



CHAPTER XIII.

Two years have dragged their slow length away. Two years! I have but brief records of them here and there—so brief and so far between that it seems to me they must have been very unprofitable of events.

I have had two seasons in London, and a winter in the South of France. I know that the boys are flourishing, and that Moorlands is still our own; that Darby is my shadow as of yore, a sweeter, gentler and more tender shadow than even in her childish days. I know, too, that my husband is devoted to us both, that he showers upon me, and that Joan, Lady Ferrers, is a personage of no small dignity and importance in the country.

It is night, and late night too. Monk's Hall has been gay with guests and festivities, but they have all departed now. It is the first night of the new year, and I have been sitting alone in my dressing room, gazing into the fire—alone, yet not alone, for a host of memories peopled my solitude and gazed at me from out the flickering flames. As I so looked back and thought, a knock came at the door, and in answer to my "Come in!" a pretty girl figure advanced and dropped into the chair beside my own.

"I thought you would not mind," she says, apologetically; "and it is my last night."

"She is very pretty, and she is the only girl I have ever called friend, though many bestow that name on me. She is no other, in fact, than that same Nettie Croft of whom I was once so jealous. She has been staying with us for this Christmas week, but to-morrow she has to go home—to a very dreary home, poor girl! with the sour, embittered old woman who is her only living relative, and whose tongue and temper are proverbs in the neighborhood."

"I am glad you have come," I said, cheerfully; "I thought you would."

"I am sorry to go home," she said, with a plaintive accent in her rich young voice; "so very, very sorry. I think you spoil me, Joan; every time I come it is harder to go away. But are you tired—you look so pale to-night!"

"Not more tired than usual," I answered; "this has been a very fatiguing week."

"I envy you!" she said suddenly; "oh, I envy you! What would you do if you had the empty days, the dreary round of commonplace events, the wretched beaten track to tread that I have?"

"You will have other chances," I said. "You are young yet. I—I think it is a mistake to marry young."

"I shall never marry at all," she said, palling to the hue of her white wrapper. "I—I put that idea aside long ago."

"You mean," I said, looking gravely at the sad young face, "that you have cared for some one too well to forget?"

"Yes," she said, very low and with a pained, drawn look of the pretty brows; "I suppose most girls have had an experience of that sort before they are twenty. I can't help it if mine has taken a deeper root than most. You don't mind my speaking to you?—it is a relief at last."

"Mind?—no. The experience of one season was it not? And you think it will last?"

"It will last," she said solemnly, "all my life."

The fire flames died down for a moment. I think I was glad of the sudden gloom. I bent a little nearer to the flames, a shiver seemed to chill my veins.

"Did he—did he love you?" I asked.

"He made me believe so," she answered, the faint color springing into her face. "And that he forgot."

"Suppose he returns?"

"He will never return to me," she said, the slow tears rising to her eyes; "even if he did."

"I know," I said, in that broken pause, "it is never the same thing. One may join the thread, but there is always the knot to mar it."

"She looked at me quickly."

"You have not escaped either," she said tenderly. "I—I feared it. But it is over, is it not?"

in the morning room listening to Darby playing on the piano the door opened and my husband entered. He came straight over to me where I sat by the bright wood fire. I noticed he had some letters in his hand.

"Go on, child," he said, as Darby stopped and moved round.

She turned and resumed her playing, only keeping it soft and subdued, so as not to drown his voice.

"Joan, my dear," he said, "you remember the new housekeeper is coming to-day?"

"Yes," I answered; "the woman you engaged in London."

"Woman! She thinks herself quite a lady," he said, laughing. "She is a very dignified and imposing personage indeed. But I thought I would remind you, for you must see her when she comes. I suppose her rooms are ready?"

"Oh, yes," I answered; "I saw about them this morning. I am so sorry to lose Mrs. Birket. She was such a dear old thing."

"But she is really too old for so responsible a post," said Sir Ralph. "I thought it best to pension her off, poor old body! You see, my dear, you are so young, and we are away so often, that it is necessary to have some one trustworthy and capable to look after the place and the servants."

