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THE MISTAKEN LETTER

CHAPTER V.

"Yes. We must try to find her at once. Where can she be?"

"Why, of course she will return to her old friends."

"Do you think so? She didn't like her old life."

"She wouldn't feel like hunting up new places. She will go back, I think. If we can find out where the child lived."

"I can do that."

"And, Ruel, we must not forget the stranger within our gates, will you see her this morning? I didn't send for Dr. Harrold. She is better—rested and fed, you know, but I fear—"

"I will go," Dr. Berkley said, leaving the room.

"And you are Ruel Berkley. It is a pity I didn't die before I came here; don't you think so? I don't come up to the shrewd little woman who personated me so successfully, by any means. I feel quite like a usurper."

Miss Bascom's niece was sitting up with a bright, warm shawl folded about her. She laughed a little as she finished speaking and there was a ghastly sort of coquetry in her manner.

"I hope you'll soon be feeling much better," Dr. Berkley said with professional gravity.

"You must not make me too well, else I shall tire of this quiet life. I was devoted to our company—you know I belonged to one! I was leading lady. But I was taken ill in that horrid western town, and they dropped me. It is the way of the world, you know. I wrote to aunt Ruth, then for somehow I can't get well. But I shall not try the stage again. Aunt Ruth need not begrudge keeping me for she will never need all she has, anyway."

"I must ask you to be very quiet. Talking is not good for you," the doctor said when the violent fit of coughing was over.

"How grave you look! Am I very sick? You frighten me."

"I don't want to do that, but you ought to know that you are really—"

"Hush! Don't say that I am in a dangerous condition. It is not true. I gave you that impression by my foolish talk."

"Then you must not talk so much."

"I'll try. Have you found that pretty impostor? But you must not be too hard on her, for really she might have done worse, if she had been wiser or wickeder. I sent her to aunt Ruth with my last appeal. She had the chance to bring me any answer that suited her, and she could have sent me away."

"She knows nothing of deceit or fraud. She is an innocent girl who is the victim of a mistake, that is all," said Dr. Berkley, gravely.

"Ah, yes. She is an extremely pretty woman and Dr. Berkley is a man! My aunt, fortunately, sees her in a somewhat different light."

The doctor was quietly counting her pulse.

"You must be quiet, madam, and take the medicine that will be sent out to you. Good morning." He left her and went to the hospital.

Mr. Slocum was surprised and glad to see him.

"I left you somewhat abruptly, Mr. Slocum, awhile ago. We were speaking of a friend of yours. Did you know her in her home in Morrisville?"

"Certainly sir. She lived as sort of a help with the Sims family. Worthy people, but, unlettered, as one might say. Illiterate, but kindly withal. They took Mary when her mother died. Her mother was a lady-like woman, and little Polly took after her. The girl read everything she could find. Good books that I carried to her and novels and books of that sort that her mother had left her. But she seemed to get good out of them all."

Dr. Berkley asked several questions and went away.

He sat down in his office and began a letter to Mrs. Sims. It ended in a note to Miss Bascom. The office boy took it and returned with Dr. Berkley's valise. He was just in time for the train going west.

CHAPTER VI.

"Why, Polly, for the land sakes is it you?"

Yes, Mrs. Sims, it is I."

"Well, come in child. Now who'd a thought! Air ye tired of your fine kin, Polly, or did ye jus nae uly want ter see your ole friends? There, set down and rest. You walked from the depot. They didn't send you off, did they, Polly?"

"No. I came because—I wanted to."

"If I'd ever caught you in a lie, Polly, I'd say that was one, but I never did."

Mrs. Sims stood with her red hands on her hips looking down at the pale, tired girl.

"I suppose so—if you will let me."

"Lor, I wouldn't turn a stray dog away, much less you that's mighty nigh the same as my own child. But it's square, fur all that, and there's them that wouldn't take you back, Polly."

Polly sat listlessly by the stove hardly hearing her. The wind was blowing drearily outside. She had heard it so often. The kitchen was hot and full of steam that rose in clouds from a boiler of clothes on the stove.

"Want they good to you?" Mrs. Sims asked, fiercely punching the clothes with a long stick.

"They were good to me."

"But you didn't like it?"

"I liked it."

