

IRENE'S VOW

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

"Duchess," he said, "I will try in everything to obey and please you. Do you not think it would be wiser to be friends?"

"No, I do not," she replied, curtly.

"Do you not think that, if you tried to make a desperate effort—you could forgive me?"

"I forgive you? Oh, never! If you lay down and asked me to forgive you I would not."

"But, Irene," he said, bent upon making some impression on her, "what will people think of you if you are thus?"

"I will think of you as a woman who has done something between us. I am not cowardly. Fighting a duel would not distress me; a blow from an enemy would rouse me to give back another. I am not a coward, for I fear no man. My arm is strong, and I know how to use it. You have told me that your father and husband intend to slay me if they find me out. Now, could you go a surer way to point me out to them than by showing them on what evil terms you stand with me?"

"The truth of the words struck her at once. Naturally enough, if the duke and her father saw her showing any great resentment against any one man they would at once suspect him. If she wished to keep him from the most terrible fate, and keep her vengeance in her own hand, she must not show what she really thought of him."

"I see," she said, slowly, "you are right. If I show to you outwardly the hatred, scorn, the contempt that I feel, it will draw suspicion upon you. I will be so far wiser that I will refrain from that; but remember, between us there is no peace—between us there is war to the knife."

CHAPTER XIX.

There came a change over the young duchess. She had never been gay or frivolous, but she had taken a vital interest in all that surrounded her; she had been a leader in all the gaieties of the neighborhood; her beautiful face had been alive with eloquence. But now she seemed abstracted; she was always deeply engrossed in thought; if anyone suddenly entered a room she started as though aroused from sleep. The expression of her face changed to one of deep study and profound thought.

"How am I to strike the heart of a man who has no heart?" she asked herself in despair. "The only thing that could make him suffer would be the loss of fortune, the loss of the means he employed for the purchasing of all his pleasures that might hurt him; the loss of position might be a keen blow to him, but then he had his wife's fortune to fall back on, and Lord Gerard was known to be rich; if he lost his own position, he had always the position that being son-in-law to an earl would give him; neither loss of fortune nor position would punish him as she desired. What should her vengeance be?"

Yet think as she would, the great wonder of her life remained a puzzle still. She had sworn to be avenged, and she could find no method of vengeance.

"I will think over it, until I do manage it," she said to herself. And these words encouraged her until she reached London, when the season began—the season of which she was to be the queen.

One evening as she sat at the opera, her eyes glancing indifferently round the house, lingered on a face that was terribly familiar to her—the face of Vane Forrester.

Her face flushed slightly as she looked at him, and her white jeweled hands clinked each other tightly. She watched him, while the breath came in hot, quick gasps from her lips, and then she smiled to herself—a slow, almost cruel smile. The duke was in the box with her, and when all signs of emotion had left her face and manner, she turned to him.

"Telephone," she said, in a slow, calm voice, "do you see a dark-haired man in the stalls—the third to the right—a man with a handsome, evil face?"

The duke raised his glasses.

"Yes, I see him," he replied.

"Who is he," she asked, with complete unconcern.

"I know him; his name is—let me think—Forrester—Vane Forrester; he is what is commonly called a man-about-town."

"What is he?" she asked.

"Strange you should ask me that question, for my influence procured him the appointment. He was down in the world—Lord Gerard spoke of him to me. I believe Sir Hulbert asked him to use all his influence in his favor."

Her face grew a shade paler, and her lips had a hard look about them; still she maintained her indifference of manner, although the hand that held the richly jeweled cigarette trembled.

"He is a friend of Sir Hulbert's, Lord Gerard said."

"He was?" Sir Hulbert spoke to Lord Gerard about him, and Lord Gerard spoke to me."

"And you?" she asked.

"I found him a most excellent position at the inland revenue office, with an income of no less than eight hundred per annum, and he was well pleased over it. I assure you."

She was quite silent for a few minutes; then she laid her head on his arm.

"Telephone," she said, gently, "I am going to ask you a favor—will you grant it without wanting to know why I ask it?"

"That I will, most assuredly," he said.

"If you obtained that position for him, could you take it away?"

