his filthy lucre, I would now be happy in the love of Bertram—the only man I ever will love.” And, wheeling around she came face to face with Col. Philip Clayton.

He was very pale, and there was a cold glitter in his grey eyes, as he said sneeringly:

“So—so that is why you consented to be my wife, eh? I might have known it. I wondered at your coldness of manner toward me, but I thought probably it was just your natural way. I find out that I am mistaken, however. I never saw more passion in any one’s face,” he continued with withering sarcasm, “than there was in yours while speaking of Bertram Heathcourt. There is no fool like an old fool, but I fear I must disappoint you about the filthy lucre, however. Miss Hawthorne, I bid you and your mother adieu.” And with mocking gravity he bowed himself out, leaving the two astonished women looking at each other in helpless dismay.

The old lady recovered herself first, and going deliberately up to her daughter, she caught her arm in a vice-like grip and gave her a good shaking.

“Mona, you have done it now,” she said, harshly. When Mona, with flashing eyes, had shaken herself free.

“You have lost the love of Colonel Clayton and he will never forgive you. You will learn to take my advice yet.”

“I have taken your advice too much now,” retorted the daughter. “That’s why I lost Bertram’s love.”

“This is another debt between Viola Dunkirk and myself that has to be cancelled,” she went on, harshly. “I am going to wreak a terrible vengeance on her—a terrible vengeance.”

Her mother thought it was simply the raving of a disappointed woman, but the day came in which she remembered her words, and cursed the day in which Mona had ever known Viola.

Mona suddenly left the room and proceeded to her chamber. Going to the window she looked out. The sun was just setting and the earth was bathed in a flood of golden light. The birds were singing their good night songs. A few pleasure seekers were just returning from their trip and their gay laughter was borne out on the still air of the lovely roving afternoon.

But Mona had eyes for none of these. She was thinking—thinking. A plan so diabolical had entered her scheming mind that she shuddered to think of it, but it did not deter her. No warning voice whispered to her that though it might go smoothly for a while that God in his infinite love and mercy would never allow it to succeed.

So she went headlong into the plot that was to recoil on her own head and be her doom.

After standing there about half an hour, she turned with a low laugh of exultation, and said:

"Now, for the first move toward love and vengeance," Going to the desk she took out paper, pen and ink. Putting Bertram's letter before her she wrote the following in his writing:

Dear Miss Dunkirk: I am very sorry to say that from the force of circumstances, I am compelled to ask you to consider yourself free from any alliance with me. I thought truly that I loved you, but I find my heart has turned to its old allegiance. I find that I love her more dearly than ever, and hope to be able

to claim Miss Hawthorne's hand in a very short while. Hoping that you will consider yourself (as I do) dead to me, I remain, respectfully,

"Bertram Heathcourt."

Having written this she called a servant and, telling him to mail it early in the morning, she sat down to think of the second movement toward love and vengeance.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### Returns And Finds Mother Dead.

Viola watched her love out of sight, and slowly turned toward the house. "If I should lose him I believe it would kill me," she murmured musingly.

She entered the house. Its stillness struck her strangely. Quickening her pace she continued to her mother's room.

"Mother," she called, as she reached the closed door. "Mother, may I come in. It is only I—your daughter." She received no answer. A horrible fear shot through the girl's heart. What if she were worse, or perhaps—but, no, no, perish the thought."

But, despite this little assurance, she opened the door rather quickly, and what she saw never left her mind. On the bed in the corner, pale as snow, lay her mother—dead.

"Mother!" screamed the girl, "mother! speak to me. It is Viola—your child." But no answer came from these pale, still lips. If they were not cold in death no power on earth could have prevented her from answering when that dear voice called.

"Mother! Oh, mother!" continued that agonized voice. "Oh, why did you leave me all alone? Mother, let me die and go with you, too," and, throwing herself on that dear breast, she wept as if her heart would break. How long she lay she did not know, but soon she caught the noise of closing doors and muffled tread, and into the room came three women.

They were neighbors, and were on their back piazza chatting pleasantly when that agonizing scream reached their ears. They knew of the ill-health of Mrs. Dunkirk, and suspected the cause of the cry. So they hastily went over to see if they could render any assistance.

Viola lay in a half-stupefied condition. While one bore her light form to her room, the others performed the last sad offices of the dead.

They remained all night at watch by the corpse, each taking turns to watch by the bedside of Viola, who lay tossing on her pillow over half the night, murmuring always in the same monotonous strain, "Mother, oh, my mother! let me go with you."

She fell to sleep far into the night, and slept till late the next day. She arose calm and collected, for she knew she had to cease repining and turn her attention to the practical side of life. She dressed herself in a dress of deep black, and, going downstairs, she softly opened the door of the death chamber and stepped in. She went up to the couch on which the corpse lay, and drawing a chair close by the side of it, she gazed long and earnestly on the face of her mother. Finally she arose slowly, and with tears in her eyes, said: "Betram is all I have left. I am alone in the world."

She looked around the room, and, seeing a letter



on the table, she went over to see to whom it was addressed. There were two of them on the table, one without envelope. She saw that they were in the familiar handwriting of her mother.

One was addressed to Bertram, the other to herself and marked, "To be read at once." She read as follows:

"My darling daughter: When you read this letter I will have gone from you forever. Please mail the letter at once to Bertram Heathcourt. You have been a good child—a good daughter to your mother, and I bless you for it. I have been watching the growing intimacy between you and Bertram with pleasure. You will marry him, I am sure, and I am glad—very glad—for more than one reason. Be a good wife to him. Be sure and mail the letter to him. Justice depends on his receiving it. Good-by, my child, and may God forever bless you is the fervent wish of your

"Mother."

She wept freely over this letter, but she could not understand how justice depended on Bertram's receiving it. She had half a notion to open it. But the temptation was short-lived. She could not betray her trust to the dead. So she sat down and wrote him a loving letter informing him of her mother's death, and asked him to come to her. Then, putting a bonnet on and covering her face with a thick veil, she went out to mail them.

That afternoon the funeral took place. Viola had saved a little money of her own—enough to bury her parent decently and without the assistance of any charitable institution.

After the funeral she was sitting in her room, taking comfort from her bible when there came a quick ring at her door bell. She arose hastily and went to the door. It was the mail carrier. He handed her a letter, and, tearing it open eagerly, she read it. When she finished her cheeks were ghastly pale, and, giving a low moan, she clutched at her heart convulsively, and sank into a deep swoon.





## CHAPTER VII.

## Lost Letter.

When Viola recovered from her swoon it was dark. At first she could not remember what had happened. But gradually the truth dawned upon her mind, and with a low moan she staggered to her feet and wended her way to her room.

One of the neighbors consented to remain with her for several days—until she became used to the loneliness, Viola told her she was going to lie down, as she had a severe headache. But the next day found her unable to leave her room. The terrible strain on her nervous system had been so great for the last twenty-four hours that for two days she was utterly prostrated. When she began to feel better, she remembered the necessity of her finding some work, so she gave up the house and with what little money she had she secured cheaper rooms in a different section of the city.

Bertram was not at home when Viola's mail arrived. A servant went to the village post office for the mail. When he was returning home he noticed that the horse he was riding was unusually restless. The servant thought he was thirsty, so he went down to the watering place with him to give him a drink. As ill luck would have it, some persons in skiffs were passing at the time, and as the horse stepped into the water to drink, they sent up a loud shout of jollity. The horse became frightened and reared. The suddenness of the movement caused the servant to lose his equilibrium, and in recovering dropped some of the letters in the water. As fate would have it, Viola's own letter was among them, and before the

man could do anything to save them they were whirled out into the middle of the stream, and went floating swiftly down toward the ocean. The man was very much frightened, but he decided not to say anything about it and of course nobody would know of it.

When Bertram arrived after two days' absence, he read his mail. The letter from Mrs. Dunkirk had a great effect upon him. It read thus:

"Dear Mr. Heathcourt—I am dying. I know you love my daughter and I wish you would come and take charge of her right away, for when you receive this letter I shall be in eternity. Mr. Heathcourt, I will take this opportunity to tell you something strange which happened in my youthful days. When I was a young girl in England, a young and handsome man came from America and made love to me. I loved him dearly, and after a while married him. We were very happy for about a year. In the meantime my baby, Viola, was born. During one of our confidential chats he told me of a great wrong he had done his brother. How they both had loved the same woman, and his brother being the favored one, he had revenged himself upon him by informing his father of the affair. How his father disinherited his brother after he had married her, and the fortune went to him. I was shocked, horrified, and I chided him for his sin. A coldness sprang up between us, and every day we drifted further apart, until he left me altogether. I was alone, except for my baby Viola. I need not go into details. Suffice it to say that he gave me money enough to educate my child, and keep us from immediate want.

He left a note also, informing me that I never was his wife. He had deceived me. The man who performed the ceremony was simply some one gotten for the occasion. A man by the name of Dunkirk, a good man, became acquainted with my story. He pitied me and finally made me his wife and gave my daughter—my nameless child—the shelter and protection of his honorable name.

“A few years after we came to America to try our fortune, and while my daughter was at school I, with the assistance of my husband, and detectives, managed to get on the track of the man who had wronged me, intending that justice should be done his child at least. He, living under a fictitious name, made it very difficult for us to run him to earth, and when we were just about to close in on him he died. The next news that my detective brought was that he had done justice to the son of the brother he had wronged, and had installed him in the place that was his by right of birth.

“The man that wronged me was Richard Heathcourt, your uncle. I watched your growing intimacy with my daughter with pleasure, for I knew that a great wrong would be partially righted if you finally married her. You say you love her! I leave her young life into your hands. Be a good husband to my child, and you will well merit the dying blessing of

“Catherine Dunkirk.”

When Bertram finished the letter, he sat staring straight before him. At last he said in a very low tone: ‘Poor woman! I guess she is dead now. This letter is two days old. How she must have suffered. But how much more happily she would have died if

she had only known that her child was legitimate. I must go down immediately and see after the welfare of my little Viola, my little darling. Be a good husband to her! May the Lord deal with me as I deal with her."

He arose as he spoke this last and ordered the carriage.

Half an hour later he was speeding toward the city. Arriving there he appeared at the house where Viola had once lived, and when he was informed that her mother was buried, and that Viola had gone off without giving any address, he was well nigh frantic.

"She was looking mighty strange and queer-like, poor thing. I shouldn't wonder if she"—

The woman paused, for Bertram had rushed out of the gate and down the street like a madman, crying: "Viola! Viola! Where are you?"

On and on he ran, wildly, his face ghastly pale. People stopped to look at him curiously, wondering if he was some escaped lunatic. But Bertram turned neither to the right nor to the left, but kept on at a dead run until "National!" yelled a newsboy. "Full account of the drowned girl!"

The words struck upon Bertram strangely. He stopped short.

"Extra, sir?" inquired the boy, seeing him stop so suddenly. Quickly Bertram paid him for one and glancing at it read the following:

"Found drowned. A young and beautiful girl, about five feet six inches tall, dressed in mourning, golden hair, dark eyes, beautiful teeth. The rest of the features are so mutilated that she cannot be further described. Body at Undertaker Pinkham's, awaiting identification"



"My God!" gasped Bertram. "That description tallies with Viola. I believe it is she. I must go and see at once," and wheeling about he called a cab and said:

"To Pinkham's undertaking establishment! Swift as you can! Double fare!"

The driver needed no second bidding. The horse fairly flew over the hard ground, and in ten minutes he was before the door of the undertaker.

Paying the cabman he went up the stairs three at a time.

"I want to see the body, the body of the drowned girl," he said, when he was in the presence of the undertaker

The undertaker looked at him, and seeing the anxiousness in his face, escorted him to the bedside of the corpse, and pulled back the sheet from her face. Bertram gave one swift glance. "Great Heavens! How I loved her!" and fell down by the dead body, writhing in an agony of grief that he could give no utterance to except by heart-rending groans. Presently he felt a touch on his arm, and looking up he found the undertaker looking at him pityingly. The good man was really touched by the young fellow's grief.

"Do you recognize her?" he asked, gently.

"Recognize her!" Bertram exclaimed. "Recognize her! Yes. She was all I had in the world. My Viola! My own Viola!"

"Poor fellow," murmured the good man, with streaming eyes. "But you may be mistaken. See! The face is somewhat mutilated."

"Ah, no! I cannot be mistaken. It is she. See! The golden hair, the dark eyes, and long lashes; the white, even teeth. The sweet lips that I have kissed

over and over again. It is she! I know it! Oh, Viola! My lost love!"

When the violence of his grief had somewhat abated he said to the undertaker:

"Give her a Christian burial and charge it to Bertram Heathcourt."

On that day he attended the funeral. He brought some violets, her favorite flowers, and put them on her grave, and long after everyone had left he sat there by the side of that grave, trying to think what his life was worth now.

He finally left the cemetery for the city, and as he wended his way up the grave<sup>l</sup> path of his own home, he told himself that his heart was dead within him and buried in the grave of his lost Viola.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## Letter Found.

Two days had passed since Mona had taken her first step toward "Love and Vengeance." On the afternoon of the second day she was feeling very restless, and thought she would take a row on the river for a change. So she dressed herself in a neat boating costume, and calling for a carriage she was driven to the boathouse on the great Potomac. She hired a little shell of a boat and was soon skimming over the smooth water like a swallow on the wind. She rowed up the river about two miles, and dropping the oars, let the little boat drift with the current. After drifting about half a mile, she looked over toward the shore and saw a pretty little place, and the notion struck her to go there. Seizing the oars she steered for it. It was indeed a pretty little spot. The dark water was almost entirely still. Schools of small fish frisked about sportingly, casting miniature waves along its smooth surface. The tall white oak trees, that lined the shore; and the long, drooping willows that hung far out over the water, made it a lovely little cove that would have been dear to the heart of any romantic person. Mona rowed her boat under one of the trees, and gave herself up to thought. She had been sitting about half an hour looking into the water with an unusual degree of pensiveness when she noticed something white being borne slowly on the water toward her. Closer and closer it came, and then she saw that it was a letter. She leaned out to reach it, but the movement caused a wavelet or two to take it farther from her boat. Standing up quickly she reached up and broke off a

slim branch from one of the willows, and with this she slowly fished it toward her and succeeded in grasping it. She looked at it in perplexity.

Where had she seen that writing before? And, great Heaven! For Bertram Heathcourt! She opened it with as little compunction as she would had it been her own, and read the loving letter written by Viola to her loved one. When she finished her brow was as black as a thundercloud.

"Fate favors me," she laughed, harshly. "Suppose he had received this. It would have knocked all my plans in the head. But I wonder how it came to be in the river?"

She remained about five minutes longer in deep thought.

"I will do it!" she exclaimed. "After all, the end justifies the means. I will go to his house and see him, if he will not come to me."

So saying, she seized the oars and turning the boat around, she sent it flying down the stream as swift as an arrow from a bow.

And so began the second plan toward "Love and Vengeance."

Bertram Heathcourt was sitting in the library, with an open book in front of him, staring straight at the leaves, as if he would read his future there, when there came a tap at his door. He started slightly.

"Come," he said, and in answer to the summons a footman opened the door.

"A lady to see you, sir," said he.

"A lady!" in surprise. "I wonder who it can be?"

"She did not send her card. She simply said that she **MUST** see you, as it is important."

Wondering greatly as to who his nightly visitor could be, he descended to the drawing room.

"You!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "You, Mona—Miss Hawthorne, and here! Great Heaven! You must be mad to come here."

It was indeed Mona. Her face was very pale, and there was a determined compression about her lips and a light in her eyes not good to see.

"Call it madness, or what you will, I am here, and I must ask you a few questions."

"What do you wish to know?" asked Bertram, hesitatingly.

There was a few moments pause, and then she answered: "I would like to know if you love that pauper, Viola Dunkirk, and if you are going to marry her?"

Bertram stood as if rooted to the spot. What did it mean? Was not everybody aware of Viola's death?

"You do not answer," she continued, seeing his hesitation.

At last he recovered himself and asked: "Is it possible, Miss Hawthorne, that you do not know that Viola Dunkirk is dead?"

Mona started violently. Was this true? The girl she feared—dead?

"No—no. I did not know it." To herself she said: "If I cannot win him now, I have not the power over the male sex that I once had, and may as well give him up."

There was a long pause, which was at last broken by Mona, who asked:

"Did you love her?"

"Did I love her?" in surprise. "Do you think I would ask her to be my wife if I did not?"

"True, true. And yet—oh, Bertram! When did you cease to love me—I, who loved you first and

best? After asking me to be your wife, to fall in love with that beggar girl, even while the words were yet warm on your lips."

She looked at him beseechingly. Her eyes were streaming with tears.

Bertram was astonished.

"I beg your pardon," he said, a little coldly. "But if Viola was a poor girl, she was a lady in every sense of the word, and she was not a coquette," he continued, meaningly. "I would rather you would not speak of her in that irreverent manner."

This defence of the girl she hated, and above all, the covert sneer in his words, to sting her, almost drove her to madness.

"She had no right to come between us—to rob me of my love!" she cried, springing to her feet, her black eyes flashing. "I loved you first and best; she had no right to take you from me. Why did you cast my love back in my teeth after winning my heart?"

