

YOLANDE

BY WILLIAM BLACK

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

Now for the moment Yolande was completely disconcerted. It was a point she had not foreseen; it was a point, therefore, on which she had asked no counsel. She had been assured by Mr. Lang that she had nothing to fear in taking away her mother from this house—that she was acting strictly within her legal rights. But how about this question of debt? Could they really detain her? Outwardly, however, she showed no symptom of this sudden doubt. She said to the woman with perfect calmness:

"Your impertinence will be of little use to you. My mother is going with me. I am her guardian; if you interfere with me it will be at your own peril. If my mother owes you anything it will be paid."

"How am I to know that? Here she is, and here she shall remain until everything is paid. We are not going to be robbed in that way. I'll go and fetch my husband—that I will." And the next second she had left the room and the house, too—running out into the night bareheaded.

"Now, mother," said Yolande, quickly, "now is our chance! Where are your things? Oh, you must not think of packing anything; we will send for what you want to-morrow. But do you really owe these people anything?"

"I don't know," said her mother, who seemed to have been terrified by this threat on the part of the woman.

"Well, then, where is your hat?—where is your shawl? Where is your room?"

Almost mechanically she opened the folding doors that formed one side of the apartment, disclosing beyond a bedroom. Yolande preceded her; picked up the things she wanted, and helped her to put them on.

"Come, now, mother; we will get away before they come back. Oh, you need not be afraid. Everything is arranged for you. There is a cab waiting for us outside."

"Who is in it?" said the mother, drawing back with a gesture of fear.

"Why, no one at all!" said Yolande, cheerfully. "But my maid is just outside, in the passage. Come along, mother!"

"Wait a moment, then."

She went back into the bedroom, and almost instantly reappeared—glancing at Yolande with a quick, furtive look that the girl did not understand. She understood after.

She took her mother by the hand and led her as if she were a child. In the lobby they encountered Jane; and Jane was angry.

"Another minute, miss, and I would have turned her out by the shoulders!" she said, savagely.

"Oh, it is all right," said Yolande, briskly. "Everything is quite right! Open the door, Jane, there's a good girl."

They had got out from the house, and were indeed crossing the pavement, when the landlady again made her appearance, coming hurriedly up in the company of a man who looked like a butler out of employment, and who was obviously drunk. He began to hector and bully. He interposed himself between them and the cab.

"You ain't going away like this! You ain't going to rob poor people like this! You come back into the house until we settle this affair."

Now Yolande's only aim was to get clear of the man and to get her mother put into the cab; but he stood in front of her, whichever way she made the attempt; and at last he put his hand on her arm to force her back to the house. It was an unfortunate thing for him that he did so. There was a sudden crash; the man reeled back, staggered, and then fell like a log on to the pavement; and Yolande, bewildered by the instantaneous nature of the whole occurrence, only knew that something like a black shadow had gone swiftly by. All this appeared to have happened in a moment; and in that same moment there was a policeman in plain clothes, whom she knew by sight.

"What a shame to strike the poor man!" said he, to the landlady, who was on her knees, shrieking by the side of her husband. "But he ain't much hurt, mum. I'll help him indoors, mum. I'm a constable, I am; I wish I knew who done that; I'd have the law agin him."

As he uttered these words of consolation he regarded the prostrate man with perfect equanimity; and a glance over his shoulder informed him that, in the confusion, Yolande and her mother and the maid had got into the cab and driven off. Then he proceeded to raise the stupefied ex-butler, who certainly had received a "facer"; but who presently came to himself as near as the fumes of rum would allow. Nay, he helped, or rather steadied, the man into the house; and assured the excited landlady that the law would find out who had committed this outrage; but he refused the offer of a glass of something, on the plea that he was on duty. Then he took down the number of the house in his notebook and left. As he walked along the street he was suddenly accosted by the tall, broad-shouldered young man who had disappeared into the narrow entry.

"Why weren't you up in time?" said the latter, angrily.

"You was so quick!"

"Is that drunken idiot hurt?"

"Well, sir, he may 'ave a black eye

in the morning—maybe a pair on 'em. But 'tain't no matter. He'll think he run agin a lamp post."

"When you saw that drunken brute seize hold of the young lady's arm, you should have been there—on the spot—on the instant—"

"You was so quick, and the man went over like a ninepin—"

"Well, the affair is satisfactory as it stands," said the younger and taller man; "and I am well satisfied."

CHAPTER XVII.

