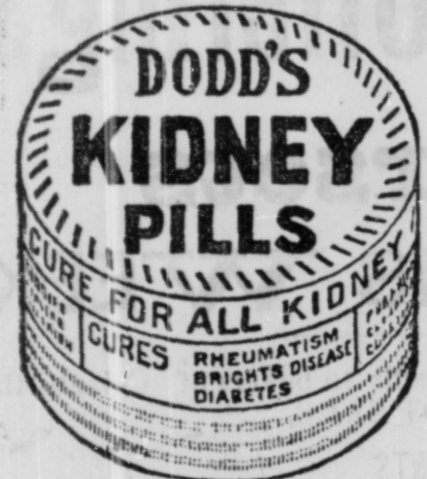


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Parted by Fate

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Author of "Parted at the Altar," "Lovely Maiden," "Florabel's Lover," "Ione," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXVII Continued

"Good-bye, lost love, whom I have loved so well!" she sobbed. "Good-bye, fair face, that has won him from even my memory! I shall never look on either of you again."

Like a shadow Uldene flitted down the white moonlit road, never pausing until she found herself on the wharf that overlooked the river.

Ah! how peaceful it looked, reflecting the myriads of silver stars in its clear depths!

"Down there I could find rest!" she murmured, piteously, clasping her trembling hands close together, and gazing down into the limpid water like one fascinated by a subtle thought.

Suddenly a hand was laid on her arm and a gentle voice murmured softly in her startled ear:

"Whatever your sorrows may be, my poor child, do not contemplate that!"

Uldene started back with a cry of dismay, and saw standing before her a young girl, neatly but poorly dressed, with an earnest, pale face, and large, dark, sad eyes.

"I was not thinking of drowning myself," said Uldene, with a shudder. "I would not have such a sin on my soul as that—bitterly as I may have been tempted to do so."

"I am glad to hear it," returned her companion, "for many a young girl with whom the world has gone wrong comes here for that purpose and no other."

"I was wondering, as I stood here, where I had better go," said Uldene, wearily.

"Have you no home—no mother?" asked the gentle stranger.

Uldene burst into tears. "My mother died when I was a babe," she sobbed, "and my one cry to Heaven by night and by day since is—why did not God take me, too, when my young mother died? Life has been a cruel curse to me."

"You say you were thinking of where you could go for the night," said the gentle stranger. "Will you not come home with me? I am one of the bread-winners. My lodging is of the plainest, yet I will share it, such as it is, with you to-night."

Emily Lennox did not quite like the wild, despairing light in the dark eyes of the beautiful, sobbing young girl she had found gazing breathlessly down into the smiling waters of the deep flowing river.

More than one young girl this good angel (as those who knew her called her) had snatched from an untimely fate.

She had expected she would have to persuade Uldene to accompany her from this alluring spot; but to her surprise the young girl consented readily enough.

"You are very kind," said Uldene, gratefully. "I will go with you gladly. I was wondering a few moments before where I should find a lodging place, my means are so limited," she added, flushing painfully.

"Then come with me," said Emily, drawing the little white hand within her own. She was surprised to see how delicate and dainty it was—like those of fortune's favorites, who neither toil nor spin. "I have a great horror of seeing a young girl stand where you did, with such a look on her face," continued Emily, "for not very long ago I stood in the self-same place, eagerly



to bear this hardship uncomplainingly. If a woman is in thoroughly good health it does not come so hard, but when, as is frequently the case, the poor woman is suffering from the pains, nervousness, debility and ill-health that are a result of weakness and disease of the distinctly feminine organism, the task is too much.

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watching my opportunity to plunge beneath those waves, and leave the world which had narrowed down to a grave for me."

For a brief moment Uldene forgot her own intense sorrow in listening to her companion.

"Would you like to hear what tempted me to such rash folly?" asked Emily, seeing she had attracted her companion's attention. "I can tell you as we walk home."

"I should like to hear, if the memory of it is not too painful," assented Uldene, readily.

"Love drove me to it," replied Emily, calmly—"love, that brings with it either a blessing or a curse to the hearts of women who indulge in its golden dreams. But, to the story: There was one whom I loved better than life itself, a fair-haired, handsome lover, who had placed the betrothal ring on my finger, and named the day I should be his bride.

"One day a girl friend came to pay me a visit. She was as gay and handsome as I was quiet and plain. I was not inclined to be jealous by nature, but when I introduced my lover to my lovely friend a pang like the bitterness of death smote through my heart as I saw with keen eyes the gaze of rapt admiration he bent on her. I saw all that happened after as in a glass, darkly. You can guess the result. My friend won my lover from me, and on the eve they were wedded I crept out here to die, and end my woe. I flung myself into the water with a bitter cry. Oh! I loved him better than life! I was saved, and I knew then my time had not yet come. God intended me to live and endure. I was needed in this world. Slowly the thought came to me what duty Heaven had assigned to me. I afterwards realized it was to save young girls from the fate that had so nearly been mine. I passed this way from my work at night, and many a young girl I rescue from a suicide's fate."

