The Watchman and Southron.

THE SUMTER WATCHMAN, Established April, 1850. "Be Just and Fear not--Let all the Ends thou Aims't at, be thy Country's, thy God's and Truth's" THE TRUE SOUTHRON, Established June, 1866.

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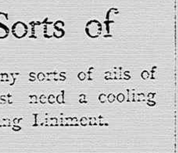

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BOOK ONE.

LADY BEAUTY'S MOTHER.

CHAPTER IV.

FIFTY AND FORTY-FIVE.

Our little town of Kettlewell had inhabitants to the number of ten thousand, and three churches; but of these latter, two were what at that date were called district churches, and the great ancient parish church was the ecclesiastical center of the town. Like many another such noble structure, it was but poorly endowed and the rewards which it offered to its minister were chiefly the contemplation of venerable architecture, and a social position of considerable importance. The saying always was that none but a man of fortune could be rector of Kettlewell. Consequently, at each vacancy the bishop was in a difficulty. Rich men he could find, able men he could find; but to find one rich and able, too, was not so easy, and in the last appointment, being unable to meet with a clergyman thus doubly qualified he had chosen a wealthy parson of rather meager abilities, who was now our spiritual chief. The Rev. Anthony Brent was a cheerful man, undersized, with a merry nose of ruby, and a countenance denoting neither deep learning nor that isolation of character which is natural in men who live above the world. Indeed, Mr. Brent did not live, nor affect to live, one inch above the level of commonplace cheerful life. He told us from his pulpit that human things are frail and nothing worth, and that man is full of misery; but having tolled up his sermon, he seemed to have fiddled up his theology too, for when you met him on week days he was full of comfort and good cheer. Perhaps we are fastidious; perhaps we are ignorant; certain it is that we never could quite satisfy ourselves that Mr. Brent was altogether a gentleman. His manners were no better than a blithe bloom creature such as he might have picked up in ten years between twenty-five and thirty-five. He had a way of alluding to "my gardener" and "my banker" which seemed to show, so Sparkling said—Mr. Brent employed the rival practitioner—that some time in his life he had neither bank nor garden. It is very possible that had he not been so good natured, his vulgarity might have been obvious, which it never was; for, indeed, we could not be quite sure that he was vulgar at all. Another thing puzzled us; where had his fortune come from? He was very wealthy and a widower, and our idea was that Mrs. Brent had brought the money. This, too, was guess, and nothing but guess. Such, then, was our rector; a man liked, but not greatly respected, and yet a man whom none could condemn or fairly despise; a shallow man, equal to reading his newspaper, and no more; on good terms with the world, able without any strain of conscience to preach saintly sermons, copied out from standard divines, and at the same time live an easy average life; a comfortable man, with good intentions, sound digestion, a full purse and collar, and one who never let his kite fly in chimney tops.

It was the rector and widower Brent whom we upon consideration had assigned to our lively Mrs. Barbara Temple as third husband; and events went rapidly to show that our forecast was not inexact. Mr. Brent was about fifty; Mrs. Barbara Temple was well known to be about forty-five; so that on the score of age there was nothing against the match, and as to its fitness, there seemed made it evident that there was no choice on his side. Everybody remarked that he took the Temples up with remarkable warmth. He gave dainty little lunches and sang little dinners for them; and he was forever calling in his carriage to take one or two of the girls a drive, the little matron attending as chaperon. At first we were in doubt as to which he was paying—mother or daughters—and we even thought the young Sophia, with her heavenly face, had attracted him; but we forgot that he was a man of some common sense. Mrs. Temple was his choice; her vivacity, her polish, her knowledge of the world, her untiring energy, were all after his own heart. He soon began to drop hints, as men do who have matrimony in their heads. "Mrs. Temple was a remarkable fine woman." "Forty-five was the exact age that the wife of a man of fifty should be—the exact age." "Mrs. Temple did not look forty-five" (he admitted that, "for"—and he would drop his voice—he knew she was every day of it). The intimation was that he had either seen the register of her baptism or she had told him the fact direct, and he declared over and over again, with amazing earnestness and publicity, that forty-five was the age he approved of; that for a man of his standing one year younger would be one year too young, and one year older one year too old. Of course, so far he had not said that he hoped or wished to marry Mrs. Temple, but the drift of his conversation and conduct was unmistakable.

