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MISCELLANY.

THE STRANGED HEARTS. A TALE OF MARRIED LIFE.

BY CLARA MORSTON.

CHAPTER VII.

"A watchful heart
Still couchant—an inevitable ear;
And an eye practiced like a blind man's touch."
(WALTER SCOT.)

"Punished for our sins we surely are; and yet how often they become our blessings, teaching us that which nothing else can teach us."
(ALFRED LOCKE.)

The mild, odorous breath of spring stole through the open casement into the lofty apart-
ment where Margaret, known only as Mrs. Hastings, sat leaning over her charge, who was now unconscious.

Ida, when awake, would not suffer Mrs. Hastings to leave her sight; if she was obliged to absent herself, the little sufferer would moan for her until her return. Mrs. Egerton often said that she was sure the child would never have recovered, had she had a less patient and devoted nurse. The physician said so also. Mrs. Dorrance said nothing. He suffered steamer after steamer to depart without him, watching whole days and long evening hours by the bedside of his beloved child.

Harry was the only one that seemed to have taken a dislike to Mrs. Hastings. She would often coax him to come to her, but he would only edge himself farther off, till he reached a corner of the room, where he would frown his eyes, and would look up from under his brows, and make mouths at her in his childish independence.

This pleasant spring day Mrs. Egerton had arrived herself of the warm atmosphere to take Harry upon a drive. She had not seen Miss Graham yet, to thank her for procuring so patient a nurse, and course she had not a suspicion of what Mrs. Hastings was, never having known her nephew's wife.

In the mean time Ida slept, and her mother bent over her, her heart full of thankfulness to the kind Heavenly Father who had spared her child to her.

During her weeks of continued watching, the religious instruction of her early youth had come up before her with renewed freshness. The noble sentiments and devoted affections of her heart, which had seemed to be extinguished by vanity and the love of pleasure, had been rekindled, and they now shed their holy light through her soul. All her interests in life had revived, now that she had taken up her abode in the quietude of a country life. She only needed a return of her husband's love, to fill the cup of her earthly happiness—happiness deeper and more rational than life had ever before yielded her.

And now while she watched the slumber of her innocent babe, she recalled, as she had done many times before, the errors for which her punishment had been so severe. Her vanity, her pride, her obstinacy, she saw in such a plain light, that involuntarily she passed one hand over her eyes as though she could thus shut it out.

A footstep fell upon her ear, and glancing up she saw Mrs. Dorrance looking at her. The expression of his eyes changed suddenly; she thought she detected in them a shade of sympathy at first. He said:

"Mrs. Hastings, have you told you that we shall go into the country in another month—to the place on the Hudson?"

"No sir," she answered, her eyes dropping under his steady gaze.

"I suppose you would prefer remaining with your city friends to going so far with us?" he continued.

"No, no, not for a moment—I have no friends—that is—I mean that I love your children so well, sir, I would follow her to the ends of the earth," she answered very much embarrassed.

"Mrs. Hastings, have you heard my history?"

"I have, sir."

Another silence, during which she walked to the window to conceal the morning glow upon her cheeks.

"I wish you would sit down, Mrs. Hastings, and listen to it from my own lips. I would like to know if it is as you have heard it."

"Indeed, sir, I know the whole. It must be a painful subject to you, I would not recall it; she said as she resumed her seat that she had no need for it to recall it! It is ever present with me. Will you tell it to me as you have heard it?—It is a relief to me to talk about it to you."

Her heart beat fast; she summoned all her courage.

"Your wife, sir, as I understand, was young, giddy, and as she did not study your happiness as she ought; you grew cold towards her; she thought that she discovered that you did not love her as fondly as you did another. Mr. Dorrance gave a start of surprise. Mrs. Hastings continued, "she grew proud, and very wretched; she would have acknowledged all her errors, and begged for a return of your love, if she had not felt that you had deceived her; and so things grew worse and worse, until they terminated in a separation."

"You have not told all; will you let me finish the story?"

"Certainly."

"I worshipped my wife! My affection for Helen Graham was calm as a brother's love; but when year after year passed, and my wife grew more and more regardless of my wishes, I did recall the bitter emotions I had felt for Helen, with something like regret. One night, after my wife had sent me from her presence with harsh, galling words, she admitted clandestinely, a man whose character I despised—a subtle, intriguing man of fashion, whom I had forbidden to pay her farther attention. I know not how long he remained with her—staying, with white lips, roses and attempted to seduce her. From that hour I steeled my heart against her—God knows with what difficulty! That man came to me, he asked me if I would allow him to wait upon my wife to some theatrical exhibition, where they were both to take a part. I answered that I should make no objections; that she should never enter my doors again." She went.

Again Mrs. Hastings essayed to speak, and again Mr. Dorrance prevented her. He continued,

"That night I sent her to her father's home. In the morning there came a letter to me from her. It softened my heart to forgiveness; for I was too foolish to believe her protestations of innocence. I wrote an answer, saying that I would come in an envelope—here I found a lock of her lover's hair; and in her own writing an acknowledgment of it as such. Good God!

