

# THE FACE OF ROSENTEL.

CHAPTER XI.  
MISS MAXEY TRIES.

Miss Maxey went out of the house in Ballouville place with no definite purpose in view. She was disappointed, vexed, even offended by what she considered Annette's misplaced sentiment and Maxey's want of firmness, but she was entirely unable to see what she could do to remedy the mischief. She had waited for Mr. Dye's coming from the day she knew of Maxey's visit to Flood street with despairing impatience, and she had heard from the lips of Annette of his arrival in the house with an excitement which rendered her own absence from the interview with him an almost unbearable hardship. Now at last she felt the long delayed time had come when something of the mystery of the cruel affair on the sea road was to be cleared away.

Miss Maxey longed to see the light of day poured in upon this dark deed. It was a longing not born of curiosity alone. All the sympathies of her broad and generous nature had been enlisted in the cause of the poor girl whom she had rescued from a nameless grave. Her outraged sense of justice made her aglow with a desire to know that the guilty had suffered for the wrong inflicted on a helpless girl. The thought that the perpetrator of this dastardly crime was left free to go about, unchallenged and unmolested, among his fellow creatures was at times almost maddening to her. And to think that after all that had happened, on the very verge, it seemed to her, of the most important discoveries, the man who undoubtedly held the key of the whole matter; the man, in all probability, who was himself the criminal for whom they sought, was in order to satisfy the scruples of a too sensitive girl, to be allowed to put himself out of their reach forever. This distressed her almost beyond endurance.

And in spite of all this she had come without a word of remonstrance or reproach. Impulsive Miss Maxey undoubtedly was, but she was quite capable of putting a bridle upon her tongue in a moment of anger, for the very reason that she distrusted her own power of self control. Not for the world would she have uttered a syllable that could by any possibility wound the sensitive spirit of Annette, and she did not dare trust herself to enter into an argument with her brother in her presence. So she had come out into the freer atmosphere of the street.

It was a cold, gloomy afternoon in January. The sky was dark and threatened snow. Miss Maxey was well wrapped up and rather enjoyed the crisp atmosphere. It was certainly an antidote for the fever within her.

She walked down the few paces which were necessary to take her to the high picketed fence that separated the street from the river. For a moment she looked out over the waste of whitened ice, and in that moment an idea came to her—out of so little do great things sometimes arise. If Miss Maxey had gone her customary way up the street into the main avenue, she would doubtless have wandered about the neighborhood till she had got the better of her emotions and have returned home, resigned to the inevitable, and so the part that she was to play in the unraveling of the sea road mystery would never have been. But at the moment when she looked out between the pickets the idea came to her that she might, by remaining where she was, get a better view of the somber Mr. Dye than she had been able to obtain in the house through a half opened door. It was only this and no more. All that followed came gradually and step by step.

Her brother had expressed his intention of dismissing Mr. Dye at once. The mysterious visitor ought by this time to be coming down the stairs and out into the street. She drew her veil over her face and turned toward the door. Almost at the same instant the woe-begone air, the shifty coat and all that appertained thereto emerged into the open air.

Mr. Dye did not look about him. His head did not seem to be capable of holding itself erect. His eyes were fixed on the ground. He plunged his hands deep into his coat pockets and set out with a slow and not exactly steady step toward the avenue. Almost involuntarily, certainly without reflecting upon what she

owing him to the end and springing upon him so far as she could first came into the mind of the artist's sister. With a glow of excitement at her heart and a quickening breath, the deliberate foot of playing the detective took form within her. It was novel, it was exciting, and it fascinated her. Still keeping the conspicuous form of the somber Dye in sight, she thought over the chances and dangers of such a project, and it did not take a great deal of reasoning to convince her that, except in a most limited sphere, her design was a wild one. It was all well now and here at this time of day in an eminently respectable part of the city to continue as she had begun. There was no one to molest her or make her afraid. But how would it be if the somber Dye should betake himself to the less reputable lanes and alleys of the metropolis? Would she dare to follow him even there? She did not know very much about such places, to be sure, but she had heard of them, and her courage failed her when she thought of them. Besides there were not many hours of daylight left.

"No," she reflected; "I cannot do everything as if I were a man, but I can at least go on until something occurs to turn me back."

And she went on.

Again Mr. Dye passed into another street. There could be very little doubt about it now. He was going back to Flood street, or if not there to some place in that locality. So he would go on till he came to the door of house No. 40. He would pull the bell and walk in. The door would close behind him. And then what? Manifestly there would be nothing for her to do but to turn about and retrace her steps, no wiser than when she had set out, and having had her trouble for her pains. Such was the prospect.

Miss Maxey smothered jealousy along upon the opposite side of the way and some distance behind, trying not to appear to look at Mr. Dye at all. But this precaution was useless. Mr. Dye never looked around. He continued to drift on in the same faltering, unenergetic, dependent fashion, with his hands in the side pockets of his threadbare coat and his head bent down.

"He does not look like a very old man," thought Ellen, "but judging by his gait he must be in feeble health."

They were now passing through a quiet side street which led down a gentle declivity. There were not many pedestrians, and out of the gloomy sky a few fine crystals of snow were leisurely finding their way to the pavement.

