

THE FACE OF ROSENTEL.

BY CHARLES HOWARD MONTAGUE.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RIVER GLISTENS.

The soft breath of a summer wind from the distant hills rustled the curtains in the artist's chamber.

The river glistened in the sun.

Miss Massey, radiant and excited, Mrs. Massey, tremulous and apprehensive, rose up when the artist opened the door leading into the parlor and ushered in his guest.

"My wife and my sister, Miss Massey, my lawyer, Mr. Bernstein," the old gentleman in the black coat glanced at the two young ladies with his little twinkling eyes and bowed.

"Happy to meet you, Mrs. Massey, most happy, my son, Miss Massey, most happy."

And so they met, the lawyer and the artist's sister, as everybody believed from their air, as perfect strangers.

"So, Mr. Bernstein," said Massey, "the lawyer accepted the professor's chair for the table. The rest followed his example."

"Have you prepared your resume of the Forsythe case, as you intended?" asked Massey. Somehow his hair had risen to an alarming attitude, and his little eyes twinkled with a state of extreme nervous tension.

"I have got down a few notes, entirely free from technicalities, Mr. Massey, which I trust you will find very plain. I mean to have had my clerk make a fair copy of it, but I did not have the time. You may find my writing a trifle backward at first sight. Perhaps I had better read off the substance myself."

"Nothing would suit me better," said Massey.

The old gentleman for himself a comfortable chair by the window.

"I have had set together on this case," said Massey, "the young wife's hand."

The lawyer drew from his pocket a neatly folded package of manuscript. As he unfolded it out in his lap he cast his twinkling glance around upon the audience. "If it rested longer and more abundantly upon the face of the artist's sister than anywhere else, she alone can give it."

"I may say to you, Mr. Massey, before I begin that there may be some matters in this document which you may bear for the first time. You may be in a line to know how I obtained this information, but, unfortunately, I shall not be able to satisfy you on that point, for the reason that I have given my information to a newspaper of some of our newspapers. I have also added a few unnecessary sentences for the purpose of bringing the document to a finished close. That is all I desire to say by way of preface. Shall I begin at once? Very well. The document is headed 'The Forsythe Case,' and thus it reads:

"Twenty years ago Ansel Forsythe was a wealthy merchant, who persisted, in spite of the ravages of a terrible disease, in carrying on a great and profitable business. The rheumatism had twisted one of his legs out of shape and made him a helpless wretch at 42. He was suffering besides from a nameless malady, which wasted him away bit by bit and brought him each year fearfully nearer to the grave. Personally he was unable to have any active superintendence of his affairs, and the work was done by a keen and ambitious young man who had formerly been his private secretary, a man misanthropic and without any religious convictions whatever, but who for the reason that he came of Jewish ancestry, was nevertheless called the Jew."

"The Jew was undoubtedly a man of great talents, for by his management the merchant's affairs to such advantage that they prospered beyond his expectations. For that reason the Jew is said to have considered the property which grew up under his care as morally his own.

"The merchant had remained a bachelor until well along in years, when he married a female beauty, who died in giving birth to a female child. This child was called Ethel and was her father's idol. In the will, made immediately after her mother's death, he settled all his property upon her. This was decidedly not to the Jew's liking, but he was too circumspet a man to permit his real feelings to be seen. He played a very deep game.

"When the child was not more than a year old, he persuaded the merchant that he ought to marry again. The poor old man would have been little likely to have followed his advice, but great persons were brought to bear upon him. Medical men were found who would not scruple to tell him that marriage would undoubtedly prolong his life. He then came out to the sacrifices.

"All this while prospective matrimony had been to him a sort of abstract idea, but this decision narrowed it down to a reality. And it now occurred to him that to marry one needed a woman. Here he was, an unshrinking, twisted creature, morbidly sensitive to his own defects. Who would marry him? Nothing simpler, said the Jew, than to find a desirable lady.

"He proved this by presenting to him the next day his own sister.

