

THE MONTROSE DEMOCRAT.

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A FLATTERING REMINISCENCE.

CHAPTER I.

"A beauty! an heiress! an eccentric guardian, whose invitation includes any friend you like to take with you for a few days' shooting. Why, my dear Fred, you have bound me to you forever by your selection of myself. I feel quite a new man already; for I must confess that, when you came in just now, I was suffering from an unusually desperate fit of the blues."

"Consequently, in a remote degree, on last night's supper," suggested Fred Clayton, "and a good deal also on the way you remain cooped up in these dismal quarters."

Fred glanced contemptuously round my dingy Temple chambers as he spoke, a survey scarcely necessary, considering their intimate resemblance to his own adjoining rooms. However, I forebore any remark; indeed the delightful prospect just presented to me absorbed all my attention, and I grasped my friend's hand in a fever of gratitude.

"Tell me all about it," I said, "and how you came to think of me?"

"There is nothing to tell," replied Fred, seating himself on the corner of the table and swinging his legs backwards and forwards lazily. "This morning I got a letter from an old fellow in the country, reminding me—as if I could remember it—that he and my father had been friends thirty years ago, and asking me down to his place for a few days' shooting, and permission to bring a friend if I liked."

"And his niece that you told me of—the heiress?" said I.

"Of course, I did not mention her," said Fred; "and I merely tell you because, if you choose to put yourself under my guidance, I may be the means of helping you to a good thing. You know," he added more deliberately, "how disinterested my assistance can be after the little confidences we exchanged last night."

"True," said I, charmed with the recollection,—"your pretty cousin,—the secret engagement—"

"Yes," interrupted Fred; "you know all about it; and we know more about each other than most fellows; so it was natural I should think of you as companion for my holiday, and I'm right glad you're inclined for the trip."

So saying, and silencing my renewed protestations of pleasure, Fred left me, appointing a rendezvous at the first train leaving for our destination, some two or three hours later.

Fred Clayton and I had been schoolfellows in our early days, and many of his vacations were spent in my father's house. Of late years, however, he had lived exclusively in London; like me, a young aspirant to the uncertain honors of the bar, but unlike me, possessing a large circle of friends and acquaintances, and never without a superabundance of invitations to dinners, balls, and concerts; for Fred was said to be very popular, especially in ladies' society.

Except in the mere fact that we were both younger sons without any expectations, there was but little resemblance between Fred Clayton and Jack Harris.—My residence in London only dated back a few months, and already the great city possessed no charm for me; I pined for the country, for freedom, and for the active life of home. I might, indeed, with the assistance of Clayton, or through letters of introduction from members of my own family, have procured fashionable invitations, and received partial toleration in society; but the prospect of a crush, heated rooms, and strange faces, was a thought of terror to my timid nature, especially with the underlying chance of presentation to a young lady, and the unhappy knowledge that my deficiencies in the art of small talk would make such a chance a perspective martyrdom. No—I confessed in my own heart that society was not my forte; other talents I certainly had,—deeper, more intrinsic merits than those that passed for genuine in a ball-room,—but they were merits to develop in an atmosphere of peacefulness and repose; qualities to expand in the quiet of a domestic hearth; and a thrill of joy shot through me as, cranning every available article of clothing into a small portmanteau, I took leave of my comfortable chambers, and allowed my fancy to dwell on a brilliant possibility, that Clayton's words had evoked. An heiress, and a beauty,—a country beauty of course; blushing and simplicity, and rich,—how rich? Rich enough to live on a grand estate; to keep a large stud; to dispense hospitality? I must ask Fred. This, however, was secondary. I would not of course acknowledge myself to be mercenary. Love must come first; love independent of fortune,—

CHAPTER II.

"Fifty thousand pounds," said Clayton, in answer to my inquiries, when we had secured a coupe to ourselves, and were preparing it for the comfort of all future travelers by lighting our cigars; "fifty thousand, my boy, and the estate, if you consent to take her name."

"Her name! What is her name?" I asked.

"Efling,—Miss Efling," he replied. "And now, if you think the attempt worth making, I will let you know how the land lies, and give you a sketch of your campaign. The time is short, and of course I cannot insure you a second invitation if all is not concluded during our present trip. Now then, old fellow, *pro or con?*"

My reply was given with a fervor quite warranted by the occasion. Fred Clayton threw himself back in his seat, and after arriving, by much perseverance, at a sufficiently comfortable position, he began his instructions, interrupted only by an occasional puff at his cigar, which momentary pause rendered his words all the more impressive; at least I fancied so.