"You forget that you are the one to whom that accusation might be applied," he said sternly. "After giving me every reason to believe that you loved me, to reject me, because I was a beggarly editor, and accept Col. Philip Clayton, because he was wealthy."

For one single moment Mona was disconcerted—only for a moment. Instantly a plan shot through her subtle brain and she proceeded to act upon it.

## CHAPTER IX.

## Mrs. Hawthorne's Deceit.

"Beggary editor! Col. Clayton wealthy!" she said, opening her eyes wide in mock amazement. "What on earth do you mean? I do not understand you. Explain yourself."

Bertram's face darkened. "Do you mean to say that you did not write a note to me, in answer to a request to see you, after your mother had refused me admission to her home, informing me that you were engaged to Col. Clayton, and that you preferred we should meet hereafter simply as acquaintances?"

"No, Bertram; no, I did not write any such note," she said, with innocent quietness. "Nor have I received one from you requesting an interview."

"Here," he said, taking from his pocket the letter in question. "There! Look at that and tell me you did not write it."

She turned a shade paler as she gazed on the note that had been the death blow to her own hopes, and said, tremulously: "No, I did not write it. Oh! Heavens! I see it very plainly now. Who would have believed it? The one, too, who should have made my happiness her chief study. Oh! It is cruel!" And the hypocrite actually shed tears as she gave utterance to these incoherent words.

Bertram had not the faintest idea what her words implied. He sat watching her in perplexity. Directly he said:

"What is it, Miss Hawthorne? Why do you go on in that strain?"

"It is enough to break my heart," she said, with a hysterical sob, wringing her hands. Then, turning

abruptly. "Man ! Can't you understand. Can't you see that that is forgery?"

A swift pallor shot across his face. What if it were a forgery? But it was closely followed by a look of incredulity.

"A forgery! How can it be? Who could have any object in doing such a thing?"

"My mother," she said, sharply.

Bertram started. "But the note I sent you? The boy who carried it said he gave it to you as I instructed him to do."

"The boy prevaricated," she said, sharply. "I heard him ring, and came to the head of the stairs; my mother answered the bell, and I heard her say: 'What is it? 'I want to see Miss Mona,' answered he. 'I've got a note for her.' 'Give it to me; I will deliver it,' my mother said. It seemed as if the boy hesitated. 'Give it here this instant,' said mother, stamping her foot. The boy must have been frightened into complying, for I heard mother say: 'Now, wait for an answer.' Soon I heard the door slam, and knowing that he was gone I came down to see what it was all about. 'What is it, mother?' I asked. 'It is nothing but an invitation to the opera,' she remarked, carelessly. Mother was always at liberty to open my letters, so I thought no more of it. That night we attended the opera, and some one made a remark about your being engaged to that—that Viola Dunkirk, and half dead with unrequited love I accepted Col. Clayton the next day, partly at his earnest request, and partly out of spite My mother, whom I trusted, and whom I believed the soul of honor, betrayed me, and now I've lost all that is worth living for!" And she cast herself dejectedly into a chair, and burst afresh into angry tears.



Bertram felt really sorry that she loved him so well—sorry that he could not respond to her love. The idea that she had uttered a deliberate falsehood never for once entered his mind. He did not believe that this girl, in order to gain the ends of her own selfish heart, would be willing to sacrifice her mother. Her mother, though a scheming woman, loved her dearly, and did all of her scheming for her daughter's sake. After sitting some minutes in deep thought he said: "I am very sorry for you, Mona—very sorry. But what can I do?"

"What can you do?" she echoed, eagerly. "You can make me your wife. You need not look so shocked. I have no pride now. Why can't a woman plead for her love just as a man. The foolish world debars a woman from obeying the dictates of her own heart when she ought to be allowed to do so. Her love is all she has. Oh, Bertram! Let me be your wife."

She had come close to him, and rested her hand pleadingly on his arm, looking him directly in the eyes.

He moved back a little as he said: "Impossible, Miss Hawthorne. I cannot do as you suggest."

"Why can't you?"

"For the simple reason that I do not love you. See! My pulse does not thrill at your touch. My heart does not throb more quickly. It would be wrong to marry you."

"You used to love me once—until she came between us. Oh, Bertram! If you do not marry me I shall die. My heart is broken."

It is no light thing for a man to have a young and beautiful woman standing before him with tear-dim-

med eyes and tell him in a woebegone voice that her heart is broken, especially when she is inclined to lay the cause of it at his door. No wonder, then, that Bertram seeing her sorrow, felt touched by her pleadings and after thinking deeply, said:

"Mona, you have suffered and I seem to be indirectly the cause of your suffering. If, therefore, I can make atonement for the unintentional wrong I will consent to do as you wish. I will strive to make you happy and to be a good husband to you, but I tell you frankly, my heart is dead, and the ashes can never be kindled. Will you accept me at such an expense?"

"Yes, gladly. My own Bertram," she murmured, twining her fair arms around his neck and kissing him passionately, the light of a deathless love shining in her eyes. She thinks, love like mine cannot fail to win love in return.

He drew her head down on his bosom and implanted a cold kiss on her forehead and they were betrothed. Finally he said:

"It is late," taking out his watch, "and the last train goes by in half an hour. Sit here while I order the carriage." He ordered the carriage, which soon came around to the entrance and in a short time they were at the station.

He had just arrived, when he noticed the slender figure of a woman, closely veiled, come staggering into the waiting-room and in a weary voice ask for a ticket for Washington. It seemed as if she could hardly stand as she walked on toward the train after receiving her ticket. Bertram, with inherent courtesy offered to assist her, but shrinking from him, she made some inaudible refusal and passed on. There

seemed to be something strangely familiar about her to Bertram, but after vainly trying to think where he had seen her before, he dismissed the occurrence from his mind. But oh! with what force was it recalled in after days.

## CHAPTER X.

## Viola's New Home—Warning To Banker.

When Viola Dunkirk left her home she went to the house of one of her friends and remained to dinner at her friend's earnest request. In the afternoon they set out together to find a place where Viola could obtain comfortable lodging in a respectable portion of the city. Late in the afternoon they succeeded in finding one in the suburbs of the city—a pretty, white vine-wreathed cottage, before which was a copse of stately oaks. It was owned by a good old widow, who had been living all alone, and who was just wishing some one would come and take rooms and relieve her of the dullness. Viola liked her new home very much and decided to move in immediately. That night, about nine o'clock, she announced her intention of going to transact some important business. It was rather late for her to go out, but that did not deter her. In fact, Viola was longing for a sight of her lover and the idea came to her that if she went to his home she might obtain a last glimpse of him before she started out on her dreary road to-morrow to earn her bread. So, wrapping a heavy shawl around her shoulders and concealing her face in a thick veil, she went to the depot and purchased a ticket, took a seat aboard the train and was soon at B—ville station. Arriving there she asked the station master how far was "Heathcourt Park." He told her, and she set out to walk the distance. When she came to the handsome mansion she looked at it in a kind of awe. It was no wonder she thought that he would not marry her—a poor girl without wealth

and refinement. How could she ever expect to shine as mistress in a house like that, beside beautiful Mona Hawthorne? She was mad to have even thought of it for an instant. And yet, Viola, your lover this very instant is thinking how lonely his life is to be and would gladly have given up all the wealth he possessed if you could only be restored to his arms. She wended her way up the slope to the window. There—could it be possible?—yes, there was Mona, and here comes Bertram into the room. How handsome he is! At sight of him her foolish little heart began to flutter like a caged bird, and she put her hand on her bosom in order to stop its violent throbbing. She gazed on them both from her place of concealment, wondering what they were talking about. She was unconscious of the time that passed. Like one fascinated she continued to look at them until Mona put her arms around his neck, and when she saw him draw her head down on his bosom and kiss her, the spell was broken.

With a low moan she turned and fled down the gravel path like a doe. On and on she ran, until the light from the station twinkled out to her, like a beacon, and she saw it with the same feeling a storm-tossed mariner sees for the first time the "lights along the shore." She ran until she was completely exhausted, and she sat down for a few minutes to rest on the trunk of a fallen tree. She arose directly, and slowly wended her way to the station, and arrived there just a little before Bertram and Mona.

When Bertram spoke to her, it was as much as she could do to keep from fainting outright, but with a mighty effort she managed to get to the car without assistance.

She took a seat in the car at one end, and covering her face more effectually, she cowered down in her seat like a criminal. Arriving in Washington she set out on foot for her home. Just before reaching her cottage, and while she was yet in the copse of woods, the sound of men's voices reached her ears. Concealing herself beyond some briar bushes, she heard the following conversation. One of the speakers had a voice that was very familiar.

"When are you going to tackle the house, boss?" said a course voice.

"In three hours' time—at half-past two A .M."

"Jimmy, this is mighty short notice."

"Yes, I just got my bearings. And, as I've got a job on for to-morrow night, I thought that this would be the best time in which to break in the old duffer's house."

"But you haven't told me whose house we are to crack yet, boss."

"That's so. Well, it is the old retired banker, Quimby, on Pennsylvania Avenue. Here is a bunch of false keys for the door, and these are for the safe. It is an old-fashioned affair, and I guess it won't be difficult to open. Secure the boodle if you can without shedding blood, but if any one tries to stop you, why, just tickle him under the fifth rib with your frog sticker."

Viola did not want to hear any more. She knew they were planning robbery, and would perhaps kill some one if they were caught in the act. Here one thought entered her mind, and that was to save the banker. Creeping out of her place of concealment as quietly as possible, she sped down the road as fast as her feet could carry her. She knew where the

great banker resided, and she had no trouble in finding his house. She ran up the broad stone steps and rang the bell violently. As luck would have it, there was some one still up, and when the door was opened she asked:

"Is this Mr. Quimby's residence?"

"Yes."

"Is he in?"

"Yes, miss, he is in. But"——

"I wish to see him at once."

The servant eyed her suspiciously, but seeing her prompt, decided manner, he conducted her into a handsomely furnished apartment.

In an arm chair, surrounded by papers, sat the old retired banker, engaged in writing. He looked up as Viola entered. He was a man of about sixty years. His hair was long and white, which gave him a venerable appearance. His eyes were still good, and they were very bright as he turned them upon her.

"You wish to see me, miss?" he asked, gently.

"Yes, sir," she answered, breathlessly. "They are going to rob your house to-night at half-past two. Oh, sir! If you don't prevent them, they may kill some one!"

"Robbers coming here?" he asked, in deep amazement.

"Yes, sir," she panted. "I was in a copse of woods to-night on my way home, and I heard them planning it. I"——

She did not finish it. The strain had been so great that the strength which had upheld her all along refused to exist any longer, and before the banker could do anything to prevent it she had staggered forward and fell heavily to the floor. The banker

rang for assistance, and to a servant who answered the summons, said:

"Have a room fixed for her immediately; she must remain here for the present"

"What is it, George?" was asked, as a tall woman advanced into the room, and despite the streaks of silver that were in her hair, she was still very handsome.

"A young girl, wife, who heard men planning to rob me to-night, and came to warn me. She must have exerted herself too much. She has fainted."

"Poor young thing," said motherly Mrs. Quimby. "How beautiful she is. How perfectly sweet and lovely. Take her, Jaundice, to the unoccupied room on the second floor."

Viola was conveyed to the room mentioned, where all manner of restoratives were used to bring her out of her swoon. At last she opened her beautiful eyes, but there was no look of recognition in their dark depths.

The doctors who were called in pronounced it a severe case of brain fever, and recommended quietness. She lay on the pillow, white as a sheet, with the exception of two spots burning on either cheek, crying always: "Robbers! They will shed blood, You did not mean it. You were just trifling," and so on she continued, with but little cessation, for days and nights.



## CHAPTER XI.

## Viola Adopted. The Rescue.

Three weeks had passed since Viola went to the house of Mr. Quimby to warn him of the robbers. The night she went to warn him the robbers came, but were surprised to find officers of the law lying in wait to entertain them. A portion of them were captured, but the principals escaped.

The banker and his wife fell in love with the beautiful girl at first sight. When she recovered and spoke of going away, they would not hear her. They pleaded so earnestly with Viola to stay—to remain and be their child, to let them adopt her—that she consented, partly to please them, and partly because she loved the two gentle old people who had been so good and kind to her. She had come to be the light of the house. Her gay laughter, her merry snatches of song and natural vivacity which could not be repressed, were in strong contrast to the former grimness and quietude of the grand old house.

The old banker and his wife were delighted. They loved the young girl who had come into their lives so miraculously.

Viola was very happy in her new home. After she recovered, she found herself the belle in fashionable society. She rode, went to balls, parties, operas and picnics. There was a continual round of gayety.

She was very happy in her new home. Poor girl! She had been so unfortunate in this world's goods that the other side of life formed a very pleasing contrast, and one that was duly appreciated by her. So matters ran on for two months, without anything to mar its brightness. One day Viola announced her

intention of going for a ride without any escort. The old banker and his wife mildly protested, and advised her to take a groom, but the wilful little miss would not hear of it.

"I shall be perfectly able to take care of myself," she said gayly, as she flitted up the steps. "And besides," she continued, somewhat fretfully, "it is so bothersome to have men dangling at one's heels, forever talking silly nothings."

"Dear heart," said Mr. Quimby. "She is the light of my old life—a veritable Godsend. I don't see how we could ever have got along without her."

"Yes, Viola is a good, affectionate little creature. But there seems to be something strange in her manner sometimes. The curious spells of gayety, and then absolute gloom. Have you never noticed it? No! Why, Philip, I have actually caught her in tears twice. Do you think," lowering her voice, "that there might be a—a lover in the case? There generally is when"—

"Hut! tut! Mabel," he said contemptuously "Why, there is as much difference between her and other girls as there is between you and other women," bowing and waving his hand with old-fashioned gallantry. "And besides, I don't want her to think of young men yet, until she has seen Bertram Heathcourt. I should like a match between them above all things."

In half an hour Viola came flitting down the broad steps, and after kissing the two dear faces, ran lightly down the steps and was soon galloping down the street. She looked lovely in her well-fitting dark blue riding habit, with a coquettish hat ornamented with a simple crimson wing of a bird, setting on her

girlish head, her fine golden hair tossed playfully by the breeze. People turned and watched her admiringly, wondering who the beautiful equestrienne was, who sat her horse so gracefully.

Bertram Heathcourt, who was on his way to Mr. Quimby's to pay a call, for he was an intimate friend of the banker's, saw her just as she suddenly turned a corner, and he started back with a wild cry.

"My God! It is Viola!" he cried, hoarsely. "Tell me," he panted, turning to a fashionably-dressed dandy, with patent leather pumps with pink bows, and clad in that very becoming style of male attire called "skin-tights," which would have puzzled the scientist of any age to explain the phenomenon; an eye-glass, and the head of his cane in his mouth. "Tell me who that young lady was that just passed on that chestnut-colored horse."

The fellow leisurely took his cane from his mouth, elevated his eye-glasses, and rewarded Bertram with a cool stare that made Bertram consider the advisability of knocking him down, and was only prevented from doing so by the hope of obtaining the desired information.

"Well, stand there and stare at me about four minutes longer and not answer my question as a gentleman should." Bertram rather emphasized the word "gentleman," and, as he had guessed, not without the desired effect. The dandy straightened himself, pushed out his tiny left foot in advance of the right and after making a few vigorous attempts to clear his throat, drawled:

"Oh, baw Jove! That wath Mith Quimby, the adopted daughter and heireth of the honorable Mr. Quimby the banker. She's a dooced pretty girwell,

she is, too, don't you think so? Fresh in the market, she is. I wath just conthidering whether I had better go in the rathe, you know Do you think I have any chanth of winning," and he primped up his mouth, showed the gold filling in his teeth, and imagined himself the "real thing," but Bertram did not agree with him in his imagination, for in answer to his inquiry, he said:

"Yes; as much as any other consummate coxcomb who waits upon her in a dining hall and imagines himself her equal," and wihout giving the surprised receiver of this speech another glance he strode away.

"How did he know I wath a waiter, I wonder? I don't remember ever seeing him before. I wish I had him here now. I would give him a good thumping for inthulting a gentleman of cultchaw and refinement."

Meanwhile Viola, all unconscious of this little dialogue, was riding on her way She passed from the streets of the city into those of the suburbs, thence into the high road She rode along leisurely, drinking in the beauty of the scenery spread out before her.

The grand old trees, for which Virginia is noted, were waving lazily to and fro, as if in resentment against the gentle breeze. The sun was going down behind the gilded clouds The broad Potomac lay before her alive with pleasures, and the beauty was greatly enhanced by the blue vista of mountains far in the background. She caught her breath with delight at the loveliness of the scene. Her eyes took on a brighter sparkle, her cheeks a richer glow.

Bang! It was a report of a gun in the woods on the

left. The horse started and reared. The shooting had frightened him. Under ordinary circumstances Viola was a good horsewoman, but she was so occupied in gazing at the beautiful sunset that when the report was heard she unintentionally dropped the reins. The horse took advantage of the situation and seizing the bit in his teeth, started off full tilt for the river. Along the smooth road he sped as if maddened. Viola managed to get the reins in her hand, and attempted to rein in the frightened animal. The only result was the bruising of her hands. Half dead with fear she tried to pull him in, and so hard did she pull that the blood oozed from her finger ends.

