

ROSALIND AT RED GATE

BY
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RAY WALTERS
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SYNOPSIS.

Miss Patricia Holbrook and Miss Helen Holbrook, long since wedded, returned to the care of Laurance Donovan, a writer, summering near Port Annandale, Miss Patricia continuing to live in the city, and her father, who, through a bank failure, had constantly threatened her for money from the father's will, which Miss Patricia was to inherit. They came to Port Annandale to see Mr. Donovan sympathized with the two women. The husband of Helen Holbrook, a wealthy banker, had been discovered and captured an intruder who proved to be a woman, Helen Holbrook. Gillespie, a young man, appeared and was arrested at the same time. Miss Patricia and her father met on friendly terms. Donovan found an Italian woman, who proved to be a woman, Helen Holbrook, but who would be married, a woman, a woman. After a short discussion, Donovan left and returned to the city. Gillespie, a young man, appeared and was arrested at the same time. Miss Patricia and her father met on friendly terms. Donovan found an Italian woman, who proved to be a woman, Helen Holbrook, but who would be married, a woman, a woman.



"When Shall I See You Again?"

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

She sat back in the chair and folded her arms. I had not referred in any way to her transaction with Gillespie. I had never intimated even remotely that I knew of her meeting with the infatuated young fellow on St. Agatha's pier; and I felt that those incidents were ancient history.

"It was cooking hot this afternoon. I hope you didn't have too much tennis."

"No, it was pretty enough fun," she remarked, with so little enthusiasm that I laughed.

"You don't seem to recall your victory with particular pleasure. It seems to me that I am the one to be shy of the subject. How did that score stand?"

"I really forget—I honestly do," she laughed.

"That's certainly generous; but don't you remember, as we walked along toward the gate after the game, that you said—"

"Oh, I can't allow that at all! What I said yesterday or today is of no importance now. And particularly at night I am likely to be weak-minded, and my memory is poorer then than at any other time."

"I am fortunate in having an excellent memory."

"For example?"

"For example, you are not always the same; you were different this afternoon; and I must go back to our meeting by the seat on the bluff, for the Miss Holbrook of to-night."

"That's all in your imagination, Mr. Donovan. Now, if you wanted to prove that I'm really—"

"Helen Holbrook," I supplied, glad of a chance to speak her name.

"If you wanted to prove that I am who I am," she continued, with new animation, as though at last something interested her, "how should you go about it?"

"Please ask me something difficult! There is, there could be, only one woman as fair, as interesting, as wholly charming."

"I suppose that is the point at which you usually bow humbly and wait for applause; but I seem to notice anything so commonplace. If you were going to prove me to be the same person you met at the Annandale station, how should you go about it?"

"Well, to be explicit, you walk like an angel."

"You are singularly favored in having seen angels walk, Mr. Donovan. There's a popular superstition that they fly. In my own ignorance I can't concede that your point is well taken. What next?"

"Your head is like an intaglio wrought when men had keener vision and nimbler fingers than now. With your hair low on your neck, as it is to-night, the picture carries back to a Venetian balcony centuries ago."

"That's rather below standard. What else, please?"

"And that widow's peak—I would risk the direst penalties of perjury in swearing to it alone."

She shrugged her shoulders. "You are an observant person. That trifling mark on a woman's forehead is usually considered a disfigurement."

"But you know well enough that I did not mention it with such a thought. You know it perfectly well."

"No, foolish one," she said, mockingly, "the widow's peak can not be denied. I suppose you don't know that the peak sometimes runs in families. My mother had it, and her mother before her."

"You are not your mother or your grandmother; so I am not in danger of mistaking you."

"Well, what else, please?"

"There's the emerald. Miss Pat has the same ring, but you are not Miss Pat. Besides, I have seen you both together."

"Still, there are emeralds and emeralds!"

"And then—there are your eyes!"

"There are two of them. Mr. Donovan!"

"There need be no more to assure light in a needful world, Miss Holbrook."

"Good! You really have possibilities!"