Despite all her hurrying, Yolande did not manage to get away from London on the day following; it was not until early the next morning that she and her mother and the maid found themselves in the train, and the great city left behind for good. The weather was brilliant and shining around them, and the autumn-tinted woods were glorious in color. To these, or any other passing object, Yolande, in her capacity of guardian, drew cheerful attention, treating the journey, indeed, as a very ordinary every-day affair; but the sad-eyed mother seemed hardly capable of regarding anything but her daughter—and that sometimes with a little bit of stealthy crying.

"Ah," she said in those strangely hollowed tones, "it is kind of you to come and let me see you for a little while."

"A little while? What little while, then?" said Yolande, with a stare.

"Until I go back, away from you," said the mother, regarding the girl with an affectionate and yet wistful look. "It was in a dream that I came away from the house with you. You seemed calling me in a dream. But now I am beginning to wake. At the station there were two ladies; I saw them looking at us, and I knew what they were thinking. They were wondering to see a beautiful young life like yours linked to a life like mine; and they were right. I could see it in their eyes."

"They would have been better employed in minding their own business!" said Yolande, angrily.

The mother seemed more and more fascinated by the society of her daughter; and appeared quite absorbed in regarding the bright, young, fresh face, and in listening with a strange curiosity for the slight traces of a foreign accent that remained in Yolande's talking. As for the girl herself, she bore herself in the most matter-of-fact way. She would have no sentiment interfere. And always it was assumed that her mother was merely an invalid whom the sea air would restore to health; not a word was said as to the cause of her present condition.

Worthing looked bright and cheerful on this breezy forenoon. The windswept yellow-gray sea was struck a gleaming silver here or there with floods of sunlight; the morning promenaders had not yet gone in to lunch; a band was playing at the end of the pier. When they got to the rooms, they found that every preparation had been made to receive them; and in the bay-window they discovered a large telescope which the little old lady said she had borrowed from a neighbor whose rooms were unlet. Yolande managed everything—Jane being a helpless kind of creature; and the mother submitted, occasionally with a touch of amusement appearing in her manner. But usually she was rather sad; and her eyes had an absent look in them.

That same afternoon they went for a drive along some of the inland country lanes; and as they soon found that the stolid, fat, and placid pony could safely be left under the charge of Jane, they got out whenever they had a mind, to look at an old church or to explore banks and hedge rows, in search of wild flowers. Now, this idle strolling, with occasional scrambling across ditches, was light enough work for one who was accustomed to climb the hills of Allt-nam-ba; but no doubt it was fatiguing enough to this poor woman, who, nevertheless, did her very best to prove herself a cheerful companion. But it was on this fatiguing that Yolande reckoned. That was why she wanted her mother to be out all day in the sea air and the country air. What she was aiming at was a certainty of sleep for this invalid of whom she was in charge. And so she cheered her on to further exertion; and pretended an eagerness in this search for wild flowers, which was not very real (for ever in the midst of it, some stray plant here or there would remind her of a herbarium far away and of other days and other scenes); until at last she thought they had both done their duty; and so they got into the little carriage again and drove back to Worthing.

That evening at dinner she amused her mother with a long and minute account of the voyage to Egypt, and of the friends who had gone with them, and of the life on board the dahabeeah. The mother seemed peculiarly interested about Mr. Leslie; and asked many questions about him, and Yolande told her frankly how pleasant and agreeable a young fellow he was, and how well he and his sister seemed to understand each other, and so forth. She betrayed no embarrassment in expressing her liking for him; although, in truth, she spoke in pretty much the same terms of Col. Graham.

"Mr. Leslie was not married, then?"

"Oh, no."

"It was rather a dangerous situation

for two young people," the mother said, with a gentle smile. "It is a wonder you are not wearing a ring now."

"What ring?" Yolande said, with a quick flush of color.

"An engagement ring."

In fact, the girl was not wearing an engagement ring. On coming to London she had taken it off and put it away; other duties claimed her now—that was what she said to herself. And now she was content that her mother should remain in ignorance of that portion of her past history.

"I have other things to attend to," she said, briefly, and the subject was not continued.

That day passed very successfully. The mother had shown not the slightest symptom of any craving for either stimulant or narcotic; nor any growing depression in consequence of being deprived of these—though Jack Melville had warned Yolande that both were probable. No; the languor from which she suffered appeared to be merely the languor of ill health, and, so far from becoming more depressed, she had rather become more cheerful—especially when they were wandering along the lanes in search of wild flowers. Moreover, when she went to bed she very speedily fell into a sound, quiet sleep. Yolande lay awake, watching her; but everything seemed right; and so by and by the girl's mind began to wander away to distant scenes and to pictures that she had been trying to banish from her eyes.

