

WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

BY MRS. M. E. HOLMES.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

The old woman's face darkened. She hoped the victim was in some way glided, and that she might have reaped a small harvest on her own account. "That will do," she answered. "I will help you. Listen. It is growing dusk, in another hour it will be dark. You are now in the Abbey ruins. I will return to you by that time. In the meantime plait up your hair, take off that white robe, put on this dress—it belongs to my daughter; your own cloak will do. You will find water in that ewer. Be very quiet in your movements. I will give out that you are asleep—do you understand? Then we will creep out on her own account. To the ruins, and you must walk alone to either Nestley or the town on the other side of Moreton."

Alice seized the old woman's hand and pressed her lips to it. "God bless you," she said brokenly. "I can never thank you enough. Only let me get away from this horrible place and I shall be a free man."

The old woman drew away her hand, and slouched away chuckling. Alice, left alone, fell on her knees and uttered a brief prayer of thankfulness. As yet she scarcely realized the full meaning of her position, but the glimpse of Count Jura's face had filled her mind with horror and dread, and she grew until it became almost a mania.

Her brain was clearing now. She recalled the night before the dinner, Roy's admiration and words, her success, the Count's villainy, and then Valerie's visit to her room.

After that try as she would, she could not recollect what had happened. "I must have been carried away in my sleep, and yet I should have awakened during the journey. This is in the Abbey ruins; it is a long distance. Ah, I remember—her handkerchief—the strange overpowering smell. They dragged me!"

She covered down in horror and shivered. Then she thought of Dame Burden, and her coming deliverance roused her.

She hastily set about her preparations with beating heart. She pulled up her mass of golden hair, coiled her face into the refreshing cold water, and cast off her wrapper of white silk for the dingy brown gown.

As she did this she suddenly remembered Frank Meredith and the two cards he had given her.

She searched her pockets, and her heart fell—they were not there. "Who had taken them? What was she to do once she was free? To whom could she go?"

To return to the Castle was impossible, for she felt with agony that disgrace must have touched her name.

She drew her cloak on, and pulled the hood over her head, then sat down to think till the old woman came back. As the moments drew nearer to the hour of her escape, her excitement and agony of fear banished all other feelings.

What did it matter once she was free of these horrible vaults? "Would the woman keep her promise? She grew pale with dread. If not, she would try to creep out alone, or else she would die of fright."

But even as she was thinking this, Dame Burden came back. She was covered with a cloak, too, and held out her hand.

"Now dearie," she said in a hoarse whisper, "I'm ready; the coast is clear." "Oh, thank you—thank you. Why are you so good to me?" Alice murmured faintly.

"Because I've got a daughter myself," the old woman replied hypocritically. "Now, come on. Stay, here's a sovereign, you have no money with you, I know; hold it tight. There, you needn't thank me; I ain't done nothing to shout about."

"Nothing," whispered the girl, you are saving me from worse than death!" She slipped a thin white hand into the old woman's one, and glancing fearfully around, was led out of the vault into the outer one.

All was still as death; to Alice the whole place was terrible. She could hear the beating of her own heart; it sounded strangely in her ears.

Dame Burden lifted her hand to pull aside the curtains, and Alice saw for the first time the glittering ring on her thick brown finger; a feeling that she recognized it came over her, even in her fear, but she could not remember rightly.

They passed through the curtains into the stone passage; the dim light vanished, they were in utter darkness; save for the touch of the old woman's hand, the sound of her heavy breathing, Alice could have imagined it was some hideous dream.

At last they stopped, a guest of fresh air greeted them from round a corner, and as Dame Burden moved on again, Alice saw, to her intense joy, the branches of trees waving to and fro in the night-wind.

In another moment they had mounted the steps, and Alice was free. She spread out her arms as if to embrace the sweet air of Heaven, and heaved a great sigh of gladness.

Roy, Earl of Darrel, was free, and yet, for one touch of his hand, one glimpse of his face, one single gleam of hope that he believed in her, she would have gladly sunk down and died.

But this would never be now; some terrible strange dream had separated her from the Castle; she felt that she could never return; and Valerie—crystal, gorgeous, handsome Valerie—would be his wife.

