

# WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

BY MRS. M. E. HOLMES.

## CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

Valerie bit her lip. Again this girl followed her. She thought to have triumphed over her ignorance in this case.

"Can you ride?" she asked insolently.

"Yes," answered Alice, quietly.

"You are a paragon of perfection indeed," sneered the other woman as she withdrew.

Alice gazed after her sadly. She pitied Valerie now from her heart, and thought she knew what made her so bitter.

The interview in the grounds had shown Alice that Valerie had a trouble that was indeed very heavy, especially to a nature so proud as hers.

She called Davis and put on her habit. Ever since she could remember Alice had ridden, the only difference being that she had sat her steed without a saddle, and unaccompanied by a long skirt, and now she was checked by society garments and ways.

She took her gauntlets and whip, and gathering her habit in hand, opened her door.

To her astonishment, in the corridor, she came upon Count Jura walking slowly up.

He turned with an exclamation as he perceived her, and Alice thought she saw him put a paper hastily into his pocket.

"I crave pardon, madam; I mistake my way. Is this not the corridor to the guests' wings?"

"No, you are quite wrong; this leads only to my apartments."

Alice spoke coldly; indeed, she felt annoyed.

"I am indeed distressed, countless," he observed, courteously, "but I will take my departure at once."

He bowed again and turned towards a door which led into another chamber.

"Still you are wrong," said Alice, smiling and pointing with her whip. "Go straight along, and you will reach the grand staircase. Then you will soon find your way. The door leads to the empty part of the castle—the 'treasure-rooms,' as the servants call them. Yes, now you are right."

"An return, madam!"

Count Jura stooped down the corridor. "Treasure-rooms!" he repeated to himself. "Paul was right, and yet among all the treasure of the castle she is to me the rarest."

Alice made her way slowly down the staircase to the central hall. She felt excited and almost happy. She always had that strange flutter at her heart when near her husband.

Valerie, looking like a goddess in her perfectly-cut habit, was standing in the doorway, beyond which the horses were waiting. A man's form was beside her, and Alice noticed with a cold sickening sensation how low he was whispering and how eager was his look. She came slowly up to them, and caught a few words:

"When I think of it, Valerie, I am nearly mad to know what I have lost. My life is a misery to me tied as I am to—"

Valerie heard Alice's footsteps, and she drew her hand away from his.

"It is getting late, we had better start," she said, quietly, giving him a look full of sympathy, and glancing another of triumph at Alice as she hurriedly went down the steps.

Lord Radine now joined them.

"May I put you up, Countess?" he asked, eagerly.

He was a young man, and Alice's fair loveliness had won his warmest admiration.

"If you please," she answered slowly. She was still hearing her husband's voice, passion-laden, breathing his love and misery into Valerie's ear.

The Earl selected Valerie to mount, and then the four rode slowly away.

"We don't want any groomers," Roy, said Valerie, authoritatively.

So the Earl waved his attendants back.

Lord Radine glanced every now and then at his companion's face.

"Who was it said Darrell had married a farm-girl?" he mused. "What a cruel scandal! This woman is peerless! Countess," he said aloud, "are you in any way connected with the Arnolds—you know who I mean; they are a very old family—the head is always called the Master of Arnold?"

Alice had blushed, but now she was pale.

"I have no aristocratic connections, Lord Radine," she answered quietly; "I am only a farmer's niece."

"But you have their face. The Arnolds are a strangely lovely family—forgive me for paying you so gauche a compliment, but you are fairer than was the Lady Edith Arnold, whose portrait hangs in my mother's room, and who died years ago, and she was supposed to have been the greatest beauty of her time."

"I have no family," repeated Alice. "I was only a farm girl. You will have heard how I came to—to marry the Earl; before then I was neglected, ill-used, and miserable. I even taught myself at least, the village schoolmaster helped me for some time, but he died two years ago, and then I had no one to assist me."

"I do not care what you were," cried Lord Radine, fervently, reaching for her small hand and carrying it to his lips; "but to me you are the embodiment of everything that is perfection."

Valerie turned at this instant, and the Earl looking back, also saw the young man's act of courtesy and admiration.

"My Lady Alice progresses," remarked Valerie, with a sneer. "Roy, you must look after your wife."

Lord Darrell did not answer; he unconsciously tightened his hold on his reins, and his brows met in a frown.

Something in the sight he had just seen vexed him strangely, and for the first time since his return, he beheld Alice's beauty in all its power.

Valerie saw the frown and her heart leaped.

"He is angry with her," she said to herself.