"Of course I can," said Irene, that is not the villain who tried to—"

He paused, looking at his wife in utter consternation.

"No—I understand—no, that is not the man. But there came to my knowledge once a great wrong that he had done—a horrible wrong—and the person to whom he did that wrong, hoped that he would be punished. Punish him, telephone—take from him what you gave him."

The duke's fine old face grew dark with a frown.

"You cannot tell me the wrong, Irene?" he said.

"No, I cannot tell you; my word should be sufficient," she replied proudly.

"I will trust you," he said. "You are kind of heart and generous by nature; you would not let me punish the man unless he richly deserved it. It shall be as you say, Irene."

The consequence of that conversation was that in a few days afterward Vane Forrester, to his surprise, received a note to say that the office he held was abolished, so that his services would be no longer required.

And then Vane Forrester began to wonder what fate pursued him; he could get nothing to do. Long since he had run through his private fortune; he had drunk and gambled, and had done everything on earth that he ought not to have done. For years he had hung about the clubs, and had reasoned himself on rich men, one after another, getting what he could from them. Sir Hulbert had promised him he would use all his interests for him. He had done so, and the result was that the duke had found him this appointment which was to make him a rich man for life; now he had lost it, and a curse seemed to have fallen on him.

"Have I a hidden foe?" he cried out.

"Does some enemy dig my footsteps, and follow me to set everyone against me? The first time I go anywhere I am well received, the second time the doors are closed against me. I cannot understand it."

While the pockets of the solemn, silent man who had had a long interview with the Duchess of Bayard were filled with gold, and she herself almost wondered to find how much money she was spending, until Vane Forrester grew desperate and gave up the struggle; it was useless. Every door was shut in his face, every man seemed to be against him. The men who had been his friends would have nothing more to do with him. They told each other there was something against him, and though none of them knew what it was, the rumor grew and spread until his oldest friends passed him without a nod, and he was alone in the world.

The end of it was that, gaunt, hungry, almost friendless, the once brilliant, wicked man presented himself before Sir Hulbert Estmere.

"I have reserved you," he said; "you are my last resource—you must help me—I helped you."

"I would not help you more if you were dying. You did what you pleased to call a service for me. I did one in return for you, and now we are quits—I shall do no more."

"I am a ruined, broken-down man," he returned.

"Serves you right," said Sir Hulbert.

"I deserve shooting myself for my sin; but I never forget that you led me into it. But for such men as you, men like myself would be ten thousand times better than they are."

"I thought you would help me," said Vane Forrester, his face quivering, and his voice hoarse with emotion.

"I do not see why you should. I have, by enough, asked your help; you gave it, and I repaid it. Would to heaven you had refused me when I asked it. I loathe you for your complacency."

"I could swear to heaven," cried the man, "that I have a hidden foe; it is just as though someone had sworn vengeance against me. I can never succeed in any single thing, and yet I know of no enemy in the wide world."

He paused abruptly, for Sir Hulbert's eyes were fixed upon him with an expression of stunned and bewildered amazement.

"What makes you think that?" he asked, slowly, with a curious whiteness coming over his face.

"I cannot tell who, or what, or why—it cannot all be coincidence, there is too much system in it. I swear that somewhere under the pitiless sky I have a foe who follows me, and tracks me, and ruins me."

Sir Hulbert was silent for a few minutes. "Could it be possible that the beautiful, injured woman, who had threatened him with vengeance, had absolutely taken vengeance on his accomplice? It looked like it."

"Who found for you the position you held in the inland revenue office?" he asked.

The answer was: "The Duke of Bayard."

"How did you lose it?"

"It was taken from me; given up because they were reducing expenses, I was told."

"Have you asked the duke to help you since?"

"Yes, I have; but I received a letter saying that he declined to use any interest that he might have for me, and that I was not to trouble him again."

"Have you ever seen the Duchess of Bayard?" They told me she is very generous—she might—"

"No woman can help me," he cried; "I want the influence and interest of a man. No, I have not seen her; if I did it would be of no use—she would not help me."

He never dreamed that the beautiful woman, resplendent in jewels, who had looked at him that night at the opera, was the girl at whose mock marriage he had laughed as the very cream of jests.