"Miss Rosentel was very young—almost a child in years—fascinating and, they told him, as pure as the driven snow. At any rate, she showed that she had no objections to making a sacrifice of herself on the altar of Hyman. She became Mrs. Forsythe.

"The next month appeared a new codicil in the merchant's will. A third of his vast property, in the event of his death, was to be left to his widow. Envious people say that the Jew made a bargain with his sister whereby she was to receive this third and leave him free to gain if he could the other two. How far she actually assisted him may never be known.

"It was evident that the merchant could not live long. After his second marriage he failed rapidly. One day a shocking thing occurred. Little Ethel, the merchant's idol, then 18 months

old, was stolen most mysteriously in the dead of night almost from her nurse's arms. The house had been broken into and many articles of value had been taken. So the object of the kidnaping appeared to be self evident. They had stolen the child hoping to extort vast sums from the merchant as a ransom. The dying man was wild with grief. He commanded the Jew, the medium through whom he transacted all his business, to use the most effective means for the immediate rescue of his darling. But, though much money was expended and a vast amount of work performed, every claim of a discovery of the missing one proved, when hunted up, to be an imposture. The Jew had an inflexible test of which the world knew nothing. An accident had necessitated the amputation of one of the toes of the child's left foot.

"The merchant's hope that he might still see his child kept him alive for years, but the time came when the physicians said that he must die. Some weeks before his decease he called his lawyer, an old and trusted friend, to ask his advice in a most important matter. As the result of that advice the merchant for the third time altered his will. The lawyer mistrusted the Jew, but the merchant to the last held blind-faith to his faith in his integrity. Still the counselor persuaded him easily enough to protect his child in the strongest manner. The will as then framed provided that two-thirds of his fortune should go to his widow, and the other third, with the exception of a stated sum, given to the faithful Jew, was to be held in trust by the lawyer and other honorable gentlemen for his daughter Ethel. If, at the end of 30 years, she had not been heard from, her share of the property, which amounted to nearly \$300,000, was to go to various charitable institutions. This will was made on April 14, 1875, signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses. On April 21 of the same year the lawyer was hastily summoned to attend Mr. Forsythe, who was dying, and who, apparently in perfectly sane mind, told him that, having decided at the last moment again to alter the will, he had done so in a codicil, which he only desired him to examine as to its legality and force. There could be no doubt about that. The codicil had been added in the Jew's handwriting and was countersigned by three servants in the house, who, in the eyes of the law, were disinterested witnesses. It was certainly legal, but the startling nature of the alteration alarmed the lawyer and aroused his deepest suspicions. It revoked the provisions of the previous will regarding his daughter's legacy, reduced the number of years the money was to be held for her from 30 to 10 and made the provisional legatee, in the event of her not being found at the expiration of that time, instead of the charitable institutions, the Jew himself.

"The lawyer did not let this pass without remonstrance, but the dying merchant refused to alter the testament. 'I own everything to my good Felix,' he said, referring to the Jew. 'Why should you envy him? But so certain was the lawyer of the exercise of undue influence upon the merchant's mind that after his death he hunted up a distant relative and persuaded him to dispute the will. The case was tried in court and resulted in a triumph for the Jew. The will held.

"Ansel Forsythe died April 23, 1875. The court decided in favor of the legality of the will in October of the following year, and on that day the Jew disappeared personally from the field of war and transacted such business as it was necessary to transact with reference to the trust property in the hands of the executors through his solicitor, Mr. Forsythe's old lawyer naturally drew a sigh of relief when matters assumed this quiet state, from which they did not seem likely to emerge for at least 10 years. But he drew this breath altogether too soon. The moment the status of the will was settled by the court a new complication arose. The same impostors who had before appeared and now ones who had come into the possession of the necessary facts began to impersonate the lost Ethel and to set up successive claims to the property. Most of them were so ridiculous on the face that they did not merit sober consideration. Others were more slowly planned and gave the executors much trouble. If false witnesses could have perjured their way to wealth, the property would have been wrested from the executors long ago, but fortunately the Jew's secret was a secret still, locked up in the breasts of half a dozen people whose interests bade them not to speak. When the left foot of the claimant was bared, the chances of success vanished like smoke before a high wind.

