

OUR STORY TELLER



THAT UNLUCKY KISS.

DR. CHILTERN did not go to the hall without misgivings. He was aware that Miss Denison would be there—indeed, he knew that her presence was the magnet which attracted him. The girl was the daughter of Lady Denison. His infatuation was absurd! Yes, he saw the situation, the folly of his attachment, but he had fallen in love very deeply indeed, and his reason had not been strong enough to combat temptation, albeit he condemned himself for yielding to it.

She noticed his approach with a gratified smile, and the next moment he was greeting her, indifferent to the warning glance he had detected on the part of her mother.

"I hoped I should find you here," he said, "and yet I doubted it."

"Why?"

"Because I hoped it so much."

She laughed and unfurled her fan.

"You always say pretty things. The knack ought to bring you a fashionable practice, Dr. Chiltern."

"I wish it would," he answered, "that or something else. A fashionable practice would be very welcome just now. As a matter of fact, I am thinking of throwing up what I've got and looking for an opening in pastures new."

"You think of leaving England?"

"I am considering it. Will you give me a wait—perhaps it will be our last, you know?"

Their waltz was over and he had led her into the conservatory on the pretext of discussing his projected departure.

She leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes a moment. When she opened them she met his own bent intently on her.

"Tell me all," she said softly, "you are not really going away?"

"Not if you wish me to stay!"

"If of course I do not like to lose my friends."

"I am not your friend! Miss Denison—Ethel—you know—you must have seen—how dear you are to me. Darling, you are all my world! I am a poor man. I never meant to speak. I have nothing to offer you, I can only beg you to wait; but if you will wait, O, my dearest, I will worship you all my life. Answer me—are you offended?"

"No," said Miss Denison faintly, "I am surprised! I did—I did not know you cared about me like that."

"And are you sorry?"

She shook her head.

There was an instant in which he foresaw Paradise. Then they both realized they were engaged, and that there would be the devil to pay when her mother knew it.

"Your mother must be spoken to," he said ruefully, "I am afraid she will hardly be pleased."

"I will speak to her first," said Miss Denison, "I will prepare her for your

visit. Come to-morrow afternoon Philip!

His pulse throbbed triumphantly and he kissed her.

"Nothing shall part us, Ethel?"

"Nothing," she said firmly.

He presented himself at the house in Curzon street nervously, and was ushered into the drawing room where Lady Denison greeted him with a stately politeness which he instinctively knew forboded ill.

"My child has been telling me of the—"

—the compliment you have paid her, Dr. Chiltern," she began. "What a pity—what a great pity—you should have been so imprudent! Believe me, I regret it more than I can say."

"I confess that I scarcely expected you to be delighted, Lady Denison," he replied, "but I do sincerely trust you will not refuse your consent to the engagement. I think I have a fair share of ability, and I am in a profession which, as you know, has rich opportunities to offer."

"I hope you will do well," she said, "and that my daughter to engage her-

She was a decidedly pretty girl, despite the too golden hair and the art she had invoked for her complexion. She put her head coquettishly to one side with her eyes sparkling at him, and leaned slightly forward, her hands resting on the table. He noticed that they were provoking eyes, and that the hands were small and daintily gloved.

Miss Denison's cab stopped with a jerk outside, and she descended, and rang the bell impulsively. The house-keeper answered her:

"Dr. Chiltern has not come in yet, I think."

"I will wait, please."

She turned the handle and advanced a step into the room. Chiltern was kissing the chorus girl at the exact moment.

Then he saw her and there was a pause that appeared to last a lifetime. It was broken by the rustle of the intruder's skirts as she withdrew, and by a stifled oath of Chiltern rushing to overtake her in the hall.

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Denison, icily, "but in the hurry of our leave-taking I forgot to say something. I must beg you to return my letters, and—I have brought you back your ring!"

Peculiar Cipher.

A cipher is a means of communication in which words or combinations of words have a peculiar significance known only to the parties interested. It is of value in two ways. First, by its use important information can be transmitted secretly. Secondly, in telegraphing, much money is saved by the use of single words which mean whole sentences. But that the use of a cipher requires judgment is illustrated by the following incident:

A few years ago a prominent oil-producer of Pittsburg was putting down what is known as a "wild-out" that is, a well in a territory that had never been tested for oil.

