

A FATAL WEDDING.

By Lottie Braham.



CHAPTER XXIV.

"Mark," she exclaimed, in a low hushed tone, then more loudly she repeated his name. "Mark—Mark—Mark!" she cried, and fell into his outstretched arms; and, as her head lay against his heavily beating heart, he bent his own over her in silence.

Suddenly he felt her tremble violently in his arms, and heard her breathing come in low, hurried gasps.

"Barbara!" he whispered anxiously, bending his head still lower over hers; and the girl slowly raised her face and looked up at him with blind, unseeing eyes.

"Mark," she gasped, in almost inaudible tones, "you have come to me!"

"My darling, you might have known I would come," he answered hoarsely.

"It is so good to see you, Mark!" she whispered. "I have wanted you so often."

"Have you, dear?"

"Yes. Why do you speak so sorrowfully, Mark? Have I vexed you? Are you unhappy about me?"

She was looking at him with a faint, unconscious smile on her pale lips; then, as she met his troubled, anxious eyes, the smile died away, and was replaced by a sudden questioning look. Her eyes wandered round the room, lingering on the bare walls, the high-barred window. A long shudder shook her slender frame, and, with a faint, sobbing cry, she hid her face upon Lord Hatton's breast.

"Mark," she said presently, without looking up, and clinging to him with trembling hands, "I will never tell, dear, I will never tell! I know it was an accident, and—"

Her words died away, and she pressed her head convulsively against him, as if she wished to shut out some terrible vision; but, as he was going to speak, she seized a trembling hand and touched his lips with her burning fingers.

"Hush! Say nothing," she whispered feverishly—"It is not safe! You might be overheard. Mark, I understand! It was for me, dear—no, dear—no, dear! Ah! I ought not to have said that! He is dead! Do you know, did you not? Ah!"—springing up suddenly, with a low, sharp, startled cry of dread, "Why did you come? It is not safe. Webster saw you, and—Oh, Mark, go—go, dear! I am not afraid—I am not afraid!"

"My darling, what is it?" Mark asked anxiously, catching the trembling girl in his arms. "What dreadful thought is in your mind? Do you think that I am guilty of that poor man's death? Barbara, listen!"

But she was incapable of self-control; then, she was shaking her head to and fro, her eyes were burning with fever, her hands shook as if with palsy.

"No—I cannot listen," she said wildly. "Mark, you did it, did you not? He told me he was to meet you there, and I went; and when I got there, they were gone, and I never told, dear! They knew I had been out; but I did not tell them why—I would have died first! But you must go, Mark, lest they should suspect and—"

The hurried, broken, disconnected words died away, her great wild eyes rested on his face in mute inquiry.

"My darling, there has been some terrible mistake," he said gently but impressively. "Dear, I am entirely innocent of what you suppose. I met him that night, as you imagine, but I did not harm him. I did not lay a finger upon him, surely as I was tempted to do so; I will swear that, Barbara. You must believe me, my dear."

"Yes," she murmured feebly, leaning heavily upon the little dead table; "I believe you, Mark. I know you cannot speak falsely. And yet—and yet—"

She pushed her hair from her forehead with a strange wild gesture, and stood staring straight before her for a moment; then, in a hoarse, trembling voice, she went on, in broken, disjointed sentences: "I went out. It was very cold and dark—so dark that I could see nothing; but he had told me that you would meet him there, and I thought you would help me, Mark—you had never failed me."

"I will not fail you now, my darling," he murmured, a sudden fear striking him as he listened to the broken words and looked at the wild eyes which stared so blindly before her. "Dear, you trust me, do you not?"

"Yes," she whispered. "But it is all so strange; I cannot understand. It is as dark as that night was! I went out, and I touched his face; it was like ice—and I was frightened; and then—oh, Mark, forgive me—I thought you had killed him!"

"My poor Barbara!" he murmured huskily. "I did not know what to do. I had only one thought—to hide my secret until you could get away. Are you very angry with me, Mark? I thought it was an accident; but—"

"Dear, try to forget it. All will be right soon."

