

L. M. GRIST'S SONS, Publishers.

ESTABLISHED 1855.

HERON'S WIFE.

By ETTA W. PIERCE.

CHAPTER XVI.

Hazel Speaks Again.

Another day, and yet another passed. Miss Carbury received no tidings of my lost papers. Colonel Pitt Rivers had not as yet returned to Wolfenden, but was expected hourly. A new servant was appointed to watch at night with our faithful Martin, but as Sir Griffin Hopewood found him stretched dead drunk on a garden seat, before twelve o'clock had struck, we felt no additional security from his presence.

"A singular epidemic," said the professor. "And, indeed, news of small thefts all about us, and rumors of larger ones, filled the air. A general uneasiness prevailed in the big country houses along the river. Sir Griffin still hiding his passion under the mask of civility, watched me with anxious eyes.

"My darling," he whispered, stealing into the recess of a window, where I had taken refuge from the after-dinner small talk that was going on in the Wolfenden drawing room, "how pale you look, how sad! One would think some enormous burden was pressing on your spirits. Can it be that you are frightened with all this trumpery talk of thefts and robbers?"

"No, no," I stammered, "it is not that." "What then?" he urged, slipping an arm about me, in the shadow of the curtain, and straining me to his strong side. "I do not like to see this shadow on your beauty. I hardly know your great arch eyes, your witching red mouth in this gloom of sadness."

"You think too much of my beauty," I said, half in jest, half in earnest. "How can that be?" he answered in good natured amazement. "It is a part of yourself."

"Yes, but will it hold you to your allegiance when—when—the truth shall be told?" I gasped, incoherently. Then my face dropped against his sleeve, and a sob shook me.

"What do you mean, love?" murmured my lover, in sore distress. "Are you fretting because our engagement has been made in secret?—does that trouble you, pet? For my soul, I shall rejoice when Rivers comes back, and everybody at Wolfenden knows that you are to be my wife. Rest assured, your beauty is sufficient for anything. Hazel—it will hold me like prison-fetters, forever. Why may I not love you for your sweet eyes, for the lustre in your hair?—gathering a mass of crushed cheek and throat? What is all this fuss and a fussiness but a garment of gauze which I see your soul as the outlines of your body are visible through the dress you wear?"

I felt a strange relief in this foolish talk. He had no suspicion of the thoughts in my heart. The moment of confession could not be far distant; but for any respite, however brief, I was thankful.

Another besides Sir Griffin had observed my tell-tale looks. That night she came sliding into my chamber, like a lovely ghost—her long, white gown spread out behind her like a fan, and dropping into a seat, she extended to me her bare, shining arms.

"Confession is good for the soul, Hazel," she said. "I have not been so selfish in these past few days—so absorbed in my own affairs—that I could not see you were suffering. Now, out with it, dear!—tell me everything. I walk in the soft rug at her feet, and buried my face in her lap. I could not withstand her searching, loving gaze—I could no longer conceal from her my troubles. Whatever came, I must tell her; and then and there I did tell her everything that the reader already knows.

After my story, silence fell. Her shining white arms held me in a close embrace—her cheek pressed my hair. She was shivering unaccountably. "Oh, you poor darling!" she said, at last. "It is dreadful!—dreadful! I want you to be happy—you must be happy! Why should you suffer for your father's sins? We do not know Sir Griffin very well. I fear, nor can we comprehend the full height and depth of his pride. I am wicked enough to suggest that you remain silent concerning your family history. The baronet loves you for yourself alone. Keep your secret, Hazel—keep it all ways!"

"That it is no longer my secret," I shuddered. "You forgot that it has left my keeping, Sergio. My mother's letter is lost—I know not into whose hands it may have fallen. No, no! the whole truth must be told, but how can I find courage to tell it?"

"She fell to comforting me with sisterly tenderness. We went to sleep in each other's arms, as in the old days at school. Whatever evil might overwhelm me, in Sergio I possessed a friend who would never desert me. The following day to lunch at a neighboring villa, occupied by a retired banker named Talcott, who was on very friendly terms with Colonel Rivers.

Hopewood's ring was still on my hand; I fumbled weakly at it, but could not draw it off. As the victim waits for the ax of the executioner, as Damiani waited for his awful death-day, I sat there, shuddering speechless, almost breathless.

