

# A FAIR MAIDEN'S NO.

## The Story of an Unprecedented Courtship and a Betrayed Trust.

(Not Yet Published in Book Form.)

"By no means," came Carroll's quick reply. "In itself I should say that it was neither hollow nor false. Society, as I have seen it here, strikes me as an aim, an effort, toward excellent results. But I can only imagine it successful when it has become a picturesque relaxation for those chiefly concerned with less frivolous pursuits."

"Ah, yes," Channing sighed, "but could it then be picturesque?"

"More so than it now seems to me. The condition of affairs, must, of necessity, grow self-fatiguing. Where there is no end there is inevitably dulness."

"Now has he learned all this?" thought Channing. But aloud he said: "Give this mass of idlers the incentives of their intellectual superiors, would not their routs and dances and dinners be of a workmen's holiday?"

"It would at least be spontaneous and not banal. If society be anything, I should say that it is amusement. And that amusement is made prosy as I take it, should be a relief, not an occupation. I have often read about the stupidity of social life in large towns like this. Is not the explanation that society is the sure shadow cast by the sun of industry?"

"I would rather spend my life cultivating cabbages, with an occasional chance of looking into my neighbor's tropical hothouse, than pass the whole year round among those meadows of roses which are grown for the sake of essences in Asiatic Turkey."

"So, then, in the main, you disapprove society, Carroll?"

"I disapprove its claims which have too pompous a vena. It reminds me of certain assumptions on the part of Christianity, as an institution, which in itself might be more acceptable to some of our finer minds if it did not so often assume to have invented all the human virtues."

"Your three stipulated months in this old Courtaine house have now passed," Channing said at another time. "Are you thinking of a return to Southmeadow, or have you resolved on that trip to Europe, in which I know you would find such relief and refreshment?"

"I shall stay here for the present," Carroll said. "I have many matters to keep me here; it is surprising how quick we sometimes put forth new root in new soil."

"Ah, I know, you mean, of course, your charities. They accumulate naturally. Once placed yourself in the full rush of the avalanche, and it will bury you forever."

"Not so formidable a burial, I should say, after all," smiled Carroll. "A few affairs interest me," he added; "I've mentioned to you most of them."

"You've shown me that you're splendidly philanthropic, and that in doing good you behave as stealthily and surreptitiously as most men behave when they do evil. You've seen something of our blazoning newspapers, and you're as much afraid of them as if you forged cheques criminally, instead of signing them for the good of your fellow-men."

"Recalling dear old Southmeadow," said Carroll, with evasive thoughtfulness, "I confess that I should love to see it when May brings those green glimpses to the slopes of the hills and touches their big shoulders, at morning and evening, with that delicate, smoky blue. I should like to see the laurel thickets put out their lighter tints of emerald below the old, hard, glossy sorts of leaves that had bruted all sorts of winter savageries. I should like to watch the slow and dignified unleafings of those brawny roadside elms. They're never really magistrates in the way of foliage, you remember, till they're confident of the wavering politics of spring will fully endorse their mild administrations. They wait for summer to come and support them, notwithstanding that venturous spring flings out its green banners everywhere before it is even sure that the tyranny of March has ended such an awful dynasty of despots as that which began with ruffian December and