

THE FACE OF ROSENTEL.

CHARLES HOWARD MONTAGUE.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE. They made an armchair of themselves by interlocking their hands and arms.

How different from the ominous roll of the departing ambulance was the coming of this jaunty carriage!

Modern science had done made this arrival possible. For the second time within the short period of a few weeks brain surgery had won another brilliant victory.

But there was that about this second and more recent miracle which not even Lamar himself could explain.

That the results had exceeded his most daring hopes he had acknowledged, at least to Maxy. To rescue from the grave a trembling paralytic victim, who realizes full well his doom, and himself gives the word which authorizes the dangerous operation as his last fearful danger, is great indeed, but to pour a flood of fullest, freest light into the darkness where no death that enshrouds an intellect is something so far greater that it rises at once one of the regions of human achievement into that unfathomed realm of nature's mysteries where the wisest are as children.

No Lamar was too scientific a man to believe this triumph all his own, too honest to claim it as his own, but nevertheless the world would count it his. Henceforth he would be great among his fellows.

The victim of the effort had been still in a very sensitive and precarious state. Her memory of even recent events might fall her at times in the most alarming manner, but her pulse was normal, her appetite good, and every day would show a change for the better—every day away from the hospital, surrounded by sympathetic faces, kind voices and the quiet of a home. So they all believed. So had the carriage come.

This was scarcely the same being who once before had been carried by those four strong arms from the street to the artist's rooms. That form had been submissive and leaden. This shrank in maiden modesty from undue contact. That face had been distorted with the hideous nightmare of perpetual fear. This glowed with all the sweet, shy, womanly emotions that rise in the breast of a young girl whom necessity compels to cling in timid fashion to strangers of the other sex. She obeyed their instructions to put her arms about their necks with a trembling reluctance that was too spontaneous to be counterfeit. I know not what philosophy Dr. Lamar thought, but to Julian Maxy the tremulous touch of that almost transparent little hand was a virgin revelation of the possibility of a joy to come greater than any he had ever known.

It was toilsome, climbing the long flights of stairs in this slow, steady fashion, but it seemed to Maxy in his present ecstatic frame of mind, with a burden such as this to carry, he would willingly have kept on mounting forever. As for the palpitating burden herself, she was troubled with more sentiments than one. This removal, her destination, her new friends, were so many mysteries to her. The truth had purposely been kept from her for a specific reason, and she had to be informed only that she was to be taken to a more secluded place than the hospital, where she would be surrounded by lighter influences and would get well the quicker.

Notwithstanding her weakness, and her trepidation at finding herself in the arms of the strange men, she was soon to glance with an expression of interest and curiosity upon the home and the entrance into which she was being taken. In spite of Dr. Lamar's assurance to the contrary, Maxy hoped that she would recognize the place and its inmates without a word to aid her. This was the object of his silence to her. It partook of the nature of an experiment.

Miss Maxy, waiting for them in the corridor, held the door open for them to pass in. The girl looked at her in a naive, questioning manner, that thoroughly disappointed the artist's sister. The doctor's strong tones were the first to break the silence.

"These are your new friends, Miss Dye. Have your limbs to be as long as you care to make it. From the time you expressed a desire not to be taken back to your father they resolved to bring you here."

"They are very good to me," said a faint voice. "But do you know that I am a poor girl without money to pay them for their care?"

"They know everything that is necessary," said Maxy.

Miss Maxy had drawn a great chair in front of the fire and had made it doubly easy with pillows. The comfortable back chamber was in a state of order and neatness wonderful to behold. Everything was in readiness for the return of the patient. They placed her in the chair, and Maxy sighed as the clinging hood left its warm nestling place on his neck. Then they all stood back from her, and she looked about, first at the strange faces of the artist and his sister and then at the various objects which went to make up the character of the room. Her glance wandered to the windows, with the fine prospect far away and the ice-land river underneath, to the piano, the pictures, the bookcases, even to the little white bed in the alcove room, the curtains of which had been purposely drawn back that she might see it.

