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A WOMAN'S SECRET.

A Story of the Revolution.

CONTINUED.

It was all over. The irreparable step was taken. The Rubicon of life was passed. The hour that was just expired would tinge with its hues every future moment of his life. He felt that it was no light thing that he had just done, and though he was conscious of a deep happiness, it was no boisterous joy; and it was not only with ease, but with satisfaction, restrained within the limits of his own breast, until the due time of disclosure. It was a pleasure to feel that he had a secret hoard of happiness, known only to himself, which he might count over with a miser's joy, but none of a miser's guilt or folly.

One thing however, was remarkable. The idea of the orderly-book, or of the ghost, had never once crossed his mind, after he had found himself hurried on to the catastrophe of the interview. He was sorry that he had not made Helen the confidante of his troubles, and resolved to repair the omission at the first opportunity. Confidence should not be kept back first on his side. He rather rejoiced that he had a misfortune, which she might share with him. Perhaps his philosophy would not have stood him in such good stead, had his misfortune been a little greater than it was. But every thing helps to feed a healthy love. It is your feeble, rickety brats, that expire of the first unsavory mess of earthly pottage.

The mess dinner was over. There had been some quizzing on the subject of Miss Clairmont and of the ghost; but it was all evidently at random, and they had no idea how very near the wind they were going, on either track. Ingram and his friends kept their own counsel, and after dinner met by appointment at Dr. Halcombe's quarters, to finish the plan of their campaign against the midnight forger of orderly-books. They had, as they had agreed upon, selected a number of picked men, on whose secrecy and fidelity they could rely, who were to keep watch and ward, duly relieved by night and day, without making any noise about it. So that if the ghost should return, clothed in his "vesture of decay," to the scene of his former operations, he would be pretty sure to be laid by the heels. The officers themselves also agreed to mount guard, by turns, in the captain's chamber, so that it should never be without a sleepless eye on the look-out. Arrangements were made that the sentinels and their officers should rendezvous quietly in the neighborhood, at a small inn, as if by accident, and the men be shown their posts of observation without any bustle to attract notice. John and Orderly Williams being left in garrison of the haunted building until it was properly invested. Everything happened at the time and in the order that it should, and the arrangements were carried into effect with military precision. One man walked up and down the street, with injunctions never to lose sight of the front of the house. The three other sides were in charge of three other trusty men, so placed that no approach could be made to the house on either side without instant detection. A guard was also placed on each floor of the house, on the inside; although it had been most thoroughly searched, in advance, in every corner. It seemed as if the Prince of the Power of the Air alone, approaching through his own peculiar principality, could obtain entrance unobserved. And so they rested on their arms.

In the mean time, the winter's sun made haste to put an end to the short day, and the time arrived for the great sleighing party to rendezvous in the North Square. Captain Ingram's graceful little sleigh, contrasting curiously

with his stout cob, was at the door, and he was speedily drawn up in front of Mr. Clairmont's mansion, awaiting the pleasure of its fair mistress. She soon appeared, breathing a fresh summer upon the cheek of winter, and yet looking like his youngest daughter, so be-furred, and be-tipped and be-cloaked was she. Still, through all, you could see the graceful outline of her shape, while her happy face glowed through her world of habiliments, like the sun through evening clouds. The moon would, perhaps be a more appropriate, but the sun is a more splendid simile—so let it stand. She was soon by the side of Ingram, and they were rapidly careering away toward the North Square. A very few minutes brought them to the rendezvous where they found a large company of the elite of the garrison and the town's people, preparing for a merry scamper round the town. There were large sleighs drawn by two, and some by four horses, containing parties, which, like the family party of the Vicar of Wakefield, if they did not have a great deal of wit, they had a great deal of laughing, which answered the purpose just as well. There were not wanting modest single sleighs, like that conveying our hero and heroine, which, if not as well adapted for frolic as their larger companions, were better calculated for sentiment and for flirtation. After the usual time had been wasted in waiting for loiterers, and adjusting where every one should go, the procession set forward in due order, the large sleighs taking the lead, and the more unpretending vehicles following in due succession.

