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Select Poetry.

IT MUST COME.

Into all lives some rain must fall, Into all eyes some tear drops start, Whether they fall as a gentle shower, Or fall like fire from an aching heart.

Over all paths some clouds must lower, Under all feet some sharp thorns spring, Tearing the flesh with their bitter sting, Or entering the heart with their bitter sting.

Into all hands some duty thrust, Unto all arms some burdens given, Crushing the heart with its dreary weight, Or lifting the soul from earth to heaven.

A WOMAN'S REVENGE.

A Doctor's Story.

CONCLUDED.

I RETURNED to Cottam saddened and disappointed, but by no means convinced. I had, however, no choice but to leave the mystery to be solved by time.

One evening about twelve months after I had settled at Kinton, I was called into the surgery to attend a lady. Of course I had no other thought than that it was a patient; nor was my opinion changed when I saw her, for her cheeks were hollow and her eyes sunken; but what was my surprise on looking closer to recognize in that wasted form the once passable fair, if not brilliant, Miss Leclere.

She saw I recognized her, and without waiting for me to speak, said: "You are surprised to see me here, doctor; but I have something important to say to you. Can we be alone?"

"We shall not be disturbed here," I said; and still not doubting that it was medical advice she required, I added: "Well, now, tell me your symptoms, and I will prescribe for you."

"No, doctor; your medicines would do no good in the purpose I have in view. I require your help, not medicine; and let me say, in helping me, you will help yourself in a way you little expect."

"Tell me how; and if I can do it, I will."

"You can do it, I am sure; and equally sure you will, after you have heard my story."

"I am all attention."

"Well, then, listen. I must go back to the time of Mr. Russel's death. You were very much surprised and disappointed at the disposition of his property, were you not?"

I bowed assent.

"In fact, the will was a complete mystery to you?"

"It was, indeed, a deep mystery."

"I can explain it."

"You!" I said, springing to my feet, "you! Why, you had very little communication with Mr. Russel in his last illness?"

"No; and yet I tell you I can explain the mystery; and on two conditions I will."

"Name them. They must be onerous, indeed, if I fail to comply with them."

"Oh, they are not difficult; they are simply these: First, that in consideration of this my assistance in obtaining your rights, you will not have me punished for the part I myself took in the matter; and secondly, that you will supply me with money to go to America, where I have friends."

"But if a crime was committed, have I the power to promise you immunity from punishment?"

"Be content. You have, for the crime—and I will not deny there was a crime—injured no one but you and Miss Ellen; and if I make restitution by enabling you to secure the real culprit, you can surely let the tool go free."

"Well, I promise," I said, after a few moments consideration. "Do what you have said, and I pledge my word that neither I nor any one on my behalf shall bring you to justice for your share in the transaction. That being granted, the other condition is easily fulfilled."

"That is enough. I will now proceed. But first I must tell you why I do this. It is not, as you might suppose, out of consideration for you or even Miss Ellen, although my conscience has often troubled me for my ingratitude towards her. No," she said; "I have a purpose to serve, and that purpose is—Revenge. Nay; start not. It is a desire for revenge that nerves me to the confession. You remember what I once was. Look at me now. See my hollow cheek and wasted form; hear of my blighted life, and then cease to wonder that I crave for revenge on the cause, But pardon me; I must begin at the beginning. Soon after Mr. Russel's death, and the affairs were all settled, Charles left England for Paris. This you know; but you did not know that I went with him.—As his wife, do you ask? No! Poor silly fool that I was; I trusted to his promise, that we would be married in Paris. Well, we lived gayly enough for two or three months; the marriage put off on one pretext or another, until one day he went out, and never returned. He had left me—left me almost penniless—to starve or die, not caring which. It was some days before I could realize the fact that I was indeed deserted. I thought some accident had befallen him, and made inquiries in all directions. I even visited the dreadful morgue, but without avail. At length I heard he had gone to Lyons, on his way to Venice; and thither I determined to follow him, but on the road was struck down by illness. When I recovered, all trace of him was lost. How I got back to England I hardly know; but I was buoyed up by the hope that after all there might be some mistake, and that I should find him there, glad to receive me back. I did find him; but how? The Willows has now both master and mistress. Yes; he is married, notwithstanding all his promises to me. Another reigns in the house where I ought to be supreme. Oh, but he shall regret it. Little did he know my power, or he would have sacrificed his right hand ere he offended me. I did not tell him, because I wanted his love, not his fear; and when I would have told him it was too late, for he had gone, gone, and left me the wreck you see; married another, after the most sacred promises to me. But I will be revenged. Yes; revenged to the uttermost. He has known my love; now he shall learn my hate. I will drag him down—down, even as he has dragged me."

It is impossible to convey the emphasis with which all this, especially the latter part, was said. I could see that the spirit of revenge was in her, its fire burning her very life out.

"Still," I said, "you have not yet told me anything about the will. I am anxious to hear about that."