In the meantime it was evident that the lively widow did not dislike attentions which had now become so marked that even those saw them who could see nothing. She exchanged compliments freely with the rector, invited him to her house, paid his service music, and he was a frequent visitor in a manner may matching enough which, in people less sure of their position, might have given rise to gossip. He was with her almost attention, sitting near, and keeping her eyes fixed upon him almost as it would have been hard to say whether he knew or cared less about the subject. She could not have told in which contained the district spoken of hay, nor whether the people were white, brown or black; but she listened as attentively as if she had been hearing of dear relations in a far-off land. In short, with garden parties and picnics and dinners and drives, things went so far that would-be gossips the matter settled, and when we heard that no proposals had yet been made, we all agreed that there must be a lady concerned, who, for some private reasons, was not just yet to be named. To all intents and purposes we regarded Mrs. Temple and Mr. Brent as engaged, and, on the whole, we approved of our rector's choice. Certainly, he was a little too old to be taken into account; but, then, he was wealthy, and it was much better that he had married a young woman, too, considering matters, than that he should not have done so.

The rector was fine today. He was in his best, and, one may almost say, he looked brilliant without, and really a handsome person, with his silver hair, his purple face, and his clerical of the rear he was perfect. In the most polished of hats, the most faultless frock coat, the most faultless trousers, gloves, and boots, and over a comfortable waistcoat, he could fill around them, gaiters and leggings with satisfaction. The girls, I dare say, had accepted his attentions with charming freedom, and their mother surveyed women never manifested the smallest jealousy. In this, beside proving her own good sense, she paid a compliment to the good sense of the girls, for, whatever a mother may think of her daughters, she knows, and knows that they know, that the most perfected belle.

"Ah, Mrs. Temple, I'm still on duty, when he was saying to her, as he stood with one hand on their balcony rail, "I'm still on duty, child, waiting for the coming of the Duke of Anthony. I know you have a high opinion of your family, and you think, perhaps, that no duke is good enough for you. Well, upon occasion I can be a duke myself, and I'm ready to do duty in that way." Mrs. Temple, with her most polished smile, was about to reply, when she saw a well-dressed old woman. He was talking to her, and with a courtesy to her and with a bow to the rector, he left the balcony.

"Who is that old woman?" the rector inquired.

"Poor Hannah Spearman," the rector replied, shaking his head. "I have known her many years. Poor Hannah Spearman."

"Polly," the curate remarked, "Polly Spearman."

"Of course, it is Polly," the rector rejoined. "In visiting about a parish like mine," he turned to Mrs. Temple, "one's head gets so full of Pollies and Sallies and Billies that one is apt to take the name that comes first. I am sorry for poor Hannah—Polly. But what *can* you do in a case of natural decay?"

"It is not natural decay," the curate answered, with a waggish dryness in his manner. "She fell down stairs."

"To be sure she fell down stairs," little Mr. Brent cried, recovering his faulty memory by a gesture of his gloved hand. "How came I to confound the two—*complaints!*"

"Perhaps because you are suffering from a third," retorted the curate. He loved a joke and had before this broken a jest on his own bishop. And our rector was a tempting object, being not apt to take offense, and not one to inspire great respect or fear.

The carriage drove on; but for once little Mr. Brent was downright angry.

"Rather an impertinent speech," he said, glancing diffidently at Mrs. Temple.

"Impertinent," cried easy-humored Mrs. Temple. "Nothing of the sort."

"Milligan has no sense of propriety."

She gave a little laugh.

"I like Mr. Milligan."

At this Mr. Brent took heart, changed his view of the matter, reddened with pleasure, and gave himself up to laughter, which lasted until the tears were chasing each other down his rosy cheeks. But somehow the proposal was not made that day.

CHAPTER V.

VANITY CAN VANQUISH LOVE.

The following morning Mr. Brent received a letter from his son in Australia, announcing his intention of returning to England for a few months. The reason of this return the letter went on to furnish. The son said he feared his father would think him very foolish; but love was bringing him home, and here was the worst of the matter—love under very peculiar circumstances. He had fallen in love with—a picture! He had seen the portrait of a girl whose face had impressed him as never the living face of any woman had, and having ascertained that the original of the picture really lived, and was English, and not a duchess or a princess, which well she might be, but a girl of his own rank in life, young Brent was determined to find her out and try to secure her for himself. The letter wound up in very ingenuous language, admitting the apparent absurdity of the whole proceeding; but protesting that the passion was true and deep, and that nothing could end it except realization or absolute and ascertained hopelessness.

