

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. LEE STRUGGLES AGAINST FATE.

Not only did May become pale, but she began to like lonely walks up and down the damp cloisters; to flit about like a bat in the twilight; and to climb to her old haunt in the belfry, in order that she might look out over the land like "Sister Anne," and see if there was "anybody coming." One evening she was leaning over the garden-hedge, peering into the vanishing landscape, and devouring every sad suggestion that the falling night presented to her mind. Suddenly there came two red eyes glaring down the road; not the angry eyes of some terrible demon as at first they might have been supposed, but only carriage lamps. Yet they could not have proved a sight more surprising if they had been a couple of unucky stars jostled out of their place, in consequence of too much crowding upon the milky way.

They came glaring down the road, and they stood before the gate of Monasterlea. The darkling landscape swam before May's eyes, as a delightful idea flashed through her mind that this was Paul coming back. She had flown half-way to the gate before joy gave way to another feeling, and she hid behind a rose-bush. Meantime the two red lamps had glared right up the path, and into the open eyes of the cottage, and answering lights had already appeared at the door. The coachman had left his box, and May could see the disgorgement of the carriage. A slow, heavy body rolled from the interior of the coach, and a sound that was not unfamiliar made its way to her ears. Her hopes fell flat and expired as she stood up, and stepped forward to receive Mrs. Lee.

"Ah—a—ah! my beloved daughter!" she cried, as May appeared. It was an odd form of address; but, considering the affliction of the visitor, May would not have wondered at, nor objected to, being addressed as "my dear grandmother!"

"I knew it from the first," Mrs. Lee went on, in a choking voice, while she took desperate measures with one hand to save herself from strangulation by loosening the strings of her weightiest cloak from about her neck, and letting it fall to the ground. "It was not for nothing that I felt like a mother for you at Camlough. Carry up that hamper of wine, my man! A little present, my love, for your aunt. And I have been picking up fresh eggs as I drove along—from the country people—all day; your cook may find them useful."

Miss Martha arrived here on the scene, with Nanny and Bridget and torches, and the little commotion of welcome having subsided, the mother was conducted to the embraces of her son; and then, after going through several ceremonies of joy and benediction, she was again taken possession of by May, and conducted to a guest-chamber, to remove the traces of her travel. Having settled her front and her turban, she sank at last into a large arm-chair, and prepared further to unburden her soul of the purpose with which it was charged.

"Ah! my dear daughter! Such a daughter as never was welcomed before to a mother's longing heart. Sit down at my feet, my pretty one, and let us talk at our leisure about our plans."

But May had no plans; she preferred standing erect. Yet she declared herself willing to converse with Mrs. Lee.

"Nay, nay, my dear," said the lady; "why so? You must think me very blind not to have seen what was going on between you and Christopher."

"Nothing ever went on, Mrs. Lee. You, of all others, ought to know that well."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Lee, taking her hands, and trying to draw her down for a kiss, "do you mean to say that my poor boy did not propose to you?"

"I thought he had forgotten it," said May, aghast. "How could you find it out? He was delirious when he did it, and he thought I was Katherine."

"Thought you were Katherine? Ha, ha! Excuse me, my dear; for I know you have cause to be jealous, and to stand on your dignity; but you need not with me, my dear, his poor, anxious old mother. It is long since he gave up Miss Atchbold, and fixed his affections upon you. Excuse me; for I know your devotion to him since, which has saved his precious life; but it was his love for you which threw him into this fever."

"Did he tell you so?" asked May, knitting her brows.

"Well, no," said Mrs. Lee with a spasm of fear that she was going too far; "but do you think an anxious mother cannot read the heart of her son?"

"Not at such a distance, I should think, and without the help of a telescope," said May, with a little grim mirth.

"Ah, you are laughing at me!" said Mrs. Lee, and her tears began to descend; "and I had so buoyed myself up with the hope that you, at least, would be merciful and kind to my dear son—so different from that other woman; that his future would be a sacred affair to you; and now—and now"—Mrs. Lee wept.

"Pray don't cry," said May, with a conscious-stricken feeling that she was behaving very inhospitably in thus distressing her tired guest. "I am sorry, indeed, to disappoint you, and see you have deceived yourself in some strange way. I have great pity for your son; but you know I could not marry him for that reason, especially as he does not even want me."

"There it is—there it is!" cried Mrs. Lee. "I knew it was only proper feeling that was working your little heart. And can you really think that he does not wish to marry you? If you read his letter, his last letter, that heart-broken letter!"

May's temper and sense of humor both began to get lively.

"Mrs. Lee," she said, "I know it is very important that your son should be married before Friday."

"You do, you do!" cried Mrs. Lee, with increasing emotion.

