

FETTERED BY FATE

BY ALEXANDER ROBERTSON

"Jollette's Fate," "Little Sweetheart," "Lottie, the Sewing Girl," "Goldmaker of Lisbon," "Wedded to Win," "Diana Thorne," "Nora's Legacy," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

He had mentioned to the widow the fact that the adventurer's hand had been branded when he was sent to Siberia, so that he was now compelled to always wear a glove, but this did not seem so singular to the lady, for the fact remained that every time she had met Roger Darrel he had gloves on; so she did not think it worth while to mention this part of the story to Carol, seeing that it confirmed the detective's ideas rather than disputed them.

Though she had only seen Roger a few times she had been wonderfully impressed by his manner and looks, and she had made up her mind that if these terrible charges against him proved true she would never trust a man again.

Poor broken-hearted Carol wandered out each day, waiting for that dread interview which was sure to come, and yet which seemed unaccountably delayed.

At the very time when these ideas were passing in review through the wearied and troubled brain of Carol Richmond, the object of her thoughts, poor Roger Darrel, was pacing his library like a caged animal, growling now and then and showing every evidence of distress and despair.

Try as he would, he found it impossible to think of Carol without allowing his mind to dwell on love, and he was nearly frantic with the continued fight he had gone through.

He had promised to be a friend to the girl he loved, and though this was easy to say when it came to attempting it he found he had before him the most difficult task of his life.

The detective gained in strength so rapidly that in a few days more he hoped to leave those who had stood so nobly by him, and start upon his trail of vengeance.

Though Roger Darrel had not yet made his appearance since the time of his separation from Carol, the widow knew he would soon come, and hence she was continually on the lookout for him. She had promised her child not to say anything to him, leaving the whole matter to her.

He came at last. The day was a lovely one, with the birds singing among the trees, and all nature looked beautiful.

Up the forest aisle came Roger, heading straight for the old mill. His face was pale and set, as though he had conquered in his battle, and yet none knew better than he how weak human nature was when the hour of temptation came.

The little lady saw him coming, and while she spoke to him pleasantly her eyes were watching his face. She saw the traces of anguish there, such as never rested upon the countenance of guilt, and when he had gone to seek Carol, after her directions, she gave utterance to her thoughts aloud:

"If that is the face of guilt, then my judgment of character is at fault. Place Roger Darrel before me and I should have declared him the most honorable of men, noble and generous. Yet how the man betrays his looks. If all is true, then a greater villain never went unhung. My Heaven give my dear girl the strength to do what is right, no matter what the pain may be."

She had no idea of what was in store for her while thus thinking of her child, and yet a crisis in her own affairs was rapidly approaching.

Although she could not comprehend in full what the temptation would be, yet she knew Carol must suffer, and her heart went out to her poor child, upon whom Heaven had apparently frowned so early. Had it been possible, she would have liked so much to have been with Carol during this trial, but the girl would not hear of it, and the little lady's heart told her also that it was best not to.

In the midst of her thoughts the lady was startled by a loud, authoritative rap upon the door and, somewhat confused, she hastily answered the summons.

When she opened the door she uttered a low, almost inaudible cry, and would have fallen but for the support her hold afforded her.

The curtain of fifteen years had been swept aside by the hand of fate, and those two who had loved and parted in the past were now brought together over the grave of their only child's hopes.

Face to face stood Lawrence Richmond and the wife whom he had not once seen since that bitter parting.

CHAPTER XV.

Something within seemed to tell Carol that the meeting she had looked forward to with such aversion, and yet at the same time a strange eagerness, as though anxious to have it over with, was about to take place that day.

When she left the mill she wended her way slowly through the forest to a favorite spot of hers, and, reaching it, sat down at the base of a huge elm tree. It was the summit of quite an elevation and the view on either hand was perfectly grand, embracing, as it did, so many vistas where openings occurred through which the eye ranged far away to the river, and to a still greater elevation.

Alone with her thoughts she was accustomed to seeking this spot, and it seemed as if her very surroundings gave her comfort, yet nothing could ease the terrible pain that tugged at her heart-strings.

She held a book in her hand, but it did not occupy her attention, for her gaze was far away, and her mind evidently upon the one subject nearest her heart.