Her head sank till it touched her hands; tears were burning in her eyes, but she forced them back, and then the sound of some one caused her to turn.

The tread was heavier than the old woman's. A vague presentiment of coming evil fell on her; she clasped her hands, and in another second stood face to face with Count Jura.

The scream died on her lips, her heart was suddenly frozen with fear and hatred of this man.

"Do not shrink from me, fair Countess," said Jura breaking the silence. "I will do you no harm."

"What does it mean?" breathed rather than spoke Alice, drawing back with a repulsion.

"What do you want with me?" "Nothing disagreeable, I hope. I wish to help you."

"To help me now? Was it not through you I came here? Help me! Have you not scolded enough, Count Jura? What I have done that you should have treated me so shamefully?"

"You use hard words, my lady Alice," laughed Count Jura, quietly, "but they cannot harm me. Used you shamefully? Why, you insult our home and all its luxuries. Come, be friends."

"Do not dare approach me!" gasped Alice, shrinking from his outstretched hand. "I loath, I detest you! You are a coward to treat a woman as you are treating me! Let me go—the very sight of you is torture!"

"Go? Where to? Back to the castle—eh?" Count Jura opened a little box, took out a match, and leisurely lit a cigar. "That would be foolish, my belle; you would only exchange very comfortable quarters for an iron cage—in other words, you would be imprisoned immediately for robbery."

"Robbery!" repeated the girl, blankly at first, then the truth dawned on her. "Ah, I see—I understand. I know all. That ring spoke plainly."

"What ring?" demanded Count Jura roughly. "She wore on her finger. I knew it well, yet my memory would not help me. But now, now I see all with hideous clearness. You are a thief, a—"

"Hush!" The Count's hand closed over her lips. "Another word," he whispered savagely, "and you will repent this! Yes, the Castle has been robbed—robbed of plate, of diamonds, of its Countess. Roy Darrel will see none of his treasures back again. It is just you should know how we stand. I have taken you to my hand you are tied; henceforth you are my slave, to do as I will. No words, no screams, no weakness. Listen. I am flying from here this night, leaving the whole gang—and what for? For love—love of you. We shall start at once for that golden land I sketched for you last night; once there, all will be well. Give me your hand. Be silent; I say; my mind is made up. I love you; I will not renounce you. Leave your pleadings to another time; they will not avail. Confound it, do not kneel to me! We are delaying, and delaying is dangerous; it means—"

"Many awkward things," hissed a low, clear voice from the darkness. A form stood behind the Count. He loosened his hold on Alice, who staggered to her feet distraught with fear.

"Myra!" muttered the Count. "What brings you here?" "The fiend, perhaps," answered Myra defiantly. "Ah, you thought to play a trick on me, Master George; but you should have known me better. Coward! You thought to put me into Moses' keeping, while you broke your word with me and carried her off. Give me your hand," she added abruptly to Alice. "You have failed, George; the game is mine. I have but to whistle, and in an instant Sam and Paul will be on you and find out your treachery. Stand aside, man! You will find me difficult to tackle to-night."

The Count took no notice of her threat, but seized Alice in his arms, tried to force Myra aside. With lightning deftness she kept her right hand free, searched in her bosom for a scarf, which she had saturated with a drug, and while he twisted her left wrist, causing her acute agony, she pressed the scarf to his face.

There was a suffocating cry—a sort of sob. Alice felt his arms loosen, and the next instant the man fell heavily to the ground at their feet.

Alice staggered back, as Count Jura fell at her feet. "Have you killed him?" she said in a whisper of dread.

"Killed him!" repeated Myra, gazing at the fallen man bitterly. "No; only drugged him. See," she held out the scarf. "We are never without chloroform; it is our own best weapon."

Alice recognized the faint odor. "Ah, I see now," she murmured. "She drugged me with that." "Kill him!" said Myra moodily; "why do I not strike him dead? He has killed me. Coward—traitor—liar! But come, we must go. You can trust me," she added abruptly.

For answer Alice carried her hand to her lips.

softly. We shall find the cart waiting round this corner. He had laid his plans well.

Alice shuddered. "You have saved me," she cried softly. "I can never thank you enough."

