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THE FLOWER OF GALA WATER.

A LOVE STORY.

BY AMELIA E. BARR.

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CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUED.

"Then why are you whimpering here, instead of being at Leveno? And if the ladies tell you I gave them the scolding they deserved this morning, I give you leave to talk as they talk. You may say I am a perfect Bluebeard, if it will help you to win Katherine Janfarie. And mind, you are to fight for the wedding in September. Promise all things impossible, the moon and the stars if she wants them. I did that way with her mother. I had to. And sometimes I wonder at the courage I showed in those days. But I feel it now. I lost my sleep last night, and nothing touched my palate this morning, and my heart beats too fast. I am very sure, and all this trouble for that conceited, meddlesome Englishman! If it was not sinful to swear, I have a mountain of bad words waiting for him."

As the morning went on they visited the stock and walked into the fields, and looked at the grass now ready for the mowing, and at the growing wheat and barley. Then they had a noonday lunch, and the laird supplemented it by a long comfortable sleep. He was in hopes that his absence would cause some uneasiness to his wife that might perhaps lead to something had happened," and send to Winton House to inquire after him. He awoke about three o'clock, and asked if she had done so, and Jamie answered, "No," with the air of indifference. This want of interest rather troubled him, but there was no comfortable course open but that of returning home in the most ordinary manner.

He asked Jamie to go with him, and Jamie said he had been waiting to do so. The ride was a rather silent one. When all was said and done, Winton felt very like a puppet in his uncle's hands; and he resented the position. There had been moments that day when he had longed to tell the laird that he "did not wonder Katherine had resolved to choose a lover whom he could not order or interfere with."

They found Mrs. Brathous and Jessy Telfair on a little lawn near the rose garden. It was furnished with shelt red seats and a table, and on afternoons Mrs. Brathous frequently had tea serve there. She smiled at her husband, and made room for him on the rustic couch by removing her work-basket. He was not able to resist this charming ordinance, and seeing that Winton was talking to Jessy, he kissed the white hand that had prepared his place, and said

"Oh, Helen! How could you be so cross this morning? I have had a most wretched day. And you never cared to find out whether I was dead or alive."

"I knew pretty well what you were doing, Alexander. How are Winton fields looking? And what kind of a lunch did you have?"

"I had no appetite. When you are cross I never can eat a morsel. Where is Katherine?"

"Somewhere in the garden. I dare say Jessy and Jamie have gone to look for her."

He let his eyes follow the couple a moment and saw that Jessie was talking very earnestly to her companion. She was, in fact, telling him that Mowbray was with Katherine in the Hazel Walk, and that they all looked to him to prevent any disagreeable scene between Mowbray and the laird.

"You do ask such hard things of me, Jessy," he said, plaintively. "Do you think I like to be civil to this man?"

"I am sure you do not, Jamie, but then we ask hard things of you, because we know you have a heart capable of them."

"He is handsome and captivating; what chance have I against him? I have nothing to put beside his personal advantages."

"Oh, Jamie Winton! You have a heart of gold! You are the most unselfish soul that ever lived, and at the last Katherine must find out how captivating this noble nature makes you."

Before he could answer they saw the lovers standing under the green roof of the meeting hazel boughs. A blackbird was fluting above them, recapturing again and again his few deliciously imploring notes. Mowbray, with uplifted face, was trying to imitate them, his arm was around Katherine, her head was against his shoulder, and the bright sunshine sifting through the green trees fell all over her fair, brown hair and snow-white dress.

"Ter-a-tene! Ter-a-tene! Ter-a-tene!" he whistled soft and clear; but Katherine said:

"You have not quite understood. I know what he says."

"Then tell me, dearest!"

"I learnt the secret from the shepherds, and the angels have told them. For shepherds out on the hills all night do hear and see wonderful things. And they have known for hundreds of years what is the sweet entreaty the blackbird makes every night and morning."

"And now, will you tell me?"

"Listen, then!" and in low, mellow thirds she chanted the blackbird's mass.

"Magdalen at Michael's gate
Tirled at the pin,
The blackest sinner on Joseph's thorn,
Let her in! Let her in!"

The tender little prayer with its mournful cadence blended with the pensive notes of the bird, and when it was finished Mowbray kissed the lovely mouth that had made it.

"I will go back, Jessy," said Winton. "I will wait by the raspberry bushes for you."

She understood and made no objections, and so fitting herself the old world rhyme, she went singing it toward Katherine.