Maxy could not conceal his disappointment. It was the glance of the stranger. But there was another sentiment in the artist's mind, even stranger than this. In the anxious days when the face which now looked up from the pillows in the easy chair lay on the bed in

the alcove room Maxy had often watched it with an insufferable feeling of regret and pity at his heart. The delicate outline of the oval face and the classic features, despite the unnatural expression which distorted the countenance and robbed it of its chief charm, had whispered a sorrowful story of a lost radiance that would have dazzled the eyes of the beholder. And now, as the artist saw this face again, lit up with the light of reason and changing with the varying thoughts, deadly pale and hollow though it was, he realized, with the merriment instinct of a student of the pleasing in nature, that the reality was even stranger than he had pictured it, and he said to himself:

"She will be beautiful."

There was a deeply troubled look in the dark eyes, as they finished the momentary survey of the apartment and came back to rest on Miss Maxy's face. The pale lips murmured something which sounded to her hearers like, "I do not understand."

At any rate, Dr. Lamar took it upon himself to say again:

"These are your friends, Miss Maxy and her brother, who took care of you in your illness. You are to stay here with us as long as you like, to make your own terms with them, if you will, until you are well, strong and able to go where you desire."

"Charity" whispered the voice, a slight color coming into the face. Dr. Lamar understood the delicate shrinking of a sensitive nature and feared that it might have a tendency to retard her convalescence. The unscrupulous man lied:

"Not in the least. Your father has secured them to take charge of you during his absence. He was obliged to go away."

"He is not my father," she returned in a clearer voice. The sound of that voice made Maxy's heart beat faster. The accents and intonation were a revelation. They could have been the product alone of refinement and education.

A joyous thought seemed to arise suddenly in the poor girl's mind, a thought that made her eyes glisten and her breath come quick. She looked eagerly first into Maxy's face and then into the face of his sister. Something seemed to tremble on her lips, but she forbore to utter it. The artist, who had been watching her every movement, started forward.

"Say that you know us; that you recognize this place; that you remember to have been here before!"

The rising color suddenly faded from the pale face, and to the astonishment of everybody she said:

"You are my brother and you my sister! You have brought me home!"

Maxy's heart sank. Was her mind wandering? Her eager glance encountered

"You are my brother and you my sister!" of their blank and amazed looks, and the trembling joy faded at once from her face.

Ellen spoke up quickly:

"Let it be so, dear Annette. We will be brother and sister to you henceforth."

"Then you are not really so? No, no, I should have known better."

"And you don't recognize the room at all?" Maxy said in a tone of regret.

The dark eyes looked about in increasing perplexity. She said at last falteringly:

"I cannot say, but in my forgotten childhood, which I have tried so hard to remember—"

"I don't mean that," interrupted Maxy. "I mean since you have been sick."

The dark eyes turned toward him in wild amazement.

"Was I not taken to the hospital?"

"You were brought here. You were placed in that little bed here. My sister attended you, and so you remained for weeks. Now, don't you remember it—just in a faint, vague way, I mean?" returned Maxy.

The dark hair moved on the pillow as if he had struck it.

"It is all strange to me," she said. "I must have been very sick."

Dr. Lamar looked triumphantly at Maxy, who was evidently disappointed.

"I can remember faces faintly, coming and going as in a dream."

"Reminiscences of the hospital after the operation," commented Dr. Lamar in an undertone.

Maxy sighed.

"I must give it up," he said. "You were right."

The physician did not reply. His attention was taken by the patient. A gray pallor was creeping into her face. Her eyes closed wearily.

"No more of this," he said authoritatively. "This conversation has been too much for her. Get her to bed, Miss Maxy."

sician's orders. Those orders are that you shall absolutely refrain from questioning her or even hinting of the past in any way until you have my permission. I will tell you plainly, it may be for weeks."

"So long!" said Maxy in consternation. "You know I would be the last to do anything which would tend to her injury. But it does seem a shame, by Jove; it does seem a shame!"

