

BETRAYED;

A DARK MARRIAGE MORN.

Romance of Love, Intrigue and Crime.

BY MRS. ALICE P. CARRISTON.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

Months passed, and not another word did he hear from his old friend. He grew very restless. The whole thing was preying upon his mind. He decided that he must have some occupation. Young Belmont and others of his acquaintance had gone to Congress. His father suggested that it would be a good idea for him to follow their example.

The suggestion struck him favorably; but there was one great drawback. The member for the district in which they resided had too strong a hold on his constituency to be easily shaken off.

One morning, when he happened to be in his father's private room at the bank, while he was considering the matter, an elderly gentleman entered and asked to see the President.

Warren immediately arose to withdraw. "No, no!" exclaimed the stranger; "don't go, sir, I beg. My business is not of a private nature. I merely called to ask a question or two about the Sedley farm—a most excellent piece of property in Roxbury. One of my constituents is anxious to buy or lease it, and knowing I was to be in New York to-day, requested me to call here about the matter."

"That gentleman is the owner of the farm," smiled the bank president, nodding toward Warren.

"You, sir? I thought—"

"It is my son, sir, Mr. Warren Leland," explained his father. "The property was left by his grandfather."

"Yes, your father's father, James Sedley, I know him very well; and I know your mother, too, young man, long before she became Mrs. Leland. My name is Sweetland—Emerson Sweetland."

"Ah!" exclaimed the elder Leland; "the member of Congress from the Third Congressional District."

"Exactly, sir; but for not longer than the present term, I hope. I am heartily tired of it, and am anxious to spend a year or two abroad."

"Well," smiled Warren, "I suppose it's easy enough to find a successor?"

"Not so easy as you think, there are so many qualifications required. What a pity you are not a citizen of Connecticut, and living on your farm at Roxbury. Judging from your looks, you're just the man we want, provided your politics are all right."

"No trouble on that head!" exclaimed the elder Leland, quickly; "they are the same as your own, Mr. Sweetland."

"Then, why not think of it?" asked the Congressman. "I have a year longer to serve; that will give you time to gain a residence in the district. You can live in your own house, and turn farmer, you know." Then with a comical look and gesture:

"Good gracious! What am I saying? Advising you to come up and live on the Sedley farm when I am here to buy or lease that very farm for my friend?"

"Don't let that thought disturb you," smiled Warren. "I certainly should not think of selling, and I am hardly prepared to consider an offer for a lease."

"Then what do you say to the other plan? You must be surprised that I take so much interest in your mother's son. She was what we call a right smart girl, and I always liked her."

"I am much more inclined to consider that proposition favorably," responded Warren.

"Well, then, I'll help you."

"But won't it be uphill work to prepare myself, get acquainted, and be able to capture the convention in a year's time?"

"Oh, dear no; not with my help, and the help of one other party, be it I please."

"And who may that other party be, if I please?"

"Of course you may. It's Nathan Metcalf, the oracle of Roxbury, the most important man in the district, though not as wealthy as some others."

"Nathan Metcalf," repeated Warren, as though to fix the name in his mind.

"Yes; and my first advice to you, young man, go and live on your farm, and conquer Nathan Metcalf."

"Do do that I must know something about him. What kind of a man is Mr. Metcalf?"

"He is a clever fellow—a very clever fellow, indeed, and all-powerful in his neighborhood, as I have said. He is original, as you will see, and well worth studying. Then there's his daughter—a charming girl, woman. I tell you, my friend, you must please them, for Metcalf is really the master of the district. Why, I had better tell you his friends, or else, upon my word, I would have been elected to remain at home."

"But, sir, what shall I do to please this powerful man?"

"You must know him. He is, as I tell you, a great office. He has never been in Washington; he has a horror of New York and our other large cities. It only needs a little tact to flatter his views on these points. We always need a little tact in this world, young man."

"But his daughter, Mr. Sweetland?"

"Ah, the deuce! You must please the daughter first. He worships her, and she manages him completely, although he gambles a little sometimes."

"And what sort of a woman is she?"

