



CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

She had said all that she had intended; and even if she had contemplated any further innuendoes it would have been impossible to speak them then, for the door opened and Elaine entered.

She half sat, half knelt on the fender-stool, and held out her hands to the blaze; Mr. Bowyer watched her with something of the old tenderness and concern.

"I am more grieved than I can say to be the bearer of such a message. No one could imagine for a moment that any aspersion was cast on you," he protested earnestly, but shrunk back appalled as, with a stifled cry, she rose and passed him to leave the room.

CHAPTER XXII.—Mr. Bowyer, cowering over the fire in his bedroom, half proud and half ashamed of his scheme for self-protection, was waiting anxiously to hear what effect it had had upon the two most concerned, when a knock came at the door and his ward entered.

"What—what do you want?" he asked, in evident perturbation.

"May I speak to you a moment?" she said, quietly.

"I am at your disposal, of course."

"We have just been informed of your intention of leaving your fortune in two equal parts, one of which is to come to me."

"Remember the circumstances in which I adopted you, and that I consider myself answerable for your future fate. And, Elaine, make some allowance for my broken health, and—and the experience I have passed through lately."

"I am not blaming you. I have never blamed you."

"But you look at me with those large sorrowful eyes of yours, and make me feel a perfect brute. I am one, I believe."

"You are all goodness. You have been far kinder to me than I deserve or wish, but I want to tell you that I can no longer accept that kindness, and must seek another home, unless—"

"Unless I cannot the codicil of my will?" She shook her head impatiently.

"You have a right to make whatever provisions you think best—you have a right to do what you please with your own; but money should go as a blessing, not as a curse. It is a cruel gift, if an unwelcome one."

"What do you mean?"

"I want you to erase my name from your will absolutely and forever."

He stared at her in undisguised amazement. Was this acting or reality? Yet something in her attitude impressed him against his will.

"That is a strange request. Why do you urge it?"

"Because it is only so that I can remain with you at all. The gratitude and love I owe you prevent my resenting any unjust suspicion you may harbor, but good you have done me far outbalancing the evil; but don't you understand that such patience is incompatible with dignity and self-respect if in the end I am to gain by it?"

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I will leave your house at once."

Mr. Bowyer looked thoughtfully into the fire and pondered the matter for fully five minutes without speaking.

"Can you throw any light upon—upon that painful business—the arsenic, you know?"

"I dare say," she returned, indifferently; "but I am not afraid of being poor. That—as things are now—seems a minor evil."

"But things, I hope, will not always be as they are now, and Miss Warde, will you remember that I will do anything I can for you? If you want me, telegraph at any time, and I will come at once to right the wrong that is being done you now."

She looked up at him gratefully, her heart too full for speech, then passed on her way down stairs, while the lawyer proceeded to Mr. Bowyer's room.

CHAPTER XXIV.—It was Sunday afternoon, and throughout the house reigned that strange stillness which is suggestive of and inseparable from the day. The servants had walked over to Greatheaven to church, and no one was in the kitchen except Mrs. Priolo, who dozed before the fire. Life seemed very pleasant to the housekeeper just then. All her schemes had succeeded. A new will was made in which Mrs. Priolo was nominated sole legatee. A ring at the front door roused her, and she ran upstairs.

It was Colonel Severn; and with a bland smile she was ushering him into the sitting room, when he stopped her peremptorily.

"It is you I wish to see. Where can I speak to you undisturbed?"

A little startled, yet too secure in her own mind to be actually alarmed, she led the Colonel to the kitchen, the fire being out in her own room.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" she asked, somewhat demurely, having dusted a chair and placed it for him.

"Some time ago Mr. Bowyer took some poison given him in a cup of tea."

"Made," and given by Miss Ellen Warde," put in the housekeeper, quickly. "So far you are correct; but one fact you have withheld—that the poison was placed in the sugar basin by you."

The woman had turned ashy white, and clutched the table for support, yet, overcome as she was, she made a desperate effort to defend herself.

"It is false—false, I tell you!" she gasped, convulsively.

"It is true—perfectly true—and you know it," he retorted, calmly. "Shall I go on?"