And if sometimes in this hushed room she cried silently to herself, and hid her face in the pillow so that no sob should awaken the sleeping mother? Well, perhaps that was only a natural reaction. The strain of all that forced cheerfulness had been terrible. Once or twice during the evening she had had to speak of the Highlands; and the effort on such occasions to shut out certain recollections and vain regrets and self-abasements was of itself a hard thing. And now that the strain was over, her imagination ran riot; all the old life up there, with its wonder and delight and its unknown pitfalls, came back to her.

What was there but a woman's tears and a lifelong regret? That was a sad night. It was not the mother, it was the daughter, who passed the long sleepless hours in suffering. But with the morning Yolande had pulled herself together again. She was only a little pale—that was all. She was as cheerful, as brave, as high spirited as ever. When did the band play?—they would walk out on the pier. But even Jane could see that this was not the Yolande who had lived at Allt-nam-ba—with a kind of sunlight always on her face; and she wondered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Another two days passed, Yolande doing her best to make the time go by briskly and pleasantly. They walked on the promenade or the pier; they drove away inland, through quaint little villages and quiet lanes; when the weather was wet they stayed indoors, and she read to her mother; or they rigged up the big telescope in the bay window, to follow the slow progress of the distant ships. And the strange thing was that as Yolande gradually perceived, her mother's intellect seemed to grow clearer and clearer while her spirits grew more depressed.

"I have been in a dream—I have been in a dream," she used to say. "I will try not to go back. Yolande, you must help me. You must give me your hand."

"You have been ill, mother; the sea air will make you strong again," the girl said, making no reference to other matters.

However, that studied silence did not last. On the evening of the fifth day of their stay at Worthing, Yolande observed that her mother seemed still more depressed and almost suffering; and she did all she could to distract her attention and amuse her. At last the poor woman said, looking at her daughter in a curious kind of way:

"Yolande, did you notice, when I came away from the house with you, that I went back for a moment into my room?"

"Yes, I remember you did."

"I will tell you now why I went back."

She put her hand into her pocket and drew out a small blue bottle, which she put on the table.

"It was for that," she said, calmly.

A flush of color overspread the hitherto pale features of the girl; it was she who was ashamed and embarrassed; and she said quickly:

"Yes, I understand, mother—I know what it is—but now you will put it away—you do not want it any longer—"

"I am afraid," the mother said, in a low voice. "Sometimes I have tried, until it seemed as if I was dying; and that has brought me to life again. Oh, I hope I shall never touch it again—I want to be with you, walking by your side among other people—and like them—like every one else—"

"And so you shall, mother," Yolande said; and she rose and got hold of the bottle. "I am going to throw this away."

"No, no, Yolande, give it to me," she said, but without any excitement. "It is no use throwing it away. That would make me think of it. I would get more. I could not rest until I had gone to a chemist's and got more—perhaps some time when you were not looking. But when it is there, I feel safe. I can put it away from me."

(To be continued.)

His Only Hope.

"Tell me," queried the easy mark, "what sort of a girl should I propose to?"

"Oh," rejoined the fortune teller, "one who is rich, of course—and foolish."

Rude.

She—I understand you have been making remarks about my singing.

He—You have been misinformed. There is nothing remarkable about it.

GIRL HOMESTEADERS WONT MARRY



About 125 lonely maids on claims of the Rosebud land lottery in South Dakota scorn matrimony. What is more, they are giving hundreds of suitors the mitten each week. There may be no giving and taking marriage in heaven, they admit, but they insist that marriages should be made there. Stoutly they stand out for love and romance and frown upon the marriage of convenience.

Well it is that they do so, otherwise they would have been snapped up long ago by men too lazy to work for a living, incompetent or mere fortune hunters. For each one of these adventurous young women is the owner, in her own right, of many acres of good farm land.

From Bonesteel, S. D., which is the town nearest the Rosebud claims, comes the news that the community is in the throes of palpitating, trembling excitement. The single men are looking religiously neat and clean. Since the arrival of the fair farmers they have lost their taste for drink and shooting things up. They have become orderly citizens, and the authorities are patting themselves on the back every time they think of land lottery and the fine crop of young women it brought.