She checked her horse and the Earl did so also.

dine rode rapidly down the path to the right.

Alice, whose cheeks were flushed with modesty at Lord Radine's outspoken admiration, reined in her horse a few paces away.

Valerie chatted on, taking no notice of the young countess; but, strange to say, the Earl was watching his wife with a feeling akin to amazement and admiration.

How well she sat her horse! How golden and beautiful was her hair! What dark long lashes framed her eyes!

Last night he could see nothing but Valerie. The woman he loved; now his whole attention was turned on the woman he had married.

Valerie noticed Roy's changed expression, and jealous; burned in her breast.

"I am, Roy, Lord Radine is waving to us," she exclaimed, and, he moving to her side, they put their horses to the trot down the lane.

Alice felt a choking sensation in her throat and without another thought, she wheeled her horse round and cantered wildly in the opposite direction.

She had lost all control of her feelings; she burst from her lips.

The poor young wife was utterly, terribly unhappy.

She knew not what to do or where to go, but she felt that something must end the torture she was enduring, or she must die.

She cantered on, unheeding and plunged in her thoughts, till the trembling of her horse caused her to think of him, and as she came to a sort of thicket, she loosened rein and let him stand.

She must have ridden some distance, for even to her, who knew the country well for miles around, having walked in it bygone days, this place was strange.

She looked round at first in surprise; then, a little alarmed, she began to feel weary from her agitation and exercise, when the sound of a chery whistle was born to her ears, and the next minute a footstep rustled over the dying leaves, and a tall well-built young man came towards her.

He stopped, amazed, as he saw the lovely girl on horseback, her golden curls floating from their rough contact with the wind in picturesque confusion round her face and neck.

"I beg your pardon, can I help you?" he said suddenly, lifting his hat.

Alice hesitated, then meeting his frank boyish face, she answered:

"If you will, please, I have lost my way."

"You are in the Abbey Woods we are close to the old Abbey—the ruins are just beyond those trees."

"The Abbey?" exclaimed Alice in surprise. "I thought I was quite in the opposite direction—they have taken the wrong path."

"You have become separated from your friends?" asked the young man, glancing again and again at her.

"Yes."

"Well, perhaps I can assist you. Do you want to find the Abbey?"

"I think I had better go there, as they will in all probability make their way to it," replied Alice.

"Let me lead your horse. May I introduce myself? I am Frank Meredith at your service."

"And I call me Alice," said the young countess, quietly.

"Miss Alice! what a pretty name! Do you like this part of the country? I am staying down here with friends. I have been shooting, as you see, though the sport is not good. Nothing seems to live round the old Abbey—even the birds and insects desert it. It is dead, indeed."

Alice listened to Frank Meredith's easy chatter quietly. She agreed with him in his estimate of the spot. Never had she seen so weird and strange a place, and as they came in full sight of the ruins she could not repress a shudder which the young man noticed.

"Yes; is it not dismal? It looks like a great grey ghost. I really don't think I should care to venture into its gloomy vaults, even in broad daylight."

"Who owns it?" asked Alice suddenly.

"My friends did tell me, but I have forgotten. I will ask them again when I go home. Now, Miss Alice, shall I leave you here alone, or will my presence annoy you if I remain?"

"Oh, stay, please," cried Alice, her nerves unstrung still by the terrible strain put on them at the time of Eustace Rivers' murder; "perhaps they will not be long."

"I wonder if I shall see you again," said Frank Meredith after a pause, while he stroked the horse's neck; "I am staying here another fortnight."

"You may, perhaps," answered Alice; she was drawn toward the young man by his frank ways.

He seemed little more than a boy to her, though he numbered over twenty years.

"It seems a strange thing to say," went on the young man quickly, "but if ever you want me to do anything for you, if I can, I will."

Alice blushed a little, then paled.

"Why do you say this?" she asked hurriedly.

"I cannot say. I only know I would give all I possess to be your friend. You don't look happy. I should like to help you."

Alice hesitated, then held out her hand.

"You shall," she said, simply. "I have not one friend in the whole world. You shall be the first."

"Oh, thank you!" he cried. "If you want me, write to me there or there; be sure if I can I will always come," handing her two cards.

Alice took them quietly. Some curious intuition seemed to come over her that she should need his aid, but she said nothing, and the next instant the sound of voices came to their ears, and the Earl, Valerie and Lord Radine appeared before them.

"What a fright you have given us, Lady Darrell!" exclaimed the latter as he rode quickly up.

