

tried to listen and failed. The girl rose from her brother's couch, still holding his hand and facing the intruder.

Natalie at once spoke, before Brenda had time to do so. "My place is here at my husband's side, and here I shall remain," she said.

"Oh, I know why you came in like that!" now broke from Brenda. "You were afraid to let us be alone together! You were afraid of something he might tell me!"

Natalie bit her lips, and shot such a look at her husband's sister as might have flashed from the eyes of a striking quake.

But at this moment a long, heavy groan burst from Louis. Brenda flung herself once again at his side. His face had now grown bluish, his eyelids were strangely fluttering, and at the verges of his lips had collected a slight wreath of foam.

"Louis!" called Brenda wildly. "Louis! speak to me!" But she had heard the sound of his voice for the last time in life. About two hours later he died, besieged by recurrent spasms of what appeared keen suffering, though old Dr. Southgate, summoned at last, and watching him with deepest attention, declared that, being wholly unconscious, he escaped all pain.

CHAPTER IV.



The kiss that followed was one of betrothal.

The White Sulphur Springs had bored Gerald Ravelow severely for a number of weeks past. He saw in a hundred of the pretty girls that haunted the lawns and piazzas of the hotels a resemblance to Brenda, vague yet irritating. He avoided all chances of being presented to any of these damsels, and soon won, in consequence, the name of woman hater. This put him into a still more unpleasant humor, from which his only refuge was found in taking very long horseback rides among the breezy Virginia hills. Mean-

while his mother's health had improved but slightly, although her malady was fraught with no symptoms of danger. Learning by accident that a New York physician of note chanced to be at a small hotel about ten miles distant, Gerald persuaded his mother to accompany him thither. They retained their former apartments at the hotel, which they now temporarily left, and to which they proposed returning in at least three days from their time of departure.

As matters arranged themselves, however, the new quarters proved charming, the new doctor a very agreeable man and the new project a most unforeseen success. His mother seemed so much brighter and stronger that Gerald determined to give up his apartments at their former hotel and remain for an indefinite space in the spot whither he had drifted. With this purpose he sent for whatever letters that might have arrived at their recent abode, directed either to himself or Mrs. Ravelow. Several letters had arrived and were duly sent. Among them was a telegram from Miss Brenda Bond telling of her brother's death.

Gerald was horribly shocked. For the first time since boyhood his mother saw him weep. He bitterly reproached himself for having seen his friend so seldom of late; he pitied Brenda with a lover's exorbitant power to pity; and finally he told his mother that it would be imperative for him to leave on the next northern train.

"Of course, my son," she acquiesced. "I would not have you remain away from the funeral for worlds—that is, if there is any possible chance of your reaching it in time."

Gerald did his best. But the journey was long and Brenda's telegram had been cruelly delayed. When he arrived at Shadyshore the funeral ceremony had been over about three hours. Brenda, clad in the deepest mourning, met him with a sob and a little cry.

"My poor girl," he said, and took her in his arms. A servant had just glided from the drawing room, leaving them alone. Gerald's lips found their way to hers, and the kiss that followed was one of betrothal, as both silently understood.

"I have so much to tell you," faltered Brenda, looking about her with nervous glances. "But there will always be the thought that she is listening. It is such a lovely afternoon. Let us walk out under the fir trees."

Their walk lasted until nearly dusk. Finally, with a blinding headache caused by grief and excitement, Brenda redirected her steps toward the house. "And you tell me," said Gerald, as he walked ruminatively at her side, "that Dr. Southgate declared your brother died of heart disease?"

"Yes. He wrote that on the certificate; I saw the two words myself."

"But you yourself think"—

"Oh, I think nothing, because I've not a vestige of proof."

Gerald was silent for some little time. He would have liked to tell Brenda the reason her brother had caused her to

place that paper in his coffin, but remembrance of his oath forbade. After once having made the midnight visit to Louis' tomb he would be privileged to speak of it, but before doing so the terms of that curious, whimsical compact precluded all reference to his intended act.

"You, too, seemed mystified by his having bid me to conceal that paper inside his coffin," said Brenda. "You cannot guess, can you, Gerald, what it contains?"

"No, I can not," replied Gerald, glad to answer so directly. "Unless," he went on, "a list of accusations against his wife is to be found there."

"Oh, I have thought of that," said Brenda, "but surely if Louis had wished that you should see the paper he would not have"—

The words died on her lips, for just then, while they were ascending the piazza steps, Natalie came forward from the inner hall. Her mourning did not become her as it did Brenda, and, beside the extreme pallor of her face, there was a certain wildness noticeable in her odd hued eyes.

She dropped her gaze before Gerald's direct one. A significant silence now ensued, which Brenda suddenly broke. She put out her hand to Gerald. "Good-by," she murmured; "I am worn out for today. I must lie down. You will come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow—surely," he said, pressing her hand. She at once glided past her sister-in-law and disappeared into the hall.

Gerald waited a moment for Natalie to speak; then, seeing that she looked both embarrassed and agitated, he said:

"I was very sorry not to have seen the last of poor Louis."

Natalie seemed furtively to gnaw her under lip. Then she threw back her delicate head with a little blending of scorn and sadness. "Oh, if you had but come here a few hours sooner, Mr. Ravelow," she exclaimed, "I believe that even you might have consented to side with me—yes, me, the wife of your friend—against the treatment I have been forced to receive from Brenda."

"What treatment?" asked Gerald. "I have heard that you wished to keep a physician from visiting your husband, even while you knew him to be in the agonies of death."

July.

July was the fifth month in the Roman calendar and was called Quintilis, the fifth. Originally it contained 86 days, but was reduced by Romulus to 81, by Numa to 80, but was restored to 81 by Julius Cæsar, in honor of whom it was named July on account of his having been born during this month. It was also so called from the goddess Juno.

Zola on Daily Work.

I beseech you, gentlemen, to put your trust and your faith in work. I, who have been nothing but a worker, am a witness to its marvellously soothing effects upon the soul. The work I allude to is daily work—the duty of moving one step forward in one's allotted task every day.