Thus she sat when the eager eyes of an approaching man fell upon her, and the spectacle brought him to a sudden pause. There was that in her attitude that brought most vividly to his mind their first meeting, when she sat by the brook, watching the gambols of the little dog, and as he gazed Roger stifled a groan of despair.

When she knew that it was Roger who was drawing near, Carol's face whitened until it resembled the driven snow, while her partly teeth seemed to penetrate the scarlet lips, and from her eyes there gleamed a strong light, such as may be seen in the orbs of a poor hunted deer, brought to bay and turning upon his hunters.

When Roger had come close to her she

turned her face and looked at him. He could not help giving an exclamation.

"Good heaven! Carol, what is the matter with you? Your face is like death, and your eyes shine as with a fever. There is that upon your features that reproaches me, aye, stabs to the heart. For heaven's sake tell me what you intend to say, for something warns me the worst has not yet come. Are we not to be friends, Carol?"

Then she laughed—such a hollow mockery of a laugh. It was no more like the ringing merriment of old than she was like the artless girl whom Roger had met that fateful day.

"You come here and ask me that—you, of all men on earth? Does not your heart reproach you, the heart to which human misery appealed in vain? You tell me I look like death. Well, my heart is dead, and to you belongs the blame. I live, and yet do not live; I breathe the fresh, pure air of heaven, but there is nothing fair in my sight now. A blight rests upon all the earth. When the eye is distorted all objects upon which it falls assume the same phase. So it is with me. Need I say more, sir?"

He stood there, stricken dumb with amazement, aye, with horror. What a terrible crime he must have been guilty of in her sight to call out this from the lips that had never spoken a cross word before. It began to anger him. He had suffered as man could hardly suffer twice in a lifetime, and he counted it as naught. Finally he found his voice, and, in spite of his efforts, it trembled like a tightly strung cord.

"Carol, we stand here face to face. The past, with all its joys and sorrows, lies behind us, the future before, but we live only in the present. Since last we met you have changed wonderfully. Tell me why it is you look with aversion where once you loved."

Something in his voice aroused all the impetuosity of her nature. For the time she forgot how she had loved, did love even then, deep down in her heart, this man who stood before her with bowed head, his arms folded across his chest, and his frank eyes fastened upon her. She only remembered how he had deceived her, and that beneath this proud exterior must beat a heart blacker than sin.

"Where once I loved; you have said it, Roger Darrel. May heaven forgive you for deceiving me as you did," she cried.

"I deceive you, Carol?" he echoed.

"Those were my words, sir. I will put them stronger if you wish—basely deceived me. On the very night after you saved me from that wicked wedding, Nora Warner was dragged away by the minions of that wretch of a mad-house doctor, dragged off to misery and rack, pain, and by your orders. Do not attempt to deny it, sir, for I can see the assumed look of innocent surprise on your face. You brought her to a living death, you ruined the life of the gypsy girl, Barbara Merriles, and then, with your face and sweet words, you tried to lure me to destruction."

"What?"

The word burst from him like a pistol shot. As if by magic the cloud was lifted, and he saw into what a terrible mistake the young girl had fallen. His eyes were opened to the truth, but it only served to make his blood flow more rapidly with indignation and anger.

"For whom do you take me?" he asked coldly.

"You yourself declared that you were Roger Darrel, and Roger Darrel is the man who sent his wife to the asylum to be made mad. Surely the curse of heaven must follow that man forever; surely the cries of his victims must ascend on high and reach the great white throne. For myself, I forgive you freely, because I love—have loved you in the past, but in the name of those whom you have wronged in the past I could almost ask heaven to crush you, broken-hearted as I am."

"Save your pardon for those who ask it, Miss Richmond. As for me, I do not seek it. Looking back upon my past life, I do not see an event for which I may have occasion to blush. As for these things of which you accuse me, the day will come when you will realize what a terrible mistake you have made, and you will cry out to heaven to cover your head. I am a proud man, and from no other lips than yours would I hear such words. You have now gone too far. Some day shortly I will seek you to show you the proofs of my innocence; seek you to prove all that I ever claimed to be; seek you to show that it was the taint on my family name I feared, not because I had ever done ought that could bring disgrace upon myself or the one I loved, and having done this, I will throw your love from me like a tattered glove, for it was false—false."