Apart from the young men of Bonesteel there are hundreds of other men who would like to make a good impression on some of the women. Every evening the one and only train which arrives daily at Bonesteel brings a large bundle of mail for United States Land Commissioner J. D. Keller. About 10 per cent of the letters pertain to legitimate business; the rest of the letters are from men who, having heard that there are a number of women who desire husbands to run their farms, are offering themselves as candidates in the matrimonial market. This has happened because he gave an interview to the newspapers about these young women.

It has been cynically declared that matrimony is to a large extent a matter of money. Anyone looking over a portion of the letters would soon come to the conclusion that the marital state is indeed to be considered only from a financial standpoint.

From the southern borders of New Mexico to the Canadian line, from New York to San Francisco, in half a dozen different languages and in a thousand different styles of spelling, these letters are coming. All of them show very plainly that the writers want to correspond with none except those who own farms.

Most of the letters are misspelled.

TRAIN DISPATCHER AND ANGEL.

Ill health alone terminated the forty-year usefulness of Miss Rebecca Bracken, 60, a Michigan Central train dispatcher, perhaps the only woman in the world who occupied such a trying and responsible position. And her death, which occurred recently, has removed from Niles, Mich., the junction of four divisions, a woman who was admired for her ability and re-



spected as an "angel of the railroad men." Her success was due to her eternal vigilance, and her popularity to tact and the warm-hearted interest she displayed in the welfare of every employe with whom she came into contact. It was no wonder, then, that when a few months ago she was retired on a pension, the conductors and officials gave her a diamond ring and other testimonials of their regard.

"It was during the war when I started railroad work," said Miss

written in pencil and poorly composed. But now and again there comes one which shows that the writer has at least a good education. One or two send references, and one in particular names the Governor of Virginia as his sponsor. Some have money—or say they have—but the greater part of them just modestly declare themselves to be poor, hard-working, honest young men, who have been unable to find a suitable help-mate in their own community and desire a wife and a start in life at the same time.

One man, a resident of Arkansas, writes that he wants a wife from the lucky number, not from any mercenary motive, but "becos the Arkansas gulls ain't wuth shucks." He then goes on to devote a paragraph or two on the peculiarities of the girls in that State, and advises Mr. Keller not to marry a girl from Arkansas.

Another man in a small town in California wishes to be as businesslike as possible and makes use of a typewriter. His letter reads as follows: "Der Sur.

"I HAVE HEARD that YOU hav Sum gurls you Want too get married so I thoO I WouLD rite too YOU to tell WuN THAT I will Have her. I'm 35 (thurTyFive) years ols AND a Hard wurker. PLease rite Quick."

The girls themselves seemed to be taking all this as a matter of course. They seemed to be properly impressed with the fact that a good farm in their own right considerably enhances their charms.

With their coming the old regime in Bonesteel has been completely eliminated. What was a typical, old-time frontier town—lawless, fearing neither the Almighty nor the marshal—is now changed to a law-abiding, rather gay community. And the change has been caused by the influx of these women.

Many of the men who drew claims are single, but they are practically out of the matrimonial market, so far as these women are concerned. The law provides that should any of the women drawing claims marry any of the men who have claims only one of the two can retain a claim. With the prospect of losing their claims before them, those who are so much sought after elsewhere are merely women, the same as thousands of others, to these men. Besides, it is hard to find one of these men who has not a photograph of the one and only girl hanging up somewhere in the little frame shack.

Bracken, in discussing it some months before her demise. "I think it must have been in 1893. A girl friend came to our house to get me to accompany her in a walk to the depot. A soldier train was going through Niles that day and the girl had a soldier friend upon that train. We were waiting in a jam of people and Mrs. Leonard Abrams, wife of the depot operator, asked us to take seats in the telegraph office. It was the days of 'paper operators.' Well, Mrs. Abrams was helping her husband and as I saw her sending a message my thoughts of the soldier boys fled and I was entranced with what Mrs. Abrams was doing. 'If she can do that, I can,' I said to myself. Not many days after, having gained the consent of my parents, I asked Mrs. Abrams to have her husband take me as a student. He wrote to M. B. Woodford of Kalamazoo, superintendent of telegraph, for his consent, and I soon was working. I was fascinated with the work and my liking for it increased rather than diminished during all these years. The busier I was, the better I liked it."

It is said that the office had no mark against her in all the forty years of service for the Michigan Central, an unprecedented record. Miss Bracken bore the reputation of having more knowledge of time cards and how trains ought to move in relation to one another in passing Niles than any employe or official on the road. No wreck was ever traceable to carelessness or error on the part of Miss Bracken.

Ever notice that it seems to be a sacred tradition to paint every little church and school house in the country white?