

A SIREN'S VICTIMS

By Frances Warner Walker.

CHAPTER III. (Continued.)

"Why not?" he asked, and in his voice rang a challenge. "Have I not had a whole month for my recovery? Women need not more than a single hour in which to effect their convalescence. But, be this as it may, we do but waste words. Rise, madam, I beg of you. Ills of the body are less readily healed than those of the heart, and you are running very great risk from this exposure."

But she resisted the effort which accompanied his speech to lift her to her feet. Instead, she bent her head upon the hands she held, and pressed her lips passionately upon them.

"Harry, Harry!" she pleaded, "think of the effort it must have cost me to come to you like this, and, oh, let one touch of gentleness and pity steal into your voice. You are so cold, so stern, that between us rises a great barrier, beyond which I cannot recognize you. Listen to me, dear. In mercy, listen! I am not the false, heartless woman I have been led to believe me. If I were, would I come here to-night? Would I kneel at your feet and plead with you as I plead now?"

"Women are loth to let their victims escape, even when they cease to yield them amusement," he interrupted, bitterly.

Slowly she raised herself once more to her feet, and let his hand drop from her clinging touch, while she threw back her little head haughtily.

"I see," she said, "and new and quiet dignity had crept into her tone, marked, however, by infinite sadness. The new life has wiped out the old. For it, for me, you have not even one tender memory, and I— I thought you loved me so well that, though a month, a year, a lifetime had elapsed, I should find the flame burning as brightly as when last we parted. You see that I was wrong. Let us speak no more, then, of the past, except the few words I came here to speak—the few words which will tell you how you have wronged me. You thought me false to your vows of love. You were told that I was receiving Lieut. Barclay's attentions in your absence. A man jealous of me told you that Lieut. Barclay and I were engaged to be married. You came to me and made me promise not to see him again. You said you did not like the man, that you considered his attentions idle and meaningless, and compromising to the woman who stood to you in the position I held; and I promised—did I not?"

"Well, I meant to keep my promise. I forgot at the time that when last I had seen Mr. Barclay, he had picked up your ring, which I had drawn from my finger in putting on my glove, and slipped it upon his own. I meant to ask him for it before we parted. It escaped my mind, as, with my glove upon my hand, I did not miss it. It was the evening of that day when I promised you not to see him again. That same night you met him, and recognized the ring that he still wore. Some one present jestingly asked him if it had any meaning, and he answered, falsely, that it was a pledge. "Before I slept that night I wrote and begged him to return it to me at once. I told him at the same time that there were reasons why I could not again receive him.

"He replied that only into my own hands would he restore the ring; that my determination was too unjust and too unkind for him to accept other than by word of mouth—in short, that he must see me once more. I dared not tell you the truth, as I should have done, and ask you to ask him for the ring. I feared your anger. So, weakly, I consented to see him, and appointed that afternoon for the interview.

"It so happened that you, who had been angrily brooding all day over the scene of the evening previous, came at the same hour to demand of me an explanation. I had given orders to be denied to every one. Hearing this, your suspicions were newly awakened, and you insisted upon entering. What was the result? You walked into the library and saw the picture which, in your jealous rage, seemed confirmation stronger than holy writ. You turned, and, without word or glance, walked out of the house. I called you; but, for once, you were deaf to the sound of my voice.

"And it is for this man, this jealous brute—you have thrown me over?" said a mocking voice in my ear.

"I could not answer. Tears choked me. I turned my face toward the window and forced them back. When I again met Mr. Barclay's glance I was smiling. The world, at least, should not suspect that my heart was breaking. I vowed, secretly,

"I may come again," he asked.

"And, though I hated him for all the misery he had brought upon me, I answered yes—that he might come. Well, days went by, and each day I thought would bring you, even as each day the pride that upheld me grew less, and the wound at my heart bled more, until my weakness forced me here to you, to learn only that my wound is mortal—that that another holds my place!"