She uttered a low, piteous cry and held out her hands for him to stop, but he went on mercilessly, for she had roused the lion.

"Once you told me your love was as durable as the rocks of the cliff; that through good and evil report you would trust in me until my lips sounded your death blow. How has it come out? At the first breath of suspicion, your love shudders and shrivels up, turning to loathing. If that is your priceless love, then heaven help the next man upon whom you bestow it. I am going, Miss Richmond. What! are you still dumb? We shall meet once more, and when you see me as the man I am, and not in the guise of a villain who chances to belong to my family and wears my name, then perhaps you will deign to offer me your forgiveness."

With these last bitter words, he wheeled. One flash from his eyes and he had gone—gone from her in hot anger; gone to collect the proof that was to overwhelm her, while she sat there, and bowing her head, wept bitter tears, for the spell was again upon her, and she would have believed him innocent of those awful sins even should the whole world accuse him.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the Potomac!

"The princely home" provided for his mad wife by Captain Grant—otherwise

the insane asylum of Dr. Grim, stood upon the left bank of the river, and close to the descent by which the water could be reached.

It was not a picturesque building. There was a something dark and forbidding about its exterior that seemed to speak in thunder tones of the secrets it contained. A gloomy pile of masonry, with small iron-barred windows, and surrounded by a high wall—there it stood, a curse upon the face of nature.

In one of the little cell-like rooms was Nora Warner. They had brought her back senseless, and when she awoke to life once more it was to find herself within the confines of the hated asylum where she had already spent so many months of weary agony.

Up to this time Doctor Grim had not been very particular about inflicting any of the tortures of the place upon her, for his orders had principally been to hold her a prisoner. If she went insane, overcome by the horrors that surrounded her, well and good—in fact, so much the better—but so long as he received his pay and the Captain was satisfied, the Doctor did not waste his time in dealing severely with Nora Warner when he had his hands full at any rate.

Every now and then new patients arrived at the asylum, which was always full, and it might be noticed that just preceding each new arrival, a corpse was carried out of the back door. There was nothing secret about this matter of burial, and the people living in the vicinity had little idea of the hotbed of iniquity they were fostering in their midst.

It seems they had not given Nora Warner credit for the sagacity she possessed. She had escaped from the house and fate had assisted to throw them off their guard by sending the poor girl with whom Nora had exchanged her shawl and hat, to her death in the river.

The Doctor was enraged when he returned home, though he did not show it. Indeed, the more furious his anger as a general rule, the more smiling became his face, but there was death in that smile.

He realized that by the escape of Nora Warner his institution had been placed in very great danger, for had she gone to the proper authorities they would have adjudged her perfectly sane and then believed her story, which would have meant ruin, financially, to him. He trembled with fear and anger whenever he thought of the narrow escape he had had, and inwardly swore that it should never occur again.

Nora Warner was the first sane person to escape from the walls of his domain, and she should be the last. Before a month went by he would cause her to lose her reason, and then if she should manage to get out, her talk would be an incoherent jumble of nonsense.

From the glowing description of the mad-house doctor of the "princely home" he provided for his poor patients, one could imagine much that was pleasant, from padded cells to elegant furniture and Brussels carpet.

The cell of Nora Warner was a fair sample of those in the institution, with the exception of a few comfortable ones that were occupied by those whose relatives really cared for them, and who had not suspected what a den they were sending the poor unfortunates to.

With the exception of a small iron cot, fastened to the floor, and a chair, secured in the same way, the cell was entirely destitute of furniture. The walls were damp and cold, and from the barred window one could look down into the grounds of the asylum.

Beyond the great stone wall the prisoner could see the waters of the Potomac glistening in the afternoon sun, as she stood there one day, her white hands crossed, and a strange look upon her face.

(To be continued.)

Packing a Picnic Dinner.

Whether the outing be for a day or a month, the lunch is of the most importance, and the question is, "How can it be taken the easiest?" Into a basket which must be brought back, or in boxes, which of course can be thrown away. Of course, the basket looks the better, and it is the proper thing if some one is willing to shoulder the burden, and for this purpose there are the most attractive ones imaginable for sale in the shops.