Aha! what a merry jingling of bells and ringing of laughter resounded through the streets of Boston, as the horses dashed through them, making the earth resound with their tread. It was a sound of merriment that jarred gratefully upon the ears of many an unwilling listener, separated by the siege from beloved hearts, and suffering, perhaps, from cold in the depth of that dreadful winter, or with hunger, within the sound of the revelry of their oppressors. To many an ear the sweet bells seemed "jangled, out of tune, and harsh." But what was that to the revellers? What cared they for the pining of rebel hearts? Away! away! up Hanover street, down Queen street, through the succession of streets now all amalgamated into Washington street, up to the lines on the Neck! How the crackling snow glitters in the light of the full moon! What a volcanic effect do the rebel watch-fires give to the lonely hills in the distance! You can hear the very hum of the camp so near are you to it. And you have the pleasing uncertainty as to how soon a battery of cannon may open upon you, or a shell be sent to convey to you the compliments of those who are knocking at your gates. But what of that? Away! away! Back again to the Common—round it—and then dash down to the line of wharves that enclose the harbor, look out over the frozen sea, and then round again across the desolate fields, which are now all populous streets, or crowded marts. Oh! it was a merry drive! What though the hardships of a seven years' wars, ghastly wounds and grisly death, awaited some of the revellers, and the bitterness of disappointed hope, and of interminable exile, was the appointed lot of others? They knew it not! That glittering night was theirs! And who has more?

There are worse places for a flirtation or a *toto-a-toto*, let me tell you, than a sleighing party. Especially where you have a sleigh to yourselves. The noise and bustle isolates you so completely. And then the bear-skins roll you up together so comically, that positively you sometimes mistake your neighbor's hand for your own! It's very odd—but so it is. Poets may talk as much as they please about summer moons, but I have known quite as much mischief done under winter moons. And if I had a daughter, I would quite as soon trust her with a "detrimental" in a summer grove, beside a murmuring stream, with the very best moon that was ever manufactured hanging over their heads, as I would in a snug sleigh, behind a good horse, making good time over a ringing road, in a cold, clear, sparkling night.

"Now ponder well, ye parents dear," And lay these, my words of wisdom, to heart.

Helen and Ingram, you may be sure,

did not fail to improve their opportunities, and the evening's drive furnished a very satisfactory epilogue to the morning's drama. After a brief interval of silence, as they rushed up King street, Helen turned to her companion and said laughingly to him—

"But, Charles, you have not told me yet what Captain Wood had to say to you. For, of course, he must have been to call on his tenant by this time."

"Ah! my dear Helen! I am satisfied that he was a piratical dog! I have but too good reason to think ill of him."

"Indeed!—and how so, pray? Has he laid you under contribution already? Perhaps he intends collecting his rent in advance."

"If that were all," answered Charles, "I should care little about it. But I am afraid that the old villain is more of a rebel than a pirate. I fear he bears more of a grudge against the king than against me."

"That is natural enough, you know," replied Helen, "for it was his majesty's predecessor who put him to the inconvenience for his little mistakes in the matter of ownership. But you mean something, Charles—now tell me all about it."

"The all is soon told," said he. "The crafty old sea-dog has helped himself to the very thing that it is most important for the sake of the service, and for my own sake, should have been kept out of his hands—and I suppose I may have to pay for his villainy."

"Good God! Charles!" exclaimed Helen, turning pale with affright, "what do you mean? What has happened?"

"Nothing, my love," he responded, "excepting that he has carried off the orderly book of the regiment, which may convey intelligence to the rebels that will bring them buzzing about our ears, if they have the sense to make use of it."

"But you—how will it affect you?" inquired Helen, evidently thinking more of her lover than of her liege lord. "You said that it was bad for your own sake that this book had fallen into his hands."

"Indeed, I hardly know myself, exactly," he answered, "but I am quite certain that it can do me no good. And what a court-martial may think of it they only can tell."

"A court-martial!" exclaimed Helen, in consternation.—"dear Charles! what have you done for which you can be court-martialed? Pray tell me that you are only in jest."