"How did you miss us?" asked Roy, coldly of his wife. "You have come much the longest way round."

"I enjoyed my ride," Alice replied quietly and coldly too.

"I am so sorry you did not see me beckon," continued Lord Radine. "But now let us explore the ruins."

"By all means," cried Valerie. Then in a lower tone: "Who is this gentle man?"

"This is Mr. Meredith, who was kind enough to show me the way," Lord Darrell explained, Alice, quietly.

The Earl spoke a few cold words of thanks to the young man; then, with an expressive glance at Alice, Frank Meredith bowed and took his leave, still plunged in amazement, yet strangely pleased to think he was her friend.

"A very pretty boy!" exclaimed Valerie. "Don't you think so, my Lady Alice?"

"He looks good and honest," Alice replied, speaking her thoughts.

Lord Radine looked sulky, and Valerie's attention was turned on the woman that Roy was gazing at with his wife with an expression of strange interest.

"Could it be possible he was beginning to admire her, after all?"

"She must work this away, at all hazards."

"Now for the ruins! Roy, give me your hand."

The Earl was beside her instantly, and she jumped to the ground. Lord Radine put up his hand to help Alice.

"I don't think I will come," she said, drawing back.

"What, Lady Alice afraid?" observed Valerie with a sneer.

"If you are nervous remain out in the air, by all means," said Roy, almost contemptuously.

When he was not looking at Alice, he forgot her charms, and only remembered her as a bit on his life.

"I will stay with you," whispered Lord Radine.

"No, I will go," Alice said, firmly, her face growing white beneath Valerie's sneers. "I am only tired not frightened."

She slipped from her horse, and gathering her habit in her hand, hurried after the others.

Lord Radine led the reins of the four horses to a stout branch and followed her.

At first Alice could see nothing, as she crept through the damp, noisy ruins of what had once been noble halls, but the forms of those two on ahead, lost in one another's presence, but as they penetrated into the gloomy vaults, her strange sense of fear returned, and she shuddered again and again.

But for her guide, she would have turned back and fled into the open air, but Valerie's taunting voice came to her ears.

They climbed up the broken fragment of stone steps to what had been a tower, Roy tenderly helping Valerie over the rough stones.

Lord Radine went first up the steps, then bent to give his hand to Alice, when glancing round nervously, she thought she saw something glittering from a dark corner beneath an ancient archway.

She checked the cry that rose to her lips, and glanced again; this time she saw plainly the something that glittered were two dark eyes set in a pale, grim face.

She drew her hand swiftly from Lord Radine's hold.

"I can go no further; I am tired," she said, hurriedly, and turning, she fled white and trembling back to the entrance.

"My Lady Alice is frightened after all," sneered Valerie, with a short laugh.

She glanced at his wife's pale face contemptuously, then turned a look of love and admiration on the proud, beautiful woman beside him.

Lord Radine hurried up to Alice.

"You are looking quite startled and ill, Lady Darrell," he said, in consternation. "What was it—did you see a ghost?"

"Yes, I saw a ghost," Alice answered faintly.

She did not add that the ghost was a man of flesh and blood with an ugly scar across his face; she was silent beneath Valerie's scoffs and cruel sneers, forbearing to answer them as she might have done, for in that ghost in the dark corner she had recognized Valerie's disgraced and hated brother, Paul Ross.

## THE DIME AS A TIP.

Few feel more the prevailing tendency not to shell out cash in a Coal-Oil Johnny style than the waiters in the fashionable hotels and restaurants, but they do not get much pity. Why the average waiter in such establishments should look with scorn and disdain upon a dime is hard to determine. It is more than \$100 can earn in a day in the best possible investment, and no good reason exists why the waiter should get anything, as full 10 per cent. additional is charged in such establishments for the service. The trouble mostly grows out of the passing reign of wild extravagance in which fools who squandered their money have been in the habit of posing as great personages by tossing the waiter a dollar bill. There is not much of that one now. It must be apparent to any one that a quarter given at every meal to a waiter in a little while runs to an amount that is more than most people get in interest from a very large sum of money, and few can afford it along with all other expenses. For instance, there are few \$10,000 houses in Philadelphia at present which bring their owners \$1 a day after taxes and other expenses are paid, and there are plenty of people who are not getting over 3 per cent. for their money.—Philadelphia Times.

**What the Little Boy Thought.**

The lady had given the small boy an apple and he had said nothing in recognition.

"What does a little boy say when he gets anything?" asked the lady insinuatingly.

He hesitated a moment.