The last word ended in a long, quivering sob. She turned, as if to leave him, but one stride brought him to her side.

The indifference had gone from his face—gone the cold sternness—the icy disdain. The pallor, perhaps, had deepened, but his eyes were aglow with light and his lips trembled with feeling.

"Helen, is it true—this story that you have told me?"

Obeying the sudden impulse which moved her, she rose and, coming behind him, clasped her arms about his neck.

"Never tell me anything that could pain you, dear uncle!" she whispered. "Why should you? And let us forget to-day that pain or suffering exists in the world."

She bent her head until the bright chestnut hair mingled with the streaks of gray and her lips touched his brow. He raised his hand and softly stroked her cheek then rose, as if in repressed impatience, and walked to the window.

"I wish the boy would come!" he said.

But, one by one, the hours went slowly by, and still his wish brought no fruition.

To-day, as she wandered in and out of the house, no day had ever seemed so long.

It was past noon, when, curling herself up in a corner of the summer house, she tried to read; yet another hour had glided by, and she had turned no single leaf of the book she held.

A romance more engrossing than that spun out on its pages absorbed her thought—a romance in which her hero too so conspicuous a part that she forgot herself as heroine.

Her reverie deepened, and she softly closed the book, and, almost unconsciously, her waking and her sleeping dreams merged into one.

Suddenly she started, roused by her lover's voice.

What was he saying? To whom speaking? She sprang up to welcome him, but something held him still and dumb. Evidently the two men, father and son, had met outside the house, and now paused in their walk, not five feet distant from her.

"Listen to my story and its justification, father," he said. Harry said; "and then condemn me if you will."

"And then he told the story through—the story of his love and jealousy, of his injustice and its reparation.

Had the girl, screened from his view within the rustic summer house, been converted into marble by his words?

Instinctively, two little, ringless hands, white and soft and dimpled, were pressed tight over her heart; her eyes were dilated, and their hue had changed to black; her lips were parted and colorless; her breath came between them in short, difficult gasps.

Her head was bent forward in her eagerness, lest word or syllable should escape her; yet she was not conscious that she played the role of eavesdropper.

At last her guardian spoke: "It is the work of a villain," he said, in strangely-altered tones. "And that villain is your father, and I— I welcome this adventuress as my daughter."

How, then, does Grace stand toward me, who only last night held that honored place?"

"Adventuress, father," answered Harry, sternly, "is not the word to be applied to your son's wife. Except that I hastily committed myself last night to Grace, I can reproach myself with nothing. Doubtless she will cry herself to sleep to-night, poor child, but to-morrow her own roses will not be fresher nor fairer; her tears but the dew which enhances their beauty. I spoke to her of love and the child dreamed that my words awakened an echo in her heart. Would that I could spare her even the fleeting unhappiness of my falseness; but a weak heart and she will have forgotten. Father, don't let the memory of her wrong make you unjust to Helen."

"Hush! Spare me the utterance of that woman's name. Once deceived as to the character of her to whom you have given your own proud old name, blinded by the infatuation which now masquerades as love, your punishment will be as bitter as your treachery toward Grace has already been. Yet how dare I condemn you—I, who would have sinned against her; I, who have also proved unworthy my sacred trust."

And, staggering against the trunk of a tree for support, he bowed his head in his hands, while a deep groan burst from his white, quivering lips.

"Father, in God's name, tell me, what do you mean?"