"The laird is home," she said, "and he is asking for you. And Jamie is by the raspberry bushes, and you two must come out of Paradise and be just common mortals again."

They came out with a sigh, though her kindly imperativeness took away some of the sentimental regret. And then she so managed the situation as to place Katherine and Winton together, while she rather ostentatiously walked at Mowbray's side. The laird was then approaching, and his loose mouth puckered and his eyes sought some explanation from his wife. She was arranging the tea cups, and as her hands moved to and fro she said quietly

"Now, Alexander, you must not be less than a gentleman. Mr. Mowbray has come to bid you 'God-be' You gave him no opportunity to do so, and do not mention the business at present hour."

He had no time to make any objection to charge. Mr. Mowbray's perfect manner and courteous words asked for no return, and while his wife's eyes upon him the laird did not feel equal to a dispute.

Winton also treated his visit with a courtesy which, however cold, was at least irreproachable. Evidently he was determined to give the laird no opportunity of lifting his quarrel, and Brathous could hardly quarrel on his own account without making Katherine the cause, and there were many considerations against such a step. So the laird said "Good afternoon, sir," and determined to speak no more. But no one was more proof against Mowbray's charming personality, and he had almost fitten both his host and his rival to his own pleasant temper, when a servant brought into the cheerful group a telegram. It was for Mowbray, and had been sent to Gullohaugh, and from there to the minister's, and so on to Leveno-hope.

He read it with a polite impertinence, handed it to Mrs. Brathous, and said

"The business of my departure — for the Mr. Abraham Hewett, who is dying, is my father's oldest friend — cannot neglect his request, and must say 'farewell' at once."

He bowed to Winton, thanked the laird for his hospitality, and then, turning to Mrs. Brathous, gave the hand to her and one to Katherine. There was not a word utter by Katherine. Mrs. Brathous spoke some hurried sentences that meant nothing at all, and at the same time answered his entreating eyes with a look that meant all he asked. His last glance was for Katherine, and he was turning rapidly away, when Jessy said

"Will you not shake hands with me, also, Mr. Mowbray? I thought I was one of your favorites. Good-by! Be sure and write to us. Father will want to know if you forget Gala Water."

She gave a meaning to this injunction which he understood and appreciated, and then he was gone, and the tea had lost all flavor, and the laird was gruff and injured and had nothing to say; and the girls stole off to Katherine's room to talk about the lover and the telegram.

"He did not look much troubled," said Jessy. "People do not, as a rule, worry about their fathers' friends. You will get a letter to-morrow. A love-letter! Oh, Katherine, a love-letter!"

The girls looked at each other with shining eyes, and then sighed for the very joy of anticipation. They took a map and a railway guide and followed the line Mowbray would be likely to take; and Katherine read over the names of the stations sadly and musically. They were little stations on a crowded map, but they were clear and vivid to her eyes. She speculated as to the moment at which her lover would pass each of them.

"And he will reach Mowbray about sunrise, I should think, Jessy," she said.

He reached it in that still chill hour before sunrise. The village was asleep; the sheep on the mountain slopes were asleep; the silence and mystery of sleep brooded over everything, animate and inanimate. Mr. Hewett's house was on the outskirts of the place, a pretty stone dwelling in the midst of a flower-garden. Mowbray opened the gate and, with swift steps, passed the flagged walk to the door. It stood wide open. Mowbray knew Mr. Hewett's room, and he went there. He found his friend sitting by the open window, and evidently suffering.

"I saw thee coming, Richard," he said.

"I am sorry, Mr. Hewett; I am very sorry, indeed."

Nay, nay, Richard! I have had my hour, and done my work. I am ready to go as soon as I have a bit of a talk with thee. Take thy pencil and write down what I say. Why, man! Never look so scared. There is nothing to hurt thee. I haven't murder or theft or anything wicked to tell thee."

"I am not fearing for myself."

"I know. I have heard tell. Ivah fancy a bit more. A bonny lass—a Janfarie beauty. There have been many of them. The Janfaries are a handsome lot of men and women. Well, it is because of her I speak. There must be no mistakes made—all must be open and honest—eh, Richard?"

"To be sure, Mr. Hewett. That is what I wish."

"Then put down first that Squire Reginald Mowbray, deceased, was married at Edinburgh, at St. Giles Church, January 4, 1821. He was then just of age. He married Annot Fae, a beautiful gypsy girl, who bore him one son and then died. The boy lived, and was called Thomas."

"Is he still alive?"

"I think it is very likely."

"Then he is my half-brother, and my father's heir?"