However, if it is to be a railroad lunch, the box idea is recommended. A big pasteboard one—the kind one's dresses come home in—may be filled with innumerable small boxes and jars. Tin cracker-boxes for all kinds of moist things—such as chicken, beef, or ham cut in slices—small baking powder and spice boxes, or the little tin half-pound boxes druggists use, may be used for mayonnaise dressing, sandwich-fillings, soft cheese mixtures, sweet pickles, marmalades, and jellies; even butter is better carried in a box, to be spread with a silver knife when needed. Small pasteboard boxes will do for bread and cake and even pie. Of course, all these boxes must be lined with paraffin paper, their covers neatly tied on and labeled, so that the unpacker will not serve dessert first—Woman's Home Companion.

A Weak Defense.

Mrs. Newed—I baked some bread this morning and placed it in the window to cool and a man snatched up a loaf of it and started to run away, but a policeman caught him.

Newed—Was he taken to jail?

Mrs. Newed—No. The poor fellow said he was starving, so I gave him the bread and told the policeman to let him go.

Newed—You have been imposed upon, my dear. That man wasn't starving.

Mrs. Newed—How do you know?

Newed—Because a starving man would never have the strength to run away with a loaf of your bread.

Double.

"What's the matter with Jones?"

"Why?"

"He goes along as abstractedly as though he were drunk and were seeing double."

"He is. They have twins at his home."

The authorities at Minden, Germany, have made a bacteriological examination of school larks. They have found that most of them contain bacteria, which, if animals are inoculated with them, often prove fatal.

THE PASSING YEAR.

Across the shadows of the night
There came to me an expectant ear
The twelve deep notes that tell the flight
Of yet another passing year.
Its limits reached; its work is done.
Its record sealed and sent on high,
Unknown to all and seen by none
Except God's own all-seeing eye.

Ah, me! those years, those vanished years,
In memory, but beyond recall,
How filled with foolish doubts and fears,
How stained with sin and blotted all!
What can we ask of thee but grace
To make these failures of the past
The beacon lights by which to trace
Our way to thee, O Christ, at last!

Farewell, Old Year! There have been days
Of grief and ill—so, too, of good;
And for them both we give God praise,
Though at the time misunderstood.
His wisdom measures all our needs;
He knows the weakness of our frame;
His love our highest thought exceeds;
He calls us by his own dear name.

So pass the years in solemn state
Beyond our ken; we count the sun;
They come and go, we watch and wait
Until our own set time shall come.
God of the years, from out whose hand,
With all our precious gifts, they come,
Give us the grace to understand,
And make them help to lead us home!
—Christian Work.

AN OLD MAN'S FIRST CHRISTMAS.

BY HOPE DARING.

YES, I will do it. It's the only way I can be sure of making a fair profit next year. My workmen must understand that I run the mill to put money in my own pocket."

There was an ugly frown on Gilbert Bentley's brow as he sat in his shabby little study, communing with himself. He was a small, stooping man of 65, with searching blue eyes, and a cold, forbidding expression.

"I'll do it at once. One week from to-morrow I'll announce a cut of ten per

cent on all wages. One week—that will be the twenty-fifth. Why, that will be Christmas, and the men must have a holiday, Christmas! As if that old superstition made any difference with the world to-day!"

The frown on his brow deepened. He leaned back, staring from a window. He could see the long, low buildings of the Bentley Lumber Company. In the background was the leafless forest. The sun was setting and the sky, above the tree tops, was tinged with a rosy glow.

Gilbert Bentley had spent ten years in that lumbering village. In that time he had doubled his capital. Now, owing to a general depression, his profits were small. To continue his business through the winter would mean very little profit, but doubtless the spring would bring a change. Well, he would not wait for spring.

Money had always been Gilbert Bentley's god. He had begun life a poor boy and had worked his way upward, unaided. His life had been too busy for sentiment. To be sure he had married. His wife lived only a few years. There was a child. Harold had grown up, high spirited and proud. In early manhood he married against his father's wishes. Estrangement had followed. Harold and his wife died within a few months of each other, leaving a little daughter. Pride prompted Mr. Bentley to pay the girl's bills at a good school, but he never saw her.

The door bell rang and there was the

sound of footsteps and voices in the hall. The door of the study was thrown open, and a sweet voice cried:

"Grandpa, are you here?"

Before Mr. Bentley could speak, Simpson, his old English housekeeper, entered. In one hand she held aloft a lighted lamp, thus showing Gilbert Bentley his unexpected visitor. She was a slender girl of sixteen, a dimpled, blonde face lighted by sunny blue eyes.