"Our great difficulty," said he, "is the uncle, Mr. Merrick,—his name is Merrick. I told you before, he was eccentric; but that is not the word,—'exacting' describes him better. He is awfully exacting, and possesses immense influence over his niece; an influence so great that his choice would be hers, even were she not still under age, which I believe she is. My dear fellow, all depends upon the impression you make in that quarter. I cannot exaggerate the importance of devoting yourself from the very first to Merrick,—studying his tastes, sharing his pleasures, and attaching him firmly to your interests. The old fellow is so selfish in insisting on these attentions that I don't think, were I even free, I could stand enough of his society to insure success. But there's no knowing, the prize is well worth winning, and perfectly attainable through him, and through him alone."

"And about Miss Efling?" I inquired.

"Miss Efling is a charming girl," said Fred, "quite young, and ready to believe anything had of a lover her uncle condemns. Being an heiress and a beauty she has already received several proposals, but all have been rejected in consequence of the suitors having had the egregious folly to pay more attention to the niece than to the uncle."

So then the uncle was the only real difficulty; not a very grave one, I thought. At all events, forewarned was forearmed, and I inwardly vowed to tax my patience to the utmost for so great a stake. At the moment it never occurred to me how remarkably well-informed Clayton appeared on all that concerned our future hosts. I was only too glad to find him so well able to advise me, and perhaps a little relieved that the great result did not involve much courtship or attendance on a young lady.

We were not long in arriving at the station, where a dog-cart was in waiting to receive us; and after a rather cold drive of a couple of miles we reached our destination.

Mr. Merrick's, or Miss Efling's house,—for I did not know to whom it actually belonged,—was a large, handsome building, situated in a fine park, with undulating lawn and well-planted trees; so much I was able to perceive in the growing darkness.

Our arrival had been heralded by a handsome pointer that we found reposing on the terrace; and on alighting, we were met by Mr. Merrick, who treated me to a long and most unequivocal stare, and after greetings and introductions, hurried us off to our several apartments to prepare for dinner.

I shall never forget that dressing. I had heard so much of first impressions, I believed in them so implicitly, that my anxiety to produce the proper effect almost amounted to frenzy, and I could have strangled Fred Clayton for his coolness and equanimity, when he good-naturedly came into my room to accompany me down through the ordeal of a first appearance in the drawing-room.

Miss Efling was there; and the moment I saw her, I understood the failure of all former suitors; I realized the almost superhuman effort that would be necessary voluntarily to resign such companionship for that of the superannuated uncle, and resolved to steel myself by the constant recollection of my predecessors' fate.—Graceful, witty, and lively to a degree, no wonder the old man dreaded to lose the sunlight of her presence, and the affectionate charm of her manner towards himself.

With exemplary fortitude I dashed at my task, and before the evening was over found myself, to my great surprise, established as the chosen companion of Mr. Merrick. I listened with admirably-got-up-interest to long, dreary anecdotes of his past experiences, comprising minute details of the dates and even the hours at which people, long since dead, had been born,—the memories of these old people are always prodigious!—and submitted to an account of his present devotion to the collecting of minerals, which now occupied all his time, except during the shooting season, for the old gentleman was very proud of still being able to carry a gun.

Of course I immediately professed myself an enthusiast on the subject of mineralogy, and was forthwith carried off in triumph to a large cavernous den, to admire what he called his specimens.

The examination of these hideous little bits of tin and stone lasted, what appeared to me, about two hours; and when, ultimately, he returned to the drawing-room, human nature asserted its rights, and unconsciously I stole over to the piano, where Miss Efling's fairy fingers were wandering listlessly over the keys; while Fred Clayton stood beside her looking through some music. Immediately a warning glance from Fred recalled me to a sense of danger, and turning in the direction of Mr. Merrick I perceived an unmistakable scowl upon his face, as he watched the party. Hastening to his side, I succeeded partially in removing it, by the proposal of a game of chess, which absorbed all his faculties, and agonized all mine, till the general move was made for retiring.

