

lost his head in King Henry's reign, for upholding the Pope's authority. There was plenty of time to get the warrant. It would be best to surround the house and take the whole family in the act of hearing Mass. As for Mistress Betty, she would soon be a widow, for Hugh could be conveniently hanged.

A sudden turn in a narrow path brought him face to face with an old woman bent nearly double under a bundle of sticks that she had been gathering. She looked at him keenly out of piercing black eyes that seemed to read his very soul:

'Plotting and planning!' She droned out the words in a sort of refrain: 'planning and plotting. Your bed is made and your trap is laid, Master Topham,' she crooned.

'What do you mean, woman?' he said savagely, and lifted his foot as though he would have spurned her. A glance that shot from her eye restrained him.

'Get out of my woods, else I will have you hanged for a vagabond or burned for a witch.'

'Think better of it now, Master Topham—'tis best to have the witch's good word—even though I am no witch, God save us!' she added, hastily crossing herself as she spoke. Topham paused. He needed a tool—as well this one as another.

'Dost want to earn a golden guinea?' he asked her. 'For myself? Or that Master Topham may gain fifty?' she asked, shrewdly.

'A truce to thy jesting, woman! If thou wouldst do the Queen's Grace a service I will give thee a golden guinea.' She lay down the sticks slowly as if loth to part with the result of a morning's toil.

'Ay, if thou givest me the guinea now.'

He laughed but flung her the coin carelessly; he would not risk touching her. Lettice Wren was a well-known character in the neighborhood. She lived in a little deserted hovel on the common and had the reputation of being a skilful fortune-teller. She was really successful in the use of herbs and simples which she gathered and prepared for the common people, who paid her with gifts of food and clothing. It was not often that a guinea came her way. She looked at it carefully and bit it. Topham laughed.

'Thou dost not trust me, Mistress Wren?' he queried.

'Nay, thou'rt too close kin with the Evil One.'

'Enough! Now to business. Didst ever see Trevelyn the priest?'

'No.'

'Think again. He has another name. Didst ever see Walter Franklin?'

She laughed carelessly.

'Ay! I know him passing well,' she said.

'Good—he was banished from her Grace's realms last year for that being a priest in the pay of the Pope, he did feloniously celebrate Mass in a cave by the seashore in the county of Kent. He has returned, and to-night he will perform a marriage ceremony at Dane Court, where Mistress Betty Franklin proposes to marry Master Hugh Fisher.'

'And I am to be there?'

'No, thou wilt go to Master Combwell and request him to send a pursuivant to arrest the priest. And thou wilt be sure to tell him to arrest the bridegroom, too, and to report to the Queen's Grace that the information came from me.'

'It will be all right,' mumbled the old woman. 'A guinea right easily and pleasantly earned.'

He looked at her suspiciously.

'See to it that thou play'st no tricks,' he said.

'Never fear, good Master Topham. I will earn thy guinea, never fear.'

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There had been a few intimate friends gathered at Dane Court, but in order to avert suspicion they left in the course of the afternoon. Master Franklin was left alone in the House, for Betty and Hugh were wandering about the grounds.

'Look, Hugh!' exclaimed the girl. 'There is Lettice Wren and she is bringing me flowers.' The old crone was moving slowly up the driveway, both arms filled with golden daffodils nestling amidst their own green leaves. She laughed softly to herself as she saw the young people approaching her. As Betty reached her she let the flowers fall in a golden shower at her feet.

'A guinea's worth for you, Mistress Betty,' she said, 'from old Lettice Wren. No witch either, my sweet Daffodil Lady, but wise to spoil Master Topham's traps for all that.' Betty turned pale at the mention of the priest-hunter's name, and Hugh stepped forward. He understood that their interview in the wood had been overheard, for Lettice Wren never made signs in vain, and when she said 'Daffodil Lady,' he recognised the words as his own.

A hurried consultation ensued, and Hugh Fisher, after a few words of explanation to Geoffrey Franklin, rode away, for his presence might have been dangerous to Mistress Betty.

The household thus warned and ready for a surprise, Betty strolled out into the grounds, for Walter had not arrived. She had dressed herself in a long dark cloak, with a hood that drew down closely around her face, and with beating heart she waited in the little pathway by the rabbit warren by which her brother would approach the house. A voice came to her out of the darkness:

'Good-night, good friend!'

