

UNCLE PAUL'S MYSTERY.

LOUNGING carelessly in an arm-chair, his eye fixed on a lady by his side with an open letter in his hand, was a tall, fair-haired young man.

"What have you there, mother?" he asked, throwing his arm around her in a caressing way. "That smile makes you positively young, I declare."

Losing his father in India, when a child, a small legacy from his good mother had, with the most severe economy, given George Roberts a liberal education, while his mother had her small pension alone to depend upon.

Long years had passed, her father was dead and her only brother, who inherited the estate, had ever refused any overtures toward a reconciliation. Not even in her wildest day-dream had Mrs. Roberts hoped to behold her childhood's home again.

No wonder then that her cheek flushed and her eye brightened over the letter in her hand, for it contained an invitation for herself and her son to spend the Christmas week at Locksley Grange. Though expressed in cold and formal terms it was courteous, and the buried years of the past were not alluded to.

The young man took the letter, which she handed him without comment, and glancing through to the signature—"Paul Edward Hallows"—looked up at his mother.

"Your uncle, my son," she said.

A flush of indignant feeling passed over the pleasant face. Was this cold, haughty uncle, who had so long ignored their existence, to summon them to his presence by a wave of his hand? By hard study and perseverance George had won a place at the bar, and was content to labor, trusting to time. But it was with an inward struggle, as he looked at the eager expectation on his mother's face, and thought of her lonely life, that he controlled his resentment.

"You would like to go, dear mother?" he said, pleasantly.

"Yes, my boy; it seems as if I could die happier if I saw the old place once more."

"Then we shall go," he said. "I will make my arrangements for a holiday, and we will leave town on Wednesday, and with a kiss left her.

The master of Locksley Grange, a tall erect old man, of most imposing presence, with snowy hair and whiskers, and brilliant, piercing black eyes, shaded by shaggy eyebrows—like fierce fires overhanging with jagged snow crags—greeted his sister and her son with stately courtesy, although no light of love beamed from his eye to the gentlewoman who had been his childhood's playfellow.

One sharp glance he shot at his nephew as he made some comment on the journey, and then bade a servant usher them to their apartments.

When the dinner-bell rang, George conducted his mother—looking so fair and gentle in her soft gray silk, still with the delicate flush on her cheek—into the state drawing-room, where they were duly presented to the rector of Locksley and his curate. Still they waited, and in a few moments a young girl entered the room, of such unusual beauty, that George Roberts stopped short in the middle of a sentence addressed to the curate, and never completed it.

She might have been about seventeen, with a slight form, graceful as a deer, with hair of pale gold, which deepened into shadows of tawny brown under the mellow wax lights, and soft brown eyes, shaded by curling golden lashes. A dark silk dress, without ornament, displayed and heightened the delicately tinted skin and perfect figure. She approached the group timidly, and George, glancing at his uncle, saw, to his astonishment, a scowl sweep over his face as his eyes rested on the fair vision.

"Miss Kedar," he said carelessly, presenting the young girl to his sister, with a wave of his jeweled hand, "a penniless orphan whom I kept out of charity, as her mother was an old friend of mine. She made love a match," he added with a sneer. "You can take her in to dinner, he said to his nephew, with another wave of the white hand, as he turned to his sister with formal politeness.

George felt his indignation stir, as he saw the deep flush rise on the young girl's face and then fade to a marble paleness; but she did not raise her eyes to see the sympathy expressed in his.

The dinner passed off pleasantly. The rector was a fluent and graceful conversationalist, and the host excited young Roberts to bring forward his knowledge of men and things, in his manly, earnest way, by the display of his own versatile powers to draw him out.

The young man had almost forgotten the silent beauty by his side, until a glance from her soft blue eyes, lighted with appreciative feeling, met his, and received the sympathy and wonder he had felt at his uncle's nonchalance in alluding to her dependent position.

