

The Planter's Daughter

OR FATE'S REVENGE

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CHAPTER I.

On a chill and dismal afternoon in the month of October, 1858, the country folk who lived within ear-shot of the bells of the little village of Vernon, were amazed at the sudden clanging that abruptly burst forth from the ivy-veiled tower of the old church and sent its reverberating echoes far over rice-field, plantation and grove. All the greater was the amazement of those who harkened to the merry peals, since only the day before those self-same brazen throats had raised their voices in a doleful knell for a departed soul.

Nevertheless, in spite of the stormy wind that raged and the fitful gust of rain that beat upon their faces, women caught up their shawls and men their hats, and ran with their children into the village to find the place all agog, and every step hastening towards the church. The sunset hour was at hand, and all along the lower horizon, fiery gleams, blood-red, shone through the rifts in the driving clouds. There was mute inquiry upon every face, while mystery brooded over all.

The twinkling candles upon the altar, together with the eloquent perfume of massed roses and jasmines, lying in great heaps within the chancel, attracted more than half the multitude within the sacred edifice; those who remained without looked up and down the road, and asked each other what joyous event was about to take place in such uncanny weather.

At last the bells abruptly ceased, the deep tones of the organ began to surge and swell upon the bated silence, the clock struck six. Simultaneously the rapid beat of horses' hoofs and the roll of carriage wheels smote the air, and from the direction of the magnolia-crested heights, a barouche was descried swiftly approaching the church. A cry was raised among the bystanders as the Rosemont livery was recognized, and heads were craned to catch the first glimpse of the occupants, while a shudder of horror passed through every heart, as it was recalled that only the day before the same equipage had stood before the church to bear away to her lonely home the only and beautiful daughter of the lamented Colonel Courmont.

The respected gentleman had met an untimely death by accident while hunting, and the scent of the flowers that clustered about his bier had scarcely evaporated from the dim aisles of the old church ere these fresh blossoms were brought in to form a festal decoration.

But the carriage was closed against the stress of weather and no glimpse of those within was afforded until it drew up beneath the porch, and the aged sexton stepped forward to open the door; whereupon, to the speechless amazement of the beholders, there alighted a handsome, stately young gentleman in full evening dress, who in turn assisted a lady swathed in mourning to alight. At sight of her, every hat was removed, for one and all recognized at a glance the beautiful Sylphide Courmont, sole heiress and mistress of Rosemont.

She was attired in a trailing costume of black tulle relieved by an enormous bouquet de corsage of snowy jasmines that vied with the ghastly pallor that overspread her faultless neck and exquisite face; while in her jet-black hair clustered more of the spectral flowers, shaded by a veil of inky gauze. Had it not been for the flashing eyes and the triumphant curve of the haughty lip, one would have said that these were the trappings of the grave she wore—and she, the wraith of her former self.

The man at her side was flushed and nervous. Though a stranger at Vernon, they all recognized him as the guest from New York, who had been passing a few weeks at Rosemont, and had been the companion of Colonel Courmont when he met his fate. They remembered that it was he who had ridden over the country day after day with Sylphide, and had been the one to support her when she fainted beside her father's coffin in the church; but not one of those honest hearts so much as dreamed that he was so soon to become the husband of the mistress of Rosemont, nor would they have believed had they been told how this extraordinary alliance had been brought about.

The wedding ceremony began and continued until the solemn words were pronounced, "If any one present sees just cause why this man and woman should not be joined together in holy wedlock, let him stand forth and speak, or forever afterward hold his peace!"

Thereupon ensued a breathless pause. A nervous shiver passed over the bride and with a hunted look in her great, dilated eyes, she turned and stared at the assembly. No one rose; no one breathed, although outside the church it was evident that a struggle of some sort was taking place, for voices were raised—one in particular—and through the open doors the swaying to and fro of the dense mass of humanity was visible.

Sylphide Courmont almost staggered, yet clung to her lover's arm with a desperate attempt to be mistress over herself. Fixing her burning eyes upon the priest, she murmured:

"No, no! There is no one to speak. I am ill. Proceed!"

And then the deep toned benediction brought this weird ceremony to a close. The look of ineffable joy and triumph that illumined the fair bride's face as the last "Amen" was uttered, baffles descrip-

tion. She turned to her handsome young husband and whispered:

"I am yours, am I not, Lucian, yours forever?"

