

WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

BY MRS. M. E. HOLMES.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

Alice roused herself, she tried to smile. "Aunt Martha is only too glad to get rid of me. She always looked on me as a burden, and—"

"And was glad to see you happily and well married," finished the other; "of course that was natural, was it not?"

Alice's face was white now; her hands clasped together, were cold with the humiliation she was enduring. "She knew how cruel was the woman opposite, and how powerless she was to fight her. The shame which some time overcame her fell on her heart now like a heavy weight."

She saw herself as Valerie thought her—a vulgar, common girl, the relative of people who were bought out of the village, out of the home they had lived in for years, so that their presence should not shock the eyes of the caste, nor recall how their master had sunk in mating with one of their number.

None knew—none could ever know—what an agony of pain and shame lived in the young heart of Roy Darrell's wife. She was utterly—completely alone!

The man for whose sake she bartered her freedom left his home two days after the funeral of his murdered friend.

His mother still inhabited her rooms in the castle, but there was a chasm between her son and her son's wife. She treated the girl with ceremony and courtesy, her wishes were consulted in every way, but the older woman—the proud descendant of an ancient race—refused to eat or be familiar with the girl, who, a few days before, had consorted with farm-help and laborers.

Occasionally the two Lady Darrells met, and the elder woman would always drop a deep courtesy to the shrinking timid form of the younger, but they exchanged no word.

Valerie Ross alone appeared to notice the girl thrown so suddenly into this strange life, but though to the world her overtures of friendship seemed the essence of kindness and good nature, Alice knew to the contrary and always suffered torture during the visits from the beautiful woman.

About a month after Roy's departure, news reached the castle that the Earl of Darrell, his elder brother, a man who had been a wanderer from his home for many years, was dead, leaving no heir, and Roy Darrell succeeded to the title and the estates.

The tidings were communicated to Alice in the most ceremonious manner, but the fact that now she was a countess, and moreover, entire mistress of the castle, did not appear to touch her.

She was growing day by day more wretched as she saw how great a mistake it had all been, and how wrecked her life must be, henceforth passed in the gloomy solitude that appeared to be her lot.

Valerie Ross, standing by the fire, watched her face blanched with pain, and the smile on her lips despaired.

It was almost a pleasure to her to make this young heart suffer. She had gone through such tortures herself when her faithless lover died, that it seemed to have killed all the tenderness and womanliness in her.

Alice roused herself at last. "Have you anything particular to tell me?" she asked, hurriedly, turning to open her book with trembling hands.

"I bring an invitation from the Dowager Lady Darrell to Margaret, Countess of Darrell—an invitation to dine in the Blue Chamber. You will refuse, of course, my Lady Alice. An invitation like you never dine out, you know."

Alice met the merciless glance of those golden-brown eyes. "I accept with pleasure," she replied quietly. "Pray, convey my thanks to Lady Darrell. At what hour does she dine?"

Valerie drew herself up and frowned. She had come to torment and trouble this lowborn girl, and now found herself treated with almost as much hauteur and indifference as she herself could assume.

Where did this girl get her manners and ways of speech? queried Valerie, angrily. She was no ordinary common creature, but there herself with a grace and ease that might well have become a queen.

"There will be guests," she observed, coldly, smoothing an imaginary wrinkle in her glove. "And you will pardon me, perhaps, but Lady Darrell is very particular about one's garments so I must see to that."

comprehend, that Roy Darrell's low-born wife loved him. "He has not written to you?" she broke in. "Ah, that was remiss! I thought he would have fixed to dine with you instead of his mother. But I expect he forgot all about that—at least, he said nothing touching it in the letter I received from him this morning."

Alice's joy died as suddenly as it had been born. She flinched as though a blow had been struck her, but she said nothing, and Valerie Ross walked gracefully from the room, feeling that she had triumphed easily.

Left alone, Alice flung herself down by the chair and buried her face in her hands. "Forget me!" she whispered. Yes, that is what she says, and she is right. He can do nothing but hate me. And I—oh, what shame is on me! I cannot help him. I must remain forever a burden and a tie."