She struck her palms together in a mockery of applause and laughed at me.

"To a man who is in love everything is possible, I dared."

"The Celtic temperament is very susceptible. You have undoubtedly likened many eyes to the glory of the heavens."

"I swear—"

"Swear not at all!"

"Then I won't!"—and we laughed and were silent while the water rippled in the reeds, the insects waved their wings of sound and ten struck musically from St. Agatha's.

"I must leave you."

"If you go you leave an empty world behind."

"Oh, that was pretty!"

"Thank you!"

"Conceded! I wasn't approving your remark, but that meteor that flashed across the sky and dropped into the woods away out yonder."

"Alas! I have fallen farther than the meteor and struck the earth harder."

"You deserved it," she said, rising and drawing the veil about her throat.

"My lack of conceit has always been my undoing; I am the humblest man alive. You are adorable," I said, "if that's the answer."

"It isn't the answer! If more stars do this to you, what would you be in moonlight?"

As we stood facing each other I was aware of some new difference in her. Perhaps her short outing skirt of dark blue had changed her; and yet in our tramps through the woods and our excursions in the canoe she had worn the same or similar costumes. She hesitated a moment, leaning against the railing and tapping the floor with her foot; then she gravely, half questioningly, as though to herself:

"He has gone away; you are quite sure that he has gone away?"

"Your father is probably in New York," I answered, surprised at the question. "I do not expect him back at once."

"If he should come back—" she began.

"He will undoubtedly return; there is no debating that."

"If he comes back there will be trouble, worse than anything that has happened. You can't understand what his return will mean to us—to me."

"You must not worry about that; you must trust me to take care of that when he comes. Sufficient unto the day must be your watchword. I saw Gillespie to-night."

"Gillespie?" she repeated with unforgotten surprise.

"That was capitally noted!" I laughed. "I wish I knew that he meant nothing more to you than that!" I added, seriously.

She colored, whether with anger or surprise at my swift change of tone,

I did not know. Then she said, very soberly:

"Mr. Gillespie is nothing to me whatever."

"I thank you for that!"

"Thank me for nothing, Mr. Donovan. And now good-night. You are not to follow me—"

"Oh, surely to the gate!"

"Not even to the gate. My ways are very mysterious. By day I am one person; by night quite another. And if you should follow me—"

"To my own gate!" I pleaded. "It's only decent hospitality!" I urged.

"Not even to the Gate of Dreams!"

"But in trying to get back to the school you have to pass the guard; you will fall at that some time!"

"No! I whisper an incantation, and lo! they fall asleep upon their spears. And I must ask you—"

"Keep asking, for to ask you must stay!"

"—please, when I meet you in daytime do not refer to anything that we may say when we meet at night. You have proved me at every point—even to this spot of ink on my forehead," and she put her forefinger upon the peak. "I am Helen Holbrook; but as what shall I say—oh, yes!" she went on, lightly—"as a psychological fact, I am very different at night from anything I ever am in daylight. And tomorrow morning, when you meet me with Aunt Pat in the garden, if you should refer to this meeting I shall never appear to you again, not even through the Gate of Dreams. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

I clasped her hand for an instant, and she met my eyes with a laughing challenge.

"When shall I see you again—this you that is so different from the you of daylight?"

She caught her hand away and turned to go, but paused at the steps.

"When the new moon hangs, like a little feather, away out yonder, I shall be looking at it from the stone seat on the bluff; do you think you can remember?"

She vanished away into the wood toward St. Agatha's. I started to follow, but paused, remembering my promise, and sat down and yielded myself to the thought of her. Practical questions of how she managed to slip out of St. Agatha's vexed me for a moment; but in my elation of spirit I dismissed them quickly enough. I would never again entertain an evil thought of her; the money she had taken from Gillespie I would in some way return to him and make an end of any claim he might assert against her by reason of that help. And I resolved to devote myself diligently to the business of protecting her from her father. I was even impatient for him to return and resume his black-guards practice of intimidating two helpless women, that I might deal with him in the spirit of his own despicable actions.