When the ladies retired, and the political question, of the day came up, the young lawyer so startled the older men with his brilliant eloquence, with his fresh and racy opinions so powerfully put, that they felt themselves in the presence of a master-

spirit which would soar far upward when its wings were fledged.

Long did George Roberts sit by his flickering fire before he retired to rest, wondering what might be the tie between his uncle and the lovely girl—what the cause of the singular hatred evinced toward her in so many trifling things.

His uncle's morning greeting was cordial and kindly, seeming to have lost that disagreeable air of patronage which had so grated on his manhood the day before.

After breakfast he accompanied him on a ride over the estate; to view the improvements, and as they went, the old man skillfully drew out the particulars of his nephew's life, his views and feelings, his plans and hopes.

In the afternoon George accompanied his uncle to a little office adjoining the library, and saw the tenants come in with their yearly rents, where the bags of silver and gold were deposited in an iron chest. In this were secured the most valuable papers, and the family jewels. The little room was strongly protected by bars and bolts, as it contained other articles of value.

The next day a grand dinner and ball was to be given, to which the gentry of the county were bidden, and the lower hall was also to be enlivened with a dance for the tenants and servants.

Considerable was the excitement, therefore, on this sudden opening of the doors, and many a young belle prepared to enter its gray, time-honored walls, with a curiosity awakened by the tales of a mother or aunt.

Virginia Kedar, simply dressed in a delicate robe of white muslin, with a wreath of scarlet berries on her silken hair, was the beauty of the whole assemblage, and many were the whispers as to her birth and parentage.

George Roberts became more and more fascinated with her, and this evening completed his enthrallment. For the first time in his life he was in love. Yet, he could not but notice how his uncle scowled at him when he danced with her, and his mind was filled with a thousand perplexities concerning her.

He lay awake till he heard the great hall clock strike three, his heart too full of the blissful dreams which come but once in a life-time, to wish for slumber, happy visions flitted before his eyes, in which he and Miss Kedar played a prominent part.

Suddenly he heard a faint, grating noise in the silence of the night, although he could not tell from which direction it came, and listening attentively as it continued, he softly opened his door. It sounded louder, and he perceived that it came from the library. The chest and its valuable contents flashed before his mind and without pausing an instant he stole down stairs.

The noise ceased by the time he reached the foot of the stair-case, but he hastened to the library as silently as possible. The door into the office was ajar, and a faint light perceptible. As George looked through the crack he saw a figure bending over the chest, examining papers. A slight exclamation escaped the robber as he took up a pack of letters tied with a broad blue ribbon thrust it into his breast.

Then he rose from his kneeling posture, put a bag of gold in each pocket, and as the light from the dark lantern in his hand flashed for a moment in his face, George saw a deep red scar on his cheek, where the black maske had slipped one side. The young man sprung toward the robber, calculating on the suddenness of the attack to be able to knock him down, but tripping on an unseen footstool he fell headlong into the room, while the robber vaulted through the window as lightly as a cat.

When George picked himself up there was no sign of the thief, and while he hesitated a moment whether to give chase or not, his uncle, roused with the noise of his fall, entered the room. He shivered when George described the robber, and still more when the young man picked up a glove on the floor, a small gray glove, delicately yet singularly perfumed. Grasping it in his hand, the old man groaned bitterly and paced the floor irresolutely for a time, while his nephew watched him in amazement. Presently he turned to the window and refastened it, shaking his head as he examined the bolts and found them all unbroken. The thief had evidently had assistance from the inside of the mansion.

"Don't say anything about it, George," he said in an anxious tone. "I know the man: no common thief," and another groan escaped his lips. "Now go to bed I'll tell more to-morrow."

With his mind full of this new mystery the young man fell asleep. When he had breakfast a message came from his uncle in the library, and George hastened to obey.

A feverish flush burnt on the old man's cheek, and his manner was hurried and impatient, very unlike his usual haughty serenity. Motioning his nephew to a seat, he plunged into the subject on his mind without further reflection.