He was keeping the fact a profound secret, in order that, in case he got a good well, he might without difficulty secure all the leases he desired in the vicinity. He was on the ground himself, watching with great interest the indications. Everything pointed to success.

Two days before the well was expected to "come in," he was unfortunately called home. Anxious about the result, he arranged with his contractor to telegraph him as soon as the drill reached the sand. He knew, however, that secrets will sometimes leak out of a telegraph office, and so he told the driller that the sentence, "Pine trees grow tall," would mean that he had struck oil. The driller seemed to understand the matter, and promised to do as he was ordered.

The mingled satisfaction and vexation of the producer may be imagined when, two days later, he received the following telegram:

"Pine trees grow tall. She's squirting clean over the derrick."

His hope that he should have no competitors for leases was disappointed.—Youth's Companion.

A Curious Home.

At the intersections of streets where electric arc lamps are hung is a curious bit of city bird life. The lights are covered by big metal cones, inside of which a board crosses holding the bar that suspends the lamp. One day the man who replenishes the lights with carbons, lowered the lamp to the street. While he was putting in the carbons a hen sparrow flew about his head chirping angrily. A crowd was attracted by the novel sight and when the people got near enough they saw the sparrow's nest on the board inside the cone and in it three young birds with gaping red mouths. The lamp man attended to his business as though it were nothing strange.

"Is that a sparrow's nest?" asked the man who was always wanting to know.

"No, it's a man in swimming," replied the lamp man, sarcastically, for he had evidently answered the question before.

Later he said that almost every lamp cone in town had a sparrow's nest inside it. At first the lampmen tore them out whenever found, but the sparrows would rebuild the nest in a day or two and the men gave it up and let them remain. The sparrows find a high, swinging, airy home in the cones safe from cats and bad boys.—Kansas City Star.

Syrup in Tank Cars.

The sight of a tank car for oil is so common that no attention whatever would be drawn to it, but a tank car for molasses attracted widespread comment a day or two ago as it moved through Philadelphia over the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad. These cars carry about 5,000 gallons, which is equivalent to 60,000 pounds. They are loaded through a dome in the top and emptied by means of an outlet in the bottom. There is a coil of steam pipe inside the tank for the purpose of heating the molasses, which makes it run freely and enables the car to be emptied in from twelve to fifteen minutes. Under the old system of shipping molasses in barrels, holding from 500 to 600 pounds, nearly fifty pounds was lost from each package, being absorbed by the barrel staves. Losses by defective cooperage, which were also very heavy, are avoided, too.

Hateful Man!

Food Mother—lady is getting quite talented now. He can say mamma and papa just as plain as anything. There! did you hear that?

Crusty Bachelor Uncle—Yes, I heard it. Which was he saying, papa or mamma, then?—Somerville Journal.

Mary had a little lamb

With her it used to stray, But it fed when Mary read her piece On graduation day.—Washington Star.

There can be no courage without a true understanding of danger.



WOMAN'S WORLD

BY MRS. ALEXANDER

afford cares as much for her as I thought he did."

"Do you?" said Mrs. L'Estrange. "I never quite shared your opinion on that subject, though I think it likely enough they will marry. Mark Winton was saying yesterday that there was an idea at one time among her late husband's brother officers that Mrs. Ruthven would marry Captain Shirley. It is curious that he should still be so much with her. When a man is rejected, communications are generally broken off."

"It was mere gossip, probably—the report, I mean. Why should not men and women be dear friends and nothing more?"

"I am sure I do not know; but you don't often see it."

"As education and common sense increase, friendship between men and women will, I suppose, be more frequent."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. L'Estrange, doubtfully. "Mr. Winton was talking of returning to India yesterday. His leave of absence has not expired yet, but he seems anxious to get back to his work. He says he feels he is wasting his time here, and that, for a man of his disposition, the only charm life possesses is work."

"That is rather a dreary doctrine, is it not?"

"I told him so. He was very nice and pleasant yesterday, but I fancied there was an undertone of depression in all he said."

"Why, Mr. Winton is the last man I should suspect of sentimental melancholy," cried Nora. "Perhaps he has lost some money."

"I don't think you do Mark Winton justice, Nora. I have known him since he was a lad of seventeen, and, believe me, he has a good, true heart."