"Forever, my darling!" he answered in some surprise.

"I am too happy! Come, let us go. Time flies, and we must leave Rosemont to-night!"

Lucian Courtlandt gave his wife his arm, and side by side they passed down the aisle amid the wondering throng, apparently unconscious of the volley of curious glances bestowed upon them. When their backs were turned, amazement took voice.

"Unhappy the bride that the rain rains on," whispered one old dame.

"Married in black!" shuddered another; while a third shook her head, as she muttered: "Married in haste, repent at leisure!"

But all unconscious of ill-omen, Sylphide Courtlandt passed out of the porch to receive a spiteful dash of rain, like icy tears, upon her brow, and to be saluted by the muttering of distant thunder from the leaden heavens.

Meanwhile, the scene outside the church had been in startling contrast to the solemn, peaceful proceedings within. Soon after the bridal pair had entered, and the crowd had surged into

sight of his whip, but the whites stood firm. They teased him not; besides, they had come to see the show, and they were not to be cheated of their pleasure.

Courmont struggled and fought to no purpose. He was a powerfully built man, but he met his equals there in the crowd, and do what he would, they would not let him pass.

"I am her next of kin!" he roared. "I will see her married! Let me pass!"

"Don't you see that mass of heads?" retorted the burly blacksmith of the village; "you can't get in!"

"I will! Stand back! This is a crime! Let me go in!"

"Hark! Stand aside! They're coming out!"

It was true; the wedding march had again burst forth, and Sylphide Courmont was standing there before him a bride, another's wife. As though his had been the only face in all that sea of faces, she saw him and recoiled a step. In the next moment, she recovered herself, and smiled and bowed to him, though her face was as pallid as the dead.

Oscar Courmont raised his hat and fixed his eyes upon the man at Sylphide's side with a look that paralyzed the beholders.

"Quick! Back to Rosemont, and keep the horses harnessed!" whispered the bride to the coachman, as she entered the carriage, followed by Courtlandt.

Once fairly on the road, she fell with a hysterical sob into her lover's arms. Suddenly she started up with a terrified gasp.

"Hark," she panted, "do you not hear the beat of horses' hoofs behind us?"

Courtlandt lowered the glass and looked back into the rainy night.

"I see nothing," he said, "and hear nothing."

(To be continued.)

What He Wanted.

The sad-faced man entered a Baltimore street dry goods house and said: "I want a waste-basket."

"What kind?" asked the clerk, briskly.



"NO, NO! THERE IS NO ONE TO SPEAK. PROCEED," SAID SYLPHIDE.

the porch, filling every crack and crevice, a horseman had ridden up at break-neck speed, dismounted at the graveyard wall, and tethered his foaming steed to a sycamore that grew hard by. He was breathless, and covered with mud from hard riding, though his dark face was flushed and his deep-set black eyes fairly scintillated.

There is no denying the fact that he is a handsome man, handsome in a fierce, brutal way; a young man, too, scarcely thirty, but bearing the traces of premature age, which dissipation ever sets upon the countenances of its votaries.

They all knew him there, knew that he was the scapegrace nephew of the dead colonel; that his name was Oscar Courmont; that he lived down the river upon a neglected plantation, where he beat his slaves; and more than all, they knew that many a time he had sought the hand of his fair cousin, Sylphide, in marriage; not that he loved her—such a tender sentiment had never entered his heart—but because she was the only obstacle that intervened between him and his inheritance to Rosemont.

He could not kill her, therefore she must marry him. Thus he argued with himself, when the news of his uncle's death had reached him in New Orleans, whither he had gone to squander the money raised by the sale of the last of his slaves. It is needless to explain that he returned to Vernon post haste, but he arrived at Rosemont to learn that Sylphide was already gone to church to be united in wedlock to a stranger.

Without quitting his saddle, he put spurs to his jaded beast, and rode like a mad fury down into Vernon. He would forbid the banns, tear her from this interloper, even kill the priest ere he had time to give her forever to another.

At his infuriated approach, the negroes upon the outskirts of the crowd about the church door fell back in dismay at

"Why, I believe she said she wanted a straight-front one without those awful stiff stays in it—"

"But I thought you said you wanted a waste-basket?" said the impatient clerk.

"I do. What's them things that's straight front and got stays in 'em but waist-baskets?"—Baltimore American.