"My own frank, devoted girl! How bravely she comes to the point! I almost feared to remind her of it, but I need not have doubted her. She will throw herself into the breach. She will save us from ruin; be mistress of a manly heart and twenty thousand pounds a year."

"But Mrs. Lee—"

"I knew she would do it, and as she says, it must be done before next Friday. I thought about all this when I brought a parson with

me in the coach. He did not object to the trip on account of the shooting. I dropped him at a farmhouse, about a half a mile away. A most respectable clergyman, but with his time not fully occupied."

May could bear no more just at present. Her cheeks burned with indignation, and the corners of her mouth were twitching with laughter; yet she was sorry all the while for mother and son, that she could not either laugh or fly in a passion with any comfort. Fortunately, Miss Martha came in search of her guest, allowing May to make her escape; and she heard nothing more about matrimony for that one night at least.

On the next day, however, it was plain that a campaign had been entered upon by Mrs. Lee, which she meant to carry on with vigor till the hands of the clock should point to midnight on Friday. Christopher in his meekness and weakness had been talked to by his mother, and looked wistfully at May, and even ventured to say to her, that, though he could not have dared to originate the proposal seeing all that had passed, still, that she should never have reason to repent it if she could bring herself to be so generous as to marry him. May found it cruel to be thus punished a second time for a second of Katherine's sins. It was easy to silence poor Christopher, but Mrs. Lee would not be put down; and the hardest part was, that she had in some sort talked over Miss Martha to her side.

"Only think of what two young people could do with twenty thousand a year!" she said. "And two such young people as they are, my dear ma'am—so well matched in youth, in appearance, in taste! It is dreadful to think of such a crisis coming near, when all might turn out so happily in one hour by the joining of their two dear hands!"

Aunt Martha listened and was fluttered. There was a great deal of truth in what Mrs. Lee was saying; she was smarting a little from Paul's indifference to her niece, and he was gone away and had disappointed her—she had no longer his interests to provide for; neither did that stray duke, whose interference had once appeared so inevitable, seem to be on visiting terms at Camlough after all; and it might be a long time, indeed, before another fine young man with twenty thousand a year should come courting pretty May at Monasterlea. By and by Aunt Martha faltered forth a conditional consent to Mrs. Lee's proposed plan. She would talk to her niece; and if the child could be persuaded, the marriage should take place.

(To be continued.)

PAYMENT BY RESULTS.

THE following is a copy of the letter recently forwarded the Premier of the Colony of Tasmania by His Lordship the Bishop of Hobart, by request:—

Hobart, June 10, 1885.

Sir,—In compliance with your request, made to me yesterday, I have the honour to send you a statement of my views on the system of education known as "Payment by Results."

1. That the system of "Payment by Results" simply consists in paying for work done, or, in other words, a fair wage for a fair day's work. It remunerates the teacher of the school for the amount of secular instruction he imparts to his pupils, according to a standard prescribed by the Government.

2. That the school be opened to the Government Inspector, and that the school children be examined by him in such subjects as are ordered by the Government in public schools, at least once a year, on a fixed day, of which a fortnight's notice should be given to the principal teacher.

3. That payment be made per head in respect of each child upon the inspector's report and certificate as to the amount of proficiency attained during the past year.

4. That schools so conducted, and having the ordinary average monthly attendance, be entitled to payments.

5. That a sum equal to the average cost of the education of a child at the public schools be paid for each pupil as above.

6. That in country districts, in which such schools are not possible, the children may attend the public schools, the conscience clause being observed.

7. That such payment be made through the governing body of the denomination by which the school is established or through trustees appointed by him and notified to the Government.

8. That an annual report of the outlay of all monies received from Government be made to the Minister at the head of the Education Department.

9. That the Roman Catholic body of Tasmania do provide school buildings and keep the same in repair without any cost to the State.

10. That the Government supply school furniture, books, maps, etc., in the same way as to the Public Schools.

11. That the appointment of teachers and their dismissal rest with the governing body of each denomination.

12. That the schools be placed on an equal footing with the Public Schools as to prizes, scholarships, etc.

13. That the introduction of the system of "Payments by Results" is not intended to interfere with the existing or any other system of education which the Government may see fit to introduce, otherwise than in the sense expressed in this letter and in the petitions presented by the Roman Catholics to Parliament last session.

14. I need scarcely add that the granting of the proposed system will be received with great satisfaction by the members of my flock, and while meeting their conscientious and just claims, will tend to produce results of the most beneficial kind to the community in general.

I have the honour to remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

† DANIEL MURPHY.

To the Honorable Adye Douglas, Chief Secretary.

Sour stomach, bad breath, indigestion, and headache easily cured by Hop Bitters. Take none but American.