"If you say so, I am quite willing to believe it," then, breaking off suddenly, she exclaimed: "Listen to this, Helen. The enterprising manager of Drury Lane has in preparation one of the most brilliant pantomimes ever presented to a London audience. The scenic effects will be of an original and extraordinary character, and the ballet one of the most gorgeous ever seen. That is something for Helen! It will be such fun going with her! What raptures she will be in! By the bye, Helen, don't you think we can take in Fraulein Schrader at Christmas time? She is not happy at the school, and as she has given notice she is going to leave, they will be cross and disagreeable."

"Yes, I have no doubt we can manage it. Bea, too, might come to us early in December."

And the conversation turned on domestic matters.

Mrs. L'Estrange, who was far from strong, had taken cold, and was easily persuaded to keep indoors. The day being dry and crisp, Nora took their maid, who had been in Mrs. L'Estrange's service ever since she was married, to bear her company, and walked across the park to inquire for Mrs. Ruthven and bid her good-bye.

CHAPTER X.

When they reached the hotel Mrs. Ruthven was out, and Nora prolonged her walk to Harvey & Nichols', where she and her attendant spent a delightful hour, and several pounds.

By the time she reached her temporary home, Nora felt refreshed and invigorated by air and exercise. The shades of evening had begun to gather, and she planned to herself that she would read aloud to Helen after dinner, to atone for her long absence.

The gas had not been lit, and going upstairs in semi-darkness, she ran against someone on the first landing.

"I beg your pardon," said Winton, whose voice she instantly recognized, "it is so dark."

"Yes, the evenings draw in so soon now," she replied, with some confusion. "I am glad to have an opportunity of wishing you good-bye. I am going out of town to-morrow for a few weeks; by the time I come back, I shall have made up my mind whether I shall return to India at once or stay to the full extent of my leave."

"Has the country so little attraction for you, Mr. Winton, that you are ready to leave it?"

"Plenty of attraction; but—I need not trouble you with my reasons. Good-bye for the present. I hope to see you again before long, either here or at Brookdale."

He held her hand for a moment and was gone.

Nora ascended slowly, thoughtfully, to the drawing room, where she found Mrs. L'Estrange leaning back in an easy chair, her handkerchief to her eyes, beside a bright fire.

"Why, Helen?" cried Nora, as she advanced toward her. Mrs. L'Estrange started and uncovered her face; the strong light of the flames showed that she had been and was weeping. "Dear Helen, what is the matter?"

"Do not ask me now. I will tell you all one day, but not now," said Mrs. L'Estrange. Rising, she came quickly toward her stepdaughter, pressed her lips for an instant to Nora's cheek, and left the room. "Good heavens!" ejaculated Nora to herself, "she has refused him. But why? Overcome with surprise, she sat down, all dressed as she was, to ponder this unexpected outcome of their pleasant intimacy with Winton. He, too, seemed depressed and unlike himself. Why—why had Helen rejected him? especially as she evidently felt doing so very keenly."

Could it have been because she knew that she and her little girl were unprovided for, and that she did not like being a burden on a husband? Winton was fairly well off, and not likely to let such an obstacle stand in the way of his or her happiness. Could it be any hesitation about leaving her (Nora) alone, with some new hired stranger for a companion? No; Helen was too sensible for such an overstrained sense of duty or friendship. Then, as she gazed into the red mass which glowed in the grate, memory unrolled her long record of past benefits and generous acts. The quiet, steady kindness, which had won her childish heart, in spite of her natural prejudice against a stepmother, the perpetual shield she interposed between the irritable, exacting, tyrannical father and his daughter. Now that Nora was a woman—a thoughtful, observant woman—how man-

instances of her stepmother's patience, her care for every one's comfort, her self-forgetfulness, came back to her in a flood from dim, bygone days. Her own vague wonder that Helen never wanted to go anywhere, never sought release from the wearying attendance on her querulous, suspicious, invalid husband, her undefined impression that somehow life was ever for her young stepmother—that she had nothing left but endurance and kindly thought for others. What would she herself have been had she been reduced to a single-handed struggle with such difficulties—as existence would have presented itself without Helen? How much of youth would she have enjoyed? How much of education, of pleasure, or freedom from the startling effect of care too heavy for her years? Yes! She saw it all clearly. Helen had been more than a mother to her, for she had no claim to such tender, discriminating care. "And if I can repay her I will," thought Nora, her heart glowing warm and strong. "Nothing shall stand between me and a woman to whom I owe so much. Thank God! she is brighter and stronger now than I ever remember her. I do hope Bea will grow up a tender, loving daughter! She has a dash of my father's temper! But why—why did Helen send Mark Winton away? I can fancy their whole story—growing into love with each other, almost from their school days—then his going away to seek his fortune, some misunderstanding separating them probably. Helen, left a penniless orphan, with no hope in the future, tempted by a chance of a settled home with my father. It is a sad enough story, and I suppose a common one. Well, she shall have peace now, if I can secure it. But—why did she send Mark Winton away? I am sure she did. I must not ask her; I must not seem intrusive. Will she ever tell me?"

