

THE COLONEL'S HEIR.

CONCLUDED.

"I CONSENT, sir," he said, after long consideration, influenced, perhaps, by the reflections thus suggested, "to place you in a situation which you certainly do not seem intended to fill. It is chiefly, however, the constraint and servitude of the position—which I cannot alter—that I regret for you. My horses, sir," said the courtly old gentleman, with a courtly old bow, "are gentlemen, too; I think you will find them so. I have not myself considered it degrading to be much among them, and spend much time and care on them, nor has any of my—my family. I am sure they will not be the worse for having a gentleman to wait on them instead of a mere mercenary clown; and though it certainly seems an anomaly, I trust that the same reason will influence our mutual relations."

The anomaly, who had listened respectfully to this disclosure, hat in hand now took his departure, and had the honor of being escorted by the colonel himself to the scene of his future labors.

The stables, which he well remembered, were handsome and roomy, and filled with fine horses; for Col. Hudson's stock was celebrated, and he had in his younger days been fond of racing, and of betting on races—follies which he quite forgot when banishing his nephew for similar crimes. An old Arabian, rather small in size, but of beautiful shape, and spirit unbroken by increasing years, had the best and warmest stall assigned him, and was fed and tended with peculiar care. He had been imported expressly for Hugh in the days when his uncle was proud of him and his horsemanship; but the heiress owned him now, and, as the stableman said, visited him every day, and fed and caressed him with her own white hands. A chamber immediately above, lately vacated by some departed William or Ben, was the coachman's herirage—and thither Hugh transported his trunk; and after administering upon the effects of his predecessor, by throwing an old hat and a flashy cravat out of the window, sat down with Susette pressing close to his side—uneasy in her new quarters—to breathe his native air, and look about him, wondering at the strangeness of the events which brought him there. It was a clean, comfortable place, neat, sunny, and airy—a Paradise by contrast with his squalid city room; but had it been a mere hole or den, it would have been Paradise still to the wanderer, in being home.

His new duties were not heavy or difficult to learn. The ladies usually took an airing every day "for the baby's sake;" but often in a little pony carriage, driven by themselves, or with Col. Hudson and his favorite horses, whose reins he had never yet relinquished to any one else. When for some change, real or fancied, in the sweet spring weather Annie preferred to shelter her idolized infant in the close coach the young driver respectfully handed them out or in, and mounted his box with professional indifference. Both agreed that he did not attempt to assert his superiority to his present position, thereby in their minds establishing it the more; and the wayward heiress chose to use her gentlest words and smiles when she addressed him, as if with womanly kindness intending to soften his servitude, but only succeeding in increasing its bitterness instead, by awakening a sentiment strong enough to have swayed a mind far more firm and well-governed than that of her gentleman groom.

In his restless, roving, robust life, Hugh had hitherto fallen but little under parlor and boudoir influence, and never felt the power of feminine fascinations. He was to learn it now. Thrown daily into the society of a beautiful woman, really his relative and social equal, and whose willful whim it was to treat him as such, and by the graceful sweetness, the high-bred simplicity of her manner, dissolved the distance he maintained between them; he could only yield, and love, and suffer, by honor kept silent and made strong. In the promises exchanged by their dead parents, which pledged them to each other in their infancy by a bond hitherto held sacred in their family, he had a real and tangible claim to seek to renew her romantic, childish attachment to himself and win her from their uncle's inimical protection to his own, to plunge her into poverty and ruin, and compel her to bear the penalty of the faults and follies of his youth. But of such a course the generous scapegrace never dreamed. What he had alone invoked must be born alone; and he did not relax in his resolution, even when he had grown to fancy that something more than sympathy or pity looked at him out of Fontibell's tender, dark eyes.