"There is no homeless dog in the street that has been so driven, and worried, and ill-used, as I have been," cried Vane Forrester. "Give me a few pounds—enough to begin life with in another land, and you will not hear of me again."

So it happened that he left England in safety, and after some years became quite a famous man in New York. The price of his crimes was to be paid him by other hands than those of the woman whose life he had helped to mar and spoil.

CHAPTER XX.

The summer came again, the brilliant London season had ended. Saxtonhurst was to be more gay than ever this year. One of the royal guests had accepted an invitation for a week's shooting. Sir Hulbert and Lady Estmere were going, and to Irene's great delight, Santon Darcy promised to spend at least three weeks there in the autumn. A brilliant party of guests was invited to meet the royal prince, and all went merrily as a marriage bell; with this exception, that in the beautiful face of the mistress of Saxton-

hurst there was something no one understood. She was brooding always over one and the same thing—her vengeance, and the shape it would take.

There came one beautiful day in September, a day that the Duchess of Bayard never forgot. A shooting party to Burton Chase had been arranged, and the gentlemen were both eager and anxious over it. But on the morning Lady Estmere was not quite well—she had a fainting fit; not serious or alarming, but Sir Hulbert would not leave her. In vain she prayed of him to go, and not to debar himself of a day's pleasure for her trifling indisposition; Sir Hulbert would not go. "It would be of no use, Lira," he said, "I should not enjoy myself. The thought of your pale face would never leave me all day long. You should not have made me love you so much."

"I am very glad you do, Hulbert; but, believe me, I am quite as well as I was yesterday. You see, Hulbert, that cluster of trees over there, the silver beeches?"

"Yes, I see them, Lira," he answered.

"I could go now," she continued, in a tone that was like music, "and place my hand on the very spot I stood, when the first rush of love filled my heart for you, Hulbert. I remember it so well; you stood leaning against a birch tree, your head bare, and the wind playing among your bonny curls. My darling, you know I liked you when we were married, but I did not love you; it was an open question, as you will remember, whether I was to love you or not."

There were a few moments of silence, and Irene, who sat listening unavoidably just outside the window, knew well how they were filled up.

"I will not be interrupted in that fashion, Hulbert," laughed Lady Estmere; "how can I speak if you stop my lips with kisses?"

"My darling," he murmured, "I have never deserved such love as yours."

"Why not, Hulbert?" she asked, wistfully.

"I cannot tell you. The lives of men are not as the lives of women. By your side I feel as a black vulture must feel near a spotless dove."

"But, Hulbert," said the sweet, wistful voice, "you have never loved anyone except me?"

In the golden sunlight and fragrant silence, the duchess found herself listening, with her heart on her lips, for the answer. If he had said, "Yes, in my youth I had a mad love for a girl, and did her a great wrong," she would have been inclined to mercy, but the answer came:

"No; I had fancies, as I told you before, vain, foolish fancies, but I have never loved any human being truly, my wife, until I loved you."

The blue sky seemed suddenly to grow red; the trees and flowers, the fountains and the distant woods, all trembled before Irene; a rush of roaring waters filled her ears; she dropped the book, it fell in the soft, green grass; she started from her seat with a low moan.

She would not go back to the house, because in doing so she must pass the window where they stood, his arm round the graceful figure, the fair face bent on his breast. She could not pass them; it was not that she loved him, but that her whole soul was fired by that one word, "fancy."

She went down the terrace and crossed the flower gardens; from there she went through the woods; the thought of being indoors seemed to stifle her. It was well that she did not hear what else passed between them—the caressing words, the endearments.

"I shall not let you remain indoors all day with me," said Lady Estmere. "If you wish to please me, you will go out for a couple of hours, at least."

"I will go, if you wish it," he said; "I will go after them to Burton; I will start just before noon."

Before he left her he bent down and kissed the beautiful face.

"Heaven bless you, my dearest wife!" he said, and wondered at the solemnity of his own words.

He went through the grounds whistling and singing as he went, his heart warm with love for the beautiful wife who loved him so well. He came to the beach trees, and smiled as he thought of her loving words. The blue heavens seemed to smile, the sunlight smiled, and he wished, with all the fervor of his heart, that he had always been a good man.