Suddenly he turned about, he was coming back!—his step had a swift, determined ring on the gravel. He knelt at my side. With a groan he buried his face in the folds of my dress. "Love! Love! You have conquered!" he panted.

"Hear it all!" I urged, wildly. "I have no right to the name of Ferrers— that belonged to my mother, before she fled with my wicked father; and the rich, distinguished judge, of whom you have heard, has never acknowledged me as his granddaughter. The blood of a felon contaminates the Ferrers stream. My real name—"

"Stop!" he implored; "for God's sake, tell me nothing more! Oh, my darling, I do not deny that I am shocked, horrified—that if I obeyed the voice of prudence and judgment, I should fly from you; but my heart clamors for love, for love! You know what have you done to me? Give you up? Impossible! I care not who or what you are! I can well afford to sacrifice pride, prejudice, even reason, if I may have you!"

"This, after days and nights of doubt, fear, despair! Joy does not kill—otherwise, I could not have looked into the bonny blue eyes which he raised to mine, and lived; for by the passion she showed he held out one hand to still loved me—that, in spite of the still made, my happiness was yet secure.

"I shall carry you far away," he said, "where your story will never be known. My name will shield and protect you. We will forget any shadow that may hang about your past—we will never speak again of your birth or your people—we will allow no sins, either of the dead or the living, to come between us. God! as well as my heart, I have sworn to renounce your name! I have set up my idol, and I must worship it!"

He spoke in a wild, fevered way, as though, in answer to some protesting voice within himself. And as he knelt there, clasping me in his strong arms, his uplifted face all pale and agitated, a shadow fell upon us both. We looked, and lo! not three yards distant, in the Chestnut Walk, regarding us blankly, breathlessly, stood Colonel Rivers and Sergio Pole.

A frown darkened the colonel's bearded face. With contracted brows, he advanced a step toward Sir Griffin. The latter leaped to his feet.

"Thank heaven! You are here at last, Rivers!" he cried. "Wish me joy! Miss Ferrers has consented to become my wife! I have been waiting only for your return, to make our engagement public.

Sergio uttered a little cry. The thunderous roar lifted from the colonel's face—with his own frank, genial smile he held out one hand to the baronet, the other to me.

"My dear Sir Griffin, accept my warmest congratulations!" he cried. "I always knew you to be a person of excellent taste. Who could have dreamed that our demure little Hazel would capture a prize, for which older and wiser women have long been plotting?" He pinched my cheek in a teasing way. "Like Tennyson's young man, Sir Griffin believes that."

"A simple maiden in her flower, with a worth in a hundred coats of arms." Eh, dear fellow?"

"You cannot doubt, Rivers," answered the baronet, in a simple, earnest way, "that I love Miss Ferrers most deeply and disinterestedly. I wish to marry at an early day, and I sail for England in the autumn. As you know, Hazel has no relatives, no friends, to consult save yourself and my brother. He seemed to stand me between me and my future—a man whom any woman might love—rich, titled, generous. At that moment I adored him! Sergio's eyes grew moist and bright with approval. She knew the full height and depth of the sacrifice he was making, and she put her hand to him with a dazzling smile.

"I, too, congratulate you!" she said. "Hazel is as dear to me as a sister. It will be my pleasure to see you and give all the assistance I can. Do not think, Sir Griffin, that you are to wed a penniless bride. Half of all that I possess shall be hers."

Colonel Rivers looked a little blank, but she turned upon him in a gay, peremptory way.

"Prepare to give me a great deal of money, guardy!" she cried. "I am very rich, so you need not look so dismayed. Hazel's dot must be in proportion to the love I bear her."

"My dear Sergio, how do you think for me. In the Chestnut Walk at Wolfenden, when my lordly lover had first talked to me of love, I sat down on a garden chair and began to trace figures blindly on the gravel with the tip of my parasol. Sir Griffin hurried to my side, his bonny Saxton face full of tender apprehension.

"Leave us alone," I said to Miss Carbury; and she went away with the walk without a word. I turned and looked at my lover.

"My darling," he began, in a troubled voice, "what gave you that sudden turn?"

"The stories," I answered, "as Gwen Talcott said—particularly that one about the scoundrel Langstroth, who robbed the bank. It was very unpleasant, was it not?"