"Oh, heavens! I can't stop him," she moaned, in despair.

Straight to the precipice overhanging the river the horse sped, with dilated nostrils and foam-flecked flanks. Four hundred yards, and then, poor Viola! Would nothing save her? She was so young to die.

"Oh, God! Am I to die such a horrible death?" she moaned piteously

Is she? See! A young man on horseback sees her danger, raises his gun as if to shoot. He hesitates, drops his gun and comes toward the runaway at full speed. Nearer he approaches. Nearer. Two hundred yards to the precipice, fifty yards from him to her. Nearer he comes. He gives a shout, but the sound is drowned in the noise of the hoofbeats. Nearer! One hundred yards to the precipice. Ten yards between him and her. Fifty yards to the precipice. Three yards still intervene between them. See! He reaches out his hand! He seizes her around the waist, lifts her bodily from the saddle into his own, and by a superhuman effort stops his horse just as the

the other, with a cry like that of a human being, vanished over the precipice.

It was a brave act—one that few men would have undertaken. He turns his unconscious burden in his arms to a more comfortable position, and, for the first time, takes a good look at her. The effect was wonderful.

## CHAPTER XII.

Viola Arnold Campbell's Prey.

The young man catches his breath; his eyes seem to start from their sockets. He almost loses his hold of his fair burden.

"Viola Dunkirk!" he gasps. My God! How is this? The whole city has been ringing with the account of her death, and now"—

He pauses and a triumphant smile passes over his dark face. His eyes light up with a devilish expression.

"She is mine, now; all mine," he said, with intense satisfaction. "I swore to possess you, my beautiful Viola, and I will keep my word. You shall be mine, body and soul." He chuckled wickedly to himself as he realized how completely the young girl was in his power.

He rode up the river road, thinking deeply. Presently he muttered: "I wonder what it all means? She, a poor girl, dressed in all this finery?"

He could not answer that query, and he finally quickened the pace of his horse as he said: "I will take her to the rendezvous. Madge will keep her safe until I get a minister to tie the knot"

He turned from the road as he uttered this, and rode up to a large, rambling house on the river bank. It was a peculiar structure, about three stories high. Half the windows were out on the upper floor, but the doors and windows, which were all of wood and the great wheel at the side, would have given it the appearance of a disused mill but for the latticed piazza at the front. The young man rode around to the side of the house, and after dismounting, knocked on

the door, which was soon opened by a woman. She was a terrible creature to look upon. Her figure was almost bent double, and had piercing black eyes, looking out from under a pair of heavy brows and talon-like fingers, and made one, at first glance, instinctively recoil, as if confronted by some wild beast.

"Madge, I have brought you a companion, and I want you to take good care of her. Pour some brandy down her throat, and when she comes around tell her that the man who saved her life will be in directly to see her. Don't let her escape; do you hear?"

"Oh, I know how to take care on 'em," she answered, in a sharp, rasping voice. "I've taken care of 'nough on 'em for you"

"Shut up! How dare you mention such things. Go! And do as I told you."

The woman gave a chuckle as she went about her task, and he stepped out into the yard.

"How pooty she is! How I hate pooty girls! I could tear her eyes out. They all are scornful. Yes, stuck up, and think theirselves better'n other folks,' And she showed a set of yellow fangs, as if she would devour the young girl, then and there.

Viola soon opened her eyes and gazed about in a frightened manner. She found herself in a meagrely furnished room, with no carpet on the floor. In one corner stood a rickety table. In the centre of the floor were two chairs, while beside the iron cot on which she lay sat a woman looking at her savagely. Viola could not repress a shudder as she gazed on the woman.

"Where am I?" she asked, rubbing her eyes, and looking around in bewilderment. "And who are you?"



"He'll be in after a while—the one that saved your life—and I'm his housekeeper," was the surly reply.

"What gentleman was it who saved my life?"

"You'll see for yourself directly," she said, and then there was an exultant ring in her voice. "He'll soon be in to answer for himself."

Viola remained quiet for a short time, looking thoughtfully at the floor. Suddenly she took out her watch and was surprised to find that it was so late

"Why, it is twenty minutes to seven, and papa will be so anxious to know where I am. Can't you tell the gentleman to make haste. I shouldn't like to go without thanking the man who saved my"—

She stopped, for the door had opened, and a man advanced into the room. One glance, and Viola started to her feet with a wild cry, and clutched at her throat as if suffocating.

"You!" she gasped. "You! Oh! Pitying heaven! Why didn't I perish over the precipice?"

The woman had stepped from the room as soon as he had entered it. The man closed the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket and turning to Viola with a mocking smile, said:

"You seem to shrink from me as if I were an ogre, Miss Dunkirk. I am sure I mean you no harm. Have you no kind word for me? And it is such a long time since we have seen each other. You remember our last meeting, do you not?"

She was looking straight before her and beyond the nervous rising and falling of her bosom, one would imagine that she was a statue.

"You do not answer me," he said, impatiently, "and after I have just saved your life by risking my own. I think I deserve some consideration, if nothing more than a look."

She realized that she had better say something, and act in a conciliatory manner, and probably he would release her. For that she was wholly in his power she fully realized. So with an effort she extended her hand, and said:

"I thank you ever so much for saving my life. It was a brave act and when I go home I shall tell Papa Quimby, and as he is rich, I know that he will remunerate you."

At the mention of that name Arnold started back. "What is Mr. Quimby to you?" he asked quickly. "He is my adopted father," she answered.

His eyes lighted up avariciously. So this is why she was so finely clothed, and was out enjoying the evening on horseback. The daughter of the great banker and therefore his heiress. If Arnold Campbell was determined to win her before, he was doubly so now. The money itself was a great incentive, to say nothing of his love.

"She shall be mine!" he muttered, fiercely, with bated breath. "By fair means or foul." Aloud he said:

"You are very fortunate in being the daughter of such a worthy gentleman."

"Yes," she said. "Papa is very good to me and loves me and that reminds me," she said suddenly, "that he will be very anxious at my long absence. I must go to him at once."

A peculiar gleam shot into his dark eyes.

"Must you really go so soon?" he inquired, with well-assumed sorrow.

"Yes, I have been from home two whole hours. And besides, it is almost dark. Will you let me pass, please?"

"Well—er, the fact is, Miss Quimby, you cannot go just yet."

"Sir!" She was very much frightened, but she spoke without a tremor.

"Well, you see, it is rather late, and you are a long way from home, and it would not be prudent to go."

"I am not afraid, sir. I have been living here for years, and feel perfectly safe in coming and going whenever I please. Let me pass, if you please"

The clear, searching eyes of the girl were on him, and he found it difficult to return her gaze. His eyes fell, as he said:

"I cannot let you go yet."

"What do you mean?" and her voice trembled in spite of herself.

He remarked it, and the thought that he was frightening her made him answer more boldly:

"Miss Dunkirk, that your ever leaving this house depends altogether on yourself."

"I do not understand you," in surprise. "What can I do that will cause you to let me leave this house?"

His face flushed with passion.

"I love you, Viola. Be my wife this very night and you can go," he said, eagerly.

She started from him a step or two.

"You must be mad to think of such a thing. I would never marry without my parents' consent, and besides, I do not love you."

"Perhaps not; but it will come in time." wrong. God would never bless such a union."

"I cannot," she said, pleadingly. "It would be

"Then," he said, angrily. "You will stay here until you change your mind."

He turned on his heel as he spoke, and with a pitiful cry Viola sprang after him, and throwing herself at his feet, cried:

"Oh, sir, for the love of heaven, don't detain me here. Think how troubled my father and mother will be at my strange absence. If you have one spark of manhood in your breast, you will release me for their sake."

"I will give you one minute to consent to be my wife; if you refuse, here you'll stay until you do consent," he answered, doggedly.

"Then hear my answer now, without a minute's reflection," she cried, springing to her feet, her eyes blazing, her face crimson with indignation, "I would rather die than become your wife. Do you hear? God never ordained such, nor is there any possible chance of your ever becoming my husband. A thief and a murderer I never would marry!"

"What do you mean?" he cried, hoarsely, his face ghastly pale.

"You know what I mean. Ah, ha! You may try well to cover it, you wretch. I know your little secret and will blaze it forth to the world if you do not release me."

"She knows my little secret," thought Arnold. "Nevertheless, she shall never leave here other than as my wife. Then her testimony will not be worth anything. I must go to the city early in the morning and secure the services of some not over-conscientious clergyman to officiate. It is not now a question of love and wealth, but a question of safety."

Viola had sprang after him as he left the room only to have the door closed in her face, and a squeaky click announced the fact that the door was lock-

ed. The girl became well nigh frantic. She screamed and kicked at the door, and realizing that all such attempts were failures, she ceased.

"Oh! Heaven help and pity me," she moaned. "I am in this man's power and unless some assistance comes I shall be forced into a union with him.

She was feeling terribly exhausted and she threw herself on the little cot and was soon sleeping, oblivious of every trouble.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## Bertram And Mona's Marriage Announcement

The engagement between Mona and Bertram had been announced. Preparations were being made for the wedding, which was decided to take place on the 15th of September. The bridal trousseau had been ordered from the North and portions of the wardrobe were coming every day. Rolls of silk, boxes of gloves and shoes, ribbons, bonnets, fine old lace, were arriving daily without cessation. Mrs. Hawthorne was in ecstasies over her daughter's good fortune. During these days she was an ideal mother. She chatted pleasantly and gave good advice to her daughter. She rode, drove, gave parties, and went to operas, and all in all, she was one of the happiest creatures in the city—at peace with all the world.

Mona's chief delight seemed to be in the presence of her lover. When he was with her she was all smiles, she talked gayly and sang and tried every artifice with which she was acquainted to be loving.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mr. and Mrs. Quimby returned home that night they were surprised to learn that Viola had not yet arrived. They thought probably that she had stopped at the house of one of her friends, but when at twelve o'clock she did not return, they sent out a couple of men servants to look for her. The men returned in two or three hours and said they had not learned anything of her whereabouts. The old people were sorely troubled, and early the next morning Mr Quimby went to the police headquarters and in-

formed the chief of Viola's disappearance. The chief told him he thought she could be found, and referred him to Special Officer Turpin.

"Dick Turpin," as he was usually termed by the rough class, had not been a year on the force, but his shrewdness and strict attention to business and the discharge of his duty had made him a man who was mortally feared by criminals, while his natural gentility of manner and his general temperament had won for him the respect and admiration of his brethren and made him a general favorite with them all.

Mr. Quimby appeared at the office of the great detective. He found the man busily engaged with a pile of documents. On his entering the detective turned on him a pair of piercing gray eyes. Mr. Quimby asked:

"Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Turpin, the detective?"

"I am he. To whom am I indebted for the pleasure of this visit?"

The banker handed him his card.

Ah!" said the detective. "Mr. Quimby, the banker."

"Yes, and I would like you to take a case for me if you are not busy."

"Well, I have a case on hand, as you see, but I think I can take another," said the detective.

"Very well, sir. My daughter—my adopted daughter—is missing. She disappeared very strangely from her home yesterday."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes, sir, and in order that you may fully understand the case, I will have to tell you my story."

"Very well, sir. Let me have all the facts, and al-

ways remember that whatever you may tell me will simply be in the strictest confidence, and as such I shall hold it sacred."

The banker began and told the detective the circumstances with which the reader is acquainted, from the time Viola had come into his family, until her disappearance. When he had finished the detective sat quite still, looking thoughtfully at the carpeted floor. Finally he said:

"You say she did not tell you anything of her former life, except that her mother and father were both dead. Might there not"—and here he gave the banker a keen look, as he began again. "Has it never occurred to you that there might be a lover in the case?"

This second mentioning of a lover in connection with Viola and her strange disappearance seemed to give the case a startling significance. As the old man raised his head he answered:

"No—no. I have never looked at the matter in that light," he finally said. "You don't know my dear girl, sir. She was very different from the girls in general and, besides if there had been anything of the kind, I think she would have told me."

The detective smiled cheerfully, rubbing his hands vigorously, and said in a pleasant manner:

"Very well, sir; I will undertake your case and I will have good news for you soon."

The banker arose and moved toward the door. When he had laid his hand on the knob he turned: "Oh, by the bye. You haven't said anything about your pay."

"Oh, never mind, sir, never mind. We'll speak about that when my work is done"



"You shall be amply remunerated if you succeed.  
Good morning."

"Good morning."

Five days had elapsed since Viola had been a prisoner in the house by the river. She had pleaded for her liberty, implored, stormed and threatened, but it had done no good. Hope had given place to despair. She had made up her mind to meet the issue, whatever it might be, bravely. Her tormenter had been to see her this morning and had begged her to become his wife, and had left her in anger, because of her refusal. He told her to prepare herself, for on the morrow she would have to become his wife.

She was sitting now on one of the hard stools, trying to be resigned to her fate, but there was a dull pain at her heart when there came a light step in the hall. The knob turned in the door and a young woman entered. Viola sprang to her feet; her heart leaped with great joy. She was to be free at last.

"Miss Mona! Oh! Merciful Father in Heaven, I thank Thee!" she cried, joyously. "Oh! I am so glad you have come to deliver me from that villain—that fiend in human shape. How is father and mother?" she continued, breathlessly. "Are they anxious about me? Oh! Take me to them. Please do, and I will bless you as long as I live."

And the poor girl—poor, because her joy was soon to be turned into the bitterness of death—clasped the haughty Mona Hawthorne about the knees and sobbed for very joy.

"Why, my dear girl," said Mona, mockingly, "you seem to have very pleasant quarters here. How do you like them? True, your furniture is rough, but I presume your husband that is to be will refurnish your apartments when you are settled down."

Viola had slowly risen to her feet and was leaning on the back of a chair for support. Her eyes had become black as midnight with horror. What did it mean? Did Miss Mona—was it possible that she did not come to release her—that she even knew something about her imprisonment, perhaps. But no, no! Perish the thought! No woman with a spark of feeling for her sex would stand quietly by and see one of her fellows imprisoned and forced into an unwilling alliance with a man from whom her whole soul recoiled in loathing.

"What—what is it you say, Miss Mona?" she asked, in piteous perplexity. "I—I don't seem to quite understand you."

Mona rippled out a little tinkle of silvery laughter and said:

"What! My dear little woman, I thought I spoke plainly enough. I say I hope you will be happy with your young husband, who loves you dearly. Pray accept my heartiest congratulations. If it were not that I am so happy in the love of Bertram, my betrothed, I should surely envy you your good fortune."

"Then you did not come to release me? Oh, Miss Mona!" she said, almost in a whisper. The awful anguish and hopeless misery in her voice as she gave utterance to this would have melted the heart of a stone, but unfortunately Mona's heart was made of harder material than stone, and she did not notice it.

"Come to release you!" she said, in mock surprise. "How could I presume to intrude into this paradise of love When Mr Arnold Campbell"—

"Do not mention his name to me!" cried Viola, stung into madness by the heartless woman's taunts.

"Don't you dare do it! I—I hate him, loathe him and you, too. And I believe you have had a hand in this outrage. You know more about it than you care to admit."

Mona had started back quite frightened before this burst of indignation. She did not believe Viola had life enough in her for that.

"My! What a regular little virago you are. Mr. Campbell, your intended husband, will have to bring that little temper in check, or you will make it warm for him."

"Leave me to my misery, you wicked woman. Why did you come here?"

An angry fire flashed into the eyes of Mona.

"Why did I come here?" she echoed, advancing meaningly up to the girl. "Shall I tell you? Well, then, hear me. It was to triumph over you, my rival. I knew you were here. You are here by my instructions. Nay! Hear me out. You were in my way. You won the love of my life from me, and I am determined on revenge. I tell you this because I am now safe in the love of Bertram Heathcourt, and on the fifteenth of this month will become the wife of his bosom. Now, listen. Your lover was never false to you. Ah, ha! You started the rivalry which almost broke my heart strings. I shall wring your heart strings as mine have been wrung. I wrote that letter telling you that he never did love you; that henceforward you would meet as strangers. He never received your letter. I have it in my possession now. How I got it matters not. He now believes that you are dead, and in less than a fortnight I shall be his wife. While you (with a dazzling smile) will be ditto of Mr. Arnold Campbell. You see, little Viola, I

have triumphed, and there is no use to kick against the pricks. You had better accept your fate with good grace, and make the best of circumstances."

Viola never moved. She had been looking straight before her since the beginning of Mona's story. She had become pale to the lips. Her eyes were dilated with horror at the enormity of the sin of the woman whom she believed at most to be proud and haughty.

"My dear," continued Mona. "Why do you look like that? You quite frighten me. You do not look very much like a prospective bride."

"So you deceived me," murmured Viola, brokenly. "And he was true to me! He meant it when he said that he loved me. He was not doing it to pass away the time?"

"No, he was not doing it *PASSER LE TEMPS*. But so far as you are concerned he might as well have done so. Well," said Mona, as she moved toward the door. "I must leave you, my dear. I will not see you for—oh! ever so long. After our wedding tour, I may drop in to see you. So, au revoir." She paused on the threshold of the door as if to take one last look, and what she saw never left her mind until her dying day.

Viola was acting as if she did not hear her—was not even aware of her presence. She was murmuring over and over again: "Bertram did mean it. He was not fooling. He loved me."