As the wish grew in his heart he saw, away in the trees, the glimmer of a blue dress, the dress he had seen that morning worn by the Duchess of Bayard.

What was she doing there among the trees, away from everyone, and quite alone? he wondered, with more than a touch of anxiety. Was she unhappy? Had she come there to weep away her sorrow? His heart went out to her; he remembered her fashion of wandering alone, if ever any little cloud came between them.

"Poor Irene," he murmured, "although she is a wealthy and beautiful young duchess, poor Irene!"

A strong impulse came to him to do what he had never done before—to beg her pardon for the wrong he had done her. In that moment he forgot her vow of vengeance; he forgot the revenge which she had always threatened him with; he forgot everything except, how young and fair and innocent she was when he found her by the brookside, and despairing when she had left him at Beechgrove. He was supremely happy in the love of his wife, and his heart went out to her in pity. He longed that she should forgive him; he longed for her pardon; if he had that, he should be most certainly the happiest man in the world.

He would go and see her now; perhaps on this lovely, balmy morning her heart would be softened to him; the sunshine, the flowers, and the fragrance might plead for him. He would ask her for the love of heaven to forgive him that his sins might be blotted out of his life and forgotten.

He left the beach trees and went in the direction of the blue dress; he could not find her as quickly as he had hoped to do; at times she would vanish from his sight among the trees, and at other times he could find no path leading to where she was.

Income of the Churches.

The income during 1901 of the six principal Protestant church organizations shows a falling off from the year previous, and is as follows: Baptist, \$12,575,000; Congregational, \$7,350,000; Episcopalian, \$14,856,000; Lutheran, \$8,100,000; Methodist, \$18,951,000; Presbyterian, \$16,338,000.

THEY LIVE IN THE SEA

PEARL DIVERS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

Thursday Island, Between Australia and New Guinea, Is the Center of the Richest Pearl Fisheries in the World—A Dangerous Calling.

A large proportion of the pearls that deck the fair throats of the gentle sex are found in the Pacific ocean, and one of the richest of the pearl fisheries is near the rocky shores of Thursday Island. This island is one of the most curious and interesting bits of land on the globe. It is the commercial center of a race of people who live practically in the sea. They are the pearl divers of the Pacific ocean.

Thursday Island is one of the little group of coral formations lying between Australia and New Guinea. Taken together the largest of these islands constitute a calendar, with an island for every day of the week, beginning with Sunday Island. Thursday Island commands Torres Strait. Representatives of nearly all the nations of the far East may be seen any day along its shores, sporting themselves in the water—Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, East Indians, Fijians, Papuans. To the right of the island, running for 1,200 miles down the Australian coast, is a stretch of waving green vegetation, apparently afloat upon the surface of the placid ocean. This is the top of the Great Barrier Reef, the most notable coral reef in the world. Throughout its length its banks are lined with pearl oysters.

Thursday Island forms the great market for these oysters. About £200,000 worth of shells are raised annually along the reef and on the western coast of Australia. The business of pearl fishing is conducted on the basis of the profit from the oyster shells. The pearls are clear gain, the value varying a great deal. One pearl found in 1890 sold for £2,000, another for £1,500. Pearls worth £20 are quite common.

The shells of pearl oysters are of enormous size, measuring frequently eighteen inches across. The oysters lie in the sea fastened to rocks, especially coral rocks, and quite away from sand and dirt. They hang by thread-like filaments, about a dozen in a bunch.

The business of the diver is to cut this thread and bring up the oysters. The shells are worth from £100 to £200 a ton for the best; the poorest from £15 to £60 a ton. The natives trade them for merchandise, and realize about £15 a ton on the average.

Fishing is done in small boats or luggers. Each boat has a pumping apparatus to force air to the divers under water. The smallest boat, with apparatus, is worth £600.

The business is very dangerous. Poisonous fish, sharks and squid abound. Sharks rarely attack divers, but contribute immensely to their nervousness. Squid exude a quantity of inky black liquid, which dangerously clouds the water.