He learned now to measure time by the hours in which he saw her, the days in which he saw her not; to watch her coming and going, and exercise a secret

surveillance over her actions and pursuits. He knew when she would come into the balcony to tend her flowers, or into the parlor to feed her birds; what time she would spend in the garden, and what at her music, and from what hidden ambush this could best be heard; how she sat sometimes in the twilight at the window, her pure, fair profile clear against the soft spring sky, her chin supported by her slender hand, dreaming or thinking, till some officious servant brought in a brilliant lamp and dissolved the dear picture, showing only her shadow on the lighted wall. He knew, too, the first accents of the cooing, murmuring voice, that thrilled him every morning in the stall below, where she came to pet her pony; but he always lingered, listening in his loft, and never dared enter the stables while she stayed. Not so Susette, who received the heiress' admiring overtures with lady-like condescension, and usually trotted down to receive her tribute of attention, suffering her silken ears to be threaded through those fairy hands, her gentle head to be pressed against that pink velvet cheek; not unfrequently deserting her master to accompany the fair owner back to the house for a romp with the baby, and wondering at his obtuseness in neglecting this chance of enjoying superior society. But Hugh had learned to tremble at the touch of those soft hands; to avoid the innocent, questioning eyes; to be thrown into a fever by the flutter of her light dress, or the sound of her sweet voice approaching; to pass his days in dreams, his nights in restless wakefulness, and know no peace out of her presence or within it.

The country roads were settling after the spring rains, and growing harder, the twilights growing longer, and the young lady of the house resumed her usual summer evening rides, with the new attendant as groom. Perilous rides they were, when she came down fair and elegant in her becoming hat and habit, rested her light hand on his shoulder, left her small foot in his hand in mounting, gave him her pony's bridle or her whip to hold, while she arranged her dress and fastened up her falling silken hair, received the services he rendered with as graceful gratitude as if he had been, not her paid servant, but her chosen cavalier. She treated him as brother, friend, and equal; she made of him the intelligent, pleasant companion he was capable of becoming; she drew him on with a witchery he could not resist to talk about himself—a subject usually delightful to his egotistical sex, but hitherto carefully avoided by one unselfish specimen—his travels, his history, his faults, his failings, his past life and future prospects, were all unfolded before her soft gaze; she was his confidante before he knew it, as she had been in childhood, reserving only the secret of his identity and his love. In vain he strove against this gentle influence, and tried to maintain the distance, mental and physical, which custom demanded should be preserved between them; in vain he resolutely averted his eyes and closed his lips in determined silence, and persistently reined in his chafing horse to the proper and prescribed distance behind her own, as stolid and automaton-like a squire as the sturdy Bill, her last attendant, "who knew his place," and kept it. But she always fell back to her escort's side on one pretext or another, requiring his help to adjust her bridle-rein, to lead her pony over broken ground, to push aside the boughs that threatened to sweep across the path, to pick a wild flower she particularly wanted to wear. If he still remained sternly proof against these innocent advances, she would lift to his face such a bewildering look, half pained, half pleading, as he remembered in her childish eyes, when he first came to Hudson Hills as a boy, and laughed at her odd, old-fashioned name, or failed to give her her own sweet will and way. And then her haughty little head would droop in soft submission to his mood; her lovely, long eyelashes would fall slowly in sad and thoughtful meditation; her coaxing, caressing tones would be suddenly silenced; her liquid laugh would be heard no more till she chose to speak. Proud and pretty as she was, Fontibell was but a spoiled child at heart, and reasoned after the manner of one.

And he? He should not have understood her—but he did. He should not have remembered that he was cousin and lover—but he remembered nothing else; he should probably, in strict honor, have rushed to Col. Hudson's presence, betrayed her secret and his own, renounced his employment forever, or never mounted a horse in her service again. But he was young and impassioned, and did not immediately take this wise course, for, fancying he kept the letter of his vow in governing his words and actions, he rode at her rein and looked in her face; he let his eyes linger and his lips smile; he suffered the natural language of his heart to be spoken through his countenance, and there was a conscious thrill in each clear voice, a happy flush on each young

cheek, as they rode home slowly through the summer silence.

The morning after the third of these delightful excursions, the colonel summoned Mr. Harris to the library.