"Not exactly. To proved to be a very handsome and lovable lad, but unsayable and unbiddable beyond everything. He ran away from all schools. He was sent to sea and deserted his ship. Customs and fashions he despised and disobeyed. In fact, he was a gypsy, and not an English gentleman. When he was eighteen he was allowed to travel wherever his fancy led him. Your father hoped to weary out his roving temper on the continent, it confirmed it. He came back with the wild life of California and Colorado and Texas in the middle of his heart. There was no life worth living but that of an Indian or a cowboy. He talked to the squire until even he sometimes felt as if he should ell Mowbray and ride off on to the prairies. But the scheme was only in the squire's unconscious mind when he was dead. Did my father think the lad would keep?' It was his nature. As I put his father aside I must say that he could be comfortable an Englishsquire sort of Thomas Mowbray than he would make a pleasure-mate of a red deer. They did not quarrel openly about it. They talked the case sensibly over in my presence, and the young man was glad to take five thousand pounds as his portion and go out with it to the West to make his own life and be his own master."

A painful silence followed this story. The lawyer breathed with difficulty and had been obliged to rest frequently during its recital. Richard sat with a trouble-d face. He needed no more to point out to him the unfortunate influence this position must have on his relations with Katherine. The laird would very justly refuse the matrimonial alliance while his own social standing was so undetermined. He looked anxiously at the lawyer's face and asked:

"Was not this agreement formally authenticated?"

"Certainly. I put it down myself in black and white, and your brother signed it."

"That is, he relinquished all claims on Mowbray for five thousand pounds?"

"Yes."

"Then my title to Mowbray is clear enough."

"Your father thought so until just before his death, when I was going through his papers with him. Then the real condition of the agreement struck him. Thomas Mowbray was not of age when he signed it. Annot could not alienate his rights. The transaction had been concluded three days too soon."

"And you did and knew this?"

"Certainly I did not. Whether your father had mistaken the date of his son's birth or whether he overlooked the condition altogether I do not know. I confess that it never occurred to me to question the majority of Thomas Mowbray, for travel had given him a very mature appearance."

"Had you not known him all his life?"

"By no means. Until your birth Squire Mowbray scarcely ever lived in Mowbray. His son Thomas was never here, to my knowledge, but on the one occasion when he freely resigned his right in the property for five thousand pounds. I doubt if the villagers knew of his existence. The action was in accord with his own urgent desire, and there was nothing but affection in your father's willingness to accede to it. He went with his son to Liverpool and watched him sail away forever from his sight. And he took on a deal about his going—he did that! Then he met your mother, and was comforted by her love and by your birth."

"Did not Thomas Mowbray write to his father from America?"

"At first he did. Letters came at intervals from California, Arkansas, Mexico and Texas, and soon after your mother's death when you were ten years old—he sent an announcement of his marriage. This letter was dated La Guadalupe, and was mailed from San Antonio. The squire wrote him a long reply and sent him a picture of your mother and yourself. Since that time there has never been another word from him."

"And Thomas Mowbray might come back and lawfully claim an elder brother's right?"

"That is the case in its absolute possibility. But I do not believe Thomas Mowbray would do such a thing. Your father had the greatest confidence in his honor. He was opposed to my making any formal memorandum of the agreement; he said it looked like a doubt of his son's word. When Thomas signed the paper he got up and went to the window and looked at nothing rather than see him do it. He always thought for other people's feelings that way, did your father."

"And, after all, the agreement is valueless?"

"Quite so."

"What would you advise me to do?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

Poultry Notes.

If hens are scarce, do not attempt to carry them over.

Study poultry from a practical standpoint just as other stock upon the farm is studied.

There is no fear of being anything by sending choice eggs and well fatted poultry to the market.

Moulting is a strain upon the system and the hens should have good feed and protection from cold winds.

A wet hen is not a comfortable hen, even in warm weather, and she ought to have protection from storms.

To have eggs in the winter is essential to the farmer who wants winter eggs at fresh. Hens cost more than anything else in dress laying.

There is nothing in its relation to the henhouse that is more important than whitewash and a whitewash brush, if they are used.

The fact that corpses poultry is sold is prima facie evidence that healthy raising is profitable. Poultry, too, brings quick sales.

Feeding corn cobs and morning is the universal of healthy management on thousands of farms, and there is no money in that sort of method.

Better breed, better care, better feeding, less stock in fewer and better houses might be worth hundreds of dollars to American farmers and fifty thousand others.

The poultry [illegible] have to be [illegible] with [illegible] in a [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]