"I have told you," she murmured, pausing between each word in the faintness and exhaustion which were creeping over her. "It was dark and cold, as it is now, Mark—ah—with a swift, low, shuddering cry; and she covered in his arms as the door opened—"don't let them take me from you, Mark—don't let them—"

Her voice died away in an inarticulate murmur, her head fell back upon his shoulder, with her face upturned, and a faint sense and consciousness all faded in a merciful insensibility.

CHAPTER XXV.

Barbara's eyes had closed to all outward things in the bare little room at the police station in Arlington; but when, after a long period of insensibility, she opened them again, her languid gaze rested on the silver hangings of her bed at Elsdale Castle, and then wandered slowly round the room.

The visitor day was at its close; outside the door she saw a gleam of light. A soft breeze was blowing in the pretty fragments

room, a fire glowed in the grate, and near the shaded lamp a lady sat busy with some fancy needlework, making a quiet, homely picture. Her head was bent over her work, and Barbara's languid eyes saw only the soft filmy lace of her head-dress. The girl lay dreamily watching her, until she raised her head and saw the great hollow eyes, looking so painfully large in the worn, pallid face, open and fixed upon her. She put down her work and hurried to the bedside and bent over the recumbent girl.

"You know me, Barbara?" a low gentle voice said, with a very perceptible tremor in its tones; and a faint wondering gleam crept into the dark eyes. "No; don't try to talk," went on the kindly trembling voice. "Just drink this, dear, and go to sleep again, and sleep as long as ever you can."

She raised the pretty cropped head upon her arm, and held a draught to the lips which were beginning to quiver; and Barbara, too weak for resistance, swallowed it obediently, and as obediently sank to sleep again, a sweet, dreamless sleep which brought healing and strength with it. Having watched her long enough to know that the slumber was the natural sleep they longed for and not the swoon they dreaded, the lady went softly to the door and whispered a few words to an anxious watcher there, which sent him away with a feeling of unutterable thankfulness.

And then she came back and resumed the work she had thrown aside, a restful look on her kindly face replacing the anxious expression which had been habitual there during the long five weeks of oblivion which had been granted to Barbara Hatton—weeks during which those who loved her had mourned her almost as dead.

When the languid white lids were raised again, the dawn of the following day was breaking in the eastern sky, the fire was burning brightly, the lamp was carefully shaded. Mrs. Fairfax, her white cap and kerchief as carefully arranged as if she had just left her room instead of having passed a long, anxious night, was seated by the bed; and then it seemed as if the kindly old face melted away to be replaced in a moment by the other kindly, tender face on which Barbara's eyes first rested.

"Goody?" the girl said; and, although her voice was very faint, it was quite audible.

"Yes, dear. You have had a nice sleep."

"Am I at Rose Cottage?" asked the faint, low tones, while the dark eyes wandered feebly around the room.

"No, dear," Mrs. Clavering answered gently. "You have been ill, and I have been nursing you."

"Ill?" repeated the girl. "Have I been long ill?"

"Not very long—a little while," Mrs. Clavering answered soothingly. "We have been anxious about you, dear child, and you must get well quickly now and repay us for all our care. You do not suffer now, Barbara?"

"No; but I am so tired!" Barbara said wearily, as she let her white lids sink over her languid eyes; and Mrs. Clavering wondered if memory, with its attendant sufferings, was coming back, and hoped and prayed with all her anxious heart that it would delay its return for a while until the enfeebled frame was better able to bear the horror it might bring with it.

But even now, though the fever had left her, and the great dark eyes were no longer bright with its luster, and the rambling, broken words which had been so terrible to listen to had ceased, there was the gravest cause for anxiety in Barbara's intense weakness. She seemed, as the days went by—such slow, anxious days to the household at Elsdale—especially so to the two men who loved her so tenderly—to regain no strength; she lay with closed eyes upon her pillows, heeding nothing, mute and motionless, in semi-sleep, semi-stupor, which sometimes deepened into a long, death-like swoon which caused the physicians great anxiety, and made them wonder if she remembered the trouble which had preceded her illness, and was letting her misery retard the recovery for which they so earnestly strove.

Mrs. Clavering and the kindly old housekeeper wondered also; but Barbara said nothing. The sweet and eyes were rarely opened, and the pale lips were parted only to utter a few words of thanks or apology for the trouble she gave.

"She must be roused," Dr. Close said; "almost anything would be better than this indifference to everything. She is drifting away in spite of all our care."