Suddenly, and while Mona was still looking at her, she started toward the table and, snatching up a fork that was lying on the plate from which she had eaten her dinner, said: "Good bye, Bertram, my lost love; I will never see you again. I love you! Oh! so well. Mother, dear mother, I will soon be with you." And

before the astonished Mona could do anything to prevent it, she had raised her hand and buried the fork in her breast up to the hilt.

"Great God!" exclaimed the guilty woman. "The girl has killed herself!"

She stood stark still, gazing like one fascinated at the crimson stream oozing from the tender breast of that prostrate figure. Like a flash it suddenly occurred to her that she was the cause of this poor girl's death, and therefore she was a—

"No, no, not that!" she cried aloud. "Father in Heaven! What am I?"

"A murderess!" was whispered in her ear.

She wheeled about with a stifled cry, but there was no one in the room but herself and that pale, dead figure.

"Who spoke?" she demanded, sharply, but an empty echo was her only answer. "My imagination is playing me pranks."

She went from the room and soon returned with old Madge.

"The girl has killed herself. Attend to her at once, and let some of the men about the yard bury her at once."

With some difficulty the woman succeeded in getting Viola on the bed, and had soon completed the last sad duty we can perform for the dead.

"Poor Viola! She deserved a better fate. It did not seem possible that the end had come to one so young, so good and true. Poor, helpless girl!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

## Mona's Conscience.

Mona had returned to her home that night and fearful thoughts were haunting her. She could not vanish from her mind that last despairing cry of the poor, innocent young girl whom she had so terribly wronged. She made an excuse to her mother and after eating a very light supper retired. But not to sleep. Sleep, that blessed boon which brings rest and peace to the innocent would not bring oblivion to her guilty mind. She undressed herself and laid down. She would ever and anon drop off into a fitful slumber, only to start up again with a smothered cry, as a voice seemed to whisper: "Murderess!" from under her pillow. Finally she arose, and robing herself in a wrapper, threw up the window, drawing a chair close to the side of it, sat down to look out.

In one of the trees a night bird was singing, but its lovely notes seemed to her excited fancy to be crying in harsh tones: "Murderess! Murderess!" In the grass on the lawn beneath her a cricket took up the strain of "Murderess! Murderess!"

"Oh, Heaven! will those terrible sounds never cease?" she moaned and closing the window with a bang, she arose and began pacing restlessly to and fro, until a faint gray streak came stealing through the window and she knew that day was breaking. She threw herself across the bed and finally dropped into a kind of deep apathy, which lasted until late in the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Madge, the old hag, had sat by Viola's corpse all night.

The next morning Campbell arrived. He came eagerly into the room, expecting to find Viola ready to give him an affirmative answer, recognizing how useless it was to defy him. But he was horrified, amazed, when on entering the room, he found Madge sitting by the side of the bed and on the bed, with her hands folded peacefully on her breast, lay Viola, cold and still.

He could not believe that he saw aright. He rubbed his eyes, and pinched himself to see if it was not some horrible dream.

"What's—what's the matter, Madge?" he stammered. "What does this mean?"

"It means that the gal's dead," was the short answer.

"Dead!" he cried, hollowly. "Viola dead! How—Good God! Who did it? Woman!" he said suddenly seizing her arm in a vise-like grip. "How did this thing happen? Answer me," he continued fiercely. "Did you do it?"

"Turn me a loose," snarled the old woman. "What you spose I want to kill her for. No, I didn't do it. She did it herself."

The man stood like one stricken dumb. Viola killed herself? And—Great Heaven! He had goaded the poor girl to her doom.

He suddenly cast himself across the prostrate form and groaned remorsefully at the thought of what he had done. Then calling on her by every endearing name to come back to him, to forgive him for the wrong he had perpetrated upon her, but there was no movement made by poor Viola.

He finally arose, and asked the woman, who had been standing near, looking at him with a cynical expression on her ugly visage, how it had happened.

She told him all she knew about it. How Mona had visited the girl and after staying in the room a considerable length of time, came to her and informed her that the girl had killed herself.

"So she was here, eh," he muttered under his breath. "I wonder if she could—but no. The girl was safe from ever molesting her in her love affairs, and it would be foolish to think that she would do such a thing."

He finally left the old woman alone with the corpse. In half an hour he put his head in the door and said:

"Madge, I am going to town after a coffin to bury the girl in. I shall return this afternoon."

"All right, sir."

Madge sat quiet for an hour or two, and then she began to feel hungry. She remembered that she had not left the room since the afternoon of the previous day.

"I'll step out and get a bite; it won't take long." So saying, she hobbled from the room.

Three minutes passed and a panel in the wall slid back, and into the room a woman stepped cautiously. She was tall and dark, with black hair and eyes of the same hue. There were lines as of trouble around her sweet mouth and eyes, but despite that fact she seemed to have been once a very beautiful woman. She advanced cautiously to the side of the bed and gazed long and earnestly at the girl.

"How beautiful! How very beautiful!" she said. "And they hounded her down, poor creature, as they



attempted to hound me—but" she paused. Was she mistaken? She thought she saw the lace at the throat of the girl move. It was only imagination. No! There it is again! She bent over closer and examined the girl's face. Then she put out her hand and pinched that of the girl. It did not remain pinched and puckered like that of a dead person's, but the flesh came back into its place just like elastic. The woman tried the other hand in the same manner, with a like result. Her face lit up radiantly.

"Not dead," she murmured, joyously. "I think I can save her if I begin at once."

And with incredible strength for a woman she bore her through the open panel and shoved it into its place.

About five minutes elapsed, at the end of which time Madge returned to the room. When she looked in and saw that the body of the girl had disappeared, she was almost wild with superstitious wonder. Where had she gone? Where could she go? She looked under the bed, and opening the shutters of the window, looked out, but nothing rewarded her gaze. She searched every room through and through, but no Viola could be found.

"I don't believe that gal was dead. She's been a playin' possum on us. But—I could a'swore she was a corpse. Mr. Arnold will be wild when he finds out she's gone."

And she sat down on a chair by the window and waited patiently for his return.

Meanwhile the strange woman had borne Viola through the panel, and after sliding it back into its place, walked along the narrow passage until she came to a flight of stairs. Ascending these she

walked along another passage until she came to a wall. Pressing her finger on a small button another panel slid back, which she closed after passing through. She entered a room that was poorly but comfortably furnished. A clean white bed and a table, a few chairs, a stove, lamp, trunk, cupboard and washstand constituted its furnishings.

The woman lay her burden tenderly on the bed, took a flask containing brandy and another of camphor from the cupboard, and for two hours worked vigorously on the girl, bathing her hands and face in the camphor, and administering the brandy. A while after she noticed the chest of the girl beginning to rise and fall, as if in respiration. Soon there was a little movement of the hand and a long-drawn sigh, accompanied by a quivering of the eyelids, which announced that Viola had at last come out of her trance. She struggled feebly to rise, but the attempt was a failure, and she sank back, gasping for breath. The woman raised the pillow under her head and otherwise made her position more comfortable. She stood with her hand resting lightly on the girl's head with a soothing, magnetic touch. Viola lay quiet, with her eyes closed. Presently she stirred, and when the woman removed her hand, she let her gaze wander around the room, as if taking in every detail.

"Where am I?" she asked, feebly, passing her hand slowly over her eyes. "And why am I here?"

The woman put her finger to her lips as if to enjoin silence.

"Hush, my dear child," she said, in a sweet voice that won Viola's heart on the spot. "You must recover as fast as you can, and the only way to do so is by keeping very quiet, and when you get better I will tell you all about it."

So saying, she drew a chair to the bedside, and taking Viola's hand in hers, she stroked it caressingly. Viola felt a strange sense of comfort and protection in this woman's presence. She did not question further. She only realized with a wild joy that in some miraculous manner she had escaped from the clutches of her enemies. And so, under the soothing touches of this kind woman, she soon dropped into a light and refreshing sleep.

## CHAPTER XV.

## Viola Not A Suicide.

That afternoon Arnold drove up to the door of the old river house in a covered wagon which, it is needless to say, contained a coffin. He jumped from the wagon, hastened into the house and toward the room where he had left, as he supposed, the corpse of little Viola. The woman had heard his footsteps in the hall and had come to meet him. He saw by the expression of her face that something out of the ordinary had happened. He thought probably—and here his heart gave a wild bound—that Viola had, after all, only been in a deep swoon, and had recovered.

"Well?" said he, inquiringly to her.

"I—I—that is—Mr. Arnold, the fact is, something very peculiar has happened."

"Yes," he said, eagerly. "What is it?"

"Well, sir," continued the woman, as if she did not know how to begin. "I—I just stepped out to get a mouthful of something to eat, and when I come back, why—why"—

"Yes, she had recovered?"

"Who said anything about her bein' recovered?"

Arnold's heart sank like lead. He felt like throttling the woman for having even unconsciously raised false hopes in his breast.

"Why don't you speak?" he demanded, angrily. "Why do you stand there looking at me like one just awakened from a dream?"

"La sakes! I wish it wor a dream. Somethin' wuss dan a dream has happened."

A horrible fear began tugging at his heart-strings, as he asked, huskily:

"What has happened, Madge? For God's sake, tell me!"

"Well, the truth of the matter is, the gal's gone."

"Gone! How could such a thing have happened? You must be mistaken."

"I doesn't know how it happened. All I know is that when I'd come back from eatin' my dinner, she was gone. You can see for yourself."

Arnold pushed her roughly aside and strode into the room and was profoundly surprised. He stood as if thinking deeply. Finally he said:

"How is it, Madge? I can't understand it. She must have been taken from the room by some outsider. For that she was dead I will swear."

"Yes, sir, she was dead, and that's a fact. And Jewhilikens!" as if she had found a solution of the mystery, continued: "I bet a dollar some dratted detective has 'skivered her whereabouts and tooken her back home. You say her folks is rich. I guess they must a hired him to find her."

Arnold seemed to be of the same opinion, for he said, reflectively:

"I think that is about the size of it. But in order to make sure I will go to the city and to-night I will take a survey of the house and find out."

\* \* \* \* \*

Viola slept all that night and a portion of the next day, and when she awoke she felt strengthened, and announced her intention to the woman of getting up. She saw that Viola was really looking better, and gave a ready consent. The woman assisted her to dress, and by the time that was completed, break-

fast was ready, and after she had placed it on the table they sat down to the tempting repast. When breakfast was finished and the things stowed away, they sat down by the window and began chatting pleasantly, both avoiding as if by tacit agreement to speak of things nearest the minds of each. Directly the woman said:

"Do you know, my dear, that you look strangely like some one whom I have known. Your face very forcibly reminds me of him or her. Who it is I cannot recall now."

"Do I?" said Viola, with a smile. "I hope it is like some one you loved. For, oh, dear lady, I would like to have you love me. Please forgive me for saying it, but I love you so much."

"Do you really love me, my dear, after such a short acquaintance?"

"I do," said Viola, earnestly. "Indeed, I do. And that reminds me, you have never told me your name."

The woman remained silent for a while and then said:

"Call me Mrs. Smith."

"Now, Mrs. Smith," said the girl, softly, "couldn't you love me a little—just a little?"

Mrs. Smith, for that we shall call her, smiled in spite of herself at the girl's earnestness, and answered warmly:

"Indeed, you dear little creature, I could and do love you already."

A light came into the girl's face, and she impulsively leaned forward and grasped the hand of her companion and imprinted a kiss thereon. And thus they sat for several minutes, clasping each other's

hand in loving confidence. And so by that token did these two women, who had come into each other's lives so strangely, seal a friendship that all the vicissitudes of their after lives could not break.

After remaining quiet for some minutes, Viola ventured to ask:

"Mrs. Smith, how came I here—in this house?"

Mrs. Smith said, as she smiled: "You will have to ask that arch plotter downstairs how you came to be in the house. Nay, do not be frightened, my dear," for Viola had started to her feet with a startled look in her eyes, when she found out she was still in the same house. "You are perfectly safe from him. I have been living here for ten years, and nobody knows of my being here, not even the other inhabitants of the house."

"But—but how do you manage to keep them in ignorance of your presence here?" asked Viola, in astonishment.

"That is easily explained. See here," and she arose and went to the wall, pressed a button and a panel slid back in its socket. "You see, my dear, this is a secret apartment. I do not know what it was built for, but I discovered it here years ago, when tired, footsore and weary, I had stepped into this dilapidated old building to rest."

Viola looked at the place with great interest. She had never seen, never heard of anything like it before. The woman continued:

"You see that passage; that leads to a pair of stairs; descending those stairs you come to another secret passage, that subsequently leads to a subterranean vault or tunnel. Follow this tunnel for two or three hundred yards and you will come out at a

small cave on the river. By the way, you see I procure work from several families hereabouts and am enabled to earn a livelihood. I come and go when I please, without any one being the wiser.

She closed the panel and returned to her seat beside the wondering girl. "You are wondering? I can see it in your eyes. How came I to take up my abode here? Would you like to hear my story?"

"I would, ever so much, if it does not pain you to tell it."

"Indeed, it does not. It has been such a long time since I've had any one with whom to exchange confidences that it is rather a relief than otherwise to be able to unburden my mind of its weight to some one whom I can trust. It is all a case of man's duplicity, woman's weakness and suffering, on account of an imprudent folly," she said, sadly.

Viola clasped her hand and then gave it a reassuring pressure, and then began to listen to the most remarkable story of her life.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## Mrs. Smith's Story.

"In the village of B—— I lived when quite a small girl, with my father, who was a simple gardener. I was a very happy girl. Though far from being rich, we managed to live comfortably, and my mother being dead, I was the light of my father's life and loved him dearly. I grew from girlhood into young womanhood, and people all called me beautiful.

"There was in the woods a great old tree known throughout the settlement as the 'Old Elm. It was strange that almost all the trees in the woods were beech, and there was not another of its kind to be found around the village. But it stood in the midst of the other trees, tall and majestic, like a grim sentinel, spreading its huge arms out over the others in its vicinity, as if in protection. It was my chief delight to take a novel or some other interesting book in the afternoon and sit under its delightful shade to read and dream. One day while I was so engaged I did not notice that the sky had suddenly become overcast presaging one of our Southern storms, until the drops began to fall thick and fast. I simply had on a thin dress and a straw hat. I surely would have been the recipient of a good drenching and probably caught my death of cold, had not a young man, whom I recognized as the eldest son of the leading personage in our town, passed opportunely and seeing my condition, offered to see me in safety to my home. I need not tell you of the frequent meetings under the old elm; of the honeyed words and confidences exchanged. Suffice it to say that when the summer had gone and the leaves began to fall from

the trees, I had promised to be the wife of the son of the purse-proud millionaire.

In the meantime the younger son of this gentleman had met me on several occasions and said he had fallen in love with me. He proposed and I rejected him. He stormed; I threatened and defied him. He asked me why I would not marry him. I told him that I loved another. Then he pleaded by the right of his love to know who it was. I told him that it was his brother. I never shall forget the look of murderous hate that came into his countenance. I shivered with fear when I saw it. It was terrible. But secure in the love of the man who was all the world to me, his deadly threats of vengeance did not long remain in mind.

"One day I received a letter from my loved one, asking me to meet him the next night by the 'Old Elm' and flee with him. I knew that it was not a prudent thing to do, but what girl with the glamour of love over her eyes listens to the reasonings of her own mind or her common sense? It is certain that I did not. I sat down and wrote him a loving assent, and the next evening met him at the place named, and before six hours had rolled over our heads we were married.

"The next day my husband left me in a little cottage and returned home. In a few days he came back and said he had come to remain with me for a whole week. We went into the garden after awhile and were lovingly examining some flowers together when who should drive up to the door but the father and brother of my husband. The stern father denounced his son and heaped reproaches upon him and cursed him. And as I stood trembling at his side, I could

see the wicked exultation in the face of my brother-in-law, the father's threats occurred to me with full force, and I knew that in some way he had found out about our elopement and betrayed us.

"My husband after this seemed cheerful enough, and as he was not altogether dependent upon his father's bounty, we managed to get along immensely.

"A year passed swiftly by. In the meantime God had sent into my life a little treasure in the shape of a son. After he was given to me my real trouble began. My husband began to grow morbid and cold. I could see that everything was not going right. I did not complain, however, but took renewed pleasure in the presence of my boy. One day, during his absence, I received a message that I supposed to be from him, requesting me to meet him. Leaving my baby boy in charge of the nurse, I repaired to the place mentioned in the letter. And my dear, I never saw my child or my husband from that day to this. When I stepped into the carriage sent for the purpose, I was seized by strong hands and a cloth placed over my mouth. I lost consciousness. When I awoke to my surroundings I was aware of being in a room with grated doors and windows. Strange, wild cries, screams, the babble of silly voices and demoniac laughter could be heard on all sides. My child, I knew, though I had never been in one before, that I was in a lunatic asylum. And the horror of finding out that I had been entrapped into such a place almost killed me.

"I staggered to my feet in terror and confronted my enemy, my husband's brother. I need not tell you how I pleaded with him, threatened and begged him for my liberty, but he only taunted, sneered and laughed at my misery.