"Wait till we are out of danger. We have heaps of difficulties to face you know nothing of."

"I will pray for help," Alice murmured. Myra made no answer.

Silently, with bated breath, the two girls crept through the long grass. They found the cart, as Myra had predicted. With great dexterity she hoisted Alice in, mounted the seat, and the next minute they were flying swiftly along the deserted lane to Moreton, the opposite direction to Nestley, leaving Count Jura stretched still senseless on the ground, with the Darrell Jewels beside him.

CHAPTER XV. Valerie Ross gazed with moody brow after the retreating horsemen. She had played a dangerous game, and was not yet out of the maze.

What if Roy should meet Count Jura? Or if Alice should see Roy and scream?

She grew pale and then laughed. It was absurd; she was growing a coward.

Had not Jura sworn he would start out on foot? And was she not free forever of the sight of the beautiful girl's face of her rival and the dark sinister one of her brother?

She mounted the staircase and made her way to Lady Darrell's room. Here, she felt, she had one secure friend and ally. Pride would trample all other feelings under foot.

Lady Darrell received her quietly, yet a cautionary. She was prostrated by the blow that had fallen on Darrell Castle; though she made no sign to Valerie, by the knowledge of the grief her son was suffering, unlike Valerie had anticipated, she did not judge Alice harshly, but even thought of her kindly, and could not dispel a vague feeling that the poor young wife was in danger somewhere.

Meanwhile, Roy and Frank Meredith rode on quickly; both were silent. Hope was glowing in Roy's breast; the news that Alice had evidently carried away the cards, with Frank's address on them was a ray of light in the grim darkness. They seemed to reach the ruins on wings, so swiftly did they ride.

"You know the place well," Roy remarked with half a smile, as Frank eagerly pushed his horse on in the nearest path. "Though I have lived at the Castle all my life, I never visited the ruins till the other day."

"They have a strange fascination for me," Frank answered with a laugh. "Does no one ever come here?"

"No; the villagers shun the Abbey, they say it is haunted. Even the owner never comes, but I fancy it is not fear of ghosts, but specters of sorrow that keeps him away."

"Well, it is gloomy enough for anything," Frank exclaimed as they reined in their horses, and gazed at the wreck of what had once been a noble pile of masonry. "I must confess I think Geoffrey has fallen on the wrong track this time, for even burglars would shun it; and supposing they did think of it as a hiding-place, what part could they choose? It is all so exposed."

Roy gazed round with a strange thrill at his heart; the vision of Alice's sweet, fair face, with the wondrous eyes and trembling lips, rose before him, and seemed to plead for help.

Frank Meredith must be right; she had not wronged him, her husband. She was wronged herself, perhaps in danger.

He turned hurriedly to Frank, with his face white to the lips.

"Something tells me here," he said in a low voice, "that you are in the right. I have a vague presentiment that she is in danger. What shall we do? It is terrible to think of."

"Let us ride round to the other side," Frank said, soothingly. They moved on over the thick grass and weeds, and glanced from side to side, but nothing met their gaze save desolation and decay.

Suddenly, with an exclamation, Frank slipped from his horse, and picked up something that lay on the grass.

"What is it?" exclaimed Roy, alert at once.

"A sovereign!" Frank held it up. "That proves conclusively that someone has been here. Of course it may be a stray visitor, and not the man we chased; yet you say no person ever comes here?"

"So the tradition runs," answered Roy, taking the gold coin, a flash mounting to his cheek. "This looks like a clue, Mr. Meredith."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Old in Experience. It is a grave little woman who brings home your washing every week. She wears her hair in a childish pigtail, to be sure, and her skirts do not hang much below her knees, but her face is that of quite an elderly person. You often wonder what age she is and also what age she considers herself. One morning you find out he looks a little graver than usual, and comes without your laundry. She delivers herself of this explanation without any pauses.

IN THE SHADDER, I'm a settin' in the shadder, Down in the middle lane, An' my heart's a feelin' tender, As I listen to the strain; Or the boobylink a sign, Like his heart was full of grief, While memory is a sign, Me, just like a bumblebee.

Long ye're ago we set here, My duty an' an' an' an' An' a fust, niver a skin pair You'd see a city ever see, We'd meet er in the event— Next night we'd come again, But now 'in some a' gins, an' all for Mary Jane.