"Those papers taken last night, George from the iron chest, were of incalculable value to me," the old man said, vehemently. "Restore them to me, and you command anything I own. Renounce your profession for a time, devote your life to the search. If need be, and Locksley Grange shall be your reward. I will make my will this very day," and he rose from his chair, regarding the young man with eager gaze.

George hesitated overwhelmed with the idea. Ambition was strong within him, but life was before him, the reward great.

"But Miss Kedar?" he murmured.

"You love that girl?" said the old man, with a sneer. "Oh! fate! fate!"

"Yes, Uncle Paul, I do love her," said George, boldly. "Add her hand to your offer, and I will give myself up to do your will."

A great struggle seemed raging within the old man's breast, and he paced the floor rapidly.

"Young man, you are honorable," he said, with a piercing glance at his nephew; "promise me, your honor, that you will not seek to marry Virginia Kedar until you find those papers and restore them to me if I am alive, or if not, burn them unread."

"I promise," answered the young man, solemnly.

"Listen, then," his uncle said, with an air of relief; "the robber was a woman. All your legal skill and sharpness will be needed to trace her; but the perfume of that glove is the strongest clue. I will give you a written description to aid you, and you must start at once."

When George Roberts left Locksley, it was as his uncle's acknowledged heir, and what was of infinitely more moment to him, the accepted lover Virginia Kedar. With the little gray glove treasured carefully he proceeded to London, secured an accomplished detective, and pursued his search. His mother was to remain at the Grange.

First, they endeavored, to find a name for the singular scent, but no perfumer in London or Paris could explain it. Both cities were searched, and every possible or impossible clue taken up, as the days lengthened into weeks, and weeks into months.

When summer emptied the cities they sought the watering places—Baden-Baden, Hamburg, and so on, but all in vain.

One evening as George sat in his bedroom, in one of the strange little German towns, pondering over a letter from his mother, which described his uncle's failing health and growing irritability, and almost cursing his own folly in thus giving up everything to gratify an old man's insane whim, he was aroused from his despondent gloom by the entrance of a fresh little maiden with her clean linen. As she sorted out her snowy burden on the bed a subtle, strange odor saluted his senses.

"Good heavens! the perfume? the glove! Striving to conceal the excitement he approached the girl as if to examine her work, and perceived a small parcel lying to one side, from which the odor came. He could not speak German; how obtain any clue from it? With a sudden movement he managed to overturn a table covered with books and papers, and while the girl, with great good nature, assisted in replacing them, he had dexterously rolled the parcel under the draperies of the bed.

She went away without missing it and George instantly summoned his ally to consult over this unlooked-for good fortune. When she came back in a few hours in search of it, the detective soon ascertained that the laces belonged to a sick lady, named Madame Bernastine.

The clue was rapidly followed up. Pratt formed the acquaintance with the invalid's maid, who was English, it seemed found from her sufficient proof of her mistress' identity with the woman they sought, and in a few weeks' time, during which Madame Bernastine failed rapidly, gained access to her private desk, and secured the package of letters, still tied with the blue ribbon. Next day the maid found herself heiress to all her mistress' effects, for the adventures lay dead, and there was no one to claim her goods.

George flew back to Locksley Grange to find his uncle dying. The old man, roused from his apathy when he saw the letters, bade his nephew burn them before his eyes, and with his last remaining strength drew a sealed paper from under his pillow, placed it in his nephew's hand, and fell asleep never to awaken.

George opened the paper. "That woman was my wife—an artful fiend. Virginia Kedar Hallows is my lawful daughter. I hated her mother and I hate her."

Accompanying this was a marriage and birth certificate. That was all.

All in One Word.

A minister had a bright little boy who used to get very tired of sitting still in church. He once proposed staying at home, "because he knew everything in the Bible and couldn't be taught any more, but his father smiled and said;

"Then you must go to set a good example Jamie."

And so Jamie had still to go, and sit still too. One warm Sunday afternoon, as he trudged along by his father's side, he drew a sigh of some size and said.

"It's pretty hot to-day, papa. If I was you I'd preach awful short!"