"Polly Brown, if you aint the aggreratinis piece! Why don't you tell straight out what made you leave your fine kin and come back here? It want for love of us or the place?"

"It seemed the best thing to do," Polly said.

"Well, I declare, if you aint a plum clam! I tell you, Polly, I'm goin' to the solid bottom of this thing. There's something not straight, and I'm ter know what it is. I'll write to your fine kin."

"No, don't. Don't do that, Mrs. Sims, if you do—"

"Then tell me why you left 'em. It was all a mistake. The letter was no't intended for me. That is all."

"Bless my soul! So you hadn't any rich kin no more that the rest of us, for all your grand airs and graces?"

"I have no one, nothing."

There was a rough kindly sympathy in the woman's voice as she said:

"Well, I hope you've learnt a lesson. I allus told you there want no use in strugglin' ergin Proverence. Hit's the best to take things as we find 'em, and make the best of 'em. Take your satchel to your room and rest a spell. You look plum beat out."

Polly silently obeyed. In her own little room she dropped down upon the bed and fell asleep.

When she awoke the room was full of pain. She wondered vaguely how she would ever be able to go back to the old ways.

She dragged herself up and went into the kitchen. Mr. Sims had come. She saw that he had heard her story.

"So you are back, Polly," he said, shaking her hand, "well, you're welcome. I expect the old woman's missed you, and I know I have. But I'm rare sorry for your desertment. How some- ever, it's all in a lifetime, as the feller said."

His words were rough, but there was a kind ring in the voice that spoke them.

"Rich kin, fur instance; and Mrs. Sims laughed.

"Didn't you catch nary bean, Polly?" Mrs. Sims asked, helping herself to the bacon.

"Not one," Polly answered.

"Why, when I was a girl, I left a string ov 'em everywhere I went. But I'll say it fur Polly, she hain't much taste fur men."

"Look out fur the quiet ones when they do take a start, ole woman," Mr. Sims laughed.

Polly knew that they were trying to make her forget her mortification. This rough banter was their id'a of lively conversation. She knew that they were making a great effort to entertain her; but it was hard to bear. She thought of the tea table at Hilton—of the happy hours spent there, and in spite of her self, she sobbed aloud.

"Forgive me. I think I am not quite well," she said, when Mrs. Sims looked up.

"Lor, I hope you aint caught no disease and aint goin' to be sick."

"I think not."

"I reckon you'd better git off to bed. You'll feel all right in a day or so." Mr. Sims pushed back his chair and got up from the table. He had done what he could to make the girl feel at home, and he had failed.

Polly dragged herself about the house, listlessly performing her old duties.

"I think she's going like her maw. That kind of woman is easy to kill as butterflies. I don't see what they were made for."

Mrs. Sims was watching Polly feed the chickens.

"I reckon they air all right in their place, and that aint here. Hit's all right fur you an' me, but not fur sich as them," Mr. Sims replied.

"Shucks! You'll have her stuck up worse than ever. She aint no better than me, if she is pretty."

Mr. Sims did not reply. A stranger had stopped in front of the house, and was beckoning to him.

"Does Mr. Sims live here?" the visitor called.

"Well, he sorter stays 'bout here when he thinks he's at home. What can he do for you?" Mr. Sims slouched forward.

Polly, hearing the sound of voices, turned to the gate. With a little cry she dropped the basket of grain and ran forward.

"Dr. Berkley, why have you come?" she cried, her face all aglow with the joy of seeing him again.

He was meeting her with outstretched hands. "And I have found you! Ruthie was right. Ah, little girl, these last have been dark days."

"I know it. I did not mean to deceive you. Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? For running away, do you mean? Well, not unless you consent to be taken back."

Polly's face was rosy red now, but she said, gravely, "That is not all. I was tempted to deceive you. Oh, I was sorely tempted."

"And who has not been tempted. You did not yield! But never mind that, now, I is all past and gone. We shall soon have our little girl home again."

And then turning to the wondering Mr. Sims he explained Polly's unexpected return, and his wish to take her back home as his wife.

"That's all right, sir, if she wants to go, but you can't compel her," said Mr. Sims only half understanding the situation. "This is a pore sort of place fur a girl like Polly, but she's allus been welcome."