Japanese are the best divers. They stay under water longer, dare more, and can be relied upon better than any of the other types. Among the Malay natives women are successful divers. They go down without diving suits, fastening stones to their feet to help them to sink. Natives and divers are not allowed to open the oysters. A careful watch is kept to prevent the theft of gems under the eye of an experienced foreman. A good operator can open a ton of shells in one day.

RESCUING A CAT.

St. Louis Man Climbed a High Pole to Save an Animal.

At the risk of his life William Clynes, of St. Louis, climbed a flagpole ninety-five feet high to rescue a helpless cat. This piece of heroism, reported among the lesser events in the daily news columns, had no motive but sympathy with a dumb animal in distress.

Three days before, the cat had run up the tall flagstaff in Carr Park in her pursuit of a sparrow. When she was within three feet of him, the sparrow flew away. Then the cat, instead of turning back, continued to climb until she reached the golden ball at the top of the pole, and this, too, she surmounted.

After a brief rest she tried to descend. Then her feet slipped, and she made the discovery that her claws, although excellent for climbing, held up, were useless when she put her weight upon them head down. The rotundity of the ball or fright at the elevation seemed to deprive her of the power to descend backward; so she sat clutched the ball at the top of the swaying pole, and cried pitiously.

Through all of one night of misery, through the following day, and then through another night she clung, cold and hungry, to her narrow perch. On the third day a park-keeper and a policeman tried to reach her. The policeman climbed forty feet and was then obliged to give up. "Can't some one save the poor creature?" he asked, sympathetically, as he slid down.

Then William Clynes, a tinner in a stove factory, pulled off his coat and started up the pole. Foot by foot he went, until he had reached the point, forty feet above the ground, where the light topmast was spliced on. Up this thin, swaying stem, which to the people below looked like a reed, and which bent and trembled under Clynes' weight, he slowly worked his way.

Once, when near the top, he slipped back a few feet. The crowd gathered below shivered, and many of the spectators called to him to come down. But he only gripped the pole the harder with his claws, and slowly worked his way up, until he was only ten feet from

TOMAS ESTRADA PALMA, FIRST PRESIDENT OF CUBA



Tomas Estrada Palma is a little, old man. He wears rusty black clothes. He moves nervously and quickly, winking his blue eyes as he talks. He is lavishly polite, after the manner of the old Spanish school. His chin is more than strong and aggressive, being what country people call jumper-jawed, which means that his chin betrays strength and aggression raised to the highest power.

The President of the republic of Cuba is 67 years old. He was born at Bayamo, in the province of Santiago. His mother tried to keep him out of the revolutionary movements which were brewing in the island during his youth. She even went so far as to restrict him to the boundaries of the Bayamo estate.

Associates she knew he must have, but his boy friends had to come to see him; he was not allowed to visit them. The father had died when Tomas was very young. When he was 15 years old he broke from his mother's leading strings and went to Havana to study. Soon after that the death of his mother left him in sole control of a great estate. He went back to Bayamo to manage it.

By this time rebellion had broken out actively and Palma cast his lot with the island party. Years of agitation and organization followed, in which

Palma bore an active and prominent part.

In 1868, when open war began, he was one of the leaders in the newly-formed legislative body. His home town was the first upon which the Spanish troops descended. The patriots, loving it devotedly as they did, for it was an old and pleasant city of homes, burned it to the ground, so that the oncoming regiments should find neither food nor shelter there.

During the guerrilla campaigning of the Ten Years' War Palma was elected President of a republic organized by the troops. In 1877 he was captured by the Spaniards, imprisoned for a short time in Havana, and later taken to Spain, where he was confined in an old castle for over a year.

He takes care to give the Spaniards their due, and says he was treated with great kindness and respect by them.

After his release he was postmaster general of Honduras for five years, and then came to the United States, where he established a collegiate school for Cuban and South American boys at Central Valley, N. Y.

During the last struggle for Cuban independence he was the head of the junta which, with headquarters in New York, raised money and carried on a propaganda in behalf of the cause.

the cat, five feet, two feet. A moment later he had gained the top, and wrapping his legs and one hand firmly about the slender staff, he reached the other hand over the gilt ball, and gently picked the cat from her place of danger. Then he slid down the pole to the ground, where he stood a moment for the crowd to inspect the cat before he took her off to get her some milk.