Tell because she died and left me, She didn't go that way, For if I sh'd had heret me, I'd not have much to say, But she left me in the winter, When the joys begin to ebb— Then she writ me she's gone 'far far married to the spite."

So I'm a settin' in the shadder, On the middle in the lane, An' my heart's a feelin' tender, For she never came again, An' she's a feelin' tender, More'n twenty times away, Since Mary Jane, she left me, On that dark December day, —G. W. Gleason in Cincinnati Tribune.

MY STRANGE PATIENT About two years ago there came to me a tall, handsome fellow, who gave the name of George Griffiths. He had a fearless eye, a cheerful, even genial expression, an exceptionally well-modeled, aquiline nose, and a splendid mustache, trimmed and tended, evidently, with scrupulous care. There is no obvious reason, certainly, why he should require my services; there was no possibility of making him better looking.

"I hear that you are a specialist in dermatology," he began, after I had greeted him with the usual formality.

I admitted the soft impeachment. "Well," he went on, "I want you to perform a surgical operation on me. I want my nose altered."

I expressed my surprise, and assured him that, in my humble opinion, his nose was best left alone. But he disputed this proposition, and insisted that he had reasons for being weary of the aquiline and for craving a protuberant, as possible to that with which nature had endowed him. Seeing my curiosity, and possibly not wishing to be deemed a madman, he proceeded to explain them to me.

"After several years roughing it in Texas," he said, "I have come back rich, and there is nothing to prevent my enjoying myself but the pestering attentions of relatives whom I had hoped to have done with forever when I went abroad. But I cannot escape them or their importunities, and so, however eccentric you may think me, I must enlist your services. I presume there is no danger in the operation."

"No danger," I replied accepting his explanation as that of an eccentric man, whose affairs, after all, were no business of mine, "and very little pain—practically none, in fact, but you must keep in doors for a few days after it is over. When and where shall I call upon you?"

"Could you not operate here, and now?" he asked.

"Impossible. Your journey home would not be without great risk."

"But could I not stay here?" Could you not accommodate me for the short time necessary? Doctor, I could and would pay you liberally for the service. Consider, if I go home, my identity would be again revealed to those from whom I desire to conceal it."

This speech, one would have thought, would have aroused my suspicions, but it did not. The man's frank and open expression disarmed me entirely, and I could but look upon him as I had done previously, simply as an eccentric individual. It so happened that I had a spare room. I could not regard the question of remuneration with indifference, and so, to cut a long story short, I consented.

For the purpose of more conveniently operating I suggested, somewhat timidly, the sacrifice of his beautiful mustache. To my surprise, he assented eagerly, and was for the application of the scissors and razor forthwith. You would scarcely credit the difference the removal of this artistic hairsuit appendage—"the crop of his years," as he jokingly described it—made to my patient. It displayed what had been concealed before, his mouth, and the sinister expression of this was such as to effectually nullify the honest gentility of his upper face. In fact, the removal of his mustache constituted as I promptly told him, sufficient disguise to baffle any number of inquisitive relatives. But he insisted on the nasal operation nevertheless. His motto was evidently "Through!"

Well, I performed it, and when, six days later, George Griffiths left my house with nothing but a rapidly healing and almost invisible scar to blight the straight nose which now adorned his face I would have wagered my pocket of instruments to a two-penny penknife that the most observant of his previous acquaintances would never have recognized him.

About a week after my eccentric patient's departure the particulars, so far as they were known, of a remarkably brutal murder were made public. The body of a lady named Bates, elegantly stabbed to death, had been discovered in a house in a London suburb where she had resided with her husband, who had now disappeared and whose portrait and description were now freely circulated by the police. A brief amount of attention to these published details was sufficient to convince me that my patient, George Griffiths, was the criminal.

I lost no time in communicating what I knew to the authorities, by whom, it must be said, my story was received with some incredulity. You see, a special branch of surgery is

but little known to the public, and it was the opinion of the police that the murderer had left the country some time before Mr. Griffiths had quitted my house.