"I am coming to it now; but I cannot talk any more to-night. See here; in this packet I have written a full history of the transaction. Take it and read it, and I will come again to-morrow at this

time to complete the evidence. Now let me go, for I am very weak."

In truth she appeared weak and almost ready to faint; so I gave her a cordial, and sending for a conveyance, handed her in, and bade her good-night.

Need I say that I hastened to my room to peruse the packet. I was far too anxious to delay. I found it addressed to myself, and inside headed: "The History of the Will of Mr. Chas. Russel, as related by Jeannette Leclere."

Miss Leclere's history of the will ran as follows:

"In order that you may comprehend all the circumstances of the case, I must go back nearly seven years, to the time when I first entered the family of Mr. Russel, as governess to his niece Ellen. I was then only seventeen years of age, and my pupil fourteen. The family consisted of Mr. R., Ellen, and a nephew Charles. This nephew was about a year younger than myself, and a fine handsome lad. There were whispers that young as he was his habits were very irregular; and it may have been so. I had no means of judging. I only know that to my girlish mind he seemed all that a young man ought to be, and so when he began to take notice of me and make love to me I lent a very willing ear. This went on with more and more warmth, until, for some reason or other, he was compelled to leave his uncle's roof, but even after this we managed to meet at frequent intervals, although, of course, all unknown to Mr. Russel or Ellen, indeed, neither of them had the slightest idea of there being anything between us. At length Charles left his uncle's office altogether, and decided to go to London. I well remember the last night before he went away. People said he was wild and wicked; but I only knew that I loved him, and he declared that he also loved me. He said when he got a situation in London he would send for me; in the meantime, he wished me to remain in Mr. Russel's service, and keep him informed of all that occurred. I faithfully promised; and when on the completion of Ellen's education I was asked to remain as her companion, I gladly agreed, for Charles' sake. Well, time passed on, and nothing particular occurred. Mr. Russel retired from business, and we removed to Cottam; then came his illness, and your introduction to the family. I was ever on the watch for any scrap of information that might be interesting to Charles, and I did not fail to tell him of the growing intimacy between you and Ellen, as well as Mr. Russel's partiality for you. These last items seemed to give him considerable annoyance, and he requested me to redouble my vigilance."

"One day I heard a servant tell you that Mr. Russel wished to see you in his bed room. You remember how these rooms were arranged; that opening out of the bed room was a small dressing room, which itself communicated with the servants' staircase, to afford facilities for lighting the fire, bringing water, &c. Now, as you went up the main stairs, I very quietly slipped into the dressing room by the others as I thought it possible that something might be said touching the interest of my dear Charles. I thus managed to overhear enough of the conversation to gather its import; especially did I take note of the directions for opening the secret place in the desk; and when I got to my own room I wrote them down, lest I should forget. Well, I immediately wrote off to Charles and the news must have troubled him considerably, for in a very short time I had a letter saying that he would arrive at Kinton the next day, and appointed a time and place for me to meet him.—I did so; and after making me repeat as well as I could all I had heard, he boldly proposed that I should get possession of the will and bring it to him. He proposed (to facilitate matters) that as he was quite unknown in Cottam, he would go there and engage rooms at an obscure inn called the Red Lion, and that I should find him there any evening. I confess this proposal startled me, partly because of its difficulty, and partly because it was my first step in crime. However, he overcame my scruples, and I promised to do what I could; at any rate I would visit him at the Red Lion at seven the next evening. Fortune favored me. The next day, just at dusk—it was the latter end

of February—Ellen asked me to sit by the bedside a few minutes until the night nurse arrived; of course I agreed, secretly delighted, for Mr. Russel being asleep I had little difficulty in securing the will. I remembered perfectly the directions: 'Top middle drawer, and a pen-holder through the top right-hand corner, then look at the back.' In fact I had opened the secret panel more than once, to see if I had heard aright. Soon after, the nurse arriving, I was at liberty and hastened to meet Charles. I found him alone in the upper room of the Red Lion, and the table strewn with papers."

"Have you got it?" he eagerly inquired the instant the door closed behind me.

"My only reply was to hand it to him. Without a word he broke the seal, and having read the contents, said: 'You are quite right. It is as you supposed. He has left the whole of his property to Ellen, except a few paltry legacies. Now, you shall see what I will do.'

"Do. Why, I suppose you will burn it, and then come in for an equal share with Ellen. But mind there is something left to me in that will, and it is only because we are to be married that I agree to its being destroyed."

"Fear not; you shall be made all right. But I think I can do better than what you suggest. I was not five years in my uncle's office for nothing."

"He then searched amongst the papers until he found a blank sheet as near like the one the will was written on as possible. 'You see,' he continued, 'the old fellow was so methodical in his ways, that I was pretty sure he would make his will on a certain sort of paper and in a certain way. I provided myself accordingly; obtained similar paper, wax, &c., to that which he always used, and had a copy of his seal made—I had plenty of impressions by me—you know you can get anything in London. Now see me write.'