"I mean that we are two thieves—you and I, father and son—and that Grace Hawthorne is our innocent victim. You have robbed her of love and happiness; I, of her inheritance. No, do not shrink away in horror. Of the two, my robbery will affect her less. Besides, I have not impoverished her. More than half her fortune is still in my hands. I, who talked of disinheriting you, am a beggar. Four years ago I put at least half my fortune and a portion of my ward's into an investment which promised the richest results—which seemed absolutely secure. The panic which, you remember, took place just then, and shook to its center the financial world, swept the money from my grasp, leaving me only securities, for the time absolutely valueless. Aghast at the stupendous loss, I undertook to retrieve it by speculations. I was badly advised, and little by little my entire fortune has been swept away. I have, however, not hazarded further a dollar belonging to Grace in this terrible struggle. Moreover, the securities I hold in her name and my share are beginning to gain in value. Had she been your wife, by still holding control of her fortune, I might have averted this pitiable confession until I had made good her loss, or at least have gained courage to tell her all. Now she must know the truth at once, for I am no longer able to support the style and living of a rich man. House, horses and carriages—all must go. Your father is a beggar!"

A shudder passed over Harry Reynolds' frame as he listened. Then he stretched forth his arm, and laid his hand upon his father's shoulder.

"Don't blame yourself too greatly, father. Grace's fortune is still ample. You acted, as you thought, for the best. If I had but known this before!"

"What difference could it have made?" interrupted the older man. "How would it have interfered with your mad infatuation for the scheming woman who holds you, at last, fast in her toils? What?"

"Hush, father! Not another word! Must I remind you that the woman of whom you speak is my wife? It were, indeed, better we should part, if in my presence, her name be not spoken with respect. As for your losses, I only wish to remind you that the little fortune left me by my mother is yours to command. I am young, I can work for Helen. But you are growing old

Please do not hesitate. Take it. It will at least give you comfort. And as for Grace—let me go to her. Let me tell her all!"

"It is not necessary; Grace has heard all!" interrupted a voice.

Both men started and looked up. In the door of the summer house stood the slight, graceful figure, which had long grown so familiar to their sight; but the child's cheek was blanched to the whiteness of her dress, and a pitiable look of suffering was clearly to be read in the azure-tinted eyes.

"Yes, I have heard all," she repeated, coming slowly forward, her gaze fixed on her guardian, his glance steadily avoiding him who, last night, had left upon her lips the kiss of a lover.

"Uncle, she whispered, twining both arms around Mr. Reynolds' neck. "I know now what you meant this morning, when you spoke of something you might have to tell me. Only that you have lost some of my money. Never—never let us speak, or even think of it again. And never while you live, and anything remains to me, call yourself a beggar. You said a moment ago I was still rich. Well, then we are both rich; and as for Harry's fortune, you cannot touch that—that goes to his—"

She paused. She had thought herself brave enough to speak the words "his wife," but they choked her in their utterance. "And, uncle," she continued, after this little pause, "she is your daughter now. Don't forget that, and promise me that you will grant Harry's prayer, and accept her as your daughter."

she might have one long, free breath. "Harry, Harry!" she murmured, "you have deceived me. And your purpose has been—what? So, even the pretext of wealth can be kept up so long as this girl is unmarried! Well, she shall never marry, then! Oh, God, I thought I had done with scheming, and lo, all former scheming has been but the prelude to the play!"

(To Be Continued.)

CASE OF LADY AND THE TIGER.

A Caged Animal in the Zoo Is Far Different From One in the Woods. Suddenly there was a sound—monkeys trooping through the jungle, high in the trees, grasping the plant branches and shaking them well with rage. A tiger must be in the neighborhood. Another second—the jungle grass waved and cracked, and out into the open emerged and advanced slowly a picture of fearful beauty. A tiger seen in the Zoo gives no faint idea of what one of his species is, seen under its proper conditions. Beasts in captivity are underfed and have no muscle, but here before us was a specimen which had always "done himself well," was fit as a prize fighter, every square inch of him developed to perfection. On he came, his cruel eyes lazily blinking in the sun. His long, slouching walk, suggestive of such latent strength, betrayed the vast muscle working fitfully through the loose, glossy skin, which was clear red and white, with its double stripes and the W mark on the head. The sight of such majestic power, as he swung majestically along, licking his lips and his mustache after his feed, was one of the things not soon to be forgotten, and while it had a bracing effect on the nerves, at the same time struck rather a chilling sensation.