Continuous Farewells.

"Well," remarked the spectator at Mrs. Oldstars' farewell performance, "she certainly was deeply affected."

"It looked that way," replied Crittick.

"Of course it's natural to be affected under the circumstances."

"Yes, that's why she got into the habit of affecting to be natural."—Philadelphia Press.

Ambiguous.

Mr. Quarles—Well, I see old Gold-man is dead and leaves upward of three millions. Wouldn't you like to be his widow?

Mrs. Quarles (sweetly)—No, dear; nothing could possibly delight me more than just to be yours.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Retort Courteous.

Tom—I say, Jack, what reason have you for wearing an automobile cap? You never ride in an automobile.

Jack—Oh, I suppose the reason is similar to the one you have for carrying a pocket book.

Love.

He—You passed me without speaking to me.

She—Oh, I must have been thinking about you.



The illuminating power of the sun at zenith is estimated by M. Charles Fabry at one hundred thousand candles.

In recent European experiments, corpses have been kept for a certain time in a bath of chloride of calcium heated to 123 degrees, then taken out and steeped for twenty-four hours in a cold solution of sulphate of sodium. The bodies are transformed into perfect mummies, to be kept indefinitely.

Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce, who has been studying the strange "sleeping sickness" which affects many of the inhabitants of Uganda, ascribes the spread of the infection to a species of the famous tsetse fly, whose attacks are fatal to horses and cattle in Africa. These flies are found to be infected with the parasite that causes the sleeping sickness by entering the blood and the cerebro-spinal fluid, and the well-defined areas of country to which the flies are confined correspond absolutely with the distribution of the disease. Where this species of tsetse fly is not found sleeping sickness is unknown.

A second blossoming of trees late in the season, after the usual forming of buds for the next year, may result from some injury, such as removal of the leaves, if the inference of M. E. Apert is correct. In October, 1900, this observer saw a white lilac in full bloom, the bush having small green leaves and beautiful clusters of white flowers, while some hundreds of feet away was another bush of the usual autumnal appearance. Investigation showed that worms had eaten off the leaves of the first bush several months before. A return of the worms in July, 1903, was followed by a partial reproduction of the phenomenon, and M. Apert believes that a second flowering of a fire-injured tree, reported by M. Jolly as a result of the action of heat, was really due to destruction of the leaves. It is proposed to test the theory by removing the leaves of apple trees, pear trees, etc., in July or August.

It is an old question, "Are the 70 odd chemical elements really elementary, or are they compounded of something still more elementary?" In the light of the recent discoveries about radium Prof. F. W. Clarke recurs to a theory, advocated by him many years ago, that as the planets were evolved out of the original nebula which gave birth to the solar system, the chemical elements themselves were also evolved out of something far less complex than themselves. The fact that existing nebulae are very simple in composition, while stars in various stages of evolution exhibit more and more complexity, until, in solidified bodies, like the earth, a great number of chemical elements with a myriad of compounds are found, is regarded as strongly supporting this theory. The phenomena of radium lead to the additional suggestion that as in the development of the heavenly bodies we seem to see the growth of the elements, so in radio-activity we witness their decay.

FIND HIDDEN WEALTH.

People Discover Treasure at Unexpected Places and Times.

Hidden treasure has an irresistible attraction for the human race. On the slightest hint from seer or fortune teller some one is sure to dig where the hidden treasure is supposed to be, and disappointment does not discourage another attempt when another "tip" is received. Very few have ever come upon hidden treasure, and the few have found it unexpectedly.

Take, for instance, that romantic unearthing of 200,000 coins in the bed of the River Dove, in Staffordshire, seventy-two years ago. Some workmen were engaged in removing a mud bank which had formed in the center of the river, when one of them was amazed to find on raising his spade that it glistened with silver coins.

Attracted by the digger's exclamations of astonishment and delight, his fellow workmen hurried up, and in a moment half a dozen men were scrambling and fighting for the treasure, feverishly filling their pockets, their hats and beer cans with silver coins, which were worth their weight in gold, for they were of the time of the first two Edwards, and had lain in the river for 500 years. That the bulk of the treasure trove was ultimately claimed by the Duchy of Lancaster matters little, for its finders had already appropriated scores of thousands of precious disks.