She rose and passed the room. "How cruel she is. What shall I do? If I remain away she will triumph, and if I go—But I must go." She stood silent, her arms crossed over her breast; a struggle was tearing her young heart. "I will go. I must be brave; better her stinging words than her contempt. If she thinks me afraid she will taunt me forever with it, and that would kill me. No; I will—I must do this, whatever happens."

She rang the bell quickly, and Davis appeared. "Light the candles in my room, Davis, and unpack those dresses that came the other day from London. I dine with the Earl and his mother to-night, and I must look well."

The maid bowed and left the room with a mind full of wonder and admiration. Never had she seen the young Countess look so beautiful, yet she was changed.

There was something different, something that told she had passed from a girl into a woman, that life had begun with all its storms and joys, its trials and happiness.

In the Dowager Lady Darrell's apartment the waxen lights glimmered in profusion from their silver stands, and shed a soft, rosy glow from beneath their silken shades.

Valerie Ross was alone, she was walking to and fro the whole length of the room, her long train trailing on the carpet, her rubies and diamonds gleaming on her neck and hair like fireflies in their brilliancy.

She had a frown on her brow, and her beautiful mouth was set and hard. "She was thinking of Alice, and the thought brought vexation."

"But for her," she muttered, "how changed it would be. How blind I was. But Estace wove the veil round my eyes. Fool that I was to believe him and lose my chance with Roy. Roy did love me, but does he still? Two months are not a lifetime. We shall see. And that puny creature shall yet learn the extent of my power."

The dowager came in slowly while she was still musing. Valerie smoothed the frown from her face as she advanced to meet the older woman.

"I have not heard the level on the gravel," said Roy's mother, as she sank into her chair; "it is getting late—nearly eight, and he has not come."

"You are over-anxious, dear," replied Valerie. "Does Roy bring anyone with him? I fancy I heard you mention something about guests."

"Yes, he will be accompanied by two gentlemen—one, Lord Radine. I think you know him. The other is a man he met in Italy, a Count Jura—from Roy's letters, a most delightful companion. I am glad, Valerie, he has brought guests, otherwise the life here at first might prove too trying."

Valerie turned at the last words. The doors had opened, and a soft rustle told that someone had entered. It was the young countess. She had heard the last sentence from her husband's mother's lips, and her face whitened a little as she put her own construction on it.

Lady Darrell had been thinking of Captain Rivers, his terrible death, and the maddening anxiety that had come to Roy, when she spoke. She rose from her chair, and bent low before the girl's figure.

"Welcome, Countess," she said, haughtily, and coldly. Alice courtesied low, while Valerie gazed at her in speechless vexation.

Roy, before he took his departure, had given his wife to understand she was expected to comply with society's laws, and had left instructions with Davis, a most experienced lady's maid, to have everything obtained as befitting her mistress's position.

The woman had obeyed him well. Dresses and many numerous things were sent down from London, though, until this evening, Alice had seen none of these marvels, contenting herself with wearing none but the simplest and most inexpensive garments made by Davis's own fingers.

Valerie was beautiful, but this girl was peerless in her strange young loveliness. In all her long life Lady Darrell never recollected a more purely patrician face, and she marveled at it.

"Have you any recollection of your childhood?" she asked, involuntarily. "Did you always live with your aunt? Which side are your relations?"

Alice looked up, strangely surprised. "I can remember nothing clearly," she replied; "but I have a dim recollection of a large house, and a beautiful face that seemed to bend over me; then came the long years spent with Aunt Martha, and all her angry words."

"What a pity you cannot remember anything!" drawled Valerie, who was watching the older woman's interest with jealous eyes. "We might have discovered a secret or lost father—you might have developed into a queen; as it is—"

"As it is, I am only Alice—Alice the farm-girl," the young countess finished quietly.

Lady Darrell's face clouded at the name. "Roy is late," she said again. "He is here," announced Valerie, and at that moment the door was thrown open, and Alice saw once more the man who had stood beside her that bygone morning and vowed his life to hers.

Roy kissed his mother and introduced the two guests, then turned to Valerie, and the girl standing by so quietly saw his eyes dilate as with a glow of unrestrained passion and happiness, and noticed their hands lingered as they clasped.

Alice's heart seemed suddenly to grow cold, but there was no sign on her face, and the next moment Roy, Earl of Darrell, was before her, greeting her with a low ceremonious bow.