"When I saw that he was so utterly heartless I became indignant and heaped reproaches on him. He said to me: 'My dear Doris, you must not blame me for the part that I have played in this affair, for I assure you that I am not the prime mover in it.' I indignantly demanded to know who was, and he answered: 'Your own husband.' I never shall forget the horror with which I heard those awful words, never! My husband, whom I believed so good, true, and honorable! My husband, whom I loved so dearly, and whom I knew loved me so well! But why should he do such a wicked thing, and what was his object.

"I stood there, speechless. My tongue refused to do its work. It seemed as if a hand of iron were clutching at my heart. At last I managed to gasp and then said, sternly: 'I do not believe it; my husband loved me, and he would never be a party to such devilish work.' 'All right, my dear,' answered my tormentor with taunting coolness, 'but your incredulity does not alter the state of affairs in the least. Now listen. Your husband truly loved you when he married you, but his was not the love of a lifetime, such as I offered you, and which you rejected with scorn. My brother was not born to be a poor man and when my father disinherited him, he began to hate you because of the blight you had cast over his life. He soon grew tired of you, and as he did not care to stain his soul with a worse crime, he had you abducted and brought here.'

"It was such a ridiculous story that I could not repress a smile, in spite of my terrible situation. The idea of my husband being guilty of such a plot against the wife he had sworn to cherish was simply

absurdity personified. I wonder how it is that God did not strike him dead for telling such a lie.

"He saw the smile and it seemed to madden him. 'You do not believe it!' 'Do you think I would so wrong my husband even in thought as to entertain such an idea for an instant?' 'Read that, then' he said, snatching a letter from his pocket and tossing it to me, 'and see if it does not change your views in regard to your husband's character.' I recognized the writing as that of my husband's with a strange sinking of the heart. The letter was a short one, but oh, my Heavens! How it did shatter my love dream, my idol.

"It was a neatly laid plan of how I was to be abducted and sent to the asylum, and after I was put out of the way my husband was to marry a rich widow, who I remembered having seen to flirt with him on several occasions. 'You know, Richard,' it wound up, 'that I cannot endure poverty, although I have put up with it with seeming good grace so far, and now when the opportunity presents itself to better myself, think you that I will hesitate for an instant to accept it, because one paltry life stands between me and wealth? No! A thousand times no! The change will be better for my son. He will be brought up believing that my second wife is his own mother; he will never know the difference. And I believe that happiness is to come into my life at last. It was all a mistake, from first to last, and I hope that in my new life I may be able to retrieve my lost advantages. Do not be too hard on Doris—poor Doris. I could not bear to see her again. Her sad, dark eyes would ever rise up before me in silent reproach.  
Fleming Heathcourt.'

"That was all, my child, but who can describe the suffering it brought to me. I was faint and dizzy at the knowledge of my husband's baseness. It was all a mistake, his having married me, and oh! the pity of it—my child, my darling baby—was never to know its real mother. To be brought up in ignorance of her very existence. I wonder why it did not drive me mad. But it did not. Nor did the other horrors that are presented to inmates of a lunatic asylum drive me mad. I stayed there for fifteen years—fifteen long, weary years, and when one night the asylum caught fire and I escaped, I was the same in mind as you, or as I am at this moment."

## CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Smith And Viola.

The woman during the narrative had been looking out of the window, her sad, dark eyes wandering off from the broad expanse of water to hazy mountains in the distance. Therefore she did not see Viola, at the mention of the name "Heathcourt," give a start of surprise, and bend forward with renewed interest and gaze scrutinizingly at her face, and also the light of a sudden conviction that broke over her.

After a short pause, Viola said, tremulously:

"Poor Mrs. Smith! How you must have suffered! "But," she continued, earnestly, "I do not believe your husband did such a wicked thing. It was all a plot against the happiness of you both, by that villainous brother of his."

A radiant expression came into the face of Mrs. Smith for an instant, then receded, leaving it its usual marble-like whiteness.

"No, my dear child," she said, smiling sadly. "You do not know. I believe that for once in his life Richard Heathcourt told the truth—that my husband had ceased to love me. And besides, the letter was in his handwriting. I recognized it as such. There could be no mistake."

"It might have been and I believe it was, a forgery," said Viola, emphatically. "I do not believe that your husband, whom I imagine to be good and true, would have done such a thing. It was a forgery, such things have been done."

She spoke with a little bitterness in her voice for she remembered Mona's words in which she acknowledged that she had forged the note that had blighted her happiness.

The woman stooped and pressed a kiss on the brow of the girl. "My child" she murmured tremulously, "you have made me feel better than you know. You have given me hope. Hope that after all these years of sorrow and suffering that a great wrong may yet be righted—that I may be restored to my loved one."

"We shall begin," said Viola, twining her arms softly about the woman's neck, "we shall begin right away to bring that villain to justice—just as soon as we can escape from here. But—but you didn't finish your story."

"There is very little more to tell, my child. I escaped, as I told you and came here, tired of my weary tramp, and hungry. The next day I discovered this secret apartment, and as I was feeling a little better, though still weak from want of food, I dragged myself over to yonder cottage. Do you see, through that cluster of trees? I asked them for food and work. They were very kind to me, and for a month I used to go there daily and work. After that time they trusted me and I was allowed to bring the work away and do it here, although they do not even know where I live. So things continued for nine years. A year ago that man downstairs and a gang of men, whom I have every reason to believe are counterfeiters, took up their abode here, and I had to be particular not to be discovered. I had just returned home the other day, when, coming up the secret passage, I heard the voice of a young girl, speaking as if she had been made joyful by some event. There happened to be a small hole in the wall, where a pine knot had once been, and through that hole I saw you kneeling at the feet of that heart-



less young woman with the black eyes. I could not resist the temptation to hear what was being said, and the consequences are that I was able to save your life, and you will not have to tell me your story."

"Did you—did you hear?" faltered Viola, paling and flushing alternately at the knowledge that her secret had been betrayed.

"Yes, my child," smiled Mrs. Smith, reassuringly. "All but the name of the young man whom she had taken from you so unfairly."

Viola gave a sigh of relief that the woman did not know who the young man was, and she told herself that she would not reveal his name. She would save the good news to add to the pleasure that Mrs. Smith would have when the work that they both had to do was finished.

\* \* \* \* \*

Arnold Campbell was in a plight. He had gone to the city and loitered in the vicinity of the Quimby mansion all the next day, hoping to see something that would indicate to him that Viola had returned, dead or alive. But nothing rewarded his efforts. No graceful, airy figure had flitted from the open door or down the steps out on the lawn; no gay laughter or merry songs had reached his ears, telling him that she was alive and well. And yet no doctor's conveyance had driven up to the curb, nor had there been any crepe fluttering from the knob that would say to him in language too eloquent to be misunderstood or ignored that she was dead. He had even ventured to inquire of the old gardener if any news

of the missing Miss Quimby had been received. But the garrulous old man had said that "nobody ever heard head nor tail of her since she disappeared so strangely."

Arnold had also gone to the morgue and hospital, thinking that probably her dead body had been found, or that she had been picked up unconscious, and taken to the latter place for treatment. But no one answering her description had been brought to either place. He might look if he felt like it, which he did, but the result was just the same. In despair he turned his face toward the house of Mona Hawthorne.

He found that lady pacing restlessly up and down under the great old cedars. Arnold acknowledged to himself that her appearance was not that of the best. She looked five years older than when he had last seen her. Her hair seemed as if it had not been attended to; her dress was shabby, her face pale, her eyes had an underlying expression of terror in them that would not be banished, and her whole appearance indicated a woman who had a guilty, terrible secret, and one that could neither rest nor sleep in consequence. She came eagerly forward to meet him, although she couldn't raise her eyes to his.

"Well?" she said, inquiringly.

Arnold thought that probably the young woman was fearful of being the cause of the young woman's death, and had taken some means of getting rid of the body in order to cover up her tracks. Therefore, he said, with as much sternness as he was capable:

"You have made a pretty job out of this affair, haven't you?"

The guilty woman started and trembled like an

aspens. Did he know that she had been to the house? True, the woman knew, but she had never seen her before, and therefore did not know her. She must find out how much he knew. So, recovering herself, she asked, laughingly:

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," said he angrily, stung by her manner. "You know that you came to the river house yesterday and caused her death."

"It is false!"

"It is true. You cannot fool me, Mona Hawthorne. Why did you cause her death? Answer me! Why did you do it?"

He had advanced upon her menacingly, his eyes blazing, his splendid physique trembling with passion.

Mona was frightened. What would he do? This man loved the girl. Would he betray her for the part she had played in it? Would he avenge the girl's death by informing Bertram of her sin? Oh horrors! Anything but that! There was madness in the thought. She must try to conciliate the man.

"Arnold!" she said, "I admit that I did go to the river house but I did not kill the girl. She committed suicide. When she found I had not come to release her, she—she became desperate."

"Is that all?" sneeringly.

"Yes," eagerly coming forward. "And—and, is she—have they buried her?"

"No."

"And why?" with a frown. "Do you want someone to find out about her and begin making unpleasant inquiries. Why hasn't she been buried?"

"Because she is gone."

"What?" almost in a whisper. "I did not quite hear you. Do I understand you to say that she is gone?"

"That was about the drift of my remarks."

"Gone! Gone! My God! And I—I!" She staggered forward, groping blindly before her and clutching wildly at the empty air, fell at his feet in a huddled heap.

And for once in her life Mona Hawthorne had really fainted.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## Attempt To Escape.

It is dark in the city of Washington, with exception of the street lamps that are twinkling here and there. It is dark in the old river house to all appearances. Any casual observer would say that much. But it is not dark in the secret room of the old river house. On the contrary a light was burning brightly from a wax candle on the table. Viola was feeling very anxious as she sat on a chair with her head resting on her right hand. Mrs. Smith, after her conversation with Viola, had appointed to-night for their escape. Viola, hungering to see her father and mother and also some one else, eagerly acquiesced. But at the same time a heavy foreboding hung over her like a pall. She tried to shake it off, but could not. She could not get rid of the presentiment that something was going to happen.

"Do you believe in presentiment of coming trouble, Mrs. Smith?" she asked that lady, who, by the way, was busy gathering together her little effects, and transferring them to a small satchel.

"What prompted you to ask that question, my dear?"

"Because I have that strange feeling now and cannot get rid of it."

"Banish it, my dear. Shake it off. There is no occasion to fear anything. Nobody is aware of our presence here."

"I know that, but try as I will, I cannot banish it. I cannot but feel that—that we are going to be unsuccessful in our attempt to-night, or something else is going to happen to us."

"I do not believe there is the least ground for such a feeling," said the woman. "Nobody knows of the passage but ourselves, and at nine o'clock we will start for liberty."

The woman spoke hopefully, but at the same time she was feeling rather nervous. She would not acknowledge it, but she had that same feeling that Viola spoke of. And it seemed rather singular, indeed, that they both should be possessed with it.

Taking a look into another portion of the old river house, in a room we see congregated a number of men. The room is quite long and wide accordingly. It is lighted by kerosene lamps that are affixed to the wall, with tin reflectors behind them, in order to throw the light out over the room. It is a peculiar room. There are work benches, moulds, steel plates, and in one corner a small forge. In the centre of the room is a long wooden table, around which the men are sitting, leisurely smoking their pipes, while others are playing cards and amusing themselves at other games. They have their faces covered with masks, behind which their features are effectually concealed. Directly one of the men arose and laying aside his pipe, picked up a gavel and rapping three times on the table, said, in a voice, though muffled and disguised, is strangely familiar:

"Men, it is time we begin business."

The men proceeded to lay aside their occupations and give attention.

"The first thing I want to say," continued the man, who seemed to be chief, "is that I failed on my last job."

Murmurs of discontent were heard on all sides, and one, a little bolder than the rest, said:

"How is that, chief? How did you happen to fail?"

"Well, you men went off on your own hooks and I had to employ strangers to do the job. They did not know the bearings of the old banker's house, and the result was they botched the job and were caught."

"They were caught?"

"Yes, they were caught and it was a close call in my getting away."

"Good!" exclaimed a few. "I am glad they were caught, for botching the job."

"It's all very well to rejoice that they were caught, but you see, we missed the money in consequence."

"But, chief," said one speaker, rather anxiously. "Did you think they might squeal on us?"

"No. Well, it doesn't make any difference if they do. Their squealing would have no effect for the simple reason that they do not know me—never saw my face, and furthermore, do not know of the band. But, boys," continued the chief, lowering his voice a trifle, "since you speak of squealing, there is something of importance I want to tell you."

Instantly everybody was all attention.

"Boys," continued the speaker, and the trembling of his voice showed that he was greatly excited. "Boys, there is someone on our track—a spy."

There was a hoarse, angry roar, mingled with fearful oaths, and the men were on their feet in a moment, flourishing their revolvers in the air.

"A spy! A spy!"

"Who is he?"

"Tell us who he is!"

"Name him, chief!"

"Knife the spy!"

And all such angry exclamations arose at once.

"Sh! Keep quiet, men, keep quiet. There is no occasion for such excitement now. There is none here now, that is sure. The reason that I spoke of a spy is that on the night when I was giving orders to the men I imagined I heard a step in the copse where we were. Then I thought I heard a sound. The second time I gave orders to the men to search the copse, but we did not see any one. It was very singular that when we went to crack the crib we found them prepared for us, and cops waiting to receive us."

"Is that a fact?"

"True as gospel."

"Then there was a spy, and we must never rest until we hunt him down. Have you any idea who he is, chief?"

"No. Well, that's what we must find out. Now, remember, all spies shall be shot at sight. Are you all in favor of that measure?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Down with the spies!"

"Very well, then. Now we will proceed to the regular business of the meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

We find Mrs. Smith and Viola sitting with shawls around their heads and shoulders, the former with a satchel on her arm. A little clock on the shelf strikes nine. Mrs. Smith arises and taking up the wax candle, says:

"It is time to start, My dear. Are you ready?"



"Yes," answered Viola, tremulously. "But—but, oh! I am so frightened."

"There is no need of being frightened," said Mrs. Smith, impatiently, and her sharp words brought tears to the eyes of the girl.

"There, there, my dear," said the good lady, "I regret very much that the sharpness of my speech has caused you to cry, but there is no occasion even for the least fear, indeed not. Come, we will go now." So saying she picked up the candle and passing over to the panel, pressed the button. The panel slid back, and they passed out, Mrs. Smith closing the panel after her. They went carefully along the long passage, and quietly down the stairs to another passage. They went along this one about twenty feet.

"We must go down another flight, and then we will be in the tunnel which will terminate at the river, and we will be safe," whispered the elder lady, encouragingly, as she felt the girl shivering close to her side. She pressed another button and a second panel slid back. They went through as before, the elder closing it. They went slowly down the stairs. They were now in an underground passage, which was close and dark. The walls were of wood and the passage was very narrow. Just as they put their feet on the floor, harsh angry cries reached their ears, coming right from the other side of the wall, just opposite them.

"Oh!" cried Viola, in terror. "We have been discovered! What shall we do?"

An angry voice reached her ears just then, saying: "Down with the spies!"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let us run!" cried Viola, panic-stricken, and she turned to put her words into action.

In some manner, just how she could never tell, as she turned, her arm came in contact with that of the woman, and the candle fell to the floor with a loud noise. The glass candlestick, which held the candle, made a terrible noise, and the noise came to the ears of those on the inside. There arose an angry, maddened roar:

"A spy!" Kill them!" "Down with the spy!" was heard.

There was a series of vigorous blows against the partition, and as the partition was thin, it soon gave way. The next instant the excited men, with revolvers in hand, came pouring through into the tunnel.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## Did Not Know His Love.

Bertram Heathcourt was perplexed as to what course to pursue. Here he was to become the husband of Mona Hawthorne in five days, and he did not even love her. He not only did not love her but he found out that he loved another. Yes, loved another. Loved a woman he never saw but once and that at a distance, and who, as he thought, had never seen him.

Ever since Mr. Quimby's daughter had passed him on the street he had been thinking of her. Her face haunted him. He wanted to know more of her. When he went to Mr. Quimby's house and found that she was missing, he was almost wild, although he held himself in control, and never by word or look betrayed to his old friend, the banker, that his heart was slowly but surely breaking. He called every day to learn if there was any news of the missing girl, only to hear with a heavy heart that there was none. He regretted a thousand times his hasty step in asking Mona to be his wife, out of pity. What was she to him that he should waste the best years of his life to make her happy? he asked himself, regretfully, thinking of how happy he would be with Viola, should she put in her appearance. He could not understand himself or his love. Was he a fickle man, that his love could change with every pretty face he met? he asked himself in surprise, and yet he was sure that he had loved, and still did love, Viola. Every time he thought of her it was with the same yearning tenderness that he thought of the banker's daughter. Why was it? Which did he love? These terrible

questions were unanswerable, and his attempting to answer them was telling on him daily. His steps grew slow and halting, his brow was thoughtful, and the lines were becoming deeper and deeper on his noble forehead, and around his handsome mobile mouth. Each day that he called to see Mona she noticed that there was a slight increase of silver threads among the gold of his hair, and her heart smote her for an instant, only an instant, when she saw that he was becoming prematurely old.

One morning Bertram called at the house of his betrothed, his face shining with a grim resolution. He had been sitting up all night, trying to solve this momentous problem of his life. Should he submit to this marriage and so bring the curse of God on their heads? Should he spoil both their lives by doing this wicked thing? For since he had begun to think the matter over, he could see that it was wicked.