As I approached Miss Efling to wish her good night, I overheard the old tyrant remark, condescendingly to Fred, "Your friend is an intelligent fellow; we sympathize, and I like him; rather superficial in mineralogy, but we must try and remedy that by making the most of our time, as your stay will not extend beyond a few days. In fact the young man quite interests me; I wish you had his tastes, Frederick."

So virtue was rewarded, and I had made a good impression.

CHAPTER III.

The next morning we started early, intent on the wholesale slaughter of part-ridges; and on this occasion Fred hurt his hand so severely as to incapacitate him from joining our future expeditions; in fact, every possible combination of circumstances favorable to my advancement in the good graces of Mr. Merrick seemed to surround me. To say what an effort it required to submit cheerfully to his perpetual presence would be impossible. He appeared, after a little, to regard my continual companionship as a matter of course; and so well had I acted my part, that the man actually believed I enjoyed his society. Presuming, therefore, on my established popularity, I ventured, casually, on an occasion that appeared favorable, to introduce the subject of his niece into one of our conversations.

"Ah," said he, and his face grew hard instantly. "Bella requires to be watched closely. She is so honest and noble-minded herself, that she cannot understand the mercenary designs of the butterflies that flutter around her. But I never lose sight of her; I am always there to ward off artful attentions, and keep would-be suitors at bay. I am always there, and I shall be always there; but," he added, changing his tone, which had been growing excited, "it is well we are free from such intruders at present. I have never seen so little of my niece as during your visit. You have made me forget myself and her; but then it is only once in a lifetime that one may meet so congenial a spirit as yours; and he would not dare now,"—he stopped with a growl.

Mr. Merrick was then aware of Clayton's secret engagement. This accounted for what had already puzzled me,—his apparent indifference to the young and fascinating lawyer's constant *le-tote-à-tote* with his niece; but his marked emphasis on the word *now* solved the incongruity, and also betrayed what would have been his tactics, had he not felt secure; and yet such knowledge argued a more intimate association with Fred's affairs than I should have expected from a man whose present hospitality was founded on a thirty-years-ago acquaintanceship with his father; but, on reflection, I detected in it an act of generosity on the part of my friend, who had evidently taken the old man into his confidence, to set his mind at ease, and leave him perfectly free to be won over by me.

So time wore on, and, as the day fixed for our departure approached, I began to feel a trifle qualmsy, in spite of the undeniable favors shown me by Mr. Merrick. It was all very well to have secured the uncle,—if I had secured him; but was I certain of securing the niece? I had scarcely exchanged half a dozen words with her. Old Merrick had remorselessly absorbed every second of my time,—the covers all day, mineralogy and chess all the evening, till the very sight of a chess-board generated a nausea that I have never since got rid of; and the suspicion that the young lady had been too much overlooked in our calculations, suddenly struck me with an uncomfortable sensation of doubt.

I determined to speak to Fred, and seized the opportunity that evening, when Miss Efling had retired, to propose a cigar on the terrace,—a proposition to which Fred readily consented. The case was speedily represented, and Fred's answer, as usual, concise.

"You have been admirable," he asserted, "and deserve, I must admit, immense credit for so fully carrying out our plans; and I feel that I cannot congratulate myself or you too heartily. Now, perceive the result: the old fellow swears by you, and I have drawn Miss Efling's attention to the high opinion entertained of you by her uncle. Of course to alter your line of

conduct now, would be to destroy everything. You would be accused of a *ruse*, suspected of intentions, and summarily ejected. Consistency, my dear fellow, believe me, unvarying consistency, is your only course,—unremitting devotion to the ogre; delicate diffidence towards the niece; and on the morning of our departure, when the near prospect of losing his congenial spirit, as he calls you, has unnerved our friend, a solemn interview in the library, a formal proposal, and you return to town an engaged man! Is it not as clear as daylight?—straightforward and inevitable in every point, because so simple. You retain your pedestal, remain consistent, and the result comes about quite naturally, through and in consequence of that very consistency."

I looked at Fred with admiration; everything appeared so feasible when detailed by him in a few simple words; his very tones of semi-indifference had a wondrous power of conviction; and, moreover, my own common sense responded to the assertion that a change of manner would be fatal. I saw my way now straight before me, plain and easy as an ordinary transaction of life, and the horizon grew bright with hope.