He began to pace the floor with his hands behind his back.

"I have my suspicions," he continued. "You know them, you would be as impatient as I am."

"I doubt it," returned Lamar, "but by and by you will tell them to me, and we shall see. Before that, however, I want to settle your mind on one point, Mrs. Forsythe does not know and never heard of this man Dye. It was utterly ridiculous, of course, that she should, but to satisfy you I have asked her."

"But it is she who lives at 10 Livingston street."

"And it is also her servants who live there!" exclaimed Lamar impatiently.

Any reference to his intended bride always had a depressing effect upon the physician. He folded his hands behind him, turned his back on Maxy and looked gloomily out of the window at the river. The artist approached him and laid a friendly hand on his arm.

"Old fellow, I have offended you."

"Nothing of the sort," returned Lamar. "You did simply right. How could you know that the suspicion of the lodging house keeper in Flood street was preposterous? You never saw her."

Maxy was well aware of that. If there was any matter on earth in which he felt he was not in his friend's confidence, it was this matter of his engagement with the Widow Forsythe, and yet his esteem and regard for the man were too great to permit him to neglect an opportunity, such as this, to counsel him.

"Eustace," he began hesitatingly, "I wish I could feel that you wouldn't think that I was presuming on your friendship."

Lamar turned toward him, puzzled and wondering.

"Why, what is all this, Julian?"

"It is my extravagant imagination, I suppose, but I can't get over the impression that your approaching marriage is not—well, that you do not look upon it as you ought."

Lamar turned his head away very quickly.

"Mrs. Forsythe is a lady," he said in a low voice. "She is very handsome. She is a very talented woman. She has a fortune, and I have been called a thousand times a 'lucky dog!'"

"All this is true, Eustace, but do you really love her?"

Lamar made an impatient gesture.

"You don't expect me to talk sentiment, I hope?"

Maxy sighed.

"That's the trouble I was afraid of. You are too much wrapped up in your science, and you imagine you don't believe in these things. But I tell you, Lamar, they are just as real and essential as anything else in our lives."

Lamar attempted to force a tone of jocularity.

"When did you experience your last great passage, Maxy?"

"You know I never had one. But I believe in it. I know it, because I have seen it."

"Oh, indeed?" Lamar's words were dry and short, but somehow he looked much more distressed than indifferent.

Maxy went on earnestly: "Eustace, it has been your province on many important occasions to give me advice, and you must acknowledge that in however bad grace I accepted it I generally acted on it. I can't expect you to take mine, but I am none the less going to advise you. If you marry Mrs. Forsythe for her money, you will regret it all the days of your life."

Lamar turned upon him almost angrily. "Who told you that, Maxy?"

The artist replied a little stiffly:

"Nobody. I inferred it from what you said. You do not love her. Don't marry her."

"Love her? No. But what is more to the point, I esteem and respect her. That is enough, Maxy, this is not an agreeable subject to me. Don't let us refer to it again. My mother has set her heart on this match, and even if I were convinced of its advisability I could not honorably retreat now. If there was a time when I had a little romantic feeling for Mrs. Forsythe, and if time and a better acquaintance with her have enabled me to overcome it, why, that is my affair. If I was weak enough or foolish enough to take a hasty, impulsive step in an all important matter—a step which I have since had reason to regret—that is my affair too. If I have said to you that which I have told and shall tell to no other person upon earth, it is because I know you too well to believe that you would betray my confidence. Julian, you will not mention that I have said this much to you to a living soul—not even to—"

He stopped and averted his glance and went on again: "Not even to your nearest and dearest friend. Now, let us change the subject."

Maxy looked at his friend regretfully. Lamar coughed and drummed on the piano.

"Well," said the physician at length, "you were saying that you had your suspicions. Whom do you suspect?"

"I suspect that man Dye. Isn't it somewhat remarkable that he disappeared from the house in Flood street the very same day that this crime was committed on the cliff road?"

"It is worth noting at least. What do the police think?"

"I have not employed the police at all."

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