"I think I shall, Jamie," was replied.

"Papa, don't 'Gospel' mean all the good there is in the Bible put together?"

"Yes my son; I think that is a good definition of 'Gospel.'"

"Then, papa, why don't you just say 'Gospel, amen?' That would be preaching all there is without firing folks to death."

ENIGMA DEPARTMENT.

A Square Word Enigma.

The following Four Words must be such as will make a square, and read the same either down or cross-ways.

The first belongs to a ship.

The second grows in the Tropics.

The third is a geographical division in the United States.

The fourth is part of a plant.

Answer to Enigma in last week's TIMES:—"M. L. Kochenderfer."

Not Good at Figures.

A GERMAN WOMAN in New York signaled the car, and the conductor sprung the bell. With gravity he walked up to the woman after she was seated, and held out his hand for her fare. The German woman gave him a three cent piece and two pennies. The conductor put the three cent piece in his vest pocket, and dropped the pennies in a side pocket of his overcoat. Then turning to the lady he said:

"I want another cent, madame."

"I gave you five cents," she replied.

"Ever since the Fourth Avenue Railroad has existed the fare on this line has been six cents," replied the conductor proudly.

"Well," answered the woman, "I haven't got another cent." After some hesitation she added, "Have you any change?"

"I can change anything, madame, from twenty-five cents up to an eleven dollar bill," said the conductor.

Thereupon the German lady handed him a fifty cent stamp. He took the stamp between his teeth, and counted out a handful of pennies into the woman's lap. She counted them very carefully, and then looked up into his face.

"Haven't you made a mistake?" She asked.

"Just hand the pennies back here, then," the conductor said, holding out his double hands.

The German woman took up her dress with one hand, and ladled out the pennies with the other. The conductor then counted them over, and threw them back into her lap saying, "That's all right—forty-four cents, and six for your fare is fifty. What's the matter with you?"

"Yes," returned the woman, "but I want five cents more."

"No, you don't," he replied. "The fare's six cents, and you've got forty-four cents in your lap. That's all right."

"Well, give me back the five cents that I gave you before, then," said the woman with a touch of asperity.

This apparently dumfounded the conductor. He remembered that the woman had given him five cents, but the thing had become so intricate he seemed at a loss to know how to straighten it out.

"I gave you a three-cent piece and two pennies," the woman said.

The conductor nodded, but rubbed his head as though endeavoring to comprehend and unravel the whole monetary mystery. His face bore a troubled expression. Finally he got it.

"Well," he said at last, give me back those pennies."

The woman scooped them into his hands, and he dropped them into his pocket. He then fished up the fifty cent stamp and passed it to her, with the words: "There madam, there's your fifty cents." In another second he took out a three cent piece from his vest pocket, saying, "And there's your three cent piece," and in five seconds more, "There's your two pennies. I don't know whether they're the two identical pennies you gave me or not, but I guess they'll do." By this time the troubled expression had left his countenance. Richard was himself again.

Addressing the astonished woman with great dignity, the conductor said: "Now we'll begin, over again. Your fare, madam," with his hands on his lips.

The lady laughed and again tendered him the fifty cent stamp. He pocketed it with the remark, "As counting specie seems to bother you, madam, I'll give you your change in stamps," which he did.

His Object.

A doctor was called in to see a patient whose native land was Ireland and whose native drink was whiskey. Water was prescribed as the only cure. Pat said that it was out of the question; he never could drink it. Milk was then proposed, and Pat agreed to get well on milk. The doctor was soon summoned again. Near the bed on which the sick man lay was a table, and on the table a large bowl, and in the bowl was milk, but flavored strongly with whiskey.

"What have you here?" said the doctor. "Milk, doctor; just what you ordered." "But there is whiskey in it; I smell it." "Well, doctor," sighed the patient, "there may be whiskey in it, but milk's my object."

With a view to collect their webs for silk, 4,000 spiders were once obtained, but they soon killed each other. Manufacturers and war never thrive together.

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