"A peculiarity," said one, 'of this child's ankle renders your claim defective. The child had a malformation which you do not possess.' So they had brought on cripples and joint diseases by the score. Unfortunately for them, they believed what we told them too implicitly. After the examination by our physician and the positive manner in which he told them that there was no foundation for their claims, there were few who dared risk the penalties for perjury by bringing the case to court. Our private tribunal generally settled the matter. The few who dared to risk a legal trial had the leisure to repeat their folly in a prison. But all this took time and work and was expensive. The will expressly stipulated that the costs of research and legal protection should be taken from the trust property itself, and in 10 years those expenses alone have more than eaten up the interest on the money, so that the trust property today does not amount to quite \$300,000.

"So matters stood on the 21st day of April last past. On that day the state was clear. There was not an unsettled claim pending. The last Ethel Forsythe had been disposed of, and there was nothing more to be done. Ten years having elapsed since the date of the will and the lost daughter not being forthcoming, Felix Rosentel had a clear title

to her property. The lawyer expected daily a call from his solicitor. The days went by, and he did not come. The papers were prepared, the property was ready, but no Jew. He did not come. In fact, there was a great hue and cry raised about this matter, for the Jew had disappeared as suddenly and completely from his home and his acquaintances as if, unseen and alone, he had, like Ethel, been translated into heaven. He had gone out one night on an errand. He had never returned.

"Meantime what was to become of the Forsythe property? The will was clear and explicit on this point. In case of the Jew's death and the non-appearance of the missing heiress the trust funds reverted, as before, to the charities. The trustees only awaited proof of the Jew's death to lift this burden off their shoulders. Then, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, a last and most dangerous Ethel Forsythe appeared upon the scene. This girl had been brought up by a certain George and Mary Stevenson in the country as their own daughter. They now declared that in her infancy the child had been placed in their hands by a certain Leander Dye, who had paid them royally for her support. An affidavit, sworn out by Dye before a justice of the peace, avowed that he had stolen the child from Ansel Forsythe's house in hope of a ransom, had been terrified by the results of his deed, and had been afraid ever since to produce her through fear of the Jew.

"So far the case was simpler and more straightforward, but not more plausible. But the physician's test threw the executors into confusion. Miss Stevenson's left foot met the requirements of the case. The third toe had been amputated. At once there arose a dispute among the executors. Some were for admitting her claim without further inquiry, but the good sense of the others prevailed, and the most rigid investigation ensued. A choice list of the best physicians in the city was made up, each of whom was to make a separate examination of the scar left by the amputation and return to the executors his opinion as to its age. The opinions varied greatly, but the average result was certainly of a character to justify our worst suspicions. The general verdict placed the date of the wound within a year, and there was but one voice to the belief that the amputation, instead of being the intelligent and careful work of a physician, was the bungling performance of a person ignorant of the first principles of surgery. The physician who had operated upon the real Ethel was dead, but his standing and knowledge of his profession were undoubtedly of the first order. Here at the outset was a manifest flaw in the Stevenson case, but before it could be followed up information was obtained which let the light in upon the whole mystery. While the executors were getting over the shock of the first astonishment caused by these developments and were preparing to proceed to extreme measures the last of the Forsythe impostures came to a sudden termination by the flight of all concerned in the conspiracy.

"Such is the remarkable Forsythe case as we know it and as the world knew it a week ago today. This is the outline and surface history. I have added a brief statement of the secret history as the events of the past few days have made them known to us.