Not to marry Mona was his determination. He would go to Mona's mother and lay his case before her, and if she was a woman with reason and a heart, she would see that the best thing to do would be to release him from the engagement, and she would do it. She could then explain all to her daughter, and that would save him the necessity of witnessing her sorrow, for he told himself he could not stand it. So, with a heart light with hope, he had gone this morning to put his plan into operation.

Mona had been expecting him. Therefore when he came she met him at the door and admitted him. She was also expecting to have him all to herself this morning. Bertram noticed the eager light in her eyes and suspecting that something was in the wind, pressed a cold kiss on her brow and made haste to inquire for her mother.

"I have something to say to her alone that is important," he said, in answer to her look of surprise.

"Oh! certainly," she said, sweetly, ringing for a servant, "you can see mamma all you want, now, because I will soon have you all to myself, and neither mamma nor any one else can come between us."

Bertram winced at these words and was rather glad when the servant came and announced the fact that Mrs. Hawthorne would see him upstairs in her sitting-room, and straightaway he repaired to the place mentioned.

"It's very peculiar—very peculiar—that he wants to see her, and alone, too. He has always shunned her as much as possible since I told him about her. I must hear what it is he says, **MUST**. I believe that I am the subject of this interview. Strange—strange that I should feel that this is my very last happy day—that I shall never know another."

"There is only one thing that will make me unhappy, and if that should happen"—Mona stopped and drew a deep breath, and her face became absolutely fiendish in its expression.

Suddenly she started and a low laugh was hissed from between her livid lips—a laugh that would make little chills creep up one's back, as if a blast had blown on one from an empty grave.

"I must hear what is being said," she muttered, in tense tones, and with that she flew up the stairs to a chamber adjoining her mother's sitting-room and standing behind the heavy velvet hangings that separated the apartments she listened to her doom.

## CHAPTER XX.

## Bertram's Mistake.

Bertram found Mrs. Hawthorne robed in a pretty satin wrapper, with some fancy-work laying gracefully across her lap. After the usual greeting he plunged without any preliminaries into the topic nearest his heart.

"Mrs. Hawthorne I have come to you on a mission of mercy."

"Is that so?" in surprise. "Well, state your mission, and if it is reasonable, I shall be happy to be merciful."

"Mrs. Hawthorne, I have discovered that I made a mistake in offering my hand to your daughter. I do not love her."

The woman started violently. Her face turned an ashen-gray hue. There was a roaring in her ears, and it was by the mightiest effort of will that she kept from fainting. Recovering, she said coldly:

"Sir! I do not understand you. I thought you loved my daughter, or else why did you win her heart and offer to marry her?"

"Mrs. Hawthorne," said Bertram, slowly. He was pained. How could he betray, even to the mother, the pleadings of the daughter for his love. It seemed to him as if it should be held sacred, but there was no other way to do. And so in a straightforward, modest way, he told her all, dwelling quite severely on the part that she had played in the affair as represented by Mona. When he had finished she sat looking straight before her, pale as a marble statue.

"Did Mona, my own child, tell that wicked lie?" she asked, more to herself than to him.

"Lie! Good Heavens, Mrs. Hawthorne, what do you mean?"

Mrs. Hawthorne aroused herself. There were lines of pain on her face, and for the first time in his life Bertram thought she looked noble. Noble she should look; noble she did look. For there was a noble resolution in her heart. If her daughter was wicked enough to tell so base a lie on the mother who bore her, lowering her and making her appear a contemptible deceiver, then that daughter was not fit to be the wife of this good man—of any honest man.

"Mr. Heathcourt, I am not a good woman, but I love my daughter, and for her sake I have schemed and planned, done everything except actual sin to promote her welfare. I have done these things for her, not through any selfish motive—and the thanks I have received—Oh! Heavens! but it is hard! To think that my daughter, my own child, should lower me in the estimation of my acquaintances; should make me appear a liar and a cheat. Mr. Heathcourt, I have been cold to you when you were poor; mercenary toward you when you came into wealth, but I did not write that note to you; do not even know that you wrote one. I now pronounce my daughter's story a base, wicked fabrication, and I absolve you from your engagement with her. Go! You are free!"

At the same time there came to their ears a low moan, accompanied by a heavy fall in the apartment adjoining and on appearing there found Mona in a dead faint on the floor, her hand clutching the lace at her throat as if in agony. Tenderly Bertram placed her on the couch, and the maid, who had come in answer to the mother's ring, began applying restora-

tives. It was a long time before she regained consciousness. She finally opened her eyes, and as they fell on Bertram she gave utterance to a hard and bitter laugh.

"Why don't you heap reproaches on my head for the deception I practiced on you?" she asked, harshly.

He did not say a word. He only sat looking at her with a half-pitying expression on his face.

"You'll never marry me now," she said hungrily. "You hate and despise me, don't you?"

"No, Mona, I do not hate you. But"—

"You'll never marry me, so it is all the same. Now, listen to me. There is such a thing as a woman's love being turned to hatred. I hate you just as truly as if you were the loathsome serpent that you are. Do you hear? Hate you! Hate you!"

"Mona, for God's sake, don't speak that way."

"It is true. I hate you! Bend down and let me whisper a few words to you." She seized the lapel of his coat as she whispered in his ear. The effect was magical.

Bertram started up, gasping for breath. The shirt he wore could not have been whiter than his face.

"My God Mona!" he gasped. "It is untrue. I never will believe it."

"It is true. I knew it all the time. She has been a prisoner for days, and no one knows her fate but me."

"It is false. Viola is dead. I saw her dead body three months ago."

"You did!" mockingly. "I don't see how that can be when you saw her alive and well the day she disappeared from the home of old Quimby, the banker."



"My God, Mona! Do you mean to say that they are one and the same? Now I understand why my heart should cling to both of them. Mona, for pity's sake, tell me where my darling is."

This mentioning of his affection for the girl she hated so cordially seemed to madden the girl.

"I will never tell you where she is—never," she cried, fiercely. "You must be mad to think I will give my rival into your arms to triumph over me, after all my scheming. Have you never heard those expressive words: 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned?'"

"Just Heaven! I cannot, WILL not believe that one so beautiful can be so false."

"Can't you? Well, just listen while I tell you how false I've been. See if a woman can't do or be anything for love and vengeance. When I found out that you really loved that pauper girl, Viola, I was determined to part you. So I wrote a letter to her, imitating your writing, telling her that you had been flirting with her and that you loved me, and that you were always to meet as strangers. She, poor little fool, believed that it was from you, and fled from her old home. The afternoon you saw her on horseback I was standing about forty feet from you, and I saw the effect it had upon you. By careful inquiry I managed to find out where she lived, and how came she there. Knowing that you would not rest until you saw her, I determined to remove her from your path. Fate favored me. That same afternoon something happened that saved me further trouble. That threw little Viola into my clutches, and there she'll stay, for nobody shall ever know her fate. Prison, tor-

tures, the rack, wild horses could not drag the secret from me."

There was a hollow groan behind them and Bert-ram turned, and he had just time enough to put out his hand and save Mrs. Hawthorne from falling heavily to the floor. She having had occasion to leave the room had returned unperceived, and had heard

## CHAPTER XXI.

## Burglars Break In On Mrs. Smith And Viola.

Mrs. Smith's presence of mind did not desert her for an instant. When the very first blow was struck on the frail partition, she knew that she had to act, and act quickly. So, seizing the girl by the arms, she shoved her under the stairs which they had just descended. She was just preparing to follow herself when the angry men began pouring into the passage.

Heaven only knows what would have happened if their anger had not given way to surprise. At sight of the woman, the men involuntarily halted, and stared at her aghast. They were so sure it was a man. They soon became repossessed with anger and made a combined rush toward her.

"A female detective! Slit her gullet!"

"Hold!"

The effect was electrical. The command rang out like a clarion. They were accustomed to obeying that voice when it was heard. And this occasion was no exception to the rule. The chief advanced, and turning to the men, said:

"Do not injure the woman yet."

"But, chief," they all remonstrated, "we've just sworn to kill all spies at sight."

"That's it," answered the chief. "But is she a spy? Do not injure her yet. We'll carry her into the den and question her. If she does not give a satisfactory reason for being here, why, she'll die, that's all."

Viola, under the steps, heard these terrible words with bated breath. She knew the woman would never tell why she was there, and the result would be death. A cold sweat broke out over her at the thought

of this innocent woman dying at the hands of these cowardly assassins. So she made up her mind then and there that it should not be. If she could only slip out when they were not looking, she could hurry and get assistance. They had hurried the woman into the room, the chief bringing up the rear. Viola stooped to come from under the steps when a nail projecting from one of the boards caught her shawl and tore it, making the noise that cloth generally does when being torn. The chief heard the noise and turning before Viola could draw her head back, saw her.

"I will be with you directly, men."

So saying, he drew his revolver and lifting the mask from his face, that he might see better, came up to Viola's hiding place.

"You had just as well come out," he said, when he reached the stairs.

Receiving no answer and no movement being made about complying, he reached his hand under the narrow steps, seized her by the wrist and pulled her out.

"Let me go!" she cried, as though her heart would break, trying hard to conceal her features by wrapping the shawl about her face.

"None of that. You might as well stop resisting. It will be"—

He stopped. For he had torn the shawl from her face, and Viola stood revealed, alive and in the flesh.

Arnold Campbell, for (as our reader has long suspected) it was he, started back, his revolver dropping from his nerveless grasp. His face was very pale, and the distending of his eyes, which seemed to start from their sockets, showed that he was gazing at the girl in abject terror. For a full minute he stood look-

ing stupidly at her. Finally he said, in a husky whisper:

"You! Viola Dunkirk! I thought you were dead!"

"I wish I were," groaned the poor girl. "Oh! I wish I were. Father in Heaven let me die!"

The man had now fully recovered from the shock of the meeting, and he saw the necessity of getting her out of the way before any of his pals saw her. So, taking her by the arm, he said:

"Come along with me."

"I will not—I will scream for help."

He stooped and picked up his pistol and pointed it at her, while an angry gleam shot into his eyes, and said:

"If you do not come with me without any trouble I will kill you where you stand."

Viola like the most of women was mortally afraid of a pistol and it proved more of a persuader than anything else that could have been done.

"Don't! Don't point it at me!" covering her face with her hands that she might not see it. "I will do as you say. I will go with you, indeed I will."

"Very well, then, come on."

He led her along the long passage until they came to a door. He took a key from his pocket and inserting it in the door, opened it. Then he led her across a room to another door through which they passed. Then they ascended a flight of stairs and entered another room that was furnished just like the one in which she had been previously imprisoned. And but for its being larger, she would have thought that she was in the same room.

"Now, Viola, my darling," he said, after fastening

the door. "I am pleased to see you. I had given you up for dead. But I find you still in the land of the living and as pretty as ever; aye, as a picture."

She made no answer. She simply sat with her hands covering her face, a picture of heart-broken despair.

"You see, my darling," he said, going up to her and laying his hand caressingly on her shoulder. "That I love you is no mistake. Why not accept my love? There is no use of kicking against fate. I have you in my power. Why don't you surrender?"

Why, indeed? She realized that it was useless to resist him longer. It seemed as if fate was against her—that it was ordained that she should be this man's wife. She shuddered at the thought of it. But she saw no way to escape him. She had been so hopeful that through the efforts of Mrs. Smith she would be reunited with her loved ones. But now the good woman was a prisoner, and her last hope was shattered. Why not end it all—as she could not die—by marrying this man. Probably he would not molest her further, after she was his, and then she could go home to her people, explain it all, and afterwards lay down and die. The thought kept growing upon her until she decided to act upon it. So when Arnold put his hand upon her shoulder, she did not shrink from him. He noticed this, and the thought that she was about to give in sent the blood flowing through his veins like molten metal.

"Oh, my darling! My sweet love. Why don't you be my wife?" he asked, passionately clasping her to his throbbing heart, and pouring a flood of kisses on her hair, cheeks and lips. "I love you, Viola. No man would do any more for you than I. My love for

you is honorable and honest. I will make you the best kind of a husband simply because I adore you. Be my wife, Viola, be my wife!"

She lay passively against his breast, neither repulsing nor responding to his caresses. Her whole soul revolted at the idea of a union with this man, who was a thief and a murderer in intent, if not in reality. But that was the only way out of the difficulty. As she lay in his arms the face of her first love arose before her, and with a bitter sob she released herself.

"Good-bye, Bertram," she said, in an agony of despair. "Good-bye. We were never made for each other. We must part now and forever. Henceforth our ways lay apart."

"What do you mean?" began the villain, his face lighting up with hope. "Do you mean that you will consent?"

"Yes," she said, in a voice choked with anguish, "I will be your wife."

## CHAPTER XXII.

## Viola Consents—Arnold Delighted.

The man could scarcely believe the evidence of his ears. Had this determined, self-willed girl consented to be his wife? He could not understand it. He had expected to frighten her into marriage at the muzzle of his pistol. But now of her own free will she had consented.

He was almost wild with delight. He strained her to his breast, and almost smothered her with kisses. When his passion had somewhat subsided, he said:

"Viola, dearest, you must not think I am too bad. Everything is fair in love and war, you know."

"Not too bad! A man that will plan robbery. A leader of a gang of robbers. A counterfeiter and not too bad!" These thoughts shot through her brain like lightning, but she refrained from uttering them, and simply asked:

"You'll give me a little time before you—that is, before we do this thing?"

His face fell. Time! What did she want with time? Did she want to think of her situation, and then change her mind? Or worse, was she expecting aid from the outside? Both of these thoughts were rather unpleasant, and he determined to have the thing over as soon as possible.

"I will give you until to-morrow night. At ten o'clock I will have a minister here. How does that suit?"

"Oh! thank you, thank you." That suits very well," said the poor girl, glad of that little respite before her terrible ordeal.

"And there is something else," she continued.



"After we are married you will not molest me—that you will not be troubled very much to go your way and allow me to go mine."

"Oh! Certainly not. All I want is to possess you—to know that you are mine," he replied, quite willing that she should make terms now, but determined that he should take the reins in his own hands when they were married.

"Thank you," said the girl. "Now leave me, if you please." And he did so.

\* \* \* \* \*

We must now take a look at one whom we have almost forgotten in our interest in the fortunes and misfortunes of our heroine. It was weeks after Bessie's rescue that she was able to be up and about. When she finally recovered she realized the necessity of finding employment. After days of discouraging failures she finally obtained employment as saleslady in one of the big department stores at the drygoods counter. She became encouraged at this and worked steadily in the place without any mishap for three months. In the meantime Bessie had taken up her abode in another portion of the city with a kind-hearted, motherly lady, and she was beginning to feel almost happy. Late one afternoon, when she was sitting on the piazza of the cottage, enjoying the cool breeze blowing from the river and watching the sunset, a carriage drove up to the house next to her. She would simply have given it a passing glance if it were not for the sight of someone whom she thought she recognized sitting within. The face of the person was turned in another direction, so that

he did not see her. When the carriage stopped he stepped out. Bessie looked more closely and grew pale to the lips, gave a gasp, and springing to her feet dodged behind a honeysuckle vine. As the man turned his face toward her, she recognized the face of the person as that of her husband. He did not stop, but passed hastily up the steps and rang the bell. The door was opened and he passed in. Bessie wondered what he wanted there. She knew that that was the home of a minister, and she could not think what he wanted with one except—and at once she thought of what he had told her about his love for another young girl came to her, and she felt she almost knew that he had come to engage a minister to perform the ceremony. She did not know what course to pursue. Only one thought forced itself into her excited brain—she must save the girl. But how? Should she go to the police? She saw that it would be useless. If they were to ask her how she knew he was going to marry, what could she tell them? So deeply was she thinking that she did not realize the flight of time until she heard that well-known voice say to the minister, who had followed him out on the piazza:

“At half-past nine the carriage will be here. At half-past nine, sure.”

“Very well, sir. I shall be ready,” came the answer.

“Half-past nine! Half-past nine! Hark!”

The clock is chiming nine now. She has only half an hour in which to think. What should she do? What could she do? For fully ten minutes she stood still, trying to think of some way to save the girl. Like an inspiration came a plan. And darting in the

hall she flew up the stairs like a flash, and soon returned, wearing a black dress and veil. Taking a dark hat from the rack she ran down the steps and opened the gate just as the hack drove up to the next door. At the same moment an old man came along the sidewalk going in the opposite direction. He stopped and gave her a scrutinizing glance and turned and looked at the vehicle, and without a word passed on his way. Bessie was annoyed at the man's curious actions, and waited to see him out of sight. The man was evidently not thinking of her, for he crossed the street and disappeared around the corner. Then Bessie closed the gate softly and gliding up to the hack like a shadow, disappeared under it. The next moment the minister came down the steps and entered the carriage, and they were all whirled swiftly away.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## Bessie's Ride.

One could imagine the flurry Bessie was in, and her many thoughts.