To Polly's surprise, Dr. Berkley held out his hand to her rough friend.

"You are the right sort of friend, Mr. Sims," he said heartily.

"Come in, sir. Polly forgot to introduce us, but I reckon you air her sweetheart, and if you are welcome with her, you air with me."

claimed as they seated themselves about the supper table.

Polly blushed. This rough teasing annoyed her, but Dr. Berkley laughed merrily. To her surprise he seemed to enjoy it all. Without any apparent effort he fitted himself to his surroundings, and was the same cheery, courteous gentleman she had always found him.

And the next day there was a quiet wedding in the little western farm house, and Dr. Berkley took his wife away.

Miss Bascom's niece was very ill, so they were spared any special entertainment or gathering of friends after they reached Hilton.

Miss Bascom welcomed Polly in her gentle way.

"The old place was not the same without you, dear," she said kissing her step-brother's wife, and she never again referred to Polly's mistake. A very fortunate mistake, Dr. Berkley thinks it was, and Polly agrees with him.

THE END.

Did You Ever

Try Electric Bitters as a remedy for your trouble? If not get a bottle now and get relief. This medicine has been found to be peculiarly adapted to the relief and cure of all female complaints, exerting a wonderful direct influence in giving strength and tone to the organs. If you have loss of appetite; constipation, headache, fainting spells or are nervous, sleepless, excitable, melancholy or troubled with dizzy spells, electric bitters is the medicine you need. Health and strength are guaranteed by its use. 50c and \$1 at B. F. Henry drug store.

School Report.

Report of Maple Grove school District number 3, township 62, range 17, for month ending Dec. 11; enrollment, male 18; female, 18; total, 36; total number of days attendance by all the pupils, 584; average number of days attendance per pupil, 19; average daily attendance of pupils 29.

HARVEY A. DEVER, teacher.

Report of West Centre district school for the month beginning November 2 and ending December 8. Number of pupils attending, 57; total number of days attendance by all pupils, 880; average number of days' attendance per pupil, 15; average daily attendance of pupils, 44; number of days taught, 20. The following are the names of those who were present every day during the month. Mabel, Lee and Earl Balch, Nellie, Fannie and Frank Darr, Mabel, Leonard and Milton Reed, Clyde Shoop, Nettie Harrel, Charley, Frank and Harrison Truitt, Johnny Highland, Glenn Williams, Harley Vanlaningham, Maude and Ethel Phipps.

CALTHA DOLAN, Teacher.

We wish to say a word in regard to the Monroe Drug Co., manufacturers of Putman Fadeless Dyes. They not only make the best dyes on the market and give you the most for your money, but they actually pay the printer in advance. Mr. B. F. Henry is their agent.

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The Man With a Remedy.

On all occasions of public excitement whether due to social, industrial or political causes, the man with a remedy or a prophecy is to be found at every corner. He may be a wise man or a fool, a statesman or an anarchist, a competent leader of public opinion or a blatant demagogue, but be he one or the other he is sure of a crowd at the corner or an audience in an auditorium. The peddler of nostrums with his pills and balsams, and his list of miracles performed on the blind, the halt and the maimed, always secures the public ear, and what is laying around loose of faith and cash. The blind see, the lame walk and the deaf hear. Men with a crook in the spine, a lazy liver, or a dead kidney, are reconstructed and renewed, and the fame of the medical wizard finds its way into every back street in the city. When he is gone, and the old ailments return, some men privately kick themselves, and others divide their time between the family doctor and the stool of repentance. The colored lights have gone out, and the house fronts that were all gold and glory are once again but smoke-stained and weather beaten boards. The same kind of a crowd, the same type of cheap faith, and the same miracle worker are in evidence on all occasions of public excitement. The ear that never cracks at what it hears, and the mouth that never refuses accommodation to a calf's foot or a whole ox, are in brave array. Men otherwise, of a steel sinewed and practical nature, that could never be tempted with a gold brick or fooled with a plugged dime, are rattled like a crowd on a sinking ship, or in a burning theater. The strangest notions and the wildest of wild cat ideas are accepted as is thirty-six inches in a yard and the rules of arithmetic. Fads that are as thin as rainbows and falsities broad as a barn door are accepted as pure gospel.