Only two years later a few village boys were playing at marbles on Sunday afternoon in a field near Beaworth, in Hampshire, when one of them caught sight of a piece of lead projecting from a cart rut in a rough road that crossed the pasture. Tugging at the strip of metal he disclosed a hole, and through the exposed opening he saw a pile of glittering coins, bright as if fresh from the mint. To fill his pockets and those of his playmates was the work of a few moments, and

so little did the youngsters appreciate the value of their discovery that on their way home they amused themselves by flinging the coins into the village pond.

Ultimately nearly seven thousand coins were recovered from this buried treasure chest, and they proved to be of the reigns of William I. and William II. and in a wonderful state of preservation.

A similar discovery was made near Wetherby, in Yorkshire, when a heavy cart, passing over a country road, stuck fast in a rut, and on being released disclosed a number of silver coins, which had escaped from the burst lid of a chest hidden under the roadway. It was assumed that the chest of coins had been buried there in the perilous days of the civil war, and that the gradual sinking of the road and the weight of the passing cart had at last brought it again to the light of day.

In the year 1846 a most valuable deposit of treasure was revealed in the strangest fashion at Cuerdale, near Preston, in Lancashire. Some laborers were digging near the banks of the River Ribble when the pickaxe of one of them struck something harder than earth and more yielding than rock. On removing his pick he found transfixed at the end of it a large ingot of silver. Plying his tool with renewed vigor he soon discovered wealth, consisting of scores of silver ingots weighing in all over 1,000 ounces.

Similar fortune befell a couple of laborers who were digging in a ditch near Gladstonbury, in Somersetshire, when they unearthed an ancient chest full of coins of the days of the Stuarts. They took samples of the coins to a neighboring antiquary of wealth, who not only paid the men a large sum for their treasure, but purchased a score or more acres of land adjacent to the lucky ditch. And here the irony of fortune is well illustrated, for although the antiquary spent thousands of pounds in buying and excavating his land, not a single coin was discovered beyond those which a stroke of the spade had revealed.

This is the kind of trick fortune loves to play on designing men. Not very many years ago, when the thatched roof of an ancient cottage near Ripon was removed a rich nest of 5-guinea gold pieces was discovered hidden away under it. When the news of this treasure trove came to the ears of a neighboring land owner he was so fired by the lust of gold that he forthwith purchased a dozen similar cottages in the district and had them all pulled down, but not a solitary coin was found in exchange for the £3,000 the experiment cost him.

Grow Young as You Grow Old.

Next to air and food in the human economy comes exercise. We may have plenty of fresh air, and a proper allowance of the right kind of food, and yet, without helpful daily exercise these will not avail to keep the body in good condition. In answer to the question, "Why do we grow old?" a French writer gives these three reasons: "We do not get enough physical exercise in the open air, we are poisoned by microbes, which the phagocytes have not succeeded in destroying, and we are depressed by fear of death." Of the three reasons it will be noted that he gives the place of first importance to lack of exercise. There is nothing else which can take the place of physical activity at a preserver of youth and energy. "Grow young as you grow older by cultivating a moderate love of good, healthful, honest sport," is sound advice. Walking, running, jumping, rowing, playing golf, tennis or croquet, or any other mild form of exercise in the open air keeps the muscles supple and prevents the joints from stiffening, fills the lungs with life-giving oxygen and keeps the blood from becoming sluggish or the liver torpid. In short, it is exercise that keeps the body in tune and "up to concert pitch," just as exercise keeps the voice or a musical instrument in perfect tone.—Success.

'Possums Show Cunning.

John Toussaint of Cahokia declares he is the first man to discover how opossums ravage hen roosts, says the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. He states that for years the farmers of this vicinity have lost their chickens and could not account for it. Mr. Toussaint says that he was sitting at his window early in the morning, when he noticed a 'possum steal along the fence and enter his poultry house. He believed the animal would soon return and secured his shotgun. The animal did return in a second or so, and as it came in sight Toussaint fired. He killed the 'possum and went to secure it, finding one of his fine chickens firmly grasped in the 'possum's tail. Mr. Toussaint says that the animal visits the henroost regularly, and that no chicken ever screeches, because its breath is cut off by the pressure of the animal's tail. When the tail is safely stretched around the neck of the chicken the 'possum starts off, dragging the fowl after him.

Good Reason.

She smiles and laughs the livelong day; Pray do not think her simple— She'll laugh at anything you say Because she has a dimple. —Yale Record.