'God save you, Walter,' she whispered softly, as her brother's hand clasped hers. Overhead the stars were shining in a cloudless sky; there was no moon. The sound of a footstep approaching warily over the grass made Father Franklin draw his sister further into the shadow. A dark form stole past them, then another, and another. They stood motionless, afraid to breathe. When the intruders had passed them and taken their stations around the darkened house, brother and sister stole quietly into the wood. Skirting the hedge, they came to the main road, and after an hour's difficult walking reached Lettice Wren's hut.

'Where are the rest, Lettice?' asked the priest. For answer she moved aside the rags that served her for a bed, revealing a few boards. These she raised and they descended into a natural cavern through which ran a little underground brook. Hugh sprang forward.

'My Daffodil Lady!' he exclaimed as he caught Betty in his arms. Father and son clasped hands in silence. They were too full of thought for speech. One by one they knelt at the priest's feet while he heard their confessions and absolved them; then he turned to the rude altar which was hidden beneath a mass of golden daffodils; where Betty stood radiant in her bridal white with the pearls, Hugh's gift, clasped about her throat.

—Benziger's Magazine.

AT THE RECITAL

Claire Hamilton came slowly into her room after lunch. She looked in the mirror of her dresser and lightly touched her hair. Her expression was dissatisfied. Then she turned to the cheval glass that stood in the corner and closely scrutinized the hang of her skirt. All the while her face—a pretty face otherwise—drooped in its lines, the mouth curving downward, the eyes heavy and clouded, the brow slightly knitted. Yet the room reflected in the long glass and the wide dresser-glass was sumptuous in furnishings, exquisite in tints, filled with all sorts of dainty and useless feminine appointments, as well as with rare old porcelains and glass and fine pictures, perfect furniture of dark old carvings and rare old mahogany.

Claire herself was in harmony with her surroundings—tall, graceful, pretty, with the look and manner that long-inherited tastes and breeding give, yet her prettiness was damaged by discontent and by an expression of selfishness springing from an objectless existence. She had been left motherless at twelve, the only heir to great wealth; every whim had been gratified by a doting father, whose responsibility for the girl he considered fulfilled by doing everything she wanted him to do when she was at home and putting her at school in the hands of nuns to form her character. This they had tried to do, but Claire had never arisen beyond the negative form of goodness—she did no harm, but she did no good in the world, and she lived to be amused and to gratify her whims. Not a gay girl, not a hard-hearted girl, but a spoiled one, missing the opportunity for happiness that her great wealth gave her because she sought only her own happiness. Thus she had reached twenty-five and found the years beginning to be a little heavier on her hands as they accumulated.

Now she went back to her dresser and picked up two tickets that lay on her engagement pad at hand. She looked at them and consulted the tiny watch pinned on the cushion. 'Well, I suppose I may as well go,' she thought. 'It's too late to get any one to go with me. I wish I had made Mimi go, but she hates a recital more than I do. Still, there isn't anything better on hand.' She touched a bell and a maid appeared.

'Tell them to call a taxicab, Therese, and bring my blue hat and coat,' she said in French. 'Bring the mink furs to-day; they take up less room and Carnegie Hall is always too crowded to take one's wraps off in it at best.'

The maid disappeared. Presently she returned and dressed her mistress in her beautiful garments, gave her the gloves she asked for, took her muff and folding fan and followed her out and put her into the cab, which was gasping its protest at delay at the door.

'Carnegie,' said Therese, closing the cab door, and Claire rolled away to the Schumann-Heink recital to which she was so indifferent.

She arrived late, and had to wait at the back of the hall among a few other tardy ones. The hall was crowded, the great contralto was singing, and her wonderful voice rolled out to Claire in all the beauty of its range, from pure soprano notes to the violoncello tones that grip the heart. All that gripped Claire was annoyance.

'Such a nuisance to stand here!' she thought.

When the song ended she followed the usher down the aisle, well down, exactly in the centre, and had to pass and discommode six people to get to her seat. They all arose, clutching wraps and hats with stern faces and with the rigid bodies that express justified displeasure in such cases, for these others had come full of enthusiasm and it was maddening to be torn out of the music mood to admit the tardy.

However, Claire sank into her seat, then half arose, got out of her coat, removed her hat, secured the pins, disposed of her luggage as well as she could on her rebellious knees, and settled down to listen to a Venetian Gondoleid by Mendelssohn, inwardly disgusted with herself for having come here.