"There is something I wish to see you particularly about," he said. "Your quarterly account and Hedges', my steward, or overseer, don't agree. Don't misunderstand me, the deficiency is not on your side, I am satisfied. He manages everything, farms my land, sells the proceeds, brings me the returns. I have always trusted to his honesty; half my income passes through his hands; but I begin now to doubt him. He has credited the stables, as usual, with enough provender for a cavalry regiment; but I don't see any signs of such a surplus in your receipts. If you can give me an hour, we'll look them over together."

At the expiration of the hour, the colonel rang the bell and sent for Mr. Hedges. "He is gone down to the city, sir," was the report; "and won't be back for a week."

"He will never be back," said the old man, quietly; "he has fled with the spoils of a dozen years. For half the sum he has robbed me of I disinherited my poor boy. I took this man into my confidence. I fed him at my table, I lodged him in my house, from which I turned away my nephew. What is his crime to mine? The scoundrel! let him go! My brother's grandson is a homeless wanderer—starved or murdered, perhaps; through my hasty anger; I have none left for my unfaithful servant; I think only of myself, and forget the lesser sin in the greater. I was false to my trust—what am I that I should be harsh with others?"

He looked up at a picture which hung above the mantel, with tears in his gray eyes, as they met the earnest and affectionate expression of the vivid brown ones in the portrait. "Poor Hugh!" he said; "poor little Fontibell! she shall not plead in vain." Turning from these he encountered the soft gaze of a pair—how like!—beneath them. The colonel started, and after a moment said:

"You remind me of my nephew, and, I dare say, are in much the same position with your relatives. Perhaps I can help you. I should like to try. Tell me all about it."

A month before, Hugh would have fallen on his uncle's neck and sobbed out his simple confession; but the love of Fontibell lay heavy on his soul, and his sense of honor would not allow him to take advantage of this ignorant generosity. In great agitation he blundered out his story, of which his kinsman was the only person who would not have recognized the hero. The colonel heard him through with deep sympathy and wiped his eyes at the conclusion.

"Cheer up, my dear fellow," said he. "It will all come right—it must—it shall. Your relative has been too severe on your youthful follies. I know what they are, I was young myself. He has treated you badly, though you won't say so. I honor your reserve, sir! I will do my best for you; my nephew, Fred Asten, who will be here to-night, will do his best; he is a lawyer, and may suggest something. In the meantime you will be my manager in Hedges' place, and we will drive over the farm to-morrow. You will live at the house, of course, and take your proper position with my nieces as a gentleman and my friend."

Mr. Asten duly arrived from a four months' business trip, and was eagerly welcomed by his "gentle Annie."

"Your coachman smokes good segars," was his remark, as he returned from a visit to the stables next morning. "He is a very handsome fellow, and looks quite a gentleman. I saw him last night sitting at his window in the moonlight, puffing away with rather a lackadaisical expression on his classical features. You have not been playing 'Aurora Floyd,' I suppose, Miss Fontibell?"

"He looks like Hugh," said the unconscious colonel, heaving a sigh.

"He writes suspiciously like him, I should say, if this is his hand," returned the young lawyer, taking up a document from the table. "These are Hugh's very characters. Why, uncle—"

He was cut short by the door opening and the new steward entering to announce the colonel's carriage. The heiress looked up with a rose flush on her delicate face, and Fred Asten started forward with outstretched hands; but stopped half way in bewildered surprise. There was a moment's agitation and embarrassment, which Annie skillfully covered by proposing to go with her uncle; and shortly after the whole party were seated in the barouche, with the colonel himself as driver.