"A splendid woman, a glorious woman—a widow, somewhat plump, but very well featured—a woman of great merit, I assure you."

"But what course must I take to please this lady?"

"What course? By Jove, young man, you ask a great many questions. I am green as grass with them all ways. It is a thing I can't understand; but you, my young friend, you have little need to be instructed in that matter. You can't fail to please her; you have only to make yourself agreeable. But you will know how to do it—you will conduct yourself properly, I assure you."

"Yes, captivate Metcalf and his daughter. These are my first instructions. And don't let me hear of your paying any attention to Miss Leland."

"And who is Miss Leland?"

"An unfortunate young lady, residing with her mother, who can't get any more about her just now. But mind! it will please them if you pay her some attention."

Mr. Sweetland now asked the Congressman how long he proposed to remain in the city, and as he had no other business, he expected to leave the next day, he settled on his taking dinner with them and remaining over night.

Mr. Sweetland consented, and the conversation on this subject was dropped in the evening.

The next day Warren Leland left New York, armed with the instructions he had received; and, further, with a letter from Emerson Sweetland, M. C., to Nathan Metcalf, Esq.

On reaching the Roxbury station he took a carriage to his own farm, which lay at some distance from the center. While making this transit he considered to himself that the path of ambition was not exactly one of roses, and that it was hard for him, at the outset of his enterprise, to encounter two faces as disquieting as those of Nathan Metcalf and his daughter.

CHAPTER XVIII.—A DELICATE SITUATION.

On carefully looking over the ground young Leland determined to wait a little before presenting himself personally to Nathan Metcalf. He sent him Mr. Sweetland's letter, however, accompanied by a neat note of his own, stating that he was unexpectedly recalled to New York, but that he should soon return, and would do himself the honor of paying his respects at the earliest opportunity.

He then hastened to the city, after giving out that he should take up his residence at the farm, as soon as the house could be made habitable; and on reaching New York, sent up an architect and a whole army of workmen to make the necessary alterations and repairs.

At length their work was completed, and Leland was informed that his country house was ready for his occupation.

He decided to take possession immediately, and on the very day that Cora Elliston had the talk with Oscar Sylve, started for Roxbury.

He reached the village in safety, and found Seth Gridley, the man who had charge of the farm, in waiting at the station, with a very decent country turnout.

Leland at once took his seat in the carriage. Seth followed, and the horses' heads were turned toward the center.

Passing through the village they struck a long and solemn avenue, shaded by elms, interlacing their thick branches, and leading directly to the Sedley farm.

Presently they reached the house. The front door was open. Leland entered, and received a hearty welcome from Mrs. Seth Gridley, the housekeeper.

Seth then showed him to his own chamber, and when he declared himself ready, conducted him to the dining-room.

Mrs. Gridley had passed half the previous night in laughing at various dwellers in the poultry yard, and the results of the massacre now successively appeared swimming in butter. The young man managed to get through the meal at last, however, and even found himself in good spirits after it.

He sought for Seth, found him in the great kitchen assisting his wife, and strove to glean from him some information of the Metcalfs. But the farmer, like every genuine Yankee, held it as a tenet of faith that he who gave a plain answer to any question was a dishonored man.

With all possible respect he let the young gentleman understand plainly that he was not to be deceived by his affected ignorance into any belief that Warren Leland did not know a great deal better than he who and what Nathan Metcalf was, where he lived, and what he did; that Warren Leland was his employer, and as such was entitled to his respect; but that he was a New-Yorker, and—as Nathan Metcalf said—all New-Yorkers were frivolous jesters.

Leland, who had taken an oath never to get angry, kept it now, drew from a cigar a fresh supply of patience, picked up his hat and left the room.

For a few moments he leaned over the balustrade of the veranda and looked around.

The night, clear and beautiful, enveloped in its shadowy veil the wide-stretching fields, and a solemn stillness, strange to a New-Yorker's ears, reigned around him, broken only at intervals by the faint bay of a hound, rising suddenly, and another bird of peace again.