Valerie was radiant, she was laughing and chatting to Lord Radine, but she was watching the husband and wife, and knew her triumph was yet to come.

Roy uttered no word to Alice. After his bow he turned from her to his mother and began to converse about his journey.

The other guest joined in the chat, but while he talked his dark eyes were fixed on the girlish figure in the rich black dress standing so lone and deserted.

He turned to Roy. "I crave, my lord, that I may have the honor of presentation to your beautiful countess."

The Earl started, his face flushed. "I beg your pardon; of course, Countess Darrell, let me introduce to you the Count of Jura."

Alice bowed again, and scarcely glanced at the man before her. She was suffering an agony of shame and pain.

"He wishes me dead," said her heart over and over again; "dead, so that he may be free. Oh, why did I come? Why can I not leave it all? It is too much for me. Their scorn and cold contempt will kill me!"

Count Jura watched her expression deepen into sadness with a strange interest in his dark eyes.

"So this is the young wife," he mused. "But, mon Dieu, how beautiful! And he has no eyes for any one save Valerie—how dangerous she looks, her eyes flash like daggers! Poor Lady Alice! She is your deadly enemy—a foiled jealous woman is Valerie Ross, beware!"

So ran his thoughts as he spoke easily to the girl, and led her in to dinner.

Roy followed with Valerie, and a sigh reached Valerie's ear, telling plainer than words how bitter was his sorrow, and how great a burden she was to his life and happiness.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

An "Oh" That Was Answered. In the far West, where the sun habitually sets amid certain clouds of red; where distance between drug stores is often great and correspondingly irksome; where the buffalo wanders aimlessly and deplores the good old times; a young man twanged his guitar and sang blithely:

"Oh, that a breeze—"
It was a tenor cantate of pure quality and the phrasing was immense.

"—would waft me to her side."
Even as the words died away upon his lips a funnel-shaped cloud came caving from the northwest and the next thing he knew he was in the back yard of his prospective father-in-law.

Muttering something about quick returns he rose and brushed the dust from his clothing.

America's First Recorded Eclipse. The first observations of an eclipse of the sun taken by American astronomers were made on Long Island, P. nobiscot Bay, on October 27, 1780. On that occasion a party from Harvard College, headed by Prof. S. W. Hollis, LL.D., having obtained the consent of the British general who was in command of Castine, landed at Bounty Cove and made the house of one Shubael Williams their headquarters. The totality of the eclipse was visible only at P. nobiscot Bay and vicinity, a fact which would make such an event one of the great importance of the day. It is but justice to add that the observations made by the Harvard scientists were very successful, notwithstanding the fact that their instruments were very crude and inaccurate.—N. Y. Press.

Explosions. It is singular, in these days when explosions in air are thought to bring rain, that no one has spoken of a 16th century experiment to stop rain by the use of gunpowder. Benvenuto Cellini tells us in his memoirs that when Margareta of Austria entered Rome he rained heavily. "I pointed several large pieces of artillery in the direction where the clouds were thickest, and whence deluge of water was already pouring; then, when I began to fire the rain stopped, and at the fourth discharge the sun shone out."

If the plumbers should strike this winter it will be the first instance where capital has struck.

THE OLD LOVE SONG.
Play it slowly, sing it lowly,
Old, familiar tune!
Once it ran in dance and duple,
Like a brook in June;
Now it soars along the measure
With a swirl of tears;
Dear old voices echo through it,
Vanished with the years.

Bubble, ripple goes the love song
Till in slowing time,
Early sweetie grows complacent
Flows its every thine;
Who sees her lean the music
Life and death to find,
Know that love is but beginning
Full love is old.

Play it slowly, it is lovely
As an evening hymn;
Morning gladness hushed to sadness
Fills it to the brim,
Memories lie in within the music,
Stealing through the bars;
Thoughts within its quiet spaces
Bite and eat the stars.

THE UNEXPECTED.
"I don't care—I am perfectly happy. Fate cannot harm me, I have dined today," said Frank.

"And I am happy also," said Nellie. "Don't see how I could be more so."

Neither was looking at the other. Each tried to get absorbed in a book, but certainly neither was absorbed; for on an average, during the entire afternoon they had made remarks similar to the foregoing at least every ten minutes.