Impossibilities as the growth of a beard on a billiard ball, or wings on an oyster, become plastic as putty and as easy as cracking an egg. Statistics that have as little to do with the issues involved as the price of a horse shoe has to do with an eclipse of the moon are believed in as is the Koran of the Musselman and the Bible of the Christian. Camels go through the eye of a needle without injury to their hump or hide. Mole hills that could be covered with a peck measure are mountains with their bald heads in a cap of clouds, and promises that are nothing but bags of wind are believed in with the faith of a child. Under such conditions of receptivity and delusion, the man with a remedy for all ills and wrongs has the opportunity of his life. He is let loose. Fences are down and doors open. Theories spread like oil on cambric, or ink on blotting paper. Opinions exploded long ago furnish gas for new balloons. Old hobbies show up with a new coat of paint, and others crude and evanescent as the work of a soap artist on the mirror of a bar-room spread their panoramic illusions on the public mind. This condition of things, however paradoxical it may seem with an intelligent and practical people, is undeniable. It is a mystery and yet a fact, a paradox and yet a verity.

Individualism is lost in an anarchic mass. Parties and even nations become temporarily insane, and the most momentous of questions and the gravest of issues are disposed of with as little regard to consequences as is a blind mouse in going down the throat of a cat. If behooves all men at such crisis times to do their own thinking. If this was done the man with a remedy would cease to be a public danger. Men would not sneeze when another takes snuff, nor follow the bell whether of a flock of sheep when he goes over the fence into the ditch. What is wanted in the decision of all grave public ques-

tions is robust, broad-shouldered, steel-sinewed, positive private conviction. It is to be confessed that even with a progressive people there is too little of it is kind of manly independence. More of this granite and less of the usual putty is needed in the building up of a great nation. Less of mind slinging and more of candid and unprejudiced investigation would save us the mockery of being a free people with others to do our thinking. If there is anything in history that has majesty it is the sovereign will of an intelligent and earnest people, and what there is of somber tragedy in its events is that of human folly, where the blind lead the blind and both fall into the ditch.

FRED WOODROW.

About Lamps.

The following, from a leading medical journal, is well worthy of close reading:

Who supposed that a turned-down kerosene lamp would breed diphtheria? We are all accustomed to the disagreeable fumes arising from this cause; and when New York was suffering from an epidemic of diphtheria, the Board of Health decided that its presence was to be attributed to the fumes of a kerosene lamp turned down more than any other cause.

Whether or not this be so, it is certainly a mistaken kindness on the part of an indulgent mother to allow a lamp to remain in a child's bedroom with the flame turned down. A turned down kerosene lamp is a magazine of deadly gas, to which the strongest lungs cannot be safely exposed.

Killing Thistles.

The notion that Canada thistles can be killed by mowing them in dog days, when the stalks are hollow, so the water will enter and rot the roots, has been going the rounds of the press ever since I can remember, and it will keep right on being printed, no doubt. Is not the annual growth cast off in any case, whether it is moved or not? And as for the hollow stalks, they are not hollow any further down than is perfectly healthy for the thistle, and good buds are just below, all ready for next year. The least of a thistle's troubles is the rotting of its roots in this way.

What really happens is, that, mowed in late summer, there is a better chance for the grass, which grows and thickens all the fall, perfect matter of course. The hay on new seeded land is often and thus the thistles are superseded. Every farmer kills oceans of thistles in this way as a mostly thistles; the second year they are much diminished; the third there is nearly clean grass, provided, of course, that the ground can produce good grass. Give thistles clean culture and you may mow in dog days all you want to without injuring them in the least.—(E. S. Gilbert.)

The Yellowstone Park in Winter with its glorious beauty and dangerous drifts of snow is graphically described and pictured in the January Demorest.

The Fashion department of Demorest's Magazine is better than ever in the January number. The styles illustrated are smart and modish, and yet practical and helpful, and cover every department of woman's dress.

Many important articles and striking stories have been secured by Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly for publication during the coming year, among them an illustrated paper on "The King's Daughters and Sons," by Louise Seymour Houghton, one of the leading spirits of that great order.

New features are being continually added to Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, and the publishers say that the coming year will show an even more marked improvement in its character than was shown during the past year.

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