

LOST AT THE BRIDAL HOUR.

From New York Weekly: CHAPTER III.

And at early dawn, and while Marcella still slept, he dispatched his servant for a trustworthy woman—a sort of half servant, who came at intervals to the poet's home to look over his wardrobe, to see that his clothing was in good keeping.

The poet had conceived the fancy to set apart a certain part of his house, where he could place the poor, demented creature—providing he could find a suitable person as nurse—and this he had no difficulty in doing, in the person he has sent for; for Mrs. Webster was a poor widow, and as he offered her a handsome income, she very readily undertook the charge.

When Marcella awoke, she was for several hours apparently perfectly sane, and during the interval she gave her lover such information as he desired, and he learned that she had been kept a prisoner all of these long dreary years within a few leagues of his home; under the care of the old gipsy, who had been instrumental in her abduction.

When Clarendon very gently and cautiously questioned her in regard to the poniard, she could only remember that she had snatched it from the hand of Randall as he had raised it in his hand in the act of stabbing her, after which she remembered no more until she found herself in the open air; then she recollected that the old hag had told her that Clarendon was living at the Brainbridge cottage, and she also remembered having found a pencil and scrap of paper one day; she had hastily scribbled her name and thrust it into the bosom of her dress, with a faint hope that she might get it to him; and putting her hand to her bosom, where she had deposited it, and finding it safe she wandered on, making inquiry of a boy she had met, for the cottage, who had kindly given her the right directions.

She then was able to direct the poet so that he was able to find the gipsy's hut. The old hag had fled. But, as he anticipated, there lay the dead body of Richard Randall, with a deep wound over the region of his heart, which had evidently been made with a sharp pointed instrument, and which had doubtless been the cause of his death.

The poet had taken the precaution to secure the attendance of an officer on his tour of investigation, who took possession of the body.

An inquest being held, Clarendon gave his testimony, and then it was for the first time that the people of Brainbridge learned anything of the poet's history.

The best medical authority in London was brought down to prove the sanity or insanity of the unhappy woman, whom they pronounced insane, and entirely irresponsible for what had happened.

Five years had passed, during which time the maniac had received the best medical aid that England could produce, which had not been in vain; for the past year she had been apparently perfectly sane, and now the physicians pronounced her entirely rid of the malady.

Clarendon, who had watched over and protected her all through this long period, as he would have done by a dear sister, only learned to love

her more dearly, from the fact of her terrible sufferings, and now determined to make her his wife. And accordingly on the fifth anniversary of that autumnal night, there was a quiet wedding at the poet's cottage, and dear, good, kind Mrs. Webster, whom Marcella had learned to love next to her husband was installed as housekeeper.

And now we leave them in full possession of their wealth, and the happiness which was so suddenly snatched from them in youth, now fully restored to them in middle life; and we pray that Heaven's choicest blessings may ever rest upon them.

What Might have been Expected.

BY MARY A. WHITE.

"Now, father, tell us all the news."

Mrs. Merriman had filled the old farmer's pipe, had given him his favorite seat by the fire, for the evenings were growing chilly, and was bustling around the comfortable, roomy kitchen, preparing supper. A market-day supper was a serious business, for Lucy Merriman and her mother took a "snack" on that day instead of the customary noonday meal, and substantial food was reserved for the hearty supper "father" relished so well after his long drive from town.

It was another time-honored custom for the farmer, in the interval while his wife and pretty daughter prepared supper, to tell them all the gossip he had heard in town, the prices obtained for his chickens butter and eggs, and the purchases to be unrolled after supper should be over.

But on this especial evening, the farmer, instead of putting down his pipe and clearing his throat for a long talk, glanced anxiously at his only child, his Lucy, the pride and darling of his old heart. She was very pretty, with blue eyes and brown hair, and a very tender smile; but she had lost something in the past three months of the bloom and brightness that had been her great charm. She looked pale and not altogether happy, as she drew out the table and spread the cloth for supper.

"I was right," thought the old farmer, "and yet I hate to tell her. She has never been the same girl since he left."

"Why, father," Mrs. Merriman said, you look as solemn as if you had had bad news. Ain't lost nothin' have you?"

"No—no. I got your calico all right, Jane, and the groceries, but—well, it don't exactly concern us now, but, the fact is, I did hear some disagreeable news to-day."

Then he paused again, wondering at his own reluctance to impart the tidings.

But Lucy had drawn near the arm chair, her face white as snow.

"Don't concern us now?" she said, "Is it news about Henry Newton?"

"Well, well, women folks are master hands at guessing," said the farmer. "You thought your old father was very cruel when he would not let you marry that fine city chap who was turning all the girls' heads?"

"You—you are never cruel, father. You always meant to be kind—but—but—what have you heard?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

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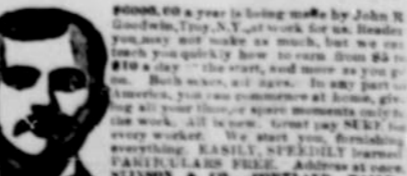
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G. A. TUPPER, Proprietor Occidental Hotel, Santa Rosa, Cal.

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1891. Harper's Magazine ILLUSTRATED

The Impresario. America, by Theodore Child, in Harper's Magazine during the year 1891. The articles on Florida, by Charles Lindley, will be continued. Among other attractions will be a novel by Craddock; a collection of original W. M. Thackeray, now published in a novel written and illustrated by Maurier; a novellette by Howell; and a series of papers London by Walter Besant.

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