MOLD PLANTS.

Beauties of the Fungus that Gathers on Jellies and Preserved Fruits.

Mold over jelly or preserved fruit is justly regarded as a pest, yet scientists who have studied it under the microscope, declare that the mold plant is a most lovely creation. Indeed, a writer in the Kitchen Magazine says that nothing in nature is more beautiful.

These plants are associated in our minds with death and decay, and so an unreasoning prejudice has developed against them. In many cases they do accomplish good, but as the jelly rises above the frosted pond, so a mold may develop its frost-like dulziness and cleanliness, its exquisite coloring, in the midst of putrefaction. Still they also thrive in the cleanest soil, and are wholly harmless in their growth.

The most common of the molds is the Penicillium glaucum, well known to housekeepers as the fungus, against which a fight is made at canning time. It first forms a grayish-green mat, and if removed, gives forth a fine, powdery dust. Under the microscope it is a wonderful thing, but housewives are probably less interested in its form than in methods of combating it.

In their struggle for existence the plants are very hardy and obstinate, and nature has provided them with a way of upsetting the most careful plans for their undoing. The spores, which take the place of seeds, sometimes, for a reason thus far unknown to science, pass into a resting stage. Instead of sprouting at once, they lie dormant for an indefinite period, and germinate apparently at their own sweet will. A German scientist has discovered that a spore may lie quiescent for two years, and then under favorable conditions of heat and moisture, develop into a sturdy growth.

This is probably the reason why fruit may exhibit no mold for months, and then suddenly make the housekeeper's heart to faint by a thick green growth. Here, as everywhere, "eternal vigilance" only may expect to win the day.

A Comedy of an Umbrella.

When the lady sat down in the car she put her umbrella in the narrow slit between the window and the back of the seat. Then she looked with what the New York Tribune calls an air of victory and compassion at the stupid passengers who sat holding their umbrellas uncomfortably against their breasts.

Of course when the car lurched the

umbrella toppled and went down the hole, but its owner did not notice its disappearance until she rose to get out.

"Where is my umbrella?" she cried. "Conductor, somebody has stolen my umbrella. I put it right in that—that slit in the car."

"Then I guess perhaps you may get it next summer when they repair the car," answered the conductor, amiably.

"But it couldn't have gone down there. I made sure it couldn't drop down. Some one has stolen it."

"Well, I'm sorry, but I can't block the line. Do you want to get off at this stop?"

"I want my umbrella," said the man opposite. He took his own umbrella, which had a hook-shaped handle, and went fishing.

"Don't tear it!" cried the woman. "It's a nice silk one, and I think a good deal of it because my cousin Nellie gave it to me."

After a few probes, the rescuer pulled out a dirty umbrella and handed it to its owner.

"Thank you, sir!" she snapped, and strode out. The conductor pulled the bell-cord vigorously. The passengers sniled.

Disadvantages of a Flat.

Ping-Pong is not an unmitigated blessing when played in a flat—that is, to the dwellers in other apartments.

"The family that lives over me is addicted to the game," says one victim, "and I am familiar with some of the drawbacks of living in such close relations with habitual ping-pongers. Regularly every night after dinner I hear the furniture in the drawing room above me being pulled about the room. I know that the large table is being prepared for the game. After that I hear steadily until bedtime the inevitable two tones of the bats, ping-pong, ping-pong, ping-pong, as the game goes on. I don't know at what time they stop. I escape to a bedroom before that time and try to go to sleep. It is not possible to do anything in the drawing room in which the constant and unchanging ping-pong is heard."

Bearing Reverses.

As a rule, women bear fortune's reverses better than men. A woman performs little acts of self-denial as a matter of course; she gives up her own personal luxuries, or even necessities, without comment or complaint; therefore her deeds of unselfishness often escape notice. The average man cannot do this. He may relinquish some big thing without a growl; his conduct in a great renunciation may be characterized by the same exemplary patience which marks women at such a time, but should the string of unaccounted poverty be so severe as to take from him any of the trifles which he treats as a matter of course, he becomes morose, and his temper suffers in consequence.