"Why, don't you know me? I am Florence, and I am glad—so glad—to see you!"

She was at his side, both arms round his neck, and her lips uplifted for his kiss. As in a dream he listened as she told how she had grown tired of spending her vacations at the school.

"You know, grandpa, that it is dreadful to have no one of your very own to be glad with, and I've come to spend Christmas with you."

The girl was so sure that her grandfather was glad to see her that he could not tell her she was unwelcome. An hour later they sat at dinner. The old man looked across to where the girl's golden head gleamed in the lamp.

She chatted gayly. When they rose from the table she went with him to the study. Sitting on a stool, she told him of her school life.

"I am happy there, grandpa, but I will be glad when school is finished. Then I can keep house for you. It has been so kind in you to do without me so I could be educated."

He made no response. They parted without the words being said that would send Florence back to school. Mr. Bentley resolved to say them at breakfast the next morning. There he found himself confronted by that smiling face, and was obliged to hold his peace.

Florence stayed. Simpson, the maid, and the man all delighted to serve her. A few simple changes were made in the dreary old house. Mr. Bentley chose some new furniture. He ordered that good fires should be kept up and bade

stood open. He noted the vase of scarlet carnations, ordered from the city, in the center of the table. Upon a quaint old sideboard was a basket of oranges and pale green grapes and a plate of the nuts over which Florence loved to linger while he drank his coffee.

The old man's face softened. He sat down before the fire. He was so engrossed in thought that he did not hear Florence enter.

"You precious grandpa!" Again her arms were round his neck. "I found your gift, and I thank you a thousand times. But grandpa, I want to ask you for something more. It is a part in your work I want you to give me. And I want to give you my help—myself. It is a wonderful position you hold—so much wealth and so many people whom you can help. On this best of all nights—the birth night of our dear Savior, let us give ourselves anew to the work you have been doing alone."

"Little girl, you don't understand. I have not been what you think I have, and—"

Her dimpled hand closed his lips. "You are not to malign my dear grandfather. We will work together, will we not?"

"Yes, dear."

In those two words the old man renounced his greed and selfishness. On the morrow his workmen should receive, not a reduction of their wages, but an assurance of his good-will and interest in them. For this child's sake he would learn to know and do his duty.

"It will be our first Christmas together," Florence said dreamily, her cheek pressed against his.

"Yes, little girl. It will really be my first, my very first, Christmas."—Home Monthly.

The Porto Rican Christmas.

Christmas in Porto Rico is a church festival of much importance and the celebration of it is made up chiefly of religious ceremonies intended to commemorate the principal events in the life of

WAITING FOR SANTA CLAUS.



Simpson see that the table was well spread.

Gilbert Bentley was powerless. Florence would think the best of him. She would think that he loved her and was glad to have her there. She would believe that he shared her own love for humanity and her reverent trust in God.

She went with him to the mill and through the village. There her mistaken idea of his character showed in a strong light. Many of his workmen were living in poverty. She knew he was doing all he could for them, but was there not some way she could help? What was he going to do for the men and for the churches of the town for Christmas? Then they must remember the little children.

Christmas Eve came. Mr. Bentley had shamelessly ordered Simpson to provide a "regular Christmas dinner." He had never made a Christmas gift in his life, but now—well, Florence meant as much to him as it did to her.

He was thinking of this as he walked home that evening. It was snowing, and the wind buffeted him as he mounted the slope. The next day the mill must stand idle, but on the following morning the men should be notified of the reduction in their wages. How angry they would be! Gilbert Bentley's lips closed in a firm, cruel line. He had looked out for himself; others must do the same.

He reached the house. As he passed through the hall the dining room door

the Savior. Beginning with the celebration of His birth at Christmas time, the feast days follow one another in rapid succession. Indeed, it may justly be said that they do not really come to an end until Easter.

Sudden and Surprising.

"What do you most desire for Christmas, Miss Mabel?"

"Oh, George, this is so sudden!"

"Wh—what do you mean?"

"Why, of course, I want you?"

Very Easy.

Pat—Why is th' owd year looks a whet towel, Nora, darlint?

Nora—Why?

Pat—Because they always ring it out.