But a few months ago, happening to be on a visit to London, whither I had gone on a brief summer holiday—and having in a way largely succeeded in dismissing from my mind the events above related—I was startled to see, seated at a table in the Gowerthaus in that city, enjoying the strains of the talented orchestra, my no longer mysterious, but now dreadful acquaintance, George Griffiths!

My duty, I decided after a moment's reflection, was plain—to denounce and deliver him to the authorities.

Accordingly, therefore, least he should leave before I could have him arrested, I explained myself as well as I was able to the nearest official. He looked and was unbelieving. So, too, were the others whom he summoned to hear my story. That part of it which referred to the operation was received with a smile; and the rest of it was that so far from effecting my patient's capture, I was myself lightly ridiculed as a mad Englishman.

But I could not allow myself to be daunted. I considered my clear duty, viz., to deliver a foul murderer up to justice. I determined therefore, to renew my acquaintance with him there, and then to give him no inkling of my knowledge of the truth, and to communicate once more with the English police, while continuing to keep him under my own surveillance in the Saxon capital.

When, with a polite bow, I approached and spoke to him, he recognized me at once; I could see that, though at first he pretended not to know me. We had a glass of beer together, and spoke of many matters of general interest. I flattering myself that nothing in my conversation or bearing gave him the slightest ground to suspect me.

That same night I wrote a long letter to the London police, again stating my certain knowledge that this man, changed though he was, was the murderer of Mrs. Bates, and suggesting that they should forthwith send over to Dresden an official armed with information as to other distinguishing marks on Mr. Bates' person besides his aquiline nose and heavy mustache.

During the next few days I became very intimate with my ex-patient, and in pursuance of a scheme I had formed invited him more than once to bathe with me from one of the floating baths. This he cheerfully did, being an admirable swimmer. On the fifth day from my writing to London an answer arrived in the person of a stalwart detective from Scotland Yard, who informed me that the real Mr. Bates had, as I suspected, the distinguishing marks which could be verified; among them an anchor tattooed on the left forearm, which I had myself, of course, noticed while we were bathing together. To satisfy himself before acting on the warrant he had brought with him, the detective, Mr. Hanway, it was agreed, should join our bathing party on the morrow—a simple and not disagreeable preliminary to the contemplated arrest.

But alas! for the schemes of mice and men! We called together at Mr. Griffiths'—alias Bates'—rooms in the morning and found him with some correspondence. "If you will wait for me half an hour or so on the terrace," he said, "which your friend will find very pleasant, I'll join you for our swim in about half an hour." Suspecting nothing, we took our leave, and waited for him, as he had directed.

But we waited in vain. Whether the features of my friend, Mr. Hanway, were known to him, or whether there had, in spite of my care, been anything in my manner to excite his suspicion, I cannot say. Subtle it that we remained a full hour on the terrace, and then returned to find him—gone.

Whither, we could never trace, and I have never seen him since. From that day to this he has baffled the skill of the police of two countries, and it is my belief that if he is still alive he has again persuaded some guileless surgeon to operate on him and once more alter the outlines of his features beyond recognition.—London Million.

What Causes Thunder? The generally-accepted theory of the cause of thunder never satisfied me," said a well-known physician. "It seems to me that, instead of being caused by the vacuum produced by the electric bolt going through the atmosphere, it would be more plausible to attribute it to the reverse of contraction—to expansion. I mean that the facts attending the phenomenon of thunder are such as to warrant my putting forth the theory that the cause of it is the explosion of the oxygen produced by the action of the electricity upon the air. One of the arguments in favor of this theory is the great amount of ozone to be found in the atmosphere after a thunder storm. Then, if it was concussion of the air rushing into the vacuum that caused the noise, heat would be produced, whereas after every peal of thunder you will notice a sheet of rain falls, showing that instead of heat being produced the atmosphere must get colder to produce the great condensation. I can not conceive how electricity passing through the atmosphere could create a vacuum great enough to make a noise like thunder. This theory came to me many years ago, before electricity was so generally used. Now, the fact of being able to transmit electricity through a solid iron without even heating it seems to justify my theory regarding the formation of a vacuum."—Pittsburg Dispatch.

LITTLE TRAVEL ON FRIDAY.