"I took Nettie safe home," he went on presently. "Poor little thing! I wish she were happier. She is such a sweet, good girl. I have always been fond of Nettie. I used to think at one time that she and Yorke would make a match. He seemed very fond of her."

"By-the-by, I have had a letter from him at last; he is tired of roving—he is coming home."

"Home!" I cried sharply; "do you mean here?"

I had the letter in my hands. I was looking at the superscription. How well I had known that writing once! How my heart used to beat at sight of it. Even now a faint tremor shook me as I held it.

"This was the letter:

"San Francisco, Dec. 18T—

"My Dear Uncle—

"I am sick of roving. I have been to silver mines, and lead mines, and oil pits, and across deserts, and mountains, and rivers, and seas, until I am yearning for a breath of the old pine woods, and a look at the old house. You may expect me back almost on the heels of my letter. Compliments to my aunt. I trust she can give me a corner at the Hall for a little while, till I can look about and see what I had best do. I am afraid the Bar was a failure. I couldn't stand the dryness and the doubtful honesty of legal complications. But I suppose there are other things. However, we will talk that over when we meet. Kind regards to all.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"YORKE."

"He has got over it," I said to myself, as I folded the letter, and replaced it in its envelope. "He would not call me aunt, or wish to come back here, if he had not. Oh, I am glad—I am very, very glad!"

A weight seemed lifted off my heart. I looked up at Sir Ralph, cool and unembarrassed.

"Of course he must have his old room," I said. "I had better give orders for it. He may return at any moment."

"Thank you, dear," Sir Ralph said heartily. "I am glad you don't mind. I—I was a little afraid you might not like it. I don't think Yorke behaved very politely that time we met him at Selby, and throwing up his profession and starting off to America. He was always a strange boy. I do hope he has quieted down a little."

"I have no doubt he has," I said calmly.

CHAPTER XV.

A few moments later and the door opened to admit the lady in reduced circumstances, as Sir Ralph had described the new housekeeper. As I looked up with some curiosity, I saw a dark face somewhat rich in the coloring of cheek and lip—a tall and very beautiful figure, and surmounting the whole, a head of snow-white hair. So white and silky and beautiful was it, that the dainty lace cap seemed almost an affront to its beauty, and yet it seemed to me the face looked too young for its framework. The fire so darkly glowing in the heavy-lidded eyes was altogether out of keeping with such sleek, after all, her looks didn't signify much, and her manners were irreproachable. I told her of her duties, and she expressed herself quite satisfied with her rooms and the arrangements.

"I don't think I shall like her," was my reflection as I sat gazing down on a blank sheet of paper—blank, save for the "Dearest Nettie," that I had scrawled in my untidy handwriting. "I suppose she is a lady; she has the manners and appearance of one. But she gives me the impression of something covert—underhand—watchful. Her eyes look too young for her face, and her voice seems forced into those low, even tones."

Then I dashed into my letter.

"Dearest Nettie:

"I have some news that will surprise you. Yorke Ferrers is coming here. He may arrive to-day—to-morrow—next week. I cannot say decidedly when. Tell me if you will come over and dine and sleep here, the day after to-morrow."

"Yours,

"JOAN."

I sealed it up and addressed it, then left it on the table till the letters should be collected for the post-bag. This done, I turned once more to my favorite chair by the fire. The flames leaped merrily up; the dark, glowing colors in and about the room seemed out in rich relief.

"It all looks very comfortable," I said to myself. "I wonder Darby has not come. It must be nearly time for tea."

I leaned forward towards the flowers, and smothered a little yawn. Just then I heard the door behind me softly open.

"Is that you, child?" I said lazily.

"Where have you been all this time?"

The flames died down and left the room in sudden darkness. Wondering at the silence, I looked round. A figure stood there outlined against the pale light from the windows, and the faint glow of the wavering fire.

For a second my heart stood still. I did not rise. I felt as if turned to stone.

Then suddenly the light leaped up, and the figure came forward from the shadows, and the deep tones of a remembered voice spoke to me:

"I fear I startled you. I told them not to announce me. I have come sooner than I expected."

I rose then. The calm, measured tones, the absence of any formal greeting, nervous hands, coolly and conventionally, as friends might have done. But platitudes did not come easily yet.