Warmly thanking my friend for the invaluable benefit of his shrewd sense and convincing advice, I withdrew to my room, my mind filled with more sanguine projects, more tangible hopes, than I had yet indulged in, since the beginning of my adventure.

CHAPTER IV.

At length the momentous morning dawned. We had prolonged our few days' stay to a week, and our host had evidently determined not to renew his invitation, spite of the manifest pleasure my company gave him; so, almost before I could realize it, this eventful day arrived.

I passed a sleepless and disturbed night, several times starting from a confused, dreamy rehearsal of the interview I intended demanding in the morning, to fancy I heard whispering voices and confused sounds about the house, quite impossible at that late hour. Visions floated before me of the already approaching future; the events of the last few days seemed to spread back over half my life, so great was the importance attached to the day; and, in letting Bella look here for a few days, could I refuse her first request on coming of age? Could I turn a guest, though uninvited, out of a house that was not my own? A guest, indeed!—a swindler, a blackguard, probably paid to amuse the uncle, and keep him off the scent."

His voice rose higher and higher as he proceeded; at the end he actually shrieked. But this was unbearable. My own temper had been severely tried, and endure more I could not.

"Mr. Merrick," I said, hotly, "such language, even under the circumstances—"

"Can't you leave off acting even now?" he burst in. "Confound your gaping look of innocence! Do you see this?" he cried, exhibiting a crushed letter, which he kept clenched in his hand. "They are married by this time and your villainy has so far succeeded; but the triumph shall not last long. I will hunt the scoundrel and his contemptible accomplice—yes, you—through every law court in Europe; I will publish his infamy in every newspaper, and proclaim it throughout the civilized world! You will not escape me—you shall not!"

The madman shook his fist in my face, and glared at me like a tiger; but, staggered as I was by such revelations and accusations, I nevertheless made one more attempt at a protest. Your nephew—"I began—

"My nephew!" he yelled, "do you think that reptile is my nephew? No, my fine keeper, I am no longer your dupe—I can see now through your shallow shamming, and I order you to leave my house. Do you hear? Leave it, instantly, or I will bid servants kick you out," he said, pointing to the door as he spoke.

I hesitated; Fate seemed too cruel. I felt that the smallest justification or explanation would lessen my misery; but before a sound could pass my lips, he had raised his hand with the savage menace—"One word more and I give the order."

There was nothing for me but to retreat; and retreat I accordingly did from the room and from the house, leaving instructions with the servants to send my belongings to the railway station—that station from which I had driven only a few days before with such pleasurable and ambitious hopes.

Mr. Merrick's unexpected reading of the case had indeed brought my wrongs to a climax. It was not enough to have been the tool, the dupe, the catspaw of one I believed my best friend; I was also to be stigmatized as the confederate, the paid agent of a plot of which I was the principal victim. Truly I had reached the summit of human wretchedness.

The whole of the scheme which Miss (or Mrs.) Bella so obligingly called a "harmless stratagem," unfolded itself by degrees to my mind's eye; and, struggle as I would, I couldn't banish the thought of how the designing pair must have chuckled over my credulity, and watched with malicious amusement my unremitting de-

mission to the avuncular conquest. The last drop of bitterness had been poured into my cup; a lifetime of experience had been crowded into the space of a few days, and swallowing my humiliation as best I could, I returned to London—wiser if not a better man.

It is scarcely necessary to add that long before the return of the bride and bridegroom, Mr. Merrick had resigned himself to submit peacefully to the inevitable; and nothing more was heard of the terrible vengeance destined to overtake Fred Clayton and his guilty accomplice.

The Truth Well Spoken.
THE MONTROSE DEMOCRAT wisely discourses upon a subject which has recently been the object of much anxiety on the part of the Radicals:

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

About once a month for the past twenty years, the opponents of the Democratic party have declared that it was dead, and that "its mission is ended."—Two or three other parties have died in that time. But the Democratic party lived on. When it dies the Constitution of the United States will have expired; and when the Constitution was violated and set aside on the pretext of "necessity," the Democratic party wielded the least political power.

It is the party of the Constitution, and pins its faith upon it. The Constitution provides for three departments of government. The Democratic party acknowledges them.

The Constitution limits the powers of each. The Democratic party demands that the authority delegated shall not be exceeded.