"Abominable!" assented Sir Griffin. "Do not touch me!" I cried, as he suddenly stretched out his arms to gather me to his heart. "Do not look at me! I ought to cry 'Unclean!' like the lepers of old. Here—take back Lady Hopewood's ring!" and I tried to draw it from my hand. "Let no one know that you have stooped to seek me for a wife—that you have disgraced yourself by wooing the daughter of a felon. Yes, it is quite true! Langstroth's accomplice—the man who killed himself in jail to escape punishment—was my father!"

"There was an appalling silence—how long I continued I know not—perhaps one moment, perhaps twenty. My tragic earnestness left no room for doubt or question. I had told the story so far as it needed to be told. Presently he staggered back a step. I heard him walk away down the drive. Lady

know that he is missed from his own fireside," said Mrs. Van Wert. "Dr. Bird detained me beyond my expectations, but all the time my heart was at Wolfenden" with one of those melting glances which had before convinced me that Colonel Pitt Rivers was a confirmed male flirt.

He made haste to present me to the company as the future Lady Hopewood. I was too agitated to remember all that was said, but everybody congratulated me with great kindness. For Miss Carbury's own sake, with amusement, I whispered in my ear: "Why, my dear, whoever would have thought it? What a strange choice for Sir Griffin Hopewood! The whims of men are incomprehensible! All the same, child, I hope from my heart that you may be happy."

I was glad to carry my confusion into a corner, while the other guests surrounded the colonel, and began to relate all that had happened in his absence. With mingled wrath and amazement, he listened to the story of the recent robberies.

"Good heaven!" he cried: "is it possible that the Blackbirds have dared to enter my house and rob my guests? And no person has yet been apprehended for the outrage? Verily, it is time for me to be at Wolfenden again!"

"To me it all seems like a stupendous, practical joke," said Mrs. Van Wert, with an arch look. "Now, now, my dear, has molested me, colonel, though I am sure it is no secret that I have a few choice diamonds with me at Wolfenden. My room is near Miss Carbury's, and about money and jewels I am sadly careless. I cannot imagine why the Blackbirds should have passed me by."

"One would think, Mrs. Van Wert, that you felt quite aggrieved at your escape," Sergio said, laughing.

The colonel, too, looked highly amused. "Not even a Blackbird could find it in his heart to rob you," he murmured. He gazed at the charming widow. He assured Miss Carbury that he would take immediate measures to recover her lost property, and bring the thief to justice.

"My dear colonel," she answered, cheerfully. "I feel more than positive that you will find the rogue, and at once! Now that you are back at Wolfenden, there can be nothing more for any of us to fear."

And indeed, his coming seemed to bring instant security and peace to the house. He joyfully rallied the professor Sir Griffin upon their failure to protect the ladies in his absence, and made us all feel that he was, in truth, the strength and safeguard of Wolfenden. In the importance of his return, even my engagement with Sir Griffin Hopewood dwindled to a merely commonplace event.

"Ladies," he said, as he sat in the midst of his admiring guests, "I have a proposal to make, as an offset to all the disagreeable things that you have in your mind. You know our Black River neighbors have been exceedingly friendly and hospitable—we have received numerous attentions, for which I feel that I must make some suitable return. Now, I propose to give a ball here at Wolfenden, and invite all our new friends on the river, and as many other from town as the place will contain."

"A ball at a country house—oh, delightful!" cried the ladies, in a breath. "A pleasant change from the Blackbirds!"

Everybody fell to discussing the matter. Colonel Rivers crossed the room to a sofa, where Sergio was sitting by my side, and said, in his kindest tone: "I depend upon you to outline all the other lights at my ball, Sergio. Order whatever you will, for Hazel and yourself. Miss Carbury will be only too glad to assist in making you both as pleasantly lovely."

Hopewood, too, turned to me, and said, with great politeness, for Sir Griffin has no manners and town houses, and a rent roll as long as his own pedigree. "To be sure," dropping his voice a little, "he has also an unfortunate weakness for cards and dice, but a wife whom he loves will, doubtless, cure him of that nonsense."

If Sergio had a fault, it was his extreme frankness. "Guardy," she answered, "it is said that you have won large sums from Sir Griffin here at Wolfenden—that you play with him constantly."