How Popular Superstition Affects Railroad and Steamship Business.

Much ridicule has been poured upon Thirteen clubs, Friday clubs, and other associations formed for the purpose of dealing in a practical and pleasant way with some current superstitions. General Walseley, who in a recent pretentious military criticism included Dessaix, the hero of Merengo among the Generals who accompanied Napoleon to Russia, has written a flippant letter to a Thirteen club in London to say that he loves to cherish the pretty superstitions of his childhood. Against this false sentiment it must be said that some of the current popular beliefs are positively mischievous in many respects.

Not a transatlantic steamship company has Friday among the days of departure and until quite recently none of the coastwise steamship lines had put the unlucky day on its list. It would be highly desirable for the ocean mail service that some of the steamships should leave Atlantic ports on Friday; but while the owners are doubtless exempt from any superstition on the subject they are obliged to defer to an absurd popular notion. Else they would be apt to find a very small passenger list, and possibly experience some difficulty in obtaining a crew. Railroad statistics show that there is less travel Friday than on any other secular day of the week. Experienced travelers are so well aware of this that they sometimes do not take the trouble to secure a Pullman ticket Friday, as they are pretty sure to find an empty berth.—Philadelphia Record.

A Nemesis of Two Centuries Ago. About forty miles above Buenos Ayres there is a large green island in the La Plata, which in colonial days was the horse ranch of some wealthy nabob. The animals usually became so numerous that there was not grass enough to feed them properly, and as there was no demand for their export the owner determined to reduce their number in a most barbarous way viz: By setting the grass on fire during the dry season. The result of this method of reducing stock was a little more complete than he anticipated, and every horse on the island was burned to death, except the few that ran into the mighty river which hemmed them in, and were drowned. Afterward the stench was so unbearable that for many weeks navigation on the La Plata was almost entirely suspended. After a while, when the grass grew up again, the owner bought new horses and attempted to start afresh. But they all died soon of a strange disease never heard of before. He tried it again and again, always with the same result, for, singularly enough, every horse that has been placed on that island since that wicked conflagration has died from the same mysterious disease. To this day, nearly two centuries later, not a colt has ever been foaled there, and although various breeds of stock have been tried, in a few weeks not one of them is left alive. Then a superstitious terror seized the people—a sort of nightmare, maybe—and for sixty years or so nobody set foot upon the accursed island. Nowadays it is used as a cattle farm, for horned cattle are not subject to the mysterious malady; but there are no horses there.—Fannie B. Ward.

The Way to Get Old. Take, again, bodily ailments. To the same and eternal question, "How are you?" the wise old man allows himself but one answer. "I am very well." He knows perfectly well that his innocent deception, if deception it be, does no one. Perhaps, for of self-consciousness we have enough and to spare, that the remembrance of his fortitude, pigeon-holed and forgotten perhaps for long years in the mind of the listener, may come forth one day to hearten that same listener along the cruel way when it shall be his turn to tread it.

For so are accounts carried forward, and not always to the wrong side of the page; and, if it is true that the sins of the parents are visited on the children, it is equally true that the lustre of their virtues shines on long after the darkness has covered them. Is he of those who desire pity for their failing power? The surest way of getting it is to keep silence.

Almost as important and almost as much neglected is the care for personal appearance. After sixty, vanity of the person should be carefully cultivated. After sixty, coxcombry in a man and coquetry in a woman become cardinal virtues. Can it be said that the old as a rule so consider them?—The Contemporary Review.

Langball for the Girls. After the handball contests the girls turned their attention to the unique game of langball. There are two teams. The team that are out are stationed around the floor where bases are located.

The batter hangs by the hands from flying rings. A football is pitched in at a distance of about five paces. The batter kicks it and then starts to run around the bases. The girls bunt with their feet very scientifically. Not all of them can bunt, but none want the bunt abolished. Recently the Academia won by 9 to 0. Miss Brooks of the victorious team made a home run, and Miss Houghton stole second in great shape. Miss Frazier, the agile and efficient assistant to Dr. Pettit, made a three-base hit, but was put out on the way home by being hit by the ball—the way a put-out is effected.—Brooklyn Standard Union.

The meaner a man is, the easier he is insulted.