"Ethel Forsythe was stolen by the Jew himself. From the day of her abduction she led a forlorn and unsatisfactory life. She was brought up under the false name of Annetta Dye. She traveled about the country, believed and believing herself to be the daughter of a moral coward whom the Jew had succeeded in getting completely under his thumb. She might have been the daughter of that moral coward still had not an accident revealed to her a part of the truth of her situation. She committed the indiscretion of telling this knowledge to her pretended father. He flew with the startling news of her fatal information to the Jew. At first the Jew was paralyzed with fear, but he was too determined and unscrupulous a man to permit the schemes of years to be dissipated in the winds without a struggle. He took prompt measures, terrible means, desperate means!

"It is perhaps useless to inquire into the Jew's motives for using the precise method for the removal of the heiress from his path to which he resorted. At any rate, he wrote the letter purporting to be from the Haggood woman and caused the availing Dye to aid him in his nefarious work. But he swore a solemn oath to that poor, weak gentleman that his only purpose in bringing the heiress to the sea coast was to frighten her a little, and that he would not harm a hair of her head. Think of the utter depravity and unscrupulousness of a mind like that! Observe, gentlemen of the jury, the grim humor in the postscript of his letter, in which he says, 'I may be late, but I shall not fail to keep my appointment.'

"The Jew was a mostrocity of heartlessness. He could have chosen no safer method for a deed of violence, as the event proved, and if he had been successful in his search for her pockets for the letter he had written, which she carried in the bosom of her dress, clews to the perpetrator of the assault would have been entirely wanting. But with all his trouble his first attempt was unsuccessful. He tried again. In the second trial he was thrown from the window of 20 Ballavorens place while trying to make an escape by way of the roof.

"The investigation into the cause of the disappearance of Felix Rosentel failed from lack of evidence. The reason lay in the fact that the only person

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MISS HARRISON.



PIERCE'S FAVORITE PRESCRIPTION

besides the criminal himself who held the clue to the matter would not speak. This person was Mrs. Forsythe. It is entirely outside the scope of this simple statement of facts to enter into a description either of the character or the life of this corrupt and unprincipled woman. Some time we shall know the whole truth. Already enough is known to make us hold our breath with wonder and horror. This woman led two lives. In one life she was the model of respectability and virtue. In the other she had no scruples and no decency. The mystery is how she was able so long to hide the fact that she played this dual role from the keen and suspicious glance of society. The reason can alone be found in her extraordinary ability and cunning and duplicity. There can no longer be any doubt that poor Forsythe was deceived even as to her purity. Miss Stevenson is her own daughter, and the people who brought her up told one truth when they said that they had always been paid large sums for the child's board, though the fact that this money was paid Leander Dye, or that he even knew them before the necessities of the conspiracy brought these precious people together, is entirely improbable.

"Mrs. Forsythe alone knew of her brother's connection with Leander Dye. She alone knew that Mr. Dye had been with him on the day of his disappearance. She alone suspected the truth. The use which she made of these suspicions has already been placed before you. After years of secret hate and fear and bitterness, when the wretched Dye, in a moment of frenzy at the thought of his own degradation, dared to strike the blow that rid him forever of his unscrupulous master, he fell at once by virtue of this very deed under the tyranny of a still sterner hand. From being a tool in the grasp of the man he became a tool in the grasp of the woman, and the woman was less lenient than the man.

"In a private room on the second floor of the Forsythe mansion, on Livingston street, on the 30th day of January last, the unfortunate child, who for the previous two weeks had been known to the household as Mrs. Forsythe's niece, took ether and submitted to be operated upon with a cold steel chisel and a rethot curling iron. Mr. Dye, who assisted at that operation, was prostrated by the effects for days. No more need be said for the fortitude and strength of purpose of the woman who played the dual role of saint and sinner.

"On the 1st of June Leander Dye, after placing his valuable knowledge of the facts in relation to the real Ethel Forsythe in the hands of the authorities, died at the city hospital. Immediately following his confession the body of a man, which was recognized from some papers in a pocket to be that of Felix Rosentel, the Jew, was found entangled in the piles beneath the windows of the house at 20 Ballavorens place.