He stared, then smiled. "Servants' gossip!" he replied. "Certainly I play with him, since his passion for gaming demands indulgence everywhere and at all times. But, my child, you cannot think that I, his friend and host, would keep my winnings. No, I return them always to his purse."

Luckily, Sir Griffin was talking with Mrs. Van Wert on the other side of the room—out of earshot. What he had heard she had made me hear. He had heard the conversation! I felt a little dismayed at the colonel's revelation of my lover's weakness, and a genuine admiration for Pitt Rivers's amazing kindness. It was not strange that everybody loved and admired the man.

After we had dined that day, the colonel held a court of inquiry in his library, and carefully examined the servants of the house in regard to the robbery. I chanced to pass the open door on my way to the garden, and with the curiosity of my sex, I paused an instant to look in.

Mrs. Steele was stationed by the colonel's chair, her spectacles nicely adjusted to her long, thin nose, her gay puffs all in order. Jael, the waiting maid, evidently much out of temper, stood before the two, undergoing some sharp questioning. Her dark face looked pale and sullen; she kept her eyes fixedly on the floor.

future, for sharp eyes are upon you. That is all—go!"

She went a few steps; then turned about, like lightning, and something whizzed through the air, and stuck in the wall of the library, just behind Mrs. Steele's head.

A pair of scissors, long, bright and sharp as needles. The two murderous-looking points vibrated in the woodwork not an inch from the housekeeper's elaborate gray hair. Mrs. Steele uttered a cry—whether of fear or anger, I could not determine, but Jael had already darted by me, and was gone up the stair. Colonel Rivers arose to his feet.

"A very narrow escape, Mrs. Steele," he said, lightly, as he pulled the scissors from the wall; "but a miss is as good as a mile. That girl has had blood in her veins. If I did not pity her because of her hereditary talent, I would not retain her another hour in my ward's service."

Startled, shocked, I turned from the spot of observation and fled to the garden. What was the mystery hanging about poor Jael? What the hereditary talent that the colonel had mentioned? Plainly the girl hated Mrs. Steele even more than I did. With my mind full of her dark, sullen looks, I stroiled down to the gate at Wolfenden, and paused there, gazing out into the brown, still twilight.

The tiny lamps of the fire-flies flashed in and out of the shrubbery. A gray bat's wing flamed my hair. I had ceased to think of my stolen papers—the principal secret which they held was now told, and could no longer affect my happiness. But as I leaned against the entrance post, the lost documents were suddenly brought back to my memory by the sight of a trap passing, just then, the gate of Wolfenden. With a very unpleasant thrill, I recognized Francis Heron.

He was holding the lines. By his side sat an old man, feeble, but of distinguished appearance, with a costly carriage rug wrapped about his figure, as a protection from the evening damp.

Remembering my last meeting with Heron—remembering how, in that same vehicle, he had brought me through the dark to Wolfenden, after my fruitless visit to Sal Bagley's cottage, I drew back from the entrance post, and in hot embarrassment, turned to fly. But he had already discovered me. Promptly he lifted his hat.

The woman in my dress also. As the carriage came abreast of the gate, I heard him say, in a high, imperative voice: "Who is that girl?"

With equal distinctness, Francis Heron answered, dryly: "Your granddaughter, Hazel Ferrers."

Then I knew that the man who had disowned me long before, and left me to the world's mercy—the autocrat judge, with the heart of a fiend—had come to be a guest at Heroncroft.

To be continued.

THE BOY WITH THE FEET.

Wins Forgiveness From Woman Whose Gown He Soiled.

The boy in the car sat cuddled so close to the woman in gray, says the New York Sun, that everybody thought he belonged to her, so when he unconsciously dug his muddy shoes into the broadcloth skirt of his left-hand neighbor she leaned over and said:

"Pardon me, madam, will you kindly make your little boy square himself around? He is soiling my skirt with his muddy shoes."

The woman in gray blushed a little and nudged the boy away.

"My boy," she said. "My goodness, he isn't mine!"

Miscellaneous Reading.

THE GOLD RUSH OF 1859.

When "Pike's Peak or Bust" Was the Cry of 50,000 Men.