That evening Nora was more than usually kind and cheerful; she insisted on Mrs. L'Estrange lying down where her eyes were shaded from the light, and she read aloud from a picturesque book of travels.

When bedtime came and they parted for the night Mrs. L'Estrange put her arm round Nora, and, kissing her gently, said: "You are a good girl, dear daughter, or I should say younger sister, to me; you made my life happier than I ever expected it to be. She went quickly upstairs, leaving Nora touched and surprised, for neither was a demonstrative woman and rarely exchanged caresses."

The days went by, however, and Mrs. L'Estrange did not show any inclination to tell Nora the story she had promised; still, her stepdaughter waited with loyal suppressed curiosity, and tidings reached them that Winton had gone as far as Florence with some Indian friends outward bound to Bombay, and had passed through London without calling to see them.

Anxious Mrs. L'Estrange flattered herself that her plans were maturing successfully. The day after Mrs. Ruthven had been installed in the principal guest chamber at Chedworth, Marsden arrived from town, and made himself charmingly agreeable to every one, especially to Mrs. Ruthven. The pretty little widow visibly revived after his arrival and lost something of the pained, strained look in her eyes, which had given Lady Dorrington such uneasiness.

"You ought to get out more, my dear Mrs. Ruthven," she said, as that lady was bidding her hostess good night. "There are lots of pretty drives about, and I have a capital pair of ponies."

"To say nothing of an excellent character, in the shape of an unworthy brother. Pray, allow me to show you the neighborhood. I am duly qualified for the task of eucherone," said Marsden.

"Thank you," and Mrs. Ruthven raised her eyes to his with a long, searching look. "If you really don't mind losing a day's hunting? It is a tremendous sacrifice!"

"Sacrifice!" cried Marsden, laughing. "If sacrifice and penance always took such a form, what a penitent I'd be! Then, if fine, we will take our first tour of inspection immediately after luncheon."

The weather was all that could be desired, more like late September than early November, and the excursion was so successful that another was arranged for the following day.

(To be continued.)

Cooking in the Gutter.

A member of the Seventh Regiment, according to an article in the New York Sun, is enthusiastic over his experiences with a tin dish and a campfire during the late street car riots in Brooklyn. He has been noted in his own circle for his delicate taste in the matter of cookery, and his skill with the chaffing-dish. He not only knew when a thing was cooked exactly right, but he could cook it just right himself, only he was so excessively fastidious that he must have just such a dish in which to do it.

Now he was left to shift for himself in the street, with nothing but a tin dish as a cooking utensil. "Fortunately," he says, "the dish had a cover and a handle, and after I became convinced that there was no help for it, I made a few experiments and found the results delicious."

"The value of a wood fire had never been apparent to me before, but I tell you it is wonderful. Why, I never ate such potatoes as I baked in the embers. And the surrounding cobblestones kept my coffee as hot as I wanted it while I was doing my other cooking."

"The doings of some of the men were laughable. They had less idea of cookery than the average servant. They would insist upon building a fire with the flames reaching heavenward, and then they wondered why their food was burned on one side and raw on the other. One fellow who wanted ham and eggs put the eggs in, shells and all. A beautiful mess!"

"As for myself, I will stand up hereafter for the regimental tin dish, and a wood fire with a cobble-stone foundation. I lived like a prince; and the next time my appetite is spoiled by the atrocities of French cooks, I am going to pitch my tent in the back yard, and win back my digestion with the sort of cookery I have been enjoying for a week."

The two most widely separated post-offices in the United States are those in Key West, Fla., and in Ounniaska, Alaska, 6,271 miles apart. Two cents will insure the carriage of a letter between those distant points.