"We—we expected you," I said, "but not so soon. Your letter only arrived this morning."

"Did it?" he said in the same quiet, even tones. "I hope I have not put you to inconvenience. How are you all?" looking round the room, bright now with treacherous glow from the flaming logs.

How is my uncle—and Darby? You took me for her, did you not?"

"Yes, for a moment. We always have tea here together about this time. I will ring for it," I added mechanically.

"Do," he said. "It will be like the old days in the school room. Poor old days! How far back they look now!"

The lights were brought, and the tea, and with their entrance came Darby, fitting, pure and spirit-like, into the room, pausing as if some presence warned her of an intruder on its dear loved solitude.

"Who is there?" she asked quickly.

"Yorke."

I led her up, and placed her hand in his.

"She at least is not changed," I said as our eyes met.

"Except to look more like an angel," he said very softly, and his lips touched her brow.

A great peace and calm seemed to settle upon us with the child's presence. She took off the restraint and hardness that we had both betrayed. I looked at Yorke's changed face with a sense of wonder, for it was changed, and something seemed to tell me not for the better.

And I, looking at him, felt that I had changed too. A sort of numbness was upon my heart. It thrilled no longer with the old vivid joys, and hopes, and fears. It beat on quiescent, and at peace. I could not have gone back now to the old foolish times, or stretched out quick arms, crying: "Come back! Oh, fill my life again!" For, suddenly, without warning, or reason, or preparation of any sort, a truth shot home to me, barbed and sharp, but wholesome in its pain—a feeling that he never had filled it; that I had only dreamt he did.

In the unuttered consolation of that thought, I grew at ease with him. When last we had parted, there had been a lover's plea in eyes and voice; but now, by night of two cold, barren years, it was changed and silenced.

I looked life and its necessities in the face from a calmer standpoint, and he—I almost thought he must have forgotten altogether. His composure accomplished what I suppose there are other things. However, we will talk that over when we meet. Kind regards to all.

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SOLD TO SHYLOCKS.

OUR DEBT BURDEN RAPIDLY INCREASING.

A Plain Talk on the Money Question—The Goldbug and the "Bimetallist"—Only a Few Steps Apart in the Progress—Plans for Organization.

A Few Blooming Idiots.

"Condemned to forever roll the stone that was forever to be rolled," was the sentence imposed on one of the characters of Greek mythology. This sentence is now imposed on the American people. We have paid two-thirds of the war debt, and the remaining third is bigger than the whole of it was when we began. How do you make that out, Cherry? Well, just figure up how much it would take to pay \$2,800,000,000 in cotton at 20 cents a pound, or wheat at \$2 per bushel, and compare that with what it would take to pay one-third that amount in cotton at 5 cents per pound or wheat at 50 per bushel.

If the sucker who carried a torch and "hollored" to help his side beat the other side (of Wall street) hasn't sense enough to understand these figures, just hand them over to his ten-year-old schoolboy.

At the close of the war the people were "comparatively free from debt," said Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch. The war debt was all the people owed, and nearly all this was in circulation among the people as the nation's legal tender money. Business was done for cash. There was a less per cent. of credit business than ever before. Labor found employment on every side at high wages and ready cash for pay.

To-day, after thirty-two years of hard work, our debts, public and private, amount to forty billions—all that the property is worth at present prices. Ours is a rich country, owned largely in Europe.

Our annual interest, rent and dividend payments to Europe amount to from three hundred millions to three hundred and fifty millions a year; and the amount is rapidly increasing.

We annually dig out of our mines from thirty-five to forty millions of gold, and from fifty to seventy millions of silver. And only last year I saw poor half-starved American working-men who believed that out of this \$40,000,000 of gold we could pay this \$350,000,000 to Europe in gold, and have dead-loads of gold left to do business with and accumulate enough surplus after while to pay the principal. Such fellows ought to be knocked in the head to save feed. Hogs could be fattened on what they eat and that would add something to the country's wealth.

"Bimetallism! bimetallism!" yelled a wide-mouthed orator. "Add silver, too." All right. To \$46,000,000, our highest annual product of gold in a decade, add \$72,000,000 of silver, making \$118,000,000 of both with which to pay to Europe \$350,000,000, and have a balance to transact our home business.