I don't know whether the ex-coachman—occupied with other matters—had neglected his duty toward the bay horses and over-fed, or under-exercised them; or if Col. Hudson's sad abstraction weakened his usual powerful grasp on the reins; certain it is, that his favorites reared, and kicked, and plunged diabolically at every rod, and finally took the bits between their teeth and ran away

with him. An instant of terrible suspense followed, during which Annie cried, her husband swore dreadfully, and Fontibell called on the name of her cousin Hugh; then a strong arm seized the reins from the bewildered colonel—there was a struggle—a stop; an agile figure sprang to the horses' heads and held them till they became quiet, often beaten down and dragged along by their convulsive resistance; but never relaxing his hold till the colonel came to his side, to whom he relinquished the reins and sank down, bruised and bleeding. Mr. Asten lifted out his trembling wife and baby, and turned to help his cousin; but Fontibell had sprang from the carriage unassisted, and made her way to the body of the fainting steward, over whom she bent like an angel of love and pity.

"Dear uncle!" she cried, "he has saved all our lives and killed himself, I am afraid; can't you forgive him now? Oh! don't you see it's Hugh?"

The prodigal was taken home and laid on the best bed, and would have had the fatted calf killed for his eating, no doubt, had such a diet been good for his broken arm. Who so happy as he, recovering in the bosom of his family, unmindful of the loss of his manly strength, of which he had been so proud; the pain of his broken limb, the bruises and cuts which disfigured his handsome face? The colonel hovered with delight about his recovered heir; the Astens rejoiced over him as over a long lost brother; but it remained for Fontibell to administer the most effectual consolation, which acted upon him like a powerful tonic, when he recovered consciousness on the evening of his accident.

"Dear Hugh!" she said, putting both her pretty hands in his uninjured one and bending her beautiful face above his own, "I always loved you, and I knew you from the first!"

An Anecdote of Ben Wade.

SOON after he took his seat, a Southerner in debate grossly insulted a Free State Senator. As no allusion was made to himself or his State, Wade sat still, but when the Senate adjourned, he said openly, if ever a Southern Senator made such an attack on him or Ohio while he sat on that floor, he would brand him as a liar. This coming to the ears of the Southern men, a Senator took occasion to pointedly speak, a few days afterwards, of Ohio and her people as negro thieves. Instantly Mr. Wade sprang to his feet and pronounced the Senator a liar. The Southern Senators were astounded, and gathered round their champion; while the Northern men grouped about Wade. A feeler was put out from the Southern side, looking to retraction; but Mr. Wade retorted in his peculiar style, and demanded an apology for the insult offered himself and the people he represented. The matter thus closed, and a fight was looked upon as certain. The next day a gentleman called on the Senator from Ohio, and asked the usual question touching his acknowledgement of the code.

"I am here," he responded, "in a double capacity. I represent the State of Ohio, and I represent Ben Wade. As a Senator, I am opposed to duelling. As Ben Wade, I recognize the code."

"My friend feels aggrieved," said the gentleman, "at what you said in the Senate yesterday, and will ask for an apology or satisfaction."

"I was somewhat embarrassed," continued Senator Wade, "by my position yesterday, as I have some respect for the Chamber. I now take this opportunity to say what I then thought; and you will, if you please, repeat it. Your friend is a foul-mouthed old blackguard."

"Certainly, Senator Wade you do not wish me to convey such a message as that?"

"Most undoubtedly I do; and will tell you, for your own benefit, this friend of yours will never notice it. I will not be asked for either retraction, explanation or a fight."

Next morning Mr. Wade came into the Senate, and proceeding to his seat, deliberately drew from under his coat two large pistols, and, unlocking his desk, laid them inside. The Southern men looked on in silence, while the Northern members enjoyed the fire-eaters' surprise at the proceeding of the plucky Ohio Senator. No further notice was taken of the affair of the day before. Wade was not challenged, but ever afterwards was treated with politeness and consideration by the Senator who had so insultingly attacked him.

About Even.

One of the latest pieces of Paris gossip is concerning a gentleman decidedly henpecked, who determined to sup with a party of friends against the will of his wife. He showed unusual determination and she was as fully determined that he should not go. He did not go, his friends missed him, and just for a lark, invaded his residence, where they found him and his wife sitting in their chairs fast asleep. He had given her an opiate, that he might slip away; she had given him an opiate that he might not.

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