On May 7 Colorado will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains. At the same time occurs the anniversary of a more remarkable event, the discovery of gold that started the great Pike's Peak stampede of gold seekers in 1859, when in the neighborhood of 50,000 fortune hunters crossed the great plains in search of quick fortune.

The discovery Colorado is about to celebrate was made by George W. Jackson in April, 1859, near the present site of Idaho Springs, on a small stream tributary to South Clear Creek. Jackson at once returned to Denver and organized a company made up of residents of Denver and Chicago to work the gold field. The concern was called the Chicago Mining company and the stream Chicago creek. On May 7, 1859, the company began the development of the first paying deposits of gold in the Rocky Mountains.

The other discovery was made by Capt. John H. Gregory, a Georgia miner, on May 6 in Gregory Gulch, in the district of Clear Creek, not very far from Idaho, while he was bound overland to the Fraser River diggings in British Columbia.

Exactly when gold was first found in the Rocky Mountains cannot be ascertained, but there is no doubt that its presence was known long before the dates given. A Pike Vasquez, who in 1836 was a trader in the employ of his uncle, Col. Smith, at Smith's Fort on Denver, declared that he had seen the Indians and Mexicans at \$2.50 an ounce. Other discoveries of gold in the Pike's Peak district were made on Cherry Creek and the Platte river in 1858 by a party of Georgia miners headed by W. Green Russell, who settled on the present site of Denver and named the place Ararat after a little town in the gold fields of Georgia near where the United States branch mint of Denver was formerly situated.

While reports of the finding of gold had reached the frontier towns from time to time in 1858, it was not until the discovery made by Gregory in 1859 that the real gold fever broke out. The Gregory find started the first stampede from Denver, and the news spread back to the states, and then began the "Pike's Peak or Bust" migration, which caused once more the great overland rush to Denver by the Republican river route. From the California stampede of '49.

The Pike's Peak gold fields soon had no lack of press agents, and they showed ability in the manner in which they boomed the district. Just when thousands of adventurers on foot, with handbags and all sorts of conveyances, were setting out for the new Eldorado a time of stage coaches was established between Leavenworth and Denver by the Republican river route. The first stage coach from the gold fields arrived at Leavenworth on May 21, 1859, bearing \$5,000 worth of gold dust. On the side of the coach was the legend: "The Gold Mountains of Kansas Send Greeting to Her Commercial Metropolis!"

The Pike's Peak press agents had nothing on their contemporaries in Leavenworth. The latter met the gold laden coach at the outskirts of the city with another coach, on which was the sign:

"Leavenworth Hears the Echo From Her Mineral Mountains and Sends It on the Wings of Lightning to a Listening World!"

So optimistic were the newspapers of the gold fields that they irritated certain gold seekers, who insisted that their expectations of extracting nothing from their long and arduous tramp across the great plains. The disgruntled prospectors suggested the lynching of the editors whose strong faith in the future of the Pike's Peak district and vivid description of the gold fields had drawn many who what proved a wild goose chase.

These suggestions were made in such good faith that the little shanty news houses of the Rocky Mountain News, Denver's pioneer paper, was turned into an arsenal. The editor had revolvers within easy reach on the editorial table and the compositors stacked rifles and shotguns alongside of the cases at which they were setting type.

The Rocky Mountain News was the first paper issued in the Pike's Peak district, but it was not published for more than a few hours. The other paper, the Denver Pioneer, owned by John H. Merrick, had arrived eight days in advance of the plant of the News, but had lost time in getting under headway. The printing outfit of the News reached Denver by prairie schooner on April 21, 1859, about sundown.

Before midnight the press was up, cases in place and type being set. The men worked all the first night except for an intermission of a couple of hours, all the next day and at 10 o'clock on the night of April 22, twenty-eight hours after the outfit had reached its destination, the first copies were run off in the presence of a large crowd of citizens.

The editor and printers of the News ate and slept in the one room in which they got out the paper, and a constant lookout had to be kept for attacks by desperadoes. Col. William Byers, the editor, denounced the county. He had returned to the states for a sash and on his way back to the mountains met a returning band of disgruntled "Pike's Peak or Busters." They immediately talked lynching, burned his mill and other things, but they finally let up on him.

As Oakes got further on toward the Peak he found on the prairie a southerner which indicated the sentiments of the disappointed gold seekers toward

THE LAST LOVE LETTER.