Don't you see that the poor working-man who votes for the goldbug is a blooming idiot, while the "bimetallist" is a half-opened boob on the same bush?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, there is no way under heaven or among men whereby prosperity permanent and enduring can be restored to this people and liberty and the republic maintained except by the issue and permanent maintenance of Uncle Sam's absolute everlasting greenbacks.

But up to date a large per cent. of our people, voters who have the powers of government and the destiny of the republic in their hands, will not reason on these matters, but will think it smart to follow some slick demagogue who tells them how free and smart they are, and who leads them with such clap-trap and catch phrases as "honest money," "sound money," and "bimetallism;" phrases as meaningless and senseless as rival college yells.

May God in His infinite wisdom and mercy give the starving American voter such a dose of Harrison-Cleveland-McKintley prosperity that he will use his head for something else than a peg to hang his hat on.—John H. Cherry, in Chicago Express.

Plans for Organization.

The National Organization Committee chosen at Nashville met in the Senate chamber pursuant to the call of the chairman after adjournment of the conference. Plans for work were thoroughly discussed and a committee to prepare and report rules for guidance of the committee, was chosen as follows:

N. H. Metsinger, Indiana; B. G. West, Tennessee, and J. E. McBride, Michigan.

The following were reported and unanimously adopted:

1. That in the selection of members of the committee in States not represented, or only partly represented, the executive committee shall be given power to name them, as well as to fill vacancies on the committee, but vacancies shall be filled only on the nominations made by the remaining member in each State in which such vacancy occurs.

2. That the member of the committee for each State shall have charge of the work of organization in their respective States, and shall monthly, and as often as requested by the national chairman, report to him and the national secretary the condition of the work.

3. The three members in each State shall select one of their number as chairman, who shall make all reports mentioned in rule 3.

4. The members of this committee in each State shall make diligent effort to secure the organization of Populist clubs under adopted plans, and to encourage the dissemination of Populist papers, periodicals and other literature, in place of what is possible.

5. Be it resolved that in a State where

the State committee will not move in the work of reorganization, or will not work in harmony with the committee on reorganization chosen at this conference, then and in that case, the three members of this national committee, of each State, or a majority of them, shall proceed to call a State convention, for the purpose of choosing a new State committee in said State. And where the conditions above described shall become manifest to either of the members of this committee in such State, in any district, or less territory in his section of such State, then he shall proceed to call a regular convention in such district or less territory to enable the People's party in such district or less territory to perfect organization in harmony with the spirit of this conference, by choosing a new committee in such district or territory.

The Test of Evidence.

The lack of attention given the Nashville conference by the Associated Press is very similar to the way our movement has been ignored in years past and is also a very significant fact and worthy of note.

The Cincinnati conference was given fair treatment by the press of the city, but the daily press of the country gave it a few words only if any mention whatever. They almost ignored the Omaha convention, and hundreds of papers never mentioned it. The fact that the daily press generally, except the local papers of Nashville, treated the recent conference with the same silence that marked the early organization of the party, is the best evidence that we are right.

Only one daily paper in Chicago mentioned the Nashville Populist conference, and then only gave it a few lines. It was an assembly of almost a thousand people, over three hundred of whom were regularly elected delegates representing almost every State in the Union. A few weeks ago these same papers devoted page after page to a "silver convention," composed of less than forty silver Republicans, who met to organize a "new party."

The voter who will regard with discretion the action of a subsidized daily press ought to be able to decide where the interests of the people belong. When a conference of a thousand people, or fifteen hundred, as we had in Cincinnati, is passed over in silence and the workings of a committeeman who would unite on silver alone, is given space and prominence, the people ought to be able to understand it.

When a mere handful of politicians is boomed into prominence and the interests of millions of farmers ignored, it means that the press is owned and controlled by speculators, and that Wall street controls even the minutest details of news.

Every voter who knows enough to be a Populist should make a note of these points. The best evidence in the world that we are right is found in the fact that the subsidized press doesn't try to boom our movement.

Referendum in Strikes.