"Some little boys," he said, "says 'thank you'; some says much 'obliged,' and some just keeps thinkin' how much better an orange is than an apple."—Detroit Free Press.

**Nearly every mature woman** knows the nature of man, but she will not admit that he has a right to be that way.

## DREAMLAND.

To the dim realm I wandered through,  
The shadow land of sleep,  
Came many souls of lovers true,  
A troop unknown to keep.

There came the host of dreamers to rule  
His phantom kingdom o'er,  
And those white and wonderful,  
And ghostly things were.

And as I wondered, lo! amidst  
The spirits free among,  
Unto all those whose love was blest  
The fairest flowers he flung.

Then I caught his garments floating beam  
In shimmering clarity,  
"King of the daylight is for them—  
And hast thou sought for me?"

An instant as I staid him there  
He looked upon my face,  
Before his garment's fold of air  
Melted from my embrace.

Then, swifter than a shadow flies,  
He passed, and no flower fell,  
But his eyes were as my lost love's eyes,  
Looking a last farewell.

## THE TELEPHONE GIRL.

"Well," said Mr. Roland Wayne, when he came into his office, after several days' illness with a wretched neuralgia, which affected him whenever the east winds blew, "you got some one for the telephone—did you, Burns?"

"Yes, sir," the head clerk replied. "The young lady has been here since Tuesday."

"Young lady?" exclaimed Mr. Wayne, testily. "Why did you get a woman? A broker's office is no place for a woman."

"Why, you see, sir," said Burns, with an obvious embarrassment and apprehensive glances toward a light-wood partition, behind which the new operator sat in concealment, "you did not say anything about that—only that Mr. Richards had his hands full with the wires, and that there'd have to be some one to take charge of the telephone, so I—"

"That is just like you, Burns," said Mr. Wayne, stamping back into his private office. "Any one else would have known better."

"Why, you see, sir," said Burns, defensively, as he followed him back, "I didn't think it would make much difference. The young lady is very capable, and she seemed to want the place so badly. She is very poor, sir, and supports her mother. I know something about her, you see."

"Oh! some flame of yours, I suppose, Burns? Very nice arrangement for you, no doubt."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Burns, in an offended manner. "I am a married man."

"By Jove! so you are!" said Roland Wayne, with a laugh. "I had forgotten that. Though," he added humorously, "that doesn't always make a difference. Well, try her, anyhow. Where's the mail, please?"

"I tell you what, Burns," one of the other clerks observed, when that individual finally emerged from Mr. Wayne's office, "the boss is in a fly humor, isn't he?"

"He's all right," Burns answered warmly. "He has given me a ticket to Atlantic City and two days off."

The clerk whistled.

"Why, I thought he was going to take your head off."

"You don't know him. I am sure it is no shame to a man whose nerves are always twinging with neuralgia if he loses his temper now and then."

Roland, meanwhile, had taken up his pen and was writing a lengthy account of Brisket's new deal in P. Y. and M.

"If the rat jumps this way," he said in conclusion, "the bears have got him sure. Danbury is on our side. He has given Brisket the cold shoulder, and if I'm not mistaken, somebody will get woefully left. I don't intend that it shall be me. If everything goes as I think it will I shall pocket \$200,000 and then I am going out of the brokerage business. It doesn't suit me and my health is so poor, that I must get away somewhere or I shall go to pieces."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said a soft, tremulous voice at his elbow. "I am Miss Archer, Mr. Wayne."

Roland dropped his pen and rose politely as he saw a slight, graceful figure in black standing before him.

"Be seated, Miss Archer," he said with a smile, which no man could have withheld when he saw the fairness of her young face and that shy, sweet flush on her cheeks. "What can I do for you?"

"I am the telephone operator," she began rapidly and with a nervousness she could not conceal. "I—I could not help but hearing what you said to Mr. Burns a little while ago, and—I came to say that if you need only say so."

"Not satisfied?" Roland echoed in manifest confusion. "Well, really, you know I have not given you a trial, and as to what I said a while ago I am sorry, Miss Archer. I am afraid you will have to set it down to neuralgia. I am quite willing to have you stay if you will."

"You are very kind," she said, facing and unclenching her fingers in some confusion. "I should like to stay—indeed it is very important that I should have this position or something else. But if what you say is true—if a broker's office is no place for a woman—I—I think I would rather not stay."

How Roland Wayne abused himself when he thought of his careless words, and then marked how her lips quivered, how her eyelids drooped to keep back the tears!