His eyes becoming used to the darkness, Leland descended the veranda steps and passed into the broad avenue, which was darker and more solemn than a cathedral aisle at midnight, and thence into another road into which it led him by chance.

Strictly speaking, Leland had never, until now, been out of the city, for wherever he had previously gone, he had carried his bustle, worldly and artificial life, play, and the race with him; and the retiring places and the seaside had never shown him true country life.

It gave him a sensation for the first time, but the sensation was not an agreeable one.

As he advanced up this silent road, without residences, without lights, it seemed to him he was wandering among the desolate sites of some lunar region. This part of New England recalled to him the worst cultivated parts of Germany. It was a rustic and savage character, with its dense shrubby tufted grass, dark valleys and rough roads.

Wandering on to an eminence, his eyes swept but a fresh horizon of apple trees and what fields, and he was about to turn back when a strange sound suddenly arrested his steps. It was a concert of voice and instruments, which in this solitude seemed to him only a dream, or a miracle.

The music was good—even excellent. He recognized a Prelude of Bach, arranged by Gounod. He could not have been more astonished if he had suddenly seen the Grand Opera House set down in front of him.

Filled with curiosity and led by the melody he heard, he descended cautiously the little hill, like a king's son in search of the enchanted princess. The palace he found in the middle of the path, in the shape of the back wall of a building, which fronted on another road. One of the upper windows on this side, however, was open; a bright light streamed from it, and thence he doubted not the sweet sounds came.

With the accompaniment of the piano came a stringed instrument, rose a fresh, flexible woman's voice, chanting the mystic words of the young master with such expression and power as would have given even him delight. Leland, himself a musician, was capable of appreciating the masterly execution of the piece, and was so much struck by it he felt an irresistible desire to see the performers, especially the singer.

With this impulse he climbed the little hedge bordering the road, placed himself on the top, and found himself several feet above the level of the lighted window. He did not hesitate to use his skill as a gymnast, acquired at Yale, to raise himself to one of the branches of an old oak stretching across the lawn; but during the ascent he could not disguise from himself that his was a scarcely a dignified position for the son of a member of Congress from the district.

He almost laughed aloud at the idea of being surprised in this position by the terrible Metcalf, or his daughter.

He established himself on a large leafy branch, directly in front of the open window, and notwithstanding that he was at a respectful distance, his glance could readily penetrate into the chamber where the concert was taking place.

A dozen persons, as he judged, were there assembled; several women, of different ages, were seated at a table work-

ing; a young man appeared to be writing, and the several persons lounged in comfortable seats around the room.

About the piano was a group which chiefly attracted the attention of the spectator in the tree. At the instrument was gravely seated a young girl of some twelve years, immediately behind her stood an elderly man, remarkable for his wonderful physique—his head bald, with a crown of white hair, and bushy, dark eye-brows.

He played the violin with skill and dignity. Seated near him was a man of about fifty, with the most benevolent face imaginable, who played the bass viol with great gusto.

Between them stood the singer. She was a pale brunette, slight and graceful, and not apparently more than twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. The somewhat severe oval of her face was relieved by a bright pair of black eyes that seemed to grow larger as she sang. One hand rested gently on the shoulder of the girl at the piano, and with this she seemed to keep time, pressing gently on the corner of the performer to stimulate her zeal. And that hand was delicious!

The hymn of Palestrina had succeeded the Prelude of Bach. It was a quartette, to which two new voices lent their aid. One of the new singers was a young lady of about twenty, quietly dressed, and divinely beautiful, albeit there was an indescribable expression of sadness on her face.

The benevolent gentleman laid aside his bass-viol, stood up, took off his glasses, and his deep, rich voice completed the full measure of the melody.

After the quartette followed a few moments of general conversation, during which, after embracing the young girl pianist, who immediately left the room, the principal songstress walked to the window.

She leaned out as if to breathe the fresh air, and her profile was sharply relieved against the bright light behind her, in which the others formed a group around the young man at the table, who seemed preparing to read what he had written.