Away went the hack, flying over the hard asphalt streets like the wind. But Bessie, curled up among the springs, clung to them with all the tenacity of life and death. She did not know in which direction they were going, but she knew by the scarcity of lamps and by the balmy breeze that they were on the country road, somewhere near the river. After about half an hour's ride they stopped, and she, from her hiding place, saw the minister get out and start toward the house. She just had time to drop down in the road when the driver cracked his whip and the carriage dashed off. She lay curled up on the ground and saw the minister go up to the door and knock, and after a few moments he was admitted. By the dim light in the room she recognized the person who admitted him as her husband. Then she arose to her feet and stood looking at the house in perplexity. What should she do?

She did not see a figure standing behind a tree about twenty feet from her, gazing at her with an eager light in his eyes. She walked swiftly up to the house, hoping that fate would throw some opportunity in her way by which she could enter the house. The figure behind the tree stepped from his hiding place and noiselessly glided after her. She walked around the house until she came to the back door. All at once it opened, and she had just time enough to dodge behind the corner when she saw an old woman, almost bent double, with a repulsive-looking

face, come out of the door, down the steps and hobble toward the stable.

Bessie's heart beat with joy as she noticed that the woman did not lock the door. As soon as the woman disappeared she came from her place of concealment and approached the door. The unseen figure all the time kept the same distance from her. She put her hand on the knob and turned it. The door flew open and she stepped across the threshold. Before she could close the door a sudden gust of wind blew out the light and she was in total darkness. She closed the door however, and began feeling her way toward the place where she had last seen another door. She found it and opening it passed through. She stopped still and listened, and after a moment the sound of voices was borne to her ears from a room on the left. Looking up the passage from whence the voices came she saw a single ray of light shooting out from a keyhole. Eagerly she went toward it, and reaching the door she knelt by the side of the keyhole and listened.

\* \* \* \* \*

Poor Viola, when she was left alone stood where she was for twenty minutes at least. Finally, with a weary sigh, she cast herself down upon the iron cot. Not to weep. Oh, no! she was past weeping, poor girl. But to think. Lying there, she began to think over her past life, from the time she left school, a happy, hopeful girl. How, although poor, she was free from care. These were her every thought until the first blow in the form of her father's death came. Then how happy she had been working for her poor, invalid mother. Then she thought of the time when

she had first met Bertram Heathcourt. How bright and beautiful her life had been. And all the time her real trouble was forming in a dark cloud above her head, ready to burst and overwhelm her. Why had they ever met? Why? Why? What had it ever brought her beyond that little dream of happiness? And now—Heaven help her—she was about to be united to this man—united for life. The very thought of it was the embodiment of everything loathsome and repugnant. What was her life worth now? Nothing—absolutely nothing! What hope had she of ever being happy again? None.

With a miserable moan of heartache she turned on her pillow and had soon forgotten her troubles in a deep, dreamless sleep.

The next day passed as miserably as the night. About ten o'clock the old woman came to bring her breakfast. Viola's head was resting on her hand, and as the woman turned to go Viola noticed that the woman was looking at her in a very peculiar manner. Following the direction of her eyes she saw that she was looking at the diamond ring on her finger. A faint ray of hope dawned in her heart as she thought that probably this woman could be bribed into releasing her.

She arose and approached the woman.

"You were looking at my ring?" she asked.

"Who said so?"

"No one. Only I thought you liked it, and would like to have it."

The woman's eyes glittered avariciously, but she did not reply.

"Would you like to have it?"

"Mebbe so."

"Well, if you will release me," she said, eagerly, "I will give it to you."

But to this the woman gave no answer.

"If that is not enough," she continued, her face flushing with hope, as she saw the woman's silence, and thought she might be won over to her side "I will add this to it," going down in her pocket and pulling out her watch. And when I get home I will give you five hundred dollars besides."

The woman smiled a sarcastic smile as she said:

"It ain't no use, miss. I know that you haven't got that much to your name. Mr. Arnold said so. He said you was a poor lacemaker, and if you is, how is yer going to give me five hundred dollars?"

Viola's heart sank, and tears of disappointment started to her eyes.

"Indeed, I am rich, and I will do as I say. I have just been adopted by rich people, and if you release me they will remunerate you."

"I don't believe a word on it. Say, miss, if they're so rich, why don't they do somethin' about findin' you? I know there's detectives 'nough in Washin'ton to find a needle in a haystack. Why hasn't they found you, eh?"

Viola saw that the woman was not to be convinced and with a last wail of despair, cried:

"Oh! My good woman, for pity's sake, for Heaven's sake, release me. Surely you could not stand by quietly and see one of your own sex in sore trouble and not come to her assistance. No woman could do that."

"I am sorry, miss, but I can't do you no good. Why, you doesn't know nothin'. Mr. Arnold would kill me if I was to loose you. I couldn't think o'

such a thing. Not by no manner of means," said the old woman, earnestly. After which she went out and closed and locked the door.

The hands of Viola's watch pointed to ten o'clock. Viola, paler than usual, heard the noise of a carriage drive up to the door of the house. In a few minutes the minister entered, preceded by Arnold Campbell, who was in his most factitious mood.

"Well, my dear, you see we are on time and have not been guilty of causing you what every woman hates—under the circumstances—to be kept waiting. Are you ready, my love?"

Without a word she arose and put the tips of her fingers on his arm, and the ceremony began, which progressed very nicely until the clergyman asked:

"If there be any one present who can give reason why this couple should not be united, let them speak now, or hereafter forever hold your peace."

The would-be bridegroom involuntarily glanced around, but no one having spoken, the minister continued: Arnold Campbell, he proceeded, "will you have this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, etc?" "I will," he answered. "Viola Dunkirk, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, etc?" "I will," she said faintly. But imagination leads us to believe that she said "high hill."

"I pronounce you"—

"Hold on! Stop! Great Heavens! I object to this marriage. It is nothing more nor less than a sacrilege."



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## Arnold Attempts Bigamy—Wife Objects.

The objection to the marriage fell upon the trio like an exploding bomb, and the effect upon each was different. The minister with surprise and annoyance. Viola with hope and joy. Arnold Campbell with—well, no one knows what the emotion or emotions with which he gazed at that slim, pale figure standing in the doorway, pointing her finger at him in condemnation, and lifting a pair of big accusing eyes at him—the figure of his wronged wife, Bessie. Had he been confronted by a ghost he could not have been paler or more rigid.

"Bessie! Alive!" was all that he could say.

"I pronounce this marriage a sacrilege, and forbid it to proceed any further."

"Why, my dear woman?" asked the minister, seriously.

"Because that man has a wife living."

"It's a lie!" gulped the baffled villain.

"Has a wife living?" said the minister. "That is a serious matter. How do you know he has a wife living?"

"Because I am his wife."

The minister frowned as the words rang out clear and firm.

Viola uttered a glad cry and burst into tears of joy.

Arnold stood pale and still as a statue. He could not utter a word. His tongue seemed paralyzed.

"Can you prove what you say, my good woman? Have you a certificate?"

Bessie faltered for a moment. In her previous excitement she had forgotten all about the certificate

of marriage, the only proof that would be accepted to verify her statement.

"He is my husband, sir," said she, falteringly, "and he has my marriage certificate."

Arnold, who had witnessed his victim slowly slipping through his fingers, in a paroxysm of rage and hate, suddenly brightened up.

"That woman must be mad," he said. "I have seen her often enough, but never had anything to do with her. You see, she cannot prove what she says to be true."

"It is true," said Bessie. "Oh, sir! don't let that wicked man wrong this lovely young girl. He cannot marry her. I am his wife."

"Ha! Ha!" he laughed jeeringly. "You cannot prove anything."

"Can you prove that you are this man's lawfully wedded wife, my good woman?" again asked the minister.

"No, sir. I can only give you my word."

"I can prove that she's his wife, if she cannot," came from the doorway, and they again wheeled about to face a newcomer.

He was a man of seemingly fifty years old, medium height and rather stout. His hair and beard were long and gray. On his nose rested a pair of glasses, and he carried a heavy cane in his hand. Bessie recognized him in spite of his glasses as the same man she had passed at her gate before leaving home.

Arnold looked at him menacingly and said:

"Who are you, you old duffer?"

"I am," said the man, in a muffled voice, "the avenger of this (pointing to Bessie) young girl's sufferings and wrongs."

"Well, sir," said the minister, "are you prepared to prove that this young woman is the wife of this young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, where is your proof, sir?"

"There it is," going into his pocket and bringing out a folded paper. "Here is Mrs. Campbell's marriage certificate."

Bessie uttered a glad cry as she caught sight of that precious document, and sprang eagerly forward, taking it from him and kissed it, and pressed it to her bosom, while tears flowed freely from her eyes.

Campbell, on realizing that he had been foiled, sprang forward with a cry like that of a wounded animal and clutched the old man by the throat. He expected to have a picnic in throttling the old man, but it seemed as if the old man objected to taking a part in the feast, for with a quick motion of his muscular arm he threw off Arnold's grasp and catching him by the collar he shook him until his teeth chattered. The old man seemed well preserved, and his joints very firm, as he danced around like a whirlwind. With a quick sweep of his feet, he tripped Arnold's legs from under him, and before the baffled villain realized what had happened, he found his wrists securely encircled by a pair of steel "darbies."

"Who are you, man?" gasped Arnold.

"Who am I?" quizzically echoed the old man.

"Yes, who are you? What right have you to commit this outrage?"

"By the right of the law," sternly. "Man, I am Dick Turpin, the detective."

With a groan the prostrate villain closed his eyes. He had fainted outright.

Turning to the wondering lookers on the man said:

"You would like to know how I came in possession of Mrs. Campbell's marriage certificate. Well, it can be told in a few words. One night I had occasion to go to a wharf, as a gang of river pirates were becoming very troublesome. While standing on the pier in one of the unused freight houses, waiting for some sign of the pirates, I saw this young lady come onto the wharf. I was curious to see what she intended to do. At first I thought she contemplated suicide, but after she had been waiting quite a time, I changed my mind. So busily engaged in watching her that I did not see the approach of another party until that whelp had struck her to the water. By a flash of lightning that broke upon the scene at the same time I recognized both parties. So horrified was I that I could not repress a groan as I saw her disappear over the side of the pier. That scoundrel must have heard it, for he turned and fled from the place as if pursued by a legion of fiends. I came to the side of the pier, hoping to see some sign of the girl. After a moment I heard her call for help and I soon had her safe ashore. I carried her to the house of an old colored man, to whom I had once rendered service, and I knew that he would protect her with his life. The next day when I called to see her she was sick, but the old negro came to me and handed me a parcel, saying that he had gone down to his boat, which lay under the pier, that morning, and had found the parcel. He wanted me to see whom it was for, as he could not read, so that he might give it to the owner. I took charge of it and instructed the man not to say anything about it. I opened the parcel,

and found that it was a marriage certificate. I resolved to keep it, as it would enable me to spring a trap on the villain when he least expected it. Everything went well until to-night, when I met this young lady at her gate. I recognized her and seeing the carriage standing so close by, I thought there was something wrong. So I passed on and crossing the street, hid behind a tree and saw her crawl among the springs of the vehicle. It happened that the carriage passed by me, and I had no trouble in springing up behind it, and we all rode out together. The rest you know."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## Villain Pleads For Mercy.

By this time Arnold had regained consciousness and as he realized that his race was run, he began to whine for mercy, but it had no effect on the stony-hearted detective.

After a while Viola spoke.

"Oh, sir, that man has made a good woman, who was with me, a prisoner. Make him tell you where she is, and release her."

That was not hard to do. Arnold seemed, on account of his defeat, to be all down and out, and readily told where she was. Soon Mrs. Smith was clasped in the arms of her friends.

When they had become quiet the detective stepped out and gave a shrill whistle. In an instant a man appeared.

"Hurry to town, Fitch," said the detective, "and get the patrol wagon."

In an incredibly short space of time the patrol wagon arrived.

"Well," said the detective, "we are all here and as our business is completed here, we might as well vacate."

They all reached the city safely, and by the request of the detective, all save the minister remained in quarters prepared by him. He had a hard time to persuade Viola to remain overnight.

"I cannot remain," she said. "My father and mother are anxious about me, and besides"—

She did not finish, but a deep flush completed the statement.

"Oh! He is all right," said the detective, in his bluff, hearty manner. "You need have no fear on that score."

"But," she said, shyly, dropping her eyes. "You do not understand that he is to be married to that woman to-morrow, and I must try and prevent that."

"You need not be uneasy," said Mr. Turpin. "I will attend to things all right, and besides, if I did not it would be just the same. The engagement between them is off. I want to see you with rosy cheeks when I come in the morning. You are very pale now."

He did not know that it was a rush of happiness that had made her pale, and what a struggle she had to keep from fainting outright from excess of joy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bertram Heathcourt, in spite of the blight that had fallen upon him, was happier as he rang the doorbell of the great banker, Mr. Quimby, on the succeeding morning, than he had been for months. As soon as he was admitted he inquired for the banker. Mr. Quimby was looking very ill. His steps were growing feeble and he was becoming morose and thoughtful, in strong contrast with his once buoyant step and hearty, jolly air. Although he had no news for Bertram, that did not quench the ardor of his hopefulness. After the usual greeting, Bertram confided his secret to the old banker and you may be sure that the old gentleman was as pleased as he was surprised. He heartily sympathized with the young man and made up his mind that he would redouble his efforts to find his daughter.

Bertram was very hopeful that his lost love would be restored to him. Not so with the banker. He had begun to lose all patience with the detective. The man had had the case long enough to bring it to a successful issue. Instead of which he had not even put in an appearance. So he and Bertram decided to go and see him this morning, and if he had made no progress on the case, to take it from him. They found the detective enveloped in a pile of papers, as usual. He greeted the gentlemen cordially, and after exchanging greetings, took from his pocket a cigar case and offered its contents to the gentlemen.

"I did not come here," said Mr. Quimby, testily, "to indulge in luxuries. I want to know what you've done in the case you've had so long?"

There was a twinkle in the gray eyes of the detective, as he said:

"Oh, yes! The case. By Jove!"

Mr. Quimby's brow darkened.

"Is it possible that you have forgotten all about it? What kind of a man are you? You've had the case five or six days, and promised to let me hear from you soon and now you've actually forgotten all about it."

The detective could hardly keep from laughing outright as he watched the exasperated old man walking up and down the floor.

"The fact is, Mr. Quimby, business has been so brisk that"—

"Brisk fiddlesticks!" said the old man, angrily. "I asked you plainly whether you were able to undertake the case, and you said you were. If you were too busy, why did you not say so and I could have engaged someone else, and thus saved valuable time. 'I'll have you discharged from the force, sir!'"



"Well, Mr. Quimby," said Turpin, his manner changing. "I have not wasted valuable time, and if you will call here at two o'clock I will show you that I have not."

The old man wended his way home disconsolate enough. Not so with young Heathcourt. His heart beat high with hope.

## A Happy Meeting.

Love had sharpened Bertram's glance, and he had noticed something in the detective's eye, unnoticed by the banker, that made him think that the detective had not been altogether unsuccessful. And for that reason he was very hopeful in consequence.

That afternoon about one o'clock Mr. Turpin went to the place where he had left the women. He soon had them transferred to his office. At two o'clock sharp the banker and Heathcourt entered. The two women were behind the screen, and as she heard the old man ask: "Well, now, what progress have you made toward finding my daughter?" she could hardly refrain from running out and kissing him.

"I find that your daughter disappeared on the ninth instant."

"Well, everybody in the city knows that."

"Yes; but everybody doesn't know what became of her."

At this instant the office boy entered and handed the detective a despatch.

The detective, who had been standing, on reading it turned white as a corpse, and dropped toward his chair. Falling into it he covered his face with his hands. The two men looked on in wonder.

"Are you ill, Mr. Turpin?" asked the banker, anxiously, and his voice took on its natural gentleness, in strange contrast to its former sharpness.

In answer the detective handed him the despatch. It read:

"Your prisoner has escaped justice. When I went my rounds I found him hanging from the bars of his

cell with a silk handkerchief around his neck. He is dead.

"Crowley,

"Warden of the Fourth District Jail."

The banker read the telegram and looked at the man in surprise. It seemed as if a prisoner of his had committed suicide, but there was nothing in that to have such an effect upon any man. It did indeed seem strange. Here was a man who was as bold and fearless as a lion, who daily came in contact with criminals of the worst sort. Here he was trembling like an aspen and as weak as a child, at having received the news of a villain's suicide. What did it mean? What could it mean?

The detective partially recovered his self-control, and said:

"Mr. Quimby, I will not quiz you any further. I will tell you all that I have accomplished."

And he told the banker all that had happened from the time that the case had been given to him for investigation.

"And you really know my daughter's whereabouts?" cried the banker, joyfully, while the young man began to tremble with excitement.

"Yes; she is in this city; in this neighborhood; in this house; this very room."

Both men sprang to their feet as Viola, pale, but with a glad light in her eyes, came from behind the screen, followed by Bessie.

Here the curtain closes on the meeting of father and daughter, and between lovers. Suffice it to say that explanations followed, and the crooked path was made straight, the rough way smoother.

When everything had become partially quiet after

the first excitement of the meeting, the detective found himself confronted with the most trying ordeal of his life.

Mrs. Smith had confided to him her secret, and now the denouement was in order. He arose, and making a vigorous effort to clear his throat, said:

"Mr. Heathcourt, do you ever remember having seen your mother?" Do you know what she was like?"