The Constitution declares that the powers not delegated to the general government are reserved to the States or the people. The Democrats claim all the reserved powers for the States and the people. They oppose centralization.

The Constitution provides that "the privileges of the writ of *habeas corpus* shall not be suspended, unless when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety may require it," and this being within the enumerations of the powers delegated to Congress, the Democrats claim that Congress alone can suspend the privilege, and that it can only suspend it in certain cases, where the public safety requires it.

The Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of life or liberty without due process of law—a trial by jury, etc. The Democratic party demands a strict adherence to this, and opposes military trials and other acts of despotism.

The Constitution provides that "no capitation or other direct tax shall be laid, unless in proportion to the census or enumeration heretofore directed to be taken." It provides also that "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers."—"The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State." "The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year, by the people of the several States." The Democratic party claim that taxation shall be apportioned equally—and that each State shall be represented as the Constitution provides.

And so on, throughout the Constitution. The Democratic creed is the fundamental law of the land. The men who support the principles of the Constitution rightfully belong to the Democratic party. Those who would set the Constitution aside for expediency or on the plea of necessity, are not Democrats. The Democratic party will live as long as the Constitution survives.

In addition to this, the Boston Post truly says that "those who are so fond of asserting that the Democratic party is dead will not find consolation in these facts: At the elections last fall the Democratic party polled 1,000,000 votes of 4,000,000." A change of fifty votes in a thousand—of fifty thousand in a million—less than six per cent.—would have given us a majority of the popular vote. In Pennsylvania, New York and Indiana, casting seventy-two votes in the electoral college and 1,600,000 votes by the people, we were defeated less than 44,000. A change of less than one and a half per cent.—of less than fifteen in a thousand—would have given us a majority.

In eleven States of the Union, excluding entirely the Southern States, a change of thirty thousand on the result of last fall, will, in 1868, elect a President and a majority of Congress."

Judge Sharswood.

From every section of the State the most gratifying intelligence comes to us of the popular enthusiasm in favor of the Hon. George Sharswood. The able and conscientious manner in which, for twenty years, he discharged the various duties of his high office, has "won for him golden opinions from all sorts of people," and thousands, who never acted before with the Democratic party, will, upon this occasion, vote for him, because they recognize in him a candidate worthy of unlimited confidence and fully entitled to their earnest support.

muttering "I cannot tell—I cannot; Thomas must go to him."

Alone with my enemy, I screwed up my courage and broke the seal. The note was short, and ran as follows:

"DEAR JACK: Pray accept my best thanks. But for your efficient aid we could never have successfully hoodwinked old Argus. You are an apt pupil, and I sincerely wish you equal success in all your future undertakings."

"Yours, by all the bonds of gratitude. FRED CLAYTON."

"P. S.—Bella insists on apologizing; so I enclose."

There was then another epistle! I looked about; it had fallen on the floor. I opened it mechanically, and read—

"Dear Mr. Harris: I hope you will forgive Fred. What he did was for my happiness. We have long been attached, and secretly engaged; but my uncle was so obdurate and so vigilant, that an elopement was our only refuge, and, but for your assistance, could not have been effected. Trusting soon to receive from your own lips pardon for a harmless stratagem, believe me, yours (by the time you receive this),

"BELLA CLAYTON EFFING."

"Please, sir, Mr. Merrick wishes to speak to you."

The door of my room was wide open, and on its threshold stood the old butler, grave and severe of aspect. I followed him silently, too full of bitterness for words, but solacing myself with the reflection that in my host I should find a thorough sympathizer in my overwhelming anger and indignation.

I was ushered into a small sitting-room where Mr. Merrick, in a flaming red dressing-gown, and absolutely growing purple with fury, was pacing up and down like a wild beast in a cage. Before I could open my lips he turned sharply round on me, and roared out—"So, sir, do you know I have sent for the police? Do you know you can be taken up for this conspiracy? I see it all now—the infamous plot, and the part you were brought here to play. Fool that I was!" "But, Mr. Merrick," I began.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Do you dare to taunt me? Have I not forbid Frederick Clayton this house scores of times? and, in letting Bella look here for a few days, could I refuse her first request on coming of age? Could I turn a guest, though uninvited, out of a house that was not my own? A guest, indeed!—a swindler, a blackguard, probably paid to amuse the uncle, and keep him off the scent."

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