The lady, leaning from the window, gently fanning herself as she looked now at the sky, now at the dark landscape. Leland imagined he could distinguish her gentle breathing above the sound of her fan; and leaning eagerly forward for a better view, he caused the leaves to rustle slightly.

She started at the sound, then remained immovable, and the fixed position of her head showed that her gaze was fastened upon the oak in which he was concealed.

He felt the full awkwardness of his position, but could not judge whether or not he was rightly to her; but, under the danger of her fixed regard, he passed the most painful moments of his life.

She turned into the room and said, in a calm voice, a few words which brought three or four of her friends to the window; and among them Leland recognized the elderly gentleman with the violin.

The moment was a trying one. He could do nothing but lie still in his leafy retreat—silent and immovable as a statue.

The conduct of those at the window went far to reassure him, for their eyes wandered over the gloom, with evident anxiety, concerning him; he was but suspected—not discovered.

But they exchanged animated observations, to which the party most interested lent an attentive ear.

Suddenly a strong voice, which he recognized as belonging to him of the violin, rose in the pleasing order, "Loosen the dog!"

CHAPTER XVIII.—PREPARING FOR AN ORDEAL.

The next day after the conference between Cora Elliston and the private secretary, in the library, they met again; and directly afterward Sylve started for Roxbury.

On his return he reported that he had arranged everything to the best of his ability; that Warren Leland had not yet made his appearance at the Metcalfs; that his own house was nearly, if not quite, completed; but, so far as he could learn, the young man had not yet taken up his abode there.

He might, he said, give up the idea and not live there at all; or even if he did, he might not form the acquaintance of any of the Metcalf family; but should he do so, he, Sylve, would be informed at once, and then Mildred would be summarily removed, as they had agreed in the morning.

"Why do you say he may give up the idea of living in Roxbury after all?"

"There is some talk of his leaving the place to a wealthy party, who, now that the matter is so very anxious to get possession of it."

"Do you believe there is anything in it?"

"I don't know."

"You had better go to Roxbury again before the week is out," said Cora, after a moment's thought.

"I think it would be a good plan myself," rejoined the secretary.

But the very next day he received a telegram from the Senator, calling him, peremptorily, to Washington, and he was obliged to start that same evening.

As he passed down the broad staircase he glanced back, and saw Eugene Cleveland entering Cora Elliston's boudoir.

He gnashed his teeth with rage, and went away with murder in his heart.

Days and weeks passed, and still the Senator's wife lingered in New York.

It was almost six weeks after Sylve's departure. It was nearly six o'clock in the afternoon and Cora awaited Eugene, who was to come after leaving the publishing house down town.

There was a sudden knock at one of the doors of her room, which communicated with her husband's apartment.

It was the Senator himself, who had unexpectedly returned from Washington. She remarked with surprise, and even with fear, that his countenance was strangely agitated.

"You here, Sherwood?" she exclaimed.

"What is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"No," replied the Senator, "not at all." "Your return is sudden and unexpected," she said.

"No doubt."

He placed himself before her, and looked at her some moments before speaking again, his eyes rolling in their orbits.

for the hour when they can divide your spoils.

"He who regards it as a pious duty to warn you, does not desire to calumniate anyone. He is sure that as yet your honor is respected by her to whom you have confided it, and that she is still worthy of your confidence and esteem. She wrongs you in allowing herself to count upon the future, which your trusted friend dates from your death. He seeks your widow and your property."

"The poor lady submits against her better judgment to the fascinations of a man who, as is well known, has already betrayed at least one confiding woman. But he—this man, your friend, your relative, almost your son—how can he excuse himself? Every honest person must be revolted by such conduct, and particularly by whom chance informed of the fact, and who obays his conscience in giving you this information."

"Cora, after reading it, returned the letter to her husband.

"Sign it Oscar Sylve," she said.

"Do you think so?" asked the Senator.

"It is as clear as day," replied the lady. "These expressions betray him. A pious duty to warn you—has already betrayed at least one confiding woman—every honest person obeys his conscience. He can disguise his writing, but not his style. But what is still more conclusive is that which he attributes to Eugene Cleveland—for I suppose it alludes to him—and his private prospects and calculations. This cannot have failed to strike you, as it has myself, I suppose?"