"Oh! how I pity you!" sobbed Uldene. "There is no pain in this world so great as the pain the heart endures when one finds the one whom we love has given his heart to another. Oh, poor girl! I can understand what you have suffered but too well. Death would have been welcome rather than face life after that with such a sword ranking in the heart."

As Emily listened she realized that the beautiful girl before her had a tragic love-story, as pitiful, perhaps, as her own which she had related; and Emily determined to bring this young girl and her lover together again, if it lay within human power, little dreaming fate itself had set its soul of defiance against this.

CHAPTER XXXI. ULDENE FINDS A FRIEND.

Uldene was conducted by her strange companion into a narrow side street, and after traversing it for some length, she stopped before a small, unpretentious cottage, and opening the gate, she bade Uldene follow her in.

"I have two small rooms here," Miss Lennox explained. "I rent them of the widow lady who owns the cottage. I am employed in the dressmaking establishment of Madame Dubois, on A Avenue."

Uldene was ushered into a scantily furnished but scrupulously neat apartment, and bade to remove her hat and sash. In vain during the hours that followed were Miss Lennox's attempts to draw from her guest's lips her history—who she was, or from whence she came.

"You have been kind to me, a stranger, yet I cannot confide to you the pitiful story that makes my life a blank," said Uldene, her large, dark, pathetic eyes filling with tears. "I will carry it down to the grave with me unrevealed."

"I am sorry," said Emily, pityingly. "I thought perhaps I could help you."

"How could you help me when Heaven itself is against me?" sobbed Uldene, bitterly. "My life has been a mistake, and has gone all wrong from beginning to end. There is no help for it, no way out of it. I am entangled in a web woven by fate."

"Do you intend remaining in the city?" asked Emily, attempting to change the subject, which she saw was so bitterly painful to the lovely young stranger.

"I could find something to do," muttered Uldene. She had realized it would be the worst thing she could undertake to attempt to find pupils for music here; her face was so well known her identity would be sure to be discovered.

"I am sure that I can help you in that way," responded Emily. "Madame was saying only yesterday we needed at least two more young ladies in the establishment. I will use my influence with her to try to get you in."

"How shall I ever thank you?" murmured Uldene.

"By not attempting it," responded Emily, promptly. "I am always glad to extend a helping hand to young girls who are inclined to help themselves; it's every one's duty. It is late now," said Emily. "We won't talk about it any more to-night. You shall go with me in the morning to see Madame."

Although Uldene lay down upon the snow-white, inviting couch, no deep came to her that night. All through the dreary, moonlit hours her dark, curly

head tossed restlessly to and fro, and the dark, sombre eyes never closed. She could not still the voice in her heart that kept repeating: "He did not mourn for your loss. He was thankful to be set free that he might wed her whom he had never ceased to love. How bitterly he would hate you, if you came back from the grave to part them."

"Oh, Rutledge! my lost love!" moaned poor Uldene, under her breath, "would that I had died rather than live to witness your love for another!"

Early the next morning Miss Lennox and Uldene presented themselves at Madame Dubois' establishment.

The madame looked in wonder at the wondrously beautiful face before her.

"I should like to take her in," she said, aside, to Emily, "but I dare not on account of my son. No, no, Emily; I dare not. Something warns me I must not. I feel it in my heart."

"She is so young and friendless," said Miss Lennox; "and with a face like that, it would be most dangerous to cast her adrift on the world."

"That is true," responded Madame, nervously. "But what greater danger could she encounter, Emily, than meeting my son? There is a skeleton in every household. You know what ours is. Therefore, I say, it would be best not to take her in."

A happy thought occurred to Emily. "You send out a great deal of work, madame. Why not give her work to do outside?"

"She is a stranger to me, Emily. I had rather not, unless you choose to be responsible for it," and Madame smiled faintly.

"I am perfectly willing to agree to that arrangement," responded Emily, briefly. "I cannot tell why, but I take a great interest in this young girl, and I cannot help the conviction which steals over me, that if I should not watch over her she would destroy herself."

"You are an angel to the wretched and needy," replied Madame Dubois, warmly. "You shall have your way. I suppose your protegee will share your apartments, in that case, for the present."

"We have made that arrangement, madame," said Emily.

A few moments later she crossed the room to where Uldene was sitting.

"Miss Dean," she said—that was the name Uldene chose to call herself—"fate or Providence, whichever you will, has been kind. Madame Dubois will furnish you employment. It will be sent you at the cottage."

"I am very thankful to Madame, and to you," responded Uldene, gratefully.

The next two weeks dragged slowly by. It was only by hard work Uldene forgot for a moment the bitter pain at her heart.

(To be Continued.)

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