The young man's face showed a blush, but he answered bravely:

"No, sir; I do not. My mother was very unfortunate, and we were separated before I was large enough to remember her."

"Have you ever heard of her? Do you know whatever became of her?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Turpin," said Bertram, again blushing, but speaking with dignity. "I would rather not speak of my poor mother. As I said before, she was very unfortunate, and as she is dead, I shall hold her memory sacred from the intrusion of strangers."

"Dead!" said the detective, in a peculiar way. "How do you know she is dead? Have you any evidence of her death?"

Bertram turned pale, and gave the man a keen glance.

"No, I have no evidence beyond my uncle's dying statement. He said that she was dead."

"Has it ever occurred to you that he might have been mistaken about her death?" asked the man, with the same mysterious look. "Such things have happened."

His manner rather than his words struck on the young man strangely, and he arose to his feet now, his suspicions fully aroused.

"Man, you know something, and are afraid to speak of it. What is it?"

"I thought probably your mother may be alive and wishes to see you, and"—

"What do you mean? If you know anything why don't you tell it?"

"What would you think if your mother were to walk out on this floor alive and well? What would you think?"

"Great God!" he muttered. "What is it you are saying? For Heaven's sake, tell me. Do you know anything of my mother? My mother alive! And we reunited after twenty-five years of separation! You must be mad! And yet—do you know anything of her? Is she alive?"

There was a long pause, and then the detective answered solemnly:

"She is alive and well, and waiting to clasp you to her bosom."

Bertram stood stock still. His face was almost ashen in its paleness. His arms were folded across his heaving bosom. After a silence, during which time he could hear his own heart beat, yet standing as firm and steady as a marble statue, he said, almost in a whisper:

"Alive! Alive! My poor, wronged mother alive! Oh, God! I thank Thee with my whole soul. Where is she? Take me to her!"

And for the first time while she was present he seemed to have forgotten all about Viola—forgot her very existence.

The detective stepped back to the screen and moved it aside, and there, sitting on a lounge, with a happy, angelic light in her eyes, an expectant blush

on her face, was the almost strange, but dearly loved mother. The next instant they were clasped in each other's arms. Mother and son were reunited.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## Excitement Over.

The excitement was all over. Everything had been proven to the satisfaction of all parties. The natural instincts of Bertram's heart had claimed this woman for his mother and besides that, there was found around her neck an old gold necklace with the miniature of Doris Heathcourt and her husband, given to her by him when they were a young and happy couple. On her finger she still wore her wedding ring, upon the inside of which was engraved: "From F. to D., June 14th, 1859."

A month had elapsed since the events narrated in the previous chapter. Bessie was living with Viola as companion. Viola had returned to her father and mother at home and Bertram had taken his mother home to the Park. Bertram, with all the impetuosity of a young lover, had told the banker that he must have Viola for his wife immediately. Viola and the old gentleman had remonstrated and tried to induce the young man to be patient, but all in vain. Reasoning was not one of his prominent qualities where his love was concerned. They had spoken of preparations for the trousseau, and other things preparatory to the marriage. Bertram had decided and declared that he did not want any preparations made, nor a great "show" of his marriage. He said also that his mother was very lonely and that they must consent for her sake.

Viola had shown Bertram that she had a will of her own by positively refusing to marry him immediately. For she had said with great dignity that it was the duty of the gentleman to permit the young

lady to name the day, and not to force her into a marriage before she was ready. With a twinkle in her eyes, she said:

"If your mother is very lonely, I will consent to become your wife in a month."

The young man, seeing how determined she was, had to be satisfied. The conclusion reached caused Bertram to send workmen by the score to the Park, where preparations were soon ready for the great event.

Finally the auspicious day arrived. The morning dawned, clear, bright and pleasant. At ten o'clock the ceremony was to take place.

Viola was up with the lark and going to the window threw it up. With smiles of joy on her beautiful face, uplifted toward Heaven, she clasped her hands and gave thanks to God that He had blessed her in this, the one hope of her life. She then dressed and calling for her horse took a brisk gallop before breakfast. Half-past nine finds her surrounded by a bevy of pretty girls, all her most intimate friends. They are laughing and chatting gayly. Just then Mrs. Quimby put her head in at the door and said she never gazed upon a more picturesque scene.

Viola noticed the wistful look in her eyes, and she knew that the kind-hearted old lady wanted to spend the last few minutes with the girl who was as dear to her as her own child.

So Viola requested them to let her have a few words with her, and after giving her an affectionate kiss they all filed out of the room. Soon the sound of carriage wheels reached their ears and Mrs. Quimby arises and says:

"Well, my daughter, you are about to leave me.



Have I been good to you? Have you been happy here?"

"How can you ask such a question?" inquired Viola, her eyes filling with reproachful tears. "I could not have been happier were you my own mother. I could not have loved you more."

"My darling daughter!" ardently exclaimed the dear lady. And she put her hands on the girl's head and by the closing of her eyes and the movements of her lips, Viola knew that she was giving her a blessing.

The bridal party was assembled. The few invited friends are all standing in pretty groups around the principals.

"They make a very handsome couple." So says everyone.

Bertram wore the conventional groom costume, and he never looked handsomer or happier. Viola was the subject of admiration. Her dress was a triumph of the modiste's art. It was truly exquisite in its absolute simplicity. It was made of white satin, with draperies of white silk. The décolleté corsage was finished at the neck with a border of fine white French lilacs. She wore a wreathed veil and other beautiful trimmings. The only ornament worn by her was a necklace consisting of three rows of pearls, and in her hand she carried a beautiful bouquet of white roses. She carried herself with a grace and charm of manner that was indescribable. There was not a touch of awkwardness, but an easy self-possession, which was as charming as it was unusual in one so young. During the hush which had fallen over the party, and amidst chants of music from the organ, the minister began and completed the ceremony.

And now Viola Dunkirk was the beloved wife of Bertram Heathcourt.

They drove away amidst a shower of rice and slippers, the latter being thrown by Mr. Quimby himself. And may they continue to be as happy as now!

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## Bessie Consents.

As has been stated Bessie had been the companion of Viola since the latter's rescue. All the remonstrances of Bessie could not make Viola change her decision that after her marriage Bessie should come to the Park and continue to live there, and as Bertram so earnestly voiced the sentiment, Bessie consented.

Viola and Bertram both sympathized with the poor girl. They knew that she had suffered and they did all they could to make her happy.

The detective, too, seemed to take a great interest in the girl. He had advised her to go to her parents and tell them all, and he was sure they would forgive her and take her back to their hearts. But when he had told her to do this, she had shrunk from him as if he had cut her with a lash.

"Oh! no, no! I could never go to them with my wrecked life, and then, too, I know that they would never forgive me. Never! It will soon be all over. Don't you see that I am getting thinner and thinner every day? Mr. Turpin, I am slowly but surely dying."

The detective started and exclaimed huskily:

"For God's sake, don't speak so! I cannot bear it. If anything of the kind should occur it would kill me. I—I could not bear it. I—"

And he stopped and turning abruptly, left her alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two whole months have elapsed since Mrs. Hawthorne heard the confession of her daughter's sin from her own lips. She had been conveyed to her room and never left it. Before the expiration of three weeks she was a dead woman.

Bertram did not hear the account of her death until after the funeral. When he heard of it he went to call on Mona to see if he could render any service, and found that she had gone.

She had gone. She had disappeared as effectually as if the earth had swallowed her into its bowels, and further search failed to reveal anything of her whereabouts.

Time passed on. If every other person had forgotten Mona, Viola had not. Somehow she could not get rid of the impression that she had not seen the last of her, and the correctness of the impression was proven sooner than she expected.

One night Bessie had complained of a severe headache and retired early. Viola, with her usual solicitude, went to Bessie's room before she retired to her own. She took some smelling salts and taking a seat beside the head of the sick girl, held the salts to her nose and gently stroked her forehead with her soft, white hand.

Under the soothing touches of her soft and experienced hand the girl began to feel better, and soon dropped to sleep. Viola, seeing the effect of her work, gently left the room and retired. But strange as it may seem, as soon as Viola had left the room, Bessie's illness seemed to return with redoubled force. She tossed on her pillow for an hour, trying to sleep, but could not. Finally she arose, and putting on a wrapper, began pacing the floor. It seemed to have no better effect and in despair Bessie went to

the window, threw it up, thinking that the cool air would make her feel better and refreshed.

"What was that?"

She could have sworn that she saw a dark-robed figure skulking along in the shrubbery. No, it was all a fancy of—no, there it is again, sneaking along as if it did not desire to be seen. What did it mean? Bessie's first impulse was to arouse the house, but then she thought it might possibly be some servant who had been out for a time, and she had no desire to cause anyone trouble. She was sure it was a servant when she saw the figure turn in towards the servants' rooms and disappear behind the house. So she drew her chair beside the window and gave herself up to thought. Presently the clock on the mantel struck one. No sooner had the sound died away when another sound came to her ears. What was it? Nothing. Her imagination was playing pranks with her.

Hark! There it was again! She was sure she heard stealthy footsteps pass her door. She arose softly, and going to the door quietly opened it and peeped out.

Yes! There it was, the figure of a woman in black.

What did it mean? This was not the servants' part of the house and if she was a servant what did she want there? Did Bertram have any dishonest persons in his employ? What was she doing sneaking in this portion of the house?

Impelled by some force stronger than herself she noiselessly glided after her. She saw the woman pass swiftly along the hall and stop at Viola's door and after trying a few keys in the lock, opened it and passed in. Bessie was close at her heels. Viola al-

ways kept a lamp burning in her room on the center-table, and by its light Bessie could see Viola sleeping peacefully on her pillow with a smile on her red lips. Her golden hair was streaming over the pillow, and one hand rested under her head, while the other was lying on the coverlet, rivalling it in its whiteness. Bessie could also see a woman dressed in mourning, with a black veil drawn back from her dark face. Her lips were compressed into a cruel smile. The whole expression of her face was something terrible to see. In her hand Bessie's eye caught the glitter of something she could not see very plainly but instinctively she guessed that it was a dagger. Bessie stood as if paralyzed when the full force of the woman's intention dawned upon her. She could not scream. She could not move a finger. She looked at the proceedings of the woman as if fascinated. She saw the woman go to the lamp and turn it up full; then she saw her return to the side of the bed and gently pull back the coverlet and gaze long into the face of the sleeping girl, with an expression of fiendish hate on her face. Then the woman danced around as if in mad delight at the helplessness of her victim. She began to make gestures as if she was talking, explaining something. Raising her eyes to the ceiling, for about fifteen seconds she was quite still. Lowering her eyes, she slowly raised her right hand, in which gleamed a dagger. And the next instant Viola would have been in eternity, but before the weapon descended there came a piercing scream. The spell had been broken and springing to the bell cord Bessie gave it a violent tug. She had roused the house.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## Would-Be Murderer Falls To Death.

The woman turned with a stifled cry of fright and fled toward the door. Bessie had to go a little distance from the door in order to seize the bell cord, and before she could return to it, the woman had darted through and toward the staircase. Bessie gave chase and so close was she to her that she managed to catch the shawl from her shoulder. This caused the woman to redouble her efforts to escape, and she made a spurt forward and began lowering her veil. This proved the most disastrous thing she could have done. In lowering her veil it momentarily cut off her view ahead. Failing to see the marble statue just at the point where she was to turn to descend the stairs, resulted in her running against it with force enough to have killed some people. She was simply momentarily checked and started off again, but the statue had fallen directly across her path, and as she started forward she tripped. Struggling desperately to regain her equilibrium, she tripped again, falling headlong down the heavy oak stairs, bouncing from step to step, finally landing in a heap thirty feet below, with a sickening thud. Bessie stopped and covered her face with her hands in horror.

The servants began to arrive on the scene half-dressed, with terror-stricken faces.

"What is the trouble?" asked Bertram, who had just arrived. "What does it all mean?"

Bessie was trembling like an aspen, and could not speak from horror.

"Oh! Bessie! For Heaven's sake, tell us what it is!"

Bessie could only groan.

"Bessie! Bessie! My goodness, what has happened?" asked Mrs. Heathcourt, standing behind her children in terror.

"O, my God! She is dead! She is dead!" gasped Bessie, at last.

"What, dead? Just Heaven! Who is dead?"

For answer Bessie pointed to the place where the motionless figure lay. They all looked.

Bertram and Viola gave one glance, and instinctively looked into each other's face, and there they read the whole occurrence.

"Yes she is certainly dead," said one of the men servants, who, a little braver than the rest had gone and examined her.

"Poor girl," murmured Bertram, mingling his tears of sympathy with those of his wife, who was already weeping on his shoulder. "Poor, misguided Mona!"

Yes it was Mona, poor girl. Her mother's death seemed to have crazed her and she wandered from her home. When she recovered her reason a month later she found herself in a hospital in Richmond, Va. As soon as she was strong enough to leave it she resolved to go to Washington, D. C., and prosecute the one desire that had taken full possession of her entire soul—to revenge herself. She would kill the girl who had robbed her of her love. She would kill the man whom she had loved too well—whom she had loved with a love worthy of a better consideration. And lastly, she would kill herself.

She came to Washington with the result known.



Bertram, after notifying the authorities, and after the inquest had been held over the remains of Mona, had instructed the jurors not to give the facts in the case to the newspapers. They complied and the jury found a verdict that the deceased had met death by accidentally falling down stairs in the house of Bertram Heathcourt.

Bertram ordered the body buried at his expense, and placed in a plot in the Clairmount Cemetery, near the family vault of the Heathcourts.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two years have passed and Bessie is still at the Park. She is looking paler and growing thinner every day. So much so, in fact, that it has become quite noticeable to those with whom she daily came in contact.

Bertram and Viola have advised a change of air and scenery, but she would not hear of it. She had also refused to follow the advice of Mr. Turpin, and return to her parents, whom he was confident would forgive her. It seemed as if she was waiting for something. Every day she would look up eagerly when the mail arrived, and if there was anything for her, after reading it, she would sigh heavily, as if it was not from the one she expected. The days flew by into weeks, and weeks into months.

One day the detective drove to the Park with an expression of grim determination on his face. He inquired for Bessie, and when they were alone, in his quick but earnest manner and without any parleying, he began straightway to lay his heart at her feet.

"It breaks my heart to see you dying by inches

and nothing being done to save you. Be my wife, and let me shield your life from every storm. I will cherish it as the dearest thing ever given into my keeping. I love you. I have loved you longer than you know. What do you say? Will you be my wife?"

Now Bessie was in sore straits. She did not know herself. She felt a strange attraction for this man—a feeling of peace and safety in his very presence. She liked him well, not to say loved him, and yet how dearly she loved the memory of the absent Kent Howard.

It pained her to have discontinued a friendship which had been so agreeable. And she told him so.

"Mr. Turpin," she said, "I admire you very much. I also appreciate the honor you do me, by wishing to marry me, after my wrecked life. I do not know about love. In justice to you, I will tell you my heart as much as I know myself.

And she told him about the occurrence previous to her marriage. Of how much she liked him (Turpin), and how dearly she loved Kent, and also told him that the hope of seeing Kent Howard once more and hearing the words of forgiveness in her ears for the wrong she had done him, was the only thing that kept her alive.

Mr. Turpin, regardless of her love for Kent Howard, continued to press his claim. Finally Bessie consented, but before the day appointed for the marriage Bessie died, which was a crushing blow to the haughty Mr. Turpin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five years have elapsed. Two women are standing on the broad piazza at the Park admiring the beautiful sunset. It needs but one glance to tell that they are the two Mrs. Heathcourts. Mrs. Heathcourt, the elder, is still beautiful, although her brow is becoming wrinkled and her hair gray. Viola is almost the same Viola as of old, only she is becoming less fragile looking. Her superb form has in it now the fulness of matronhood, and her cheeks the same glow, her eyes the same sparkle as she gazes on the crimson sky as they had shown that afternoon on the cliff, when she was in such imminent danger.

Together the two women turned as the sun was sinking behind the western horizon, and walked along the piazza to the other side of the house, where they stopped to gaze at the pretty picture that their eyes beheld.

Seated in an easy chair is Bertram, handsome as ever, a tiger-skin rug under his feet, and he is dividing his attention between an old Virginia cheroot, a newspaper and a curly golden head peeping up between his knees.

Mrs. Bertram Heathcourt, while standing quietly by, gazing on, bent forward over the back of the chair in which was seated her love, tenderly placed her arms around his neck and gently pressed a kiss on Bertram's forehead.

Suddenly the little tot of four summers called out: "Mamma! Gamma! Here tums my uzzer Gamma an' Gampa Timby!"

"Yes, yes," said Viola, smiling.

"Bless him," said Mrs. Heathcourt, the elder, "Bless him! God bless you all, my children!"

And together they go down the steps to meet the newly-arrived party.

THE END.

My region is in my sweetheart's face,  
And these are the boundary lines, I trace:  
North—a forehead fair;  
With pastures of golden hair;  
Her little mouth the sunny south—  
It is the place that I love best—  
Her eyes two sparkling lakes,  
As bright and clear as snow-flakes,  
Lit by the moon at night—the sun by day;  
The dimples in her cheek and chin  
Are snares which Love has set,  
And I involuntarily have fallen in.



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LOVE AND VENGEANCE  

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*or* LITTLE VIOLA'S VICTORY  

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