With my last barrel I fired. There was no time for a long and steady aim, but as the smoke cleared away, what relief! The tiger had dropped to the ground. With nine lives—catlike—he was not dead; he walked off and disappeared—From "A Sportsman in India."

TO BE FOUND IN YORKSHIRE.

More Quaint Characters Here Than In Any Other Part of the Country. In this county of Yorkshire there are probably more interesting and historical churches than in any other part of the country, and yet we find in an article on "English Churches, Small and Quaint," that the rarities of Yorkshire are entirely overlooked. At Adel, for instance, there is probably the one perfect Norman church in England, with its lion's head on the door for sanctuary. At Lastingham there is the wonderful church founded by St. Ceadda, which has a hole in the aisle down which one descends to find himself in another church, acting as the foundation for the edifice above. At Kip, Brand, the priest, which was actually restored some years before the Conqueror set foot on British soil. Among the other numerous rarities in churches which Yorkshire boasts may be mentioned the Saxon frescoes on the walls of the aisles in the parish church at Pickering.

In addition to the rarities too numerous to mention, it may be stated that Yorkshire has more abbeyes than all the rest of England put together. It is interesting, however, to learn from the article, which excludes Yorkshire churches, that we have in England two thatched churches, one built of logs and a black and white timbered church.—Newcastle (Eng.) Chronicle.

SELF-EDUCATION.

It is the Best Part of Every Person's Knowledge.

Sir Walter Scott, whose authority is indisputable, once remarked that the best part of a man's education is that which he gives himself, and the biographies of many of our greatest geniuses afford ample proof of the truth of this statement. Bacon declared that "studies teach not their own use, but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation," and again and again in the long roll of fame, of which as a nation we are justly proud, appear the names of those who, independent of tutors, universities and colleges, have given themselves the finest education, developed intellectual powers in the face of insuperable difficulties and attained positions of the highest eminence.

God has endowed rich and poor alike with gifts of mind and heart, so that distinction and culture, genius and talent, are not the prerogative of one class alone. The men who have achieved the greatest triumphs in science, art or literature have frequently been severely handicapped at the outset of their careers by poverty and uncivilized environment; but these hindrances, instead of deterring them, have served as wings on which they rose to high attainments.

Mamma Got Tired.

"Mamma, does money make the man?" "I am sorry to say it does, sometimes, Tommy."

"Money will make a man go anywhere, won't it?" "I suppose so."

"If it was down in Cuba, would money make a man go to raising mangoes?" "Don't bother me."

"Do monkeys eat mangoes, mamma?" "I presume so. I wish you wouldn't talk so much."

"The if money makes the man go to raising mangoes, and monkeys eat mangoes, why don't monkeys make the mango?" "Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!"—Chicago Tribune.

A Slight Mistake.

Two negroes in Atlanta were discussing the political situation. "McKinley am sho'ly a right good man," said one.

"He sho'ly am," said the other, "but I ain't gwine to vote fo' him."

"Why not?" "Cause dat wife of his done all dis heah trust business—dat wife o' his, Har'na."—Atlanta Journal.

Proved.

Patient—Look here; you've taken out the wrong tooth. This one is perfectly sound.

Dentist's Assistant (triumphantly)—And you distrusted my ability to take out even the loose ones.—New York World.

Taking a Mean Advantage.

"How is your husband's divorce case going on?" "I don't know; the stinky wretch won't buy me a new costume, and so I can't go to the court to defend myself."—Pick-Me-Up.

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Honeymoon Cruelty.

"Nay, madam, the day I married you I gave you the key to my heart." "Yes; and then you went right off and had the lock changed."—Brooklyn Life.

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Contradictions.

"Well, Digby, I'm surprised! You're getting gray!" "Yes—yes; I've lots of gray hairs and precious few of them."—Detroit Free Press.

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