After It Was Written There Was Nothing More to Be Said.

Dear Jack: Yes—I will marry you. It seems to be "the easiest way"—and besides I intended to all along. You have "won me by siege and taken me by storm," but it's been awfully hard work making you do it. The most difficult problem a girl has to face in these days is how to make a man force her to marry him. Yet every woman yearns to be taken in a rush conquest—instead of just taken for granted or as a matter of course. She wants something to remind her of the fact that her husband proposed to her besides the ring and the certificate, which are all most women have.

And yet, when I think of how beautifully you made love to me, it does seem almost a pity to marry a fascinating man like you and transform him from an artistic lover into an ordinary, prosaic husband. Your life has been such a "labor of love" from early youth that I can't help pitying all the nice girls whom I am depriving of the delicious experience of being flirted with by you.

I wonder if every girl who marries a popular and attractive man realizes what a cruel thing she is doing to her sex by monopolizing him. It seems almost as wicked as cornering wheat or forming a love trust. A really ideal lover like you is so rare in these days that he ought to be considered as you simply can't go on! It's the "Dip of Death" in life's circus! And the only way to take it is to seat yourself in fate's automobile and keep your eyes on the stars, while you go plunging down. You know you are going to get an awful job, but if you just hold tight and don't think about it you may land safely on the sawdust in the end and go rolling along comfortably forever afterwards.

What are we marrying for, Jack? Do you know? Of course not, nobody ever does until it is all over and then nobody remembers. They are just fascinated by the glittering on love's gold brick and the shimmer on the honeymoon and they refuse to scrape off the gilt and see what's underneath.

But nobody can call ours a marriage of convenience, at any rate—because there isn't going to be any convenience in that little two by four apartment, where the clothes closets are just down in the wall and the chiffonier is fighting with the trunk for breathing room and the rugs are treading on one another's skirts and the pictures elbowing one another off the walls.

Yet just for this (and the privilege of paying bills) you are giving up a comfy bachelor flat and your independence and your latch key and your clubs, and I am giving up the family home and most of my opinions. It's a pity—but then, if I didn't marry you, somebody else would—and if you didn't marry me some other man might. That's why we are marrying one another—that's why everybody married—not in order to get a particular person, but in order to keep anybody else from getting him or her; not because they can't get along better with somebody, but because all they can get along without him or her. It's the dog-in-the-manger spirit in us.

Well! This is probably the last love letter I ever shall write you—since we are to be married. Hereafter, I suppose, my communications will read, "Do-come-home-mother-sends-love-Harold-needs-shoes-the cook is sick." And yours will be confined to the simple but striking expression, "Inclosed-find-check."

Inclosed-by-the-way, I hate to exchange with a husband, but the deal is on and the bargain struck, and we'll meet at the altar and draw up the papers—and sign away our birthrights for a mess of matrimonial potage. The scene will be set like the third act of a Clyde Fitch drama, and the bridesmaids and the best man will go through their little parts, and everybody will send us wishes and don't want to appear as anything but our hat and throw old shoes after us, and the white ribbons on our trunks—and after all is said and done, we'll just be helpmates instead of soul mates.

It is very sweet of you to offer to tell me all about yourself, dear—but don't. I don't want anything to think about when I wake up nights. I don't believe in confessions between man and wife; they are just exhilarating for the moment, but they are apt to leave me with a bad taste in the memory. If you've got a past keep it, and leave your future to ME—Green-ville News.

The Pathos Went Wrong.—Irving Bacheler, the novelist, is of unusually agreeable appearance and address. Once when he was a reporter on a New York morning newspaper the Sunday editor said to him:

"I want you to write me a good story about the trials and discouragements of men who are looking for work in a big city. Get up early tomorrow, put on some old clothes and visit all the places that advertise for male help in the morning paper. Give an account of the number of applicants and the kind of men they are, and describe vividly the feelings of a poor devil who, perhaps, has had no breakfast and has walked miles because he hasn't got carfare, and then meets disappointment after disappointment. Draw it good and strong on the pathos. People like to read that sort of thing."

At noon the next day Mr. Bacheler appeared at the office crestfallen and dejected. "I haven't written anything out of that story," he said to the Sunday editor.

"What's the trouble?"

"I've got three jobs already and a promise of two more."