Christmas had come and gone, and a new year had begun during those weeks of darkness and oblivion; and one morning Mrs. Clavering came into the quiet room where Barbara lay, bringing a bunch of fresh white snow-drops with their delicate green leaves, with which she touched Barbara's lips. The girl opened her languid eyes, and then brightened a little at sight of the sweet harbinger of spring.

"Lord Elsdale has sent them, dear, with his love," Mrs. Clavering said, in her most cheerful voice. "And Doctor Close says you are to get up for a short time to-day."

"To get up?" Barbara questioned, a shade of fear coming into her eyes. Then she said pettishly, "I can't get up—I am too weak."

"Doctor Close says not," Mrs. Clavering returned in her most matter-of-fact tones. "And, Barbara, there are one or two gentlemen very anxious to see you who are not to be admitted until you are in your dressing room. Lord Elsdale has some wonderful news for you, dear."

"But, Goody—the frail little fingers let fall the snow-drops and closed over Mrs. Clavering's hand in a fierce, feverish clasp—"If I get up, will they not come—and take me away?"

And the words told Mrs. Clavering what the girl had dreaded, and what had retarded her progress to recovery.

"Dear," she replied, "I have been wanting to tell you; but we feared to agitate you. All that is settled. There was a terrible mistake, which has been fully cleared up; we need not mind how just now. When you are stronger, you shall know all about it."

"And Mark?" murmured the sweet quivering lips.

"Mark is well, and would be quite happy to see you, Barbara, if you were better."

"Is he here?"

"Oh, yes, of course he is here!" replied Mrs. Clavering, smiling as she stooped and touched the sweet lips with her own.

As Newell entered, she turned and saw him; and, by a great emotion of her noble strength, she rose to her feet, steadying herself by a hand on either arm of her chair; then, as he came up to her, she fell with a little cry into his outstretched arms, and burst into a passion of tears upon his shoulder, while the young man's eyes were dim as he bowed his head over hers. Mrs. Clavering went away quietly, leaving them together.

Presently, when the passionate sobs which brought such relief to the overcharged heart had subsided, Newell put her gently into her chair and knelt down by her side, looking at the sweet wasted face with eyes so full of tenderness and sorrow that the girl smiled faintly at him.

"You must not look so sorrowful," she said, in her pretty, pathetic tones. "I am getting better and stronger every day, Mark; and I am so ashamed of the trouble and anxiety I have been to you all."

"My darling!" he whispered tremulously, raising her hand to his lips.

"Ah, you were always good to me, dear," she said, putting her hand on his head, and pushing back the thick dark hair into which had crept many a silver thread during the last few weeks. "Your love has been a tower of strength to me all my life almost! Have you been very anxious, Mark? Was I so ill?"

"You have been very ill, dear," he answered, "and we have been very anxious; but our anxiety is almost over now, and we are only waiting for you to be a little stronger before we take you away to some warmer climate where your roses will come back to you."

"Who are 'we,' Mark? You and Goody, or you and Uncle Norman?"

"Does it sound very strange to you to hear me say 'we' when I mean the earl and myself?" he asked, smiling. "He has been very good to me, Barbara—far kinder than I deserved."

She shook her head with a faint, wistful smile.

"Then you are friends, Mark?"

"True friends, dear, for always."

She turned her face toward the window. In silence, while two great tears rolled down her cheeks. With more than a woman's tenderness the man at her side dried them and drew her pretty head upon his shoulder.

"Are you able to receive any news, Barbara?" he asked then, forcing himself to speak lightly. "Did Goody tell you that there were some wonderful tidings which you had yet to learn?"

"Yes," she answered languidly. "What are they?"

Having thus skillfully brought the conversation to the point he had been aiming for, Lord Hatton gently told her all the wonderful things that had happened since she had swooned at their previous meeting in the police station at Arlington six weeks ago.