"I wish I were in jest, my dearest Helen," said he, in reply, "but it is no joke, I assure you. The orderly book was in my custody, as the adjutant of the regiment. I left it on my table when I went to the assembly last night, and when I came back it was gone."

"Gone!" repeated Helen, echoing his words.

"Gone, my dear," he repeated; "and how or whither, the thief, and the devil that helped him, only knows. And when the loss is reported at headquarters, I have reason to fear that I shall be held responsible for it, and it may prove a serious business."

"But what can they do to you, dearest Charles?" almost gasped poor Helen.—"It certainly was not your fault that it was taken."

"I cannot think it was," he answered, "after all the precautions I had taken. But one cannot tell what views these old fellows may take. If it come to a court-martial, a reprimand would be the least punishment—the loss of the adjutancy, I think, would be the greatest. But the worst is, the effect it will be likely to have upon my promotion."

"That is dreadful—dreadful!" sobbed poor Helen, bursting into tears, "oh, Charles—Charles! what is to be done?"

"Dear, dear Helen!" answered Ingram, brushing away her tears in a manner for which I can only account on the supposition that she could not get at her pocket-handkerchief, and from the fact that they had dropped into the rear of the procession—"do not be distressed about it, my love. I and my friends are resolved to find out what this business means, and if we can get to the bottom of it by Saturday all will be well—and, if not, the worst can be borne."

"By Saturday!" said Helen, clearing up a little—"that is a good while to come, and much may happen before

then. I wish that I could do something to help you. Can I not?"

"Nothing, my love, but your good wishes and sympathy, I believe, but stay, there is a thing that you can do.—You can ask your father to let our poor fellows have the shelter of his summer-house, which commands the rear of the Vaughan house. It will be a serious service to them these bitter nights."

"Certainly," answered Helen, cheerfully, "you can have the key to the little gate that opens upon your grounds, that was made for the accommodation of Miss Vaughan and myself; and as the fence is an open one, they can keep watch as well in the summer-house as in the yard."

"Thank you," he replied, "that will be doing you good service. I hope," he continued, after a short pause, "that you will pardon me for not telling you all this, this morning. But, in truth, I never thought of it once. It was hardly fair, as you did not have all the facts of my case before you. But it is not too late, you know, now to change your mind."

"You do not think that this, or any thing else that you could do, would make any difference in my love for you, Charles, said Helen, looking up in his face. "I know you do not."

"Indeed, I do not, dearest," he replied, and as he spoke he leaned his lips so near her cheek, that I should have thought that they must have touched, had I not known that it would have been improper.

"But here we are at the Royal Tavern," he exclaimed, as they drove into Dock Square, and drew up at the inn where it was proposed to close their expedition. "Now clear your brow, and repair your eyes, lest the gossips put things, and people too, together."

There is a time of life when three days seem to be an all-sufficient eternity—and my Helen was happily not past that blessed period. So she soon dismissed the unpleasant tidings she had just heard from her mind, and endeavored to mingle in the gaieties of the Royal Tavern. The scene was not a very magnificent one, to be sure, but the company was as gay as if it had been a royal palace. The muller wine was beyond praise. The floor of the large parlor was swept, and a noble fire diffused light and heat through the room. They had not a regimental band, as they had the night before, but the fiddle of a musical negro, belonging to the house, was sufficient to set them all dancing and flirting. And what could his majesty's own band itself do more? At a proper time an excellent supper was served in the dining-room—none of your perpendicular abominations—but a good regular, sit-down supper, all hot from the spit, and served, if not with metropolitan magnificence, yet at least with provincial plenty. Ample justice was done to the viands—and the port wine and the everlasting punch were not neglected. After the sacred rage of hunger was appeased, the company returned to the great parlor, and resumed their gaieties, which were protracted until a late hour. Such were some of the schemes to which the beleaguered inhabitants of the town resorted to speed away some of their weary hours. And very good schemes they were, in my opinion.