My heart was heavy as I thought of him, but I lighted my pipe and found at once a gentler glory in the stars. Then as I stared out upon the lake I saw a shadow gliding softly away from the little promontory where St. Agatha's pier lights shone brightly. It was a canoe, I should have known from its swift steady flight if I had not seen the paddler's arm raised once,

twice, until darkness fell upon the tiny arched pier. I ran out on the pier and stared after it, but the silence of the lake was complete. Then I crossed the strip of wood to St. Agatha's, and found Hama and the gardener faithfully patrolling the grounds.

"Has any one left the buildings to-night?"

"No one."

"Sister Margaret hasn't been out—or any one?"

"No one, sir. Did you hear anything, sir?"

"Nothing, Hama. Good night."

I wrote a telegram to an acquaintance in New York who knows everybody, and asked him to ascertain whether Henry Holbrook of Stamford was in New York. This I sent to Annandale, and thereafter watched the stars from the terrace until they slipped into the dawn, fearful lest sleep might steal away my memories and dreams of the night.

CHAPTER XIV.

Battle Orchard.

When I called at St. Agatha's the following morning the maid told me that Miss Pat was ill and that Miss Helen asked to be excused. I walked restlessly about the grounds until luncheon, thinking Helen might appear, and later determined to act on an impulse, with which I had trilled for several days, to seek the cottage on the Tippecanoe and satisfy myself of Holbrook's absence. A sharp shower had cooled the air, and I took the canoe for greater convenience in running into the shallow creek. I know nothing comparable to paddling as a lifer of the spirit, and with my arms and head bare and a cool breeze at my back I was soon skimming along as buoyant of heart as the responsive canoe beneath me. It was about four o'clock when I dipped my way into the further lake, and as the water broadened before me at the little strait I saw the still-to-be-lying quietly at anchor off the eastern shore of Battle Orchard. I drew close to observe her the better, but there were no signs of life on board, and I paddled to the western side of the island.

It had already occurred to me that Holbrook might have another hiding place than the cottage at Red Gate, where I had talked with him, and the island seemed a likely spot for it. I ran my canoe on the pebbly beach and climbed the bank. The trail bore upward and I soon came upon a small clearing about an acre in extent that had once been tilled, but it was now pre-empted by weeds as high as my head. Beyond by an ancient orchard, chiefly of apple trees, and many hoary veterans stood faithful to the brave hand that had marshaled them there. (Every orchard is linked to the Hesperides and every apple waits for Atalanta—if not for Eve!) I stooped to pick a wild flower and found an arrow head lying beside it.

Fumbling the arrow head in my fingers, I passed on to a log cabin hidden away in the orchard. I approached warily, remembering that if this were Holbrook's camp and he had gone away he had probably left the Italian to look after the yacht, which could be seen from the cabin door. I made a circuit of the cabin without seeing any signs of habitation, and was about to enter by the front door, when I heard the swish of branches in the underbrush to the east and dropped into the grass.

In a moment the Italian appeared, carrying a pair of oars over his shoulder. He had evidently just landed, as the blades were dripping. He threw them down by the cabin door, came round to the western window, drew out the pin from an iron staple with which it was fastened, and thrust his head in. He was greeted with a howl and a loud demand of some sort, to which he replied in monosyllables, and after several minutes of this parley I caught a fragment of dialogue which seemed to be final in the subject under discussion.

"Let me out or it will be the worse for you; let me out, I say!"

"My boss he sometime come back; then you get out it, maybe."

With this deliverance, accomplished with some difficulty, the Italian turned away, going to the rear of the cabin for a pull with which he trudged off toward the lake. He had not closed the window and would undoubtedly return in a few minutes, so I waited until he was out of sight, then sprang and crawled through the grass to the opening.

I looked in upon a bare room whose one door opened inward, and I did not for a moment account for the voice. Then something stirred in the father corner, and I slowly made out the figure of a man tied hand and foot, lying on his back in a pile of grass and leaves.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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