Rector Brent was a good natured man and a kind father; so he shook his head and smiled over his son's folly, being a sage himself. But he wrote a kind reply, saying that his son would be always welcome home under any conceivable circumstances, and that though he must confess the expedition seemed rather wild, yet he well knew that in the latter scenes of the affair his son would be ruled by his own good sense and his father's counsel.

"And now," the rector said, as he sealed this praiseworthy epistle, "I think before Percival comes home I had better have my affairs settled." This he said, and as he spoke he looked at his own likeness in the chimney glass. Something struck him. "Dear me," he exclaimed, "I must get some new teeth." For fifty years of good living had told upon this portion of his mechanism; and now reflecting that he was about to marry, he reasoned thus: "At such times we retrench our houses. Think of a man refurnishing his house, and not refurnishing his mouth! If I am to have a new dining table, I ought to have a new set of teeth to meet it, I suppose—" He grimaced in the glass. "Yes," he said, sliding his hand over it, "all promising." He grimaced again, and this time by the power of fancy set a new white teeth in the vacant spaces. "Not a bad idea of it," he murmured; "the greatest improvement."

On the morrow, instead of making a proposal of marriage to the little widow, he went to an old-fashioned dentist, who, in a middle-class parlor, pulled teeth and fitted jaws, conducting an plan of the profession of prosecuting chiefly out. The dentist was a man of tact, and also he ascertained whenever the patient came he had a lot of questions to ask about various people in the neighborhood, and curious stories to tell, and gossip to exchange; so that our little rector, perched in the operating chair, leached and chirruped and looked the image of enjoyment. Short-sighted man!

"By the way," said the dentist, pausing a moment with one of his tools in his hand, "has not a Mrs. Temple settled in Kettlewell during the past year?"

Rector Brent knew that a faint blush shot out of his cheek as he answered "Yes."

"A remarkable woman," the dentist continued, forgetting his task, while with a meditative face he seemed to contemplate bygone days. "A very remarkable woman."

"A very, very remarkable woman," the rector replied, determined to add an adverb in this very peculiar case.

"Wonderful energy," said the dentist.

"Most wonderful," the rector rejoined, still on the augmentation principle.

"And such a face and figure!" the operator said again.

"Ah, *such* a face and figure!" repeated the rector, unable to refrain from rubbing his hands together.

"For her years," the dentist remarked, in an explanatory voice.

"O, come, come!" cried the rector, in tones of remonstrance. "I don't see that. She is youthful, certainly, and sprightly; but still women are not old at forty-five."

"At *what* five?" a deaf the dentist, not having caught the first word.

"Forty-five!" repeated the rector, loudly and emphatically.

"Sixty-five, more likely," the blunt dentist said, laying down on his tool, which was out of repair.

"O, I see, I see!" cried Rector Brent; "you are talking of her mother. We don't know the mother. The mother does not live with them now."

"Then Mrs. Barbara Temple is herself and I, or another at the same time I am not talking of her mother," the dentist answered. "That lady is a young person of age, if she is seven."

Saying this with great emphasis, he advanced to take some further measurement of the unfortunate mouth, and one feeling his face flushed, he said, reassuringly.

"Don't be uneasy; I am not going to take anything out."

The rector, a prey, wave than away. So vehemence were his movements that for a moment the dentist feared that he might have to take out some more molars in the process, which, with small exceptions, have not yet, indeed, been extracted, was, from time immemorial, the method and manner of the profession. Rector Brent was in confusion.

"Do not mention it, pray," said the astonished operator; "for what Mr. Barbara Temple and his wife whom three fine daughters."

"Three young ladies wa—

Long" the dentist replied, little thinking how disastrous were his words, "I made a fool of myself. Mrs. Temple not Mrs. Temple's three. She was a remarkably handsome woman—[illegible] forty; just a [illegible] gray hair. I was not surprised when I heard of her wonderful offer that young [illegible] to marry her. But I was [illegible] when I heard subsequently that he was going to present [illegible] and when I heard that the [illegible] married and that he [illegible] Mrs. Temple [illegible] Mr. Brent [illegible] in which the [illegible] [illegible] Barbara Temple was [illegible] [illegible] Mrs. Temple [illegible] [illegible] Barbara Temple