"You can say what you choose; I have no one to protect me, or you would not dare to attack me so."

"It is useless to deny anything I say. You have proofs to fight against—not mere idle accusation. When Mr. Bowyer gave you that sugar, did you not give him a tumbler of what you asserted to be hot brandy and water; but the cook noticed that there was no smell of spirits, and tasted what was left. It was merely hot water and salt, which you gave him as an emetic."

"It saved his life!"—doggedly.

"At that time no one knew that he was poisoned, so that your acting on that knowledge alone would condemn you in any court of justice."

"It was because I suspected her."

"Hush!"—sternly. "Such prevarications and denials do no good. Further, you were seen immediately afterward to go and empty the contents of the sugar basin and put fresh sugar into it. Are you satisfied now that I know all? A detective has been here ever since, and, connecting several incidents, each insignificant in itself, but incontrovertible when taken with the rest, has the whole chain of evidence against you complete. He is here now to act on any instructions that Mr. Bowyer may give him."

The woman fell upon her knees with a sob, and covered her face with her dress.

"On my honor, sir, I never meant to do him any harm—I swear it!" she protested. "I only wanted to frighten him, to—"

"To throw suspicion on to Miss Warde. I know that, too. That in itself is a crime. I also happened to be aware of the conversation between you and the chemist of whom you purchased the poison."

She gazed at him in speechless, hopeless amazement; and he went on remorselessly, feeling that every blow he struck was only avenging a slight part of the pain she had caused to the woman he loved.

Alarmed by the gravity of his manner as much as by his words, Mrs. Priolo could not restrain a shrill scream. The sound attracted the attention of Ellen Warde, who happened to be on the higher flight of stairs. She thought some one was hurt, and ran down at once to see; but she started back in uncontrollable surprise, as she saw the Colonel standing there in an attitude of denunciation and Mrs. Priolo in tears.

"What is the mystery of the arsenic now fully and circumstantially than I had ever hoped," announced Colonel Severn. This wretched woman placed the poison in the sugar basin with the deliberate intention of throwing the guilt upon you."

Ellen looked from one to the other in breathless agitation. Her delight at being exonerated for the time overwhelmed the feeling of disgustful horror. Presently she said:

"Does Mr. Bowyer know? Have you told him?"

"No; but I will do so now."

The housekeeper jumped up and caught hold of Ellen's arm black gown.

"If he does, I will tell all I know!" she hissed out spitefully, as a last desperate chance of escape.

Severn did not hear the threat, it having been uttered in a whisper, and was at the door—almost on the threshold—when a slight touch upon his sleeve brought him back at once.

TOPICS FOR FARMERS

A DEPARTMENT PREPARED FOR OUR RURAL FRIENDS

The Tendency Is to Force Larger Crops and to Cultivate Cheaper—Animals Select Food from Instinct—Medium Crops Not Profitable.

Medium Crops Not Profitable. Most farmers in this country only aim at medium crops. This is a mistake. The average crop only pays in the years when prices of farm products are high, and such years in recent seasons have been few and far between.

Asparagus from Seed. Asparagus germinates slowly. It is easier and not much more expensive to purchase outright the plants required for a family supply.

The Hen's Cravings. Instinct implants in all animals a taste and desire for foods that are suitable for them. A hen will leave any other food at any time for a mess of green bugs, and worms supply this craving for animal food.

Heavy Crops of Potatoes. At first it does not cost \$18; if it did we should have to abandon the business. I think that in most potato-growing sections that sum would buy the land, raise and market the crop and have a fair profit left, says a contributor in the New England Farmer.

Evolution of the Dog. Prof. N. S. Shaler, in his study of domesticated animals, advances this theory in regard to the dog, which explains in large measure why the best traits of the dog have been developed.

A New Strawberry. A San Diego man has produced a strawberry plant which, unlike the ordinary plant, bears fruit of a large size and delicious flavor on a running vine, and not almost directly from the roots.

Farm Notes. It is claimed that any land that will produce corn will be suitable for apples, pears, plums or cherries. Fruit-growing has not yet been overdone in this country, as the demand seems to keep pace with the supply.

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