"He then began to copy the will word for word, and I was astonished at the similitude. Five years' practice under his uncle's eye, and with his uncle's writing constantly before him, joined to a natural aptitude for imitation, enabled him to copy every stroke and turn exactly. 'There,' he said, when he had finished. 'A fair exchange is no robbery. I have written everything as it was before, except that Ellen's name now occupies my place, while I have taken hers. Not a very great change, but one that will make considerable difference to us both, I reckon. Now for the most difficult part, and that is to copy the signatures of the witnesses. I have practiced uncle's often enough; but of course I did not know theirs; however, I must try.'

"He did try, and succeeded so well that I could see no difference."

"There now, said he, 'just you compare these two, while I go and get a glass of brandy.'

"He left the room; and I, placing the two side by side, could only distinguish the one from the other by the change of names."

"Well," he said, as he re-entered—"Will it do?"

"Excellently well," I replied. 'I cannot tell which was written by you and which by your uncle.'

"Well, then; now to fold them; and from a heap of various sorts of envelopes choosing two, he took up the original will, sealed and endorsed as before, but putting a small almost imperceptible mark in the corner. He then took the new will and did the same, but without the mark."

"Now," said he, 'listen carefully to my instructions. When you get home, replace the original will in the desk. You will know what it is by this mark; pointing to the corner. 'It is extremely unlikely that Mr. Russel has been out of bed and missed it during the two hours you have been absent, so that will be all right. This other envelope you must keep by you until he is actually dead, and then take the very first opportunity of changing them. The old will you may bring to me, and I will destroy it.'

"But why not make the change at once? I could as easily put one in the desk as the other."

"No; no. We must not risk it. There is just a chance that my uncle

may get about again and take it into his head to open the will, and then where would we be? No; make the change when that is impossible, and we are all right.'

"I see, I see," said I, half-sickening at the dreadful deception, and yet too far committed to draw back, "as I shall gain equally with yourself, I promise to do all you wish."

"When I arrived at home, all was quiet, so I presently went into the sick room. 'Nurse,' I said, 'supper is ready. If you would like to go down, I will sit here half an hour for you.'

"She gladly accepted my offer, and as Mr. Russel was dozing with the curtains drawn and the lamp turned down, I silently and quickly replaced the old gentleman's will."

"Well, time went on. Mr. Russel, as you know, got gradually worse, and toward the end was more than half his time unconscious. One day you gave it as your opinion that he could not possibly live till the next, and it was that last night that I stealthily made the change. In the morning he was dead and so far our plot had succeeded completely. The result I need say nothing about, as you are so well acquainted with it."

"But now I must tell you of a little scheme of my own. I loved Charles, and would have done anything for him and had no compunction in helping him, as I thought doing so was a means to love, marriage and fortune. Still, he had taught me to be almost as wily as himself, and to take every precaution; so I determined to have a hold on him in case he should endeavor to play me false. To this end, when I got possession of the original will, I went into my bed room, and with a sharp pen-knife, cut carefully the end of the envelope, drew out the contents, which I carefully transferred to my pocket, and then replaced them with blank paper the same size and thickness, gumming the edges with pale gum. I daresay it was not very skillfully done, but it answered my purpose very well. Afterwards, when I gave it to Charles, he glanced at it and saw the seal was unbroken, and suspecting nothing, committed it to the flames. We both watched it until it was consumed. Charles exclaiming: 'Now I am really master of the Willows.'

"And I soon shall be mistress, I added."

"Oh, that of course," he replied.

"I have told you how he kept his promise, villain that he is!"

Thus finished this remarkable confession—a confession which to me was as acceptable as unexpected. Of course there was now no mystery, and I am only surprised that something of the kind had not occurred to me before; but it must be remembered that I knew very little about Charles, and no one had even hinted—even if they knew—of any connection between him and Miss Leclere. I read the confession all over to Ellen, and we both rejoiced at the turn events had taken. Miss Leclere came in for a certain amount of pity; yet we could not but remember that had it not been for her coyness and assistance, Charles would have been unable to carry out his nefarious scheme."

"Still," said Ellen, "I am not sorry that you promised to allow her to escape punishment. If we get our own again, we can well afford to let her go."

In the morning I called upon Mr. Sparks, my legal friend, and somewhat triumphantly laid the matter before him. He was much pleased, and at once offered to assist me all he could. We both agreed that after my promise to Miss Leclere, it would be better to try to settle the matter amicably with Charles too. We therefore decided to wait upon him and tell him that all was discovered; and if he confessed and gave up the property, we would then arrange without publicity, or exposure. If, however, he resisted, we determined at once to proceed to law. It was Ellen's wish that, for the sake of the relationship between them we should be as lenient as possible in case he yielded."

Miss Leclere duly kept her appointment, and brought the oft-mentioned will with her. The conditions were again insisted on, and again agreed to; in fact I gave her fifty pounds on the spot and promised another fifty pounds when all was settled. She then gave