"Did you say, Nellie," continued Frank, a trifle doubtfully, "that there was enough in the house for supper and breakfast?"

"In quite rare, dear, that there is enough for supper, and perhaps for breakfast. But we shall not want much breakfast. You know that you have often said that you did not care for breakfast, and really I can get along on nothing at all."

"I don't see what we have to worry about, then, do you?"

"Indeed I do not. I think we have every reason to be perfectly happy."

"—are of supper-to-day and breakfast-to-morrow—I should say we have every reason to be thankful."

"—es," added Nellie. "Think of the number of people in the world who are sure of neither supper-to-day nor breakfast-to-morrow. Take the case of a cannibal."

"Just what I was thinking," broke in Frank. "He is dependent on the chance call of a missionary—surely a precarious existence."

"Oh, Frank, you are joking!"

"Proof that I am perfectly happy," responded Frank.

"While I am perfectly happy, I do wish that the firm had not failed, and that you had not lost your position."

"Yes, and while I am perfectly happy, I do wish that our parents had not objected to our marriage."

"The idea that we, who are the children of rich parents should both of us be left to the disagreeable expedient of pawning the few wedding presents that we received!"

"—rather the disagreeable expedient of pawning the last wedding present that we received—now—now—now—you are going to cry, little wife."

"Indeed I am not," said Nellie, struggling bravely with her tears. "I think we are very lucky to have any presents to pawn."

"And so do I," added Frank, "very lucky."

Just there he was interrupted. There is no better time than an interruption to explain the condition of affairs in a romance, so I will take advantage of the present one, which may be the only interruption in my story. Frank and Nellie Hayward had married against their parents' wishes. Their parents, though rich, refused to help them in any way, or even to receive them in their homes. Frank was brave and Nellie was sensible. They determined to do for themselves, and at the very outset made a solemn compact with each other that, come what might, they would consider their love for each other compensation for all the ills of life.

For a time things went very well. Frank obtained a position that enabled them to live very comfortably in a furnished flat. But, as in the life of everyone else, the time came when luck turned against them. The firm that employed Frank failed, and he was unable to get another position. The little money that he had saved from his salary was soon exhausted. They were forced to the disagreeable expedient of pawning such things of value as they possessed, and finally they had come to the end of even that resource.

Never during all their troubles had either acknowledged to the other that they were anything but happy. The crisis, however, had just been reached. They were in a quandary. It was a question whether they would be forgiven by their parents under any circumstances, and they were not at all willing to acknowledge they had made a mistake.

But there was an interruption: it was a knock at the door. Nellie rose from her seat, and Frank was about to do so, when it occurred to him that the chances were that it was a creditor, and he thought it hardly worth while to go to the door. He was rather surprised though, when at the invitation of his wife the door was opened by a queer old man who looked at each of them over the rim of his glasses for a full minute before he spoke.

"Mr. and Mrs. Hayward, I believe?" he said at length.

"Yes, sir," replied Nellie. "Will you take a chair?"

"Ought to have been named Waverly, I suppose," he said, chuckling to himself, as he took the proffered chair. "I suppose your visit is rather unexpected?"

"Decidedly," said Frank, curtly.

"Well, it is the unexpected that always happens," said the old gentleman. "I was rather surprised to hear you through the door, accidentally, of course, assuring yourselves that you were very lucky and very happy and all that sort of thing."

"May I inquire what business it is of yours?" asked Frank.

"None, except that it assured me that I had found the right place," answered the old gentleman.

"What place were you looking for?" inquired Frank.

"The house of a happy married couple," said the old gentleman.

"You have found it," said Frank and Nellie together.

"Ah! It is quite a curiosity. I suppose you will pardon an old man like myself, if he asks a question. I am a student of human nature, you know, and perhaps this visit may redound to your advantage."

A GEORGIA SUGAR BOILING.

Simple Charms of a Rustic Treat Which the Natives Find Full of Sweet Delight.

When the frosts begin to tinge the leaves the young people of Southern Georgia are on the alert for news of the first sugar boiling. Many a gay straw ride is arranged and plantations far and near are visited, for no distance is too great and no road too rough to deprive them of a pleasure so peculiarly their own.