"I think I spoke too hastily, Miss Archer," he said. "A lady's place is where she makes it. We are not a lot of savages," he added with a warm smile. "If you remain here I think I can assure you courteous and considerate treatment on the part of every one in this office. If such is not accorded you, you have only to inform me, and I will know the reason why."

"You are very kind," said the girl, with a bright fleeting smile. "I should like to stay. I really cannot afford to resign my position."

"Then stay by all means," said Roland. And to the effect of his clerks he got up and opened the door for her when she went out.

After that he caught himself listening to the soft yet distinct voice in the other room, holding conversation over the phone.

When he was at home with an attack of neuralgia, and had to communicate with the office by wire, he often remarked how well he could hear Miss Archer's voice when all the others had ebbed away into a babel of sound.

"Burns did a fine thing when he got that girl into the office," he mused one day when he was kept a prisoner very inopportunistically. "I don't know what we should do without her—now especially. It's bad enough as it is, I couldn't have had this attack at a worst time. But I guess everything is all right. Danbury's good for any amount this side of a million. By Jove, though, it would be rough on me if anything went wrong now! It would clean me out completely."

He was waiting up and down the room trying to repress the nervous agitation which attacked him.

"Seven o'clock!" he said, glancing at the time. "The office is closed long ago. In another hour Brisket will sign over those bonds, and then—hello! as the shrill alarm of the telephone summoned him across the room. "There is no one at the office," he thought, taking up the receiver. "I wonder what's up now? Hello! Who are you?"

"Helen Archer, Mr. Wayne," said a voice he knew well.

"Why, what are you doing at the office this time of night?" he asked involuntarily.

"I am not at the office—that is, not at your office. I am at the Central Station. Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"I have something important to tell you. Our wire got crossed with Mr. Brisket's to-day and I could hear every word said over it. I could not understand what they were talking about, only Mr. Brisket was talking to a man named Danbury."

"Danbury?" exclaimed Wayne in great excitement.

"They were talking about bonds, and said a lot of things I couldn't comprehend, but at last your name was mentioned."

"This will put Wayne in a hole," Mr. Brisket said.

"Yes," said Mr. Danbury, "it'll bury him alive. It's a good thing he's shelved to-night. There is no danger, I suppose, of his getting wind of this before 8 o'clock?"

"No danger at all," said Mr. Brisket, "if you don't go back on me. There will be a new deal all around and we'll boost the market over Wayne's head."

"Do you hear distinctly what I say?" she interrupted.

"Yes, yes," Wayne said excitedly. "What else?"

"Nothing more that I could understand, except that they were to meet at the Continental Hotel to-night. I came here because I was afraid to talk from the office. I thought some one might get on our wire, and I have you here direct. That's all. Good-by."

For Roland Wayne to dress and leave the house was the matter of a very short while after he had received this message from Helen Archer. His illness and the danger of exposure were quite forgotten.

He was present, very unexpectedly to Mr. Brisket and Mr. Danbury, at the evening conference at the hotel.

It was a stormy scene that ensued between Roland Wayne and these two men who, had combined against him—a scene from which the young broker issued, pale with exhaustion, but still triumphant.

What had passed no one knew, but the next day the street was fairly electrified by the news that Wayne was closing up his affairs to go abroad.

"That will throw us all out," said Burns gloomily.

Helen Archer heard the news with a sinking heart. She was late that night in going home, having some small errands to attend to on her way, and moreover, her steps lagged with the consciousness that she had bad news to carry to her ailing mother.

"You are late, Nelly," Mrs. Archer said, as she came in. "This gentleman has been waiting to see you for some time."

It was Roland Wayne who rose and held out his hand warmly.

"Miss Archer," he said, "I have come to thank you for the service you did me last night. Thanks to you, I have saved my fortune from absolute ruin. If it had not been for your prompt action I should have been a beggar to-day."

"I—I had no idea it was so serious as that," Helen said hastily. "I am very glad I could do you such a service."

"I shall never forget it," Roland said, with a steadfast look into her soft, gray eyes, "and I have learned a wholesome lesson. When I went into the brokerage business I did not dream that so much of my intercourse would be with men wholly devoid of conscience or principle. I am sick and disgusted. Last night I had expected to make \$200,000 by one transaction. To-day I find myself thanking Heaven and you that I got out without losing anything. I am tired of such chances. I do not feel that I can enter into contracts with men like Brisket and Danbury without compromising myself, and so I have decided to get out altogether."

"I understood that you were going out of business," said Helen, quietly.

"Yes, I am. I shall close up the office as soon as possible."