Mr. Dye had traversed about half the length of the street when Miss Maxey noticed a carriage containing two women, one of whom was driving, turning from the avenue which ran to right angles with the bottom of the declivity. The woman who drove was on the side toward Mr. Dye. The horses walked slowly up the hill.

Miss Maxey marked these facts only in a mechanical way until a sudden change in the manner of the woman who drove attracted her attention. There was no doubt about it. The driver was filled with strong emotions at the sight of Mr. Dye. The somber man's gaze was still downward. He had not noticed her, but the occupant of the vehicle seemed to have concentrated her whole attention upon him. When she came opposite to him, she drew up with a sudden pull upon the reins. Then she bent over and seemed to call to him in a low voice.

Mr. Dye started out of his abstraction and looked up to find himself face to face with her. Even at the distance which intervened between herself and the scene Miss Maxey fancied she saw the man's pallid face turn to a deathly pallor and his jaw drop. He certainly staggered for an instant like a drunken man and then stood motionless in the middle of the sidewalk, staring at the woman in the carriage. The woman spoke again and beckoned to him. At this Mr. Dye roused himself, threw a hasty glance over his shoulder in each direction, as if calculating the chances of flight and ended by stepping out into the street and entering into a conversation.

All this time Miss Maxey was coming nearer and nearer. If she could only hear one little sentence of what they were saying, she thought it would be some satisfaction to her, but unfortunately she was on the other side of the way, and she did not dare to cross over. She did not dare even to look unduly toward the point where all her interest was centered, for the reason that the woman seemed to be suspicious of everything about her. Even in the midst of her conversation with Mr. Dye, which seemed to be conducted on her part with much earnestness and emphasis, she glanced up and down the street in a cautious, uneasy manner and looked at Ellen fixedly.

It was when she looked at her thus directly that Ellen first became aware of a vague and but half active impression that she did not see this face now for the first time. And yet how was it possible for her to have seen so striking a face and have forgotten the place and the circumstances? The same hasty scrutiny which showed her this showed her also that the woman was richly, even lavishly, attired, and that, though she might be between 30 and 40, she was still young, still fascinating.

"Mon would like her," thought the artist's sister, "in spite of the cynicism and disdain that spoil the face for me." And thinking this she went on, vainly trying to stimulate the passive sentiment that rose in her mind at the sight of this new countenance into active recollection.

As for the other occupant of the carriage, Ellen hardly noticed her. Yet she was young, in a mechanical way, that she was young, not more than 20, perhaps less; that she had a smiling, pretty face, of much the same type of beauty as the more mature features beside her.

As Ellen passed that point in the street where the vehicle stood her straining ears caught only six distinct words in a woman's voice:

"It will admit of no delay." Mr. Dye's response was inaudible. This was all that she, without betraying an interest in the affair beyond that of a chance passer, was able to rescue out of the whole conversation. She was so careful not to do this that she even refrained from looking around after she had passed the carriage. In truth, it was not until she had nearly reached the corner of the street, and the sound of wheels on the hard stones warned her that the carriage had started ahead, that she again ventured to satisfy her curiosity.

A rather curious state of affairs presented itself to her view when she turned. The carriage had indeed resumed its onward course in the same direction as before, but Mr. Dye had faced about and was proceeding it upon the sidewalk a little distance in front. The snow was now beginning to fall more thickly, and Ellen felt that there was serious danger of losing sight of the people in whom she was so greatly interested.

Undoubtedly when the carriage got to the top of the hill it would drive on at a much more rapid rate. She quickened her footsteps and crossed the street as to be upon the same side with Mr. Dye. By this time the trio had reached the top of the declivity and were going down on the other side. Ellen hastened forward, keeping as close as possible out of sight behind the occasional pedestrian. But before she reached the end of the thoroughfare all anxiety that the carriage would drive on out of her reach had left her. She began to understand the situation. Whoever the woman in the carriage might be they were evidently afraid or ashamed of being seen in company with the forlorn Dye. And yet it was very important that he should go along with them. They dared not take him into the vehicle, so they had compromised the matter by causing him to walk a short distance in advance. Nobody would think that this woe-begone ragamuffin who walked could have any possible connection with the elegantly dressed ladies who rode.

Mr. Dye must know the way, then, perfectly well. Undoubtedly, for he turned the corner without looking back, and the vehicle in its succession promptly wheeled about into the same avenue. Ellen perceived this with an increasing glow at her heart and the most bewildering speculations in her head.

The snowflakes came more thickly, and the young woman who had taken upon herself the bold and masculine task of following the somber Dye kept as close as she dared to her unconscious victim lest some significant circumstance should escape her observation. But no significant circumstance occurred.

The carriage and the man went on steadily, without any further intercourse or interchange of any possible signs, through the network of city streets to some definite destination.

"This I can see very clearly," thought Ellen. "But why, if this woman is so afraid of betraying observation, did she not send this man about by another road and drive on at a natural pace? People must think it strange to see her walking her horse in the midst of a heavy snowstorm. Evidently she mistrusts him. Evidently he fears her. This is a most inexplicable affair."