I do not know how it was, but the garrison gossips, of whom Ingram had warned Helen, remarked that he was not as devoted to her as usual. From this they augured, with the sagacity of their tribe, that he was inclined to be off from the flirtation. Now I formed a directly opposite opinion from the circumstance. I am too old a bird to be chaffed in this way. I know, however, that the young lovers compared notes of what they heard and overheard on the subject, as they drove home, and that they were entirely satisfied with the success of the enemy. What could have made them dissatisfied with it?

On arriving at his quarters, Ingram found every thing ready, but no ghost as yet. Dr. Holcombe, who much preferred a comfortable arm-chair, a pipe and a tankard of punch, over against a rousing fire, to all the sleighing parties that ever manufactured pleasure out of cold and discomfort, had volunteered to mount guard for the first evening in the room. He protested, however, that all had been quiet, and not so much of a

ghost stirring as would make the candles burn blue. He and Ingram sat up till near morning, and then lay down alternately for an hour or two—but all was still. "Not a mouse stirring." They had their labor for their pains that night. Still they were not discouraged in their campaign against the powers of darkness by this withdrawal of the enemy. They still believed that they would have a brush with him yet. In this faith they renewed their arrangements for the next day, carefully managing them so cautiously that there should be no ground of suspicion given to the world around that there was anything extraordinary going on.

The allies met after breakfast to talk over the matter, and decide whose turn should be the next to face the enemy. Major Ferguson, in a right of seniority of rank, received the privilege. The men who were on guard during the night were examined, but they maintained that there was nothing that could be constructed into a suspicious circumstance that had fallen under their observation. Renewed charges of secrecy were given and exchanged, not only for fear of the ghost's getting wind of the conspiracy against him, but lest the laugh at the mess-table might be turned against them. Lord Percy was curious to hear the result of the night's campaign, when the adjutant waited upon him for orders, and gave his approval of the steps taken, and encouraged them to proceed.—Concluded next week.

A Bride's Outfit in Germany.

The bridal outfit furnished by the bride's parents, consists chiefly of linen, both household and body linen—generally sufficient to last a lifetime, and adapted to the rank and means of the bride. Thus the rich mother buys what is best and finest in the shops; the less rich one buys up gradually years before the occasion, good, strong household linen, carefully kept in lavender, and cut up and sewed by the girl herself when her marriage is settled. The poorer classes do the same, beginning almost at the birth of the girl; and the peasant woman grows or buys her flax, spins it herself, and lays by a provision of strong linen (durable as sail-cloth) for her daughter, as her mother and grandmother did before her. The pride of a German woman, no matter what rank, is in her linen-press; and it is exhibited to friends and discussed with gossips as one of the chief subjects of a female conversation. It happens rarely that any well-fitted-out woman has to add any material store to her treasure. The jewelry is invariably the present of the bridegroom. The wedding-dress is likewise graduated. From the serviceable black silk of the artisan's wife it ascends through all shades of usefulness—brown, dark blue, light gray, to the simple white taffetas, and the costly white moire antique. Besides this, the prudent "middle-class" mother carefully puts into a little purse the pieces of gold provided by the "governor" for another pretty gown, and gives it to the bride for by-and-by, when it is wanted, when the wedding clothes are soiled, and the young matron does not wish to wear the old-fashioned things of her bridal day. The wedding gifts, we are assured, give rise occasionally to some little grumbling but even these are managed in the same methodical styles. The first principle is that the gifts are for the "young household" and not for the young lady. Accordingly they are invariably adapted to the rank, station, and means of the young couple, and arranged on a preconcerted plan, so that duplicates are impossible; yet every giver's means and individual tastes are duly regarded. The result is, that as all is well-considered and well-fitted together, the young people start in life with a well-fitted house, prettier and more valuable than would be the case if provided by themselves alone.

Industry at Home.

Nature is industrious in adorning her dominions; and man, to whom this beauty is addressed, should feel and obey the lesson. Let him, too, be industrious in adorning his domain, in making his home not only convenient and comfortable, but pleasant. Let him be industrious in surrounding it with pleasant objects—in decorating it within and without, with things that tend to make it agreeable and attractive. Let industry make home the abode of neatness and order. Ye parents who would have your children happy, be industrious to bring them up in the midst of a pleasant, cheerful and happy home.