"If I thought this vile letter was his work, cried the Senator, 'he should leave my employ. I would kick him out of the house.'"

"Why so? It is better to laugh at it!" The statesman commenced one of his solemn walks up and down the room. Cora looked uneasily at the clock. Her husband, intercepting one of these glances, suddenly stopped.

"Do you expect Eugene to-day?" he inquired.

"Yes, I think he will call after business is over."

"I think he will," responded the Senator, with a convulsive smile. "And do you know, my dear," he added, "the contemptible idea which has haunted me since I received this infamous letter?—for I believe that infamy is contagious."

"You have conceived the idea of watching our interview?" said Cora, in a tone of indignant inquiry.

"Yes," asserted her husband; "there—behind that portiere—as in a theater; but, thank God, I have been able to resist this base intention. If ever I allow myself to play so mean a part, I should wish at least to do it with your knowledge and consent."

"And do you ask me to consent to it?" asked Cora.

"My dear wife," said the Senator, in a sad and almost supplicating tone, "I am an old fool—an overgrown child—but I do not wish to see the misfortune of going to poison my life. I shall no longer have an hour of peace and confidence. Do you wonder at me? I am an honorable man, but I have learned that all men are not like myself. There are some things which to me seem as impossible as walking on my head. I see that these things are every day. What can I say—how can I tell you? After reading this perfidious letter I thought how you had delayed coming to me, and I could not help recollecting that your intimacy with Eugene has greatly increased of late."

"With all due respect," said Cora, "I am very fond of him."

"I remembered also your being with him that night in the snuggery, during the grand party. When I awoke you had both an air of mystery. What mysteries could there be between you and him?"

"You shall know it at the proper time."

"Finally, I swear to you that I suspect neither of you. I neither suspect you of wronging me—of disgracing me—or of selling my name—God in heaven help me!"

"But if you two should love each other, even while respecting my honor; if you love each other and confess it—if you two, even at my side, in my heart—if you, my wife, my nephew, should be calculating with impatient eyes the progress of my old age, planning your projects for the future, and smiling at my approaching death—postponing your happiness only for my tomb—you may think yourselves guiltless! But no, no; this would be shameful!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

When Girls Are Engaged.

You have a little band around the third finger of your left hand in which is set a turquoise, and when it was put there you remembered that the Hindu said: "He who hath a turquoise hath a friend." Now, that's what you have in the man you love best, and whose wife you are going to become—a friend. He is your sweetheart, your lover, it is true; but because to you his heart seems best worth having, his love the richest gift you can possess, you will not vulgarize, as many girls do, the tie that binds you. It is true you go with him alone to some fine pictures, but I hope it is not true that when you are at a party or in your own home you two pair off and make yourselves the objects for silly chatter and idiotic jesting.

He can love you with his whole heart, but he must not make you an object of ridicule. He can think you the most unselfish girl in the world, but he must not show his own selfishness by expecting you to devote your evenings exclusively to him, ignoring those who are at home. Let him come in and be one of them—there's a dear five minutes when he can speak to you, when he can kiss you on the lips that he knows are only the gates to sweet, pure speech, and when he can whisper the lovely nothings that mean so much to you both. Then, too, don't let him feel that he must give up all his friends for you; don't accept valuable presents from him, and don't assume an air of proprietorship with him. Tell him nothing about your family affairs, for the secrets of the household do not even belong to the man you are going to marry. Guard yourself in word and in deed, hold his love in the best way possible, tie it firmly to you with the blue ribbon of hope, and never let it be eaten away by that little fox who destroys so many loving ties, and who is called familiarity.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Not a Journalist.

Millionaire—You ask for the hand of my daughter. You are a journalist, I believe, and journalists, I am told, can scarcely earn their salt.

Young Editor (with dignity)—You mistake, sir. I am not a journalist; I am a newspaper man.

"Oh! Keep a news-stand, I presume. Good, paying business! Take her, my son, and be happy."—New York Weekly.

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