Dramatic Anecdote.

The following interesting story that went the rounds of the papers some years ago, is well worth repeating. The late Mrs. Jordan possessed a heart susceptible of the most tender and humane emotions, and these were called into action by the least approach of misery or distress. During her short stay at Westchester, where she had been performing, her generous heart was soothed by the presence of a poor woman, a widow with three children, who was a meritorious creditor, things had been worked up in a short time, by law expenses, into a bill of eight pounds. As soon as Mrs. Jordan learned of the circumstances she sent for the attorney, paid his demand, and observed, with as much severity as her good nature could assume, "You lawyers are certainly infernal spirits, sent on earth to make poor mortals miserable."

The attorney, however, pocketed the affront, and with a low bow made his exit.

On the afternoon of the same day, the poor woman was liberated. As Mrs. Jordan, with her servant was taking her usual walk on the Chester walls, and just as she had taken shelter from a shower of rain in a kind of porch, drooping on her knees, and with most grateful emotions exclaimed:

"God forever bless you, madam, you have saved me and my family from ruin!"

The children, beholding their mother's tears added by their cries, to the affecting scene, which a sensitive mind could not behold without strong feelings of sympathy.

The natural liveliness of Mrs. Jordan's disposition was not to be dampened by sorrowful scenes; however, though she strove to hide it, the tears of feeling stole down her cheeks, and stooping to kiss the children, she slipped a pound note into the mother's hand, and in a most playful manner replied—

"There, there—now, it's all over; go, good woman, God bless you; don't say another word."

The grateful creature would have replied that this good female Samaritan insisted on her silence, and departed.

It so happened that another person had taken shelter under the porch, and witnessed the whole of this interesting transaction, who, as Mrs. Jordan observed him, came forward, and (holding out his hand) exclaimed, with a deep sigh—

"Lady, pardon the freedom of a stranger, but would to God the world was all like thee!"

The figure of this man, bespeaking his calling, his countenance pale, and a suit of calico rather the worse for wear, attracted his full spare person. The penetrating eye of Thalia's votary soon developed his character and pretensions, and with her wonted good humor, retreating a few paces, she replied—

"No, I won't shake hands with you."

"Why?"

"Because you are a Methodist preacher, and when you know you are I can't tell me to the devil!"

"The Lord forbid! I am, as you say, a preacher of the gospel, which tells us to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the distressed; and do you think I can behold a sister so cheerfully obeying the command of our master, without feeling that spiritual attachment that leads me to break through worldly customs and offer you the hand of friendship and brotherly love?"

"Well, well! you are a good old soul, I dare say; but I don't like fanatics, and you'll not like me when I tell you who I am."

"I hope I shall!"

"Well, then, I tell you I am an actress." The preacher started. "Yes, I am a player, you must have heard of me, my name is Mrs. Jordan."

After a short pause he again extended his hand, and with a complacent countenance, he replied—

"The Lord bless you wherever thou art; his goodness is unlimited; he has bestowed upon thee a large portion of his spirit; and as to thy calling, if thy soul would but rise to the Lord forbid that I should."

This reconciled, and the rain having abated they left the porch together; the offer of his arm was accepted, and the female Roscius of comedy, and the melancholy disciple of John Wesley, proceeded arm in arm to the door of Mrs. Jordan's dwelling.

As parting the preacher shook hands with her saying—

"Fare thee well, sister; I know not what the principles of people of thy calling may be; but thou art the first I ever conversed with; but if thy benevolent practice equals thine, I hope and trust the Lord will say to each—'Thy sins are forgiven thee!'"

Refreshment of a Bad Memory.

BY AN EX-STAGE-DRIVER.

I was once on my way North, when, at one of the regular stopping-places, a young couple who had been waiting, took passage in my coach. At the lady's particular request, they were furnished with seats outside; 'for,' said she, 'one that travels in the country for the first time is eager to see as much of the scenery as possible.'

This observation sounded rather amusing to me, as you will believe when I tell you that, at first glance, I had recognized in my lady-passenger a Miss F., of S., N. H. She belonged to a poor family, not over intelligent or reputable, and up to two years before, had never been a half-dozen miles from her home. At that time as I well remember she had left for Boston, with the professed intention of going into service as a chambermaid and judging from the quality of her dress and the quantity of rings worn outside of her gloves, she had found the business very profitable.

She evidently retained no recollection of me, for as soon as her companion and myself had succeeded in elevating the 'timid creature' to the position she had chosen, and her feet had been so far soothed as to induce her to descend from giving at every plunge of the horse, a pretty, little, inelegant shriek, she turned to me and asked—

"Have you usually resided in the country?"

I answered in the affirmative.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, tossing her head and looking at her watch. "This scenery had been so far soothed as to induce her to descend from giving at every plunge of the horse, a pretty, little, inelegant shriek, she turned to me and asked—

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