There has no proposed political reform ever gained such rapid hold on the minds of the people as has that of direct legislation, and there is no better evidence of this than the decision of the leaders of the present miners strike to call for a referendum vote whenever a settlement is in sight.

The following dispatch from Columbus, Ohio, under date of July 19, indicates the growth of opinion on that line:

The national executive board of the United Mine Workers, in session here to-day, decided to refer the matters suggested by the strike to the miners themselves. In former strikes the settlement has been negotiated and concluded by the official board, which has sometimes failed to thoroughly satisfy the miners. In some instances the board has been charged with treachery, and they will not permit that charge to be made at this time. The national board has concluded to weigh carefully every proposition for a settlement, and when a proposition meets their approval they will refer it to the miners, who will be asked to vote on the referendum plan.

The action to-day indicates that the national board has relinquished its power to conclude a settlement. All matters in dispute will be referred to the miners, and in case of disagreement, a convention will be called. It is the first time that the referendum system has been called into play.

Whenever the ordering and settlement of strikes is left to a vote of those most deeply interested, it will be a long step in the right direction and will help to prove that the people, if trusted to act by a direct vote, will generally be right, while the actions taken by representatives are generally wrong. The referendum will settle the strike question whenever it is thoroughly applied.—Chicago Express.

The Bimetallist Commission.

What object did the Republican administration have in view when it appointed the bimetallic commission? Was there an honest desire to redeem the pledges of the St. Louis platform? The best answers to these questions are found in the editorials of administration newspapers. With one accord they join in ridiculing the idea that the bimetallic commission will be able to accomplish anything.

Of course, the Republican party is unalterably resolved to force the United States to a monometallic gold basis, but what did that party mean by incorporating the following plank in its platform—"We are opposed to the free coinage of silver except by international agreement with the leading commercial nations of the world, which we pledge ourselves to promote?"

Does the Republican party redeem this pledge by discrediting the labors of its own commission? Does it redeem this pledge by asserting that this commission in no manner represents the administration which appointed it? Does it redeem this pledge by straining every nerve to secure gold monometallism? The fact is the Republican party made that pledge simply to fool voters. The commission was appointed to

fool the people. The time has come when the mask must be taken off and the features of gold monometallism are revealed.

Silver and Prosperity.

If history teaches anything it teaches that a bimetallic currency conduces to national prosperity, and that monometallism produces distress among the people and a decline in business activity.

It is not necessary to go any further back than the year 1869 for the beginning of a decade of prosperity, nor to travel away from the United States to find its field of operation. From 1869 to 1879 this nation paid off half of its great debt, and at that time silver was coined at an average rate of three million dollars a month. This silver went into circulation, and by its presence stimulated business to such an extent that the government was enabled to cancel a large part of its war debt.

Since 1880 nothing has been paid on the national debt of the United States, but, on the contrary, Grover Cleveland, by his adherence to the value-destroying gold policy, saddled the people with an increased obligation of \$222,000,000. This adds ten million dollars a year of extra expense to be borne in the way of interest, and all that has been received in return is widespread commercial depression and disaster.

The Republican party acknowledged in the St. Louis platform that bimetalism was a good thing, and pledged itself to labor for the international recognition of the double standard, but there is nothing so disgusting to a Republican to-day as a report that the bimetallic commission is making successful progress in Europe.

The fact is, the Republican party is owned by the trusts, the trusts want the gold standard, and the welfare of the people, the teachings of history, the solemn pledges the party has made must all be cast aside when the gold trust bosses crack their whips.

Tariff for Trusts.

The work of the Senate on the tariff bill has resulted in creating a Frankenstein that will destroy the party responsible for it. The law establishes a tariff for trusts and a deficit. It will aid the rich to become richer, and through its outrageous taxes upon the necessities of life, it will force the poor to become poorer. The sugar trust gets a present of half a hundred million of dollars, and the people get a tax on everything they eat and wear. A feeble attempt was made to throw a sop to the farmers of the West by a proposed bounty on beet sugar, but the attempt was half-hearted, ineffectual and soon made inoperative.

As a revenue getter the tariff is the worst failure ever made by legislation. By giving notice to the importers that the retroactive clause would be stricken out, any chance of securing revenue within the next twelve months was effectually destroyed,