The murder mystery was solved by the confession found on the dead body of the man who had committed the deed. It was no other than Mr. Sinclair, Lord Elsdale's private secretary. In his confession he had told of his secret, mad infatuation for Barbara, of his insane jealousy of Walter Bryant, his discovery of what seemed to be his intimacy with the young girl, his tracking him into the woods and there shooting him. All this he confessed when he learned Barbara had been suspected of this crime, and then killed himself on the very spot where he had committed his mad deed. But this was not all of Lord Hatton's wonderful news. Before he left Barbara that day she knew that he was not Mark Robson, the actor, but Newell Hatton, the son and heir of the Earl of Elsdale—the man whom she had believed killed in the railroad accident, the man whose place she had occupied as heiress and in the affections of her adopted father.

(To be continued.)

He Didn't Collect It.

"I shall have to ask you for a ticket for that boy, ma'am."

"I guess not."

"He's too old to travel free. He occupies a whole seat, and the car's crowded. There are people standing up."

"That's all right."

"I haven't any time to argue the matter, ma'am. You'll have to pay for that boy."

"I've never paid for him yet, and I'm not going to begin to do it now."

"You've got to begin doing it some time. If you haven't done it up any place for him you're mighty lucky, or else you don't do much traveling."

"That's all right."

"You'll pay for that boy, ma'am, or I'll stop the train and put him off."

"That's all right. You put him off if you think that's the way to get anything out of me."

"You ought to know what the rules of this road are, madam. How old is that boy?"

"I don't know. I never saw him before. If you want a ticket for him you'd better ask that old gentleman down the aisle. He got on with him."

A Born Financier.

Old Hardrocks—I've decided to take young Sharpshoot into business with me just as soon as he and my daughter get back from their wedding tour.

Bullion Bonds—But I thought you had no use for the fellow.

Old Hardrocks—I didn't at first, but I've changed my mind. I told him he couldn't have my daughter till he had at least \$1,000 in the bank. He got me to put it in writing, and then went out and borrowed the \$1,000 on the strength of becoming my son-in-law. Such business ability as that mustn't be allowed to go to waste.

She Thinks They Did It All.

"Of course, I don't wish to have you think that I doubt your word," she said; "but I can't understand how you can look me in the eye and tell me that you took part in whipping those Spaniards in Santiago."

"And why?" he asked, "should you find that so hard to believe?"

"Haven't you told me yourself that you were not one of the rough riders?"

Sympathetic Knowledge.

Chollie—I must really protest! Your daughter—my wife—is er—the most difficult woman to get on with. She—or—"

Father-in-law—Say no more, my son; I am in a position to give you my trust; and dearest sympathy—I married her mother—'Tis Bix.

When a man is resigned to his fate the resignation is usually accepted.

NEW STYLES IN HATS.

HEADGEAR FAVORED BY FASHION THIS SPRING.

Old-Fashioned Woven Straw Gives Way to That Which is Made in Ribbons and Sewed to a Foundation—Small Hats Are to Be Preferred.

New York correspondence.

FIRING hats are on view, though purchasers are few as yet, most women being content for a little while to look over the new headgear. A lot of fresh big hats are already displayed, and it may be well to examine, yet there are but few women for whom they are a wise purchase. It will be well, too, to consider for the future the more novel of the new ideas in toques, and to purchase from among the less conspicuous small hats for early season wear. One of the prettiest new shapes is so slight a modification of a good standby of many seasons that it is sure to be a safe choice. It's a straight brimmed hat, with the brim rolled just a little at the sides, and comes in tuck-straw—that is, straw ribbons sewed on to a stiff foundation, the ribbons just lapping with the effect of little tufts. This is one of the new notions in straw and is at once a novelty and in good taste. Such a hat in bright green appears in the initial picture. Trimmed with black bows against the hair, with a lot of pale yellow primroses and with a generous fillet of black ribbon, it was charming hat for early wear and will be pretty throughout the season.

For gaining a crisp look. Little cap bonnets like that shown herewith are made of a knife-pleated frill of taffeta wired into becoming shape. The crown of such hats may be either woven chenille, or may be formed from the crowded fullness of the heading of the frill that makes the hat. Should the fullness be pushed aside the hair would be in view. This is one of the new ideas, and is sure to be carried out later in gauze and net for summer hats. A pretty innovation in the lovely field of artificial flowers is the branched

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make much difference, anyhow. But when the remainder is a net of wired chenille—some of the new materials for hat frame making—then the hat is suitable for wear on almost any semi-dress occasion.