To a Northerner the scene has all the charm of novelty. Great stacks of sugar cane are piled round a grinding mill, which is propelled by horse power and fed by a couple of negroes who, with great rapidity, handle the long stalks, which are quickly crushed to pieces, the juice escaping through a narrow channel into large barrels prepared for it. This juice of a sickly greenish color and to a Yankee tastes as sickly as it looks, but the natives consider it nectar fit for the gods, and their liking for it is stonily in evidence as gobletful after gobletful disappears. A few yards distant from the mill is an immense cauldron, under which a great fire is kept burning. Into this juice is poured, and after about three hours boiling it is run off into a trough, a rich brown syrup.

It is at night the scene assumes its most interesting aspect. The surrounding darkness is intensified by the deep glow of the oak fire, which throws fantastic shadows and gives a weird look to the figures of the negroes, who hover around like uncanny spirits.

The presiding genius of the cauldron on one plantation was a coal black African, whose grotesque appearance was heightened by a peculiar head-gear made of carpet. As, armed with a long handled ladle, he stirred the foaming syrup, which spluttered and hissed and leaped in brown cataracts, one could almost imagine him a wizard of fairy lore, muttering fierce incantations over some deadly potion. A torch dimly seen through clouds of vapor, cast a feeble light on the boiler and lent an additional strangeness to the scene.

As soon as the syrup is run off the visitors cluster round the trough like bees round a honey pot. Each has a "paddle," which is a strip of cane bark, and all scoop up the rich yellow foam which floats on top of the syrup. Unlike the juice, the foam wins its way into favor at once, and very ridiculous it is to see the daintiest damsel contentedly sipping out of a trough with twenty or thirty people and enjoying every sip which finds its way to her little red mouth.

The skimming of the syrup are put into a barrel. About the third day fermentation begins and the result is cane beer, a very agreeable beverage.

A New Form of Hash. How to get rid of scraps of meat and small amounts of food that will accumulate in the refrigerator, was solved by my John, when I was too ill to be out of my bed, and had no help. He brought me a small amount of a very appetizing dish, and when I insisted on knowing what it was, he said, "Norwegian hash," and so we have called it ever since. As the receipt differs according to what I have on hand, I tell you how I made it last week. I had a little roast meat and some gravy, a mutton chop, a slice of fried liver, two links of smoked sausage one Hamburg meat ball, some potato that had been fried raw, three boiled potatoes, one sweet one, about two do an Lima beans, and a tomato. I ground them all through my meat grinder, adding an onion, salt, and pepper to taste. Make it up in any shape you please—round cakes, croquettes, cylinders. Whatever I happen to have I use, but always trying to have some tomatoes and some smoked meat, such as a little ham or dried beef. If I do not have gravy, I make a little white sauce with butter and flour, and add enough to make them hold together. If I want them very nice I dip them in egg and bread crumbs, and fry them as I would croquettes. I have never had any one taste them and not like them, and they are never twice alike, as one never has just the same left-overs. Scraps are not inviting warmed over by themselves, but will make the foundation of a good meal if used in this way.—Housekeeper's Weekly.

Coffee as a Disinfectant. Numerous experiments with roasted coffee prove that it is the most powerful means not only for rendering animal and vegetable effluvia innocuous, but of actually destroying them. A room in which meat in an advanced degree of decomposition had been kept for some time, was instantly deprived of all smell on an open coffee roaster being carried through it containing a pound of coffee newly roasted. In another room exposed to the effluvia occasioned by the cleaning out of the dung pit, so that sulphurated hydrogen and ammonia in great quantities could be chemically detected, the stench was completely removed in half a minute on the employment of three ounces of fresh roasted coffee, while the other parts of the house were prematurely cleared of the smell by being simply traversed with the coffee roaster, although the cleansing of the dung pit continued for several hours after. The best mode of using the coffee as a disinfectant is to dry the raw bean, pound in a mortar and then roast the powder on a moderately heated iron plate until it assumes a dark brown tint, when it is fit to use. Then sprinkle it in sinks or cess-pools, or lay it on a plate in the room which you wish to have purified. Coffee acid or coffee oil acts more readily in minute quantities.—Merchants' Review.

People are so much alike, they should be better friends.