The carriage at last turned into a broad avenue lined with elegant houses. It was, in truth, one of the most aristocratic streets of the city, and the horse before which the vehicle eventually stopped was not eclipsed by any of its neighbors.

Mr. Dye had already mounted the long flight of brownstone steps, had opened the outer door and gone in out of sight of anybody in the street. It was not to be supposed that he had entered the house, however, for all of these residences were protected by double doors, separated by a vestibule. Mr. Dye, in all probability, was waiting in the inner space for his fashionable patrons to come up and admit him. Almost at the moment the carriage wheels grated against the curbstone in front of the house a scolding man came up out of a door underneath the steps, and after helping the ladies out got into the empty seat and drove away.

Miss Maxey tried not to have it so, but fate brought it about that she came to the brownstone steps at the very moment when these women were about to ascend them. She put as much space of sidewalk between herself and them as she conveniently could, but none the less she felt herself observed and knew, though she kept her own eyes straight ahead, that the elder woman at least was looking at her. Her sharp eye detected a whisper a moment afterward, and she fancied that the possessor of the half remembered face was calling her companion's attention to her. Perhaps the woman had recognized her and remembered to have seen her in the quiet street where they met Mr. Dye.

Ellen was aware of a slight trembling while she was undergoing this inspection. But it was only a momentary affair. She went on quickly. The women passed up the steps, shaking their garments, and the door closed after them with a slam.

The snow fell in blinding, whirling eddies. From minute specks the flakes had become large and feathery. It was impossible to see far in any direction. What was to be done?

Having reached this point, must Ellen Maxey turn about and go home? No, not yet. She would wait a little while still—wait and see Mr. Dye come out again. Yes, but where? She could not stand there in the street. She did not like to walk up and down before the house. Where?

Then an interesting fact reached her. She was aware of a slight trembling while she was undergoing this inspection. But it was only a momentary affair. She went on quickly. The women passed up the steps, shaking their garments, and the door closed after them with a slam.

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through the whir and the maze of the falling snow. There was a glaring placard in the window of the house immediately adjoining that in which her interest centered. No window curtains made a background for this card, and big black letters announced that the premises were for sale.

The further fact that she had seen the footman come out of an area door beneath the steps when the carriage stopped was all that she needed to induce an inspiration. The houses along here were extremely uniform. There was a similar door closing beneath the steps of the unoccupied house. A plain wooden door set in the solid masonry and opened by a simple latch.

Miss Maxey descended a short flight of steps, approached this door and tried it. To her intense satisfaction it yielded to her touch. She pushed it open and went in. Not a very comfortable place, to be sure. Dark, cold, disagreeable, this little space beneath the steps, hardly fit for a tramp to sleep in!

Miss Maxey turned the knob of the door leading from this area into the house. The door was fast. What matter, then, if it were cold and dark? She was at least secure from observation, and if she had ransacked the whole neighborhood in search of a convenient location from which to have watched the adjoining front steps she could not have secured a better than the one upon which she had thus accidentally stumbled. She left the entrance slightly unfastened so she might look out and sat down upon the wooden step with her back against the inner door.

The time passed, and the snow fell. It fell so thickly that it muffled the sounds of footsteps in the street above. People came and went. It grew dark. A boy with a patent torch lighted the lamp in front of the brownstone steps. Miss Maxey's limbs were cramped and cold. It seemed as though the minutes lengthened themselves to hours, the hours grew to days, and still there was no appearance of the forlorn hat and the threadbare coat upon the neighboring threshold. The carts rumbled in the street. The man who had gone with the horses came back. The snow fell on, and still no Dye.

If Miss Maxey's brain had not been so busy with exciting speculation and daring plans for the future, if she had not had so fascinating a problem to deal with in trying to locate the face of that elder woman who drove somewhere in her own uneventful past, the time would doubtless have seemed so long that she would scarcely have had the courage to wait, but it takes some obstacles to break the endurance of such a girl as this.

It had grown quite dark. The snow had ceased. The light which had been a sort of luminous whirl in front of the brownstone steps burned out, clearly and steadily. It lighted up the forlorn hat at last. Mr. Dye was coming down into the street.

Miss Maxey arose and crept to the door. Mr. Dye came toward her. His face was in the shadow, and she could not see the expression of his features. But he staggered as he walked—staggered almost like a drunken man. He was muttering to himself as he went along in an excited, incoherent way. One sentence only was fated to reach Miss Maxey's ears. It was this:

"Of the two I think the woman is the worst."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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She drew her veil over her face and turned toward the door.

did, Miss Maxey followed him at the same slow pace. When he reached the corner, he stopped and looked up and down the street, as if undecided which way he had better take. Miss Maxey slackened her pace lest she should overtake him.

After a momentary hesitation he made his decision. He took the way to the right. Was he going back to Flood street? His last movement would indicate that he was not, though the crookedness of the city streets might leave even this a matter of doubt. He went on in the same slow, unsteady, dejected manner. Presently he crossed the street, and turning into a branch thoroughfare went up toward the heart of the city. Miss Maxey followed, though she kept upon the other side of the way.

Then it was that the idea of "shad-