"On the 2d of June the executors of the Forsythe will, with the full knowledge and agreement of the representatives of the charitable institutions, which would otherwise have profited by the legacy, drew up the papers that will make over, legally and formally, that portion of the Forsythe estate remaining in their hands to Ethel Forsythe, now Mrs. Julian Massey, and her heirs and assigns forever."

The lawyer's voice ceased abruptly, and there was silence in the room.

The river glistened in the sun. The summer wind rustled the curtains at the windows.

Miss Massey smiled.

The artist looked in a grave, wistful way at his wife.

As Mrs. Massey, there was a bright light in her wonderful eyes.

As Massey went through the narrow passage between the two rooms he met his wife for the first time since the reading of the lawyer's document.

By the light of the gas jet he could see her bright eyes shining through the tears and a feverish glow rising into her beautiful cheeks. She threw her arms about him in a long and silent embrace. She spoke, but she did not lift her head from its resting place on his shoulder:

"Dearest husband, it is all yours! For your sake it is the greatest joy of my life!"

"Well," said Massey, "why should you cry about it, then?"

"Oh, my dearest husband, I don't know, but I can't help it."

"Neither can I," said Massey. "Dance take it, I believe I am as big a baby as you are!"

At the very moment when Massey gave way to tears Dr. Lamar sat with a grim, contemptuous expression about his lips at his desk, his dry eyes fixed upon a stained and almost illegible bit of writing before him, the reading of which he had just finished. The letter read:

MY DEAR FORTUNE—If you but knew how your cruel words when I last saw you have tortured me since, you would—oh, I know you would—have forbore to utter them. There has not been a day since then, in my lonely exile since they have not been with me. Oh, Estance, I did love you, and you have so cruelly misunderstood me! Am you blind? Can you not see that it was for your sake, for yours alone, not mine, that I fought out that wretched fight for a future? What could I do? Unfortunate speculations and unwise management had ruined mine. I know how proud and ambitious your mother was. It seemed so easy to retrieve it all by a simple plot which would harm nobody, because they could not know that they were robbed. Besides what are people like these to you and me? For your sake, I know, I will do anything, even worse and fought a thousand times more desperate battle than this rather than have had you speak to me as you spoke to me that night in the carriage. But all is not lost. You were beside yourself, and I—I, too, said that for which I bitterly repeat. You told me that your life was ruined, that you had lost your health, your eyes, that your practice was slipping away from you. Come then, with me and lay the foundations of a greater fortune in a distant place. I will go anywhere with you, Estance, to the end of the world if need be. I will do as you wish, and I will be true to you. It is still great. It will make you great and fortunate above all competitors yet, Estance, if you will come with me. These are no dreams, my dear husband, but facts. It is the solemn truth, for I know it better than you. And I am not penniless, dear Estance, I have enough left—enough for us both—enough to build upon, and I will make it a foundation for your future if you will come with me, dear Estance. I do not ask you for a sacrifice; I do not ask you for a marriage vow; I ask you only for yourself and your presence in my carriage. I will give you everything, myself and all I have, and ask for nothing in return if you will but come with me, dear Estance. Come, oh, come! The light is fading, and I cannot see to write any longer. But you shall get this and understand all that I offer you that I shall listen to the post with myself, leaving unsaid so much that I might say, shall see you. Do not stop to answer it. Do not cease to say good-bye to this hour.

drum ite when you will not regret—but come on the wings of love and passion to your FORTUNE.

"What fools men are!" said Lamar within himself. "There was, I doubt not, when this bit of writing would have filled me with a fever and a fire that would have burned down all before it. I should have sacrificed everything



"I should have sacrificed everything!" and rushed like a fool to my doom. Thank God, I am no longer young. No. Matters of this sort shall come into my life no more. I will devote myself from this time forth to my neglected business. I will build up my practice, restore myself to favor and success, and then!"

He stopped. The thought of a sweet smile, a frank and kindly hand, a warm womanly presence, in which he had so often in the chambers above the river forgotten the worry and care that oppressed him; stole into his heart, and somehow it cheered and comforted him.

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