Crispness is no longer highly desirable in dress materials or even in underclothes, but the look of it is one of the characteristics of the new millinery. Taffeta, too, the late lamented and universally admired dress stuff, is much favored as a medium

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THE HOUSEHOLD

Buttermilk Yeast.

For the best yeast ever made, the da you churn take one pint of fresh buttermilk and put into a steapan to boil.

When it boils stir in enough white cornmeal to make like thick gruel. Let it boil up well, then remove from fire and let cool. When lukewarm stir into this one cup of good yeast; set in a warm place to rise. In two hours it should be nice and light. Then thicken with cornmeal and make into cakes. Do not put one bit of salt, sugar, flour or hops in this yeast; nothing but buttermilk, meal and the yeast you put in to raise it. Make bread the same as with hop yeast. In making new yeast use a cup of this yeast to start with.

Washing Woollen Goods.

The secret of washing well any woollen goods lies chiefly in having the different waters of equal temperature with none of them at any time too hot to put the hand in comfortably. Soap should not be rubbed on the article, but used in the form of thin suds. It should be a good white soap, too. A little borax is probably the best thing to soften the water. For washing blankets or baby flannels it is to be preferred. Woollens should not be wrung by the hand, but rinsed or dried by squeezing. Woollens of any sort should never be allowed to freeze.

How to Fry Fish.

Fish must be well dried before frying, in a cloth well sprinkled with flour. It is then well to brush them over with beaten egg and sprinkle them with finely grated bread or cracker. The fat should be quite boiling when the fish is put in, and the pan should not be left alone for a moment until the cooking is finished. In cooking liver and bacon the strictest economy is necessary, but the liver will be more delicate if fried before the bacon.

Lockjaw.

In case of a nail or other sharp instrument being stuck in the foot of human or animal, and lockjaw is threatened, take a bucket of unleached wood ashes, put in a tub, and pour on two buckets of warm water; stir well, and place the wounded foot in the mixture. Relief will be felt immediately. Let remain an hour or so, if necessary. Another remedy is to burn a fannel rag under the foot, but the latter applies to any cut that is painful.—Prairie Farmer.

Sugar Wafers.

Beat four eggs until thick and light. Add gradually one cupful of granulated sugar, and beat again; then add three cupfuls of sifted flour. Beat for five minutes, add one scant cupful of soft butter, and beat again for ten minutes. Heat the water iron very hot, brush on both sides with melted butter, put in a small tablespoonful of the batter, close them, and return to the fire to bake. They only take two minutes. Take from the iron, and roll round a stick at once.

Curry of Eggs.

Slice two medium-sized onions and brown them in two tablespoonfuls of butter. When brown add one scant teaspoonful of curry powder, mix and cook for five minutes. Add one tablespoonful of flour, then, gradually, one and one-half cupfuls of milk. When smooth and thick add six hard-boiled eggs cut in slices, cover and place where it will keep very hot but not boil for ten minutes, and it is ready to serve.

Saving Space.

The day of the folding bed is past. Its many faults of omission and commission outweighing its one good point—the saving of space. Neither is there any call for entire bedroom suits, as in the days not so very long ago. The brass bedstead rules the hour, and is usually accompanied by a low French dresser of antique design.

Corn Bread.

Use a coffee cup for measuring. One cup meal, one-half cup flour, one-quarter cup sugar, one teaspoonful salt, small teaspoonful soda, one cup rich sour milk, one egg, well beaten. Egg and milk added last. Bake in moderate oven.

Hints.

To clean hair brushes, rub them in dry Indian meal until the oil and dust are extracted.

Oleicoth or linoleum should never be washed in hot water or soap; always in tepid water.

Iron rust and mildew may be bleached by rubbing on the spot lemon juice and salt, and exposing to a hot sun.

If a fishbone gets in the throat beyond reach, swallow at once the white of an egg, and it will generally carry down the offending bone.

Fruit stains may be removed by chloride of lime, but should it fail, oxalic acid will do the work. Be careful to well wash the fabric afterwards.

If you are in a hurry and want a pudding sauce that you haven't time to make, try heating a cup of currant jelly until it is liquid and serve it with your pudding.

It is said that parsley, eaten with onions, will destroy the offensive odor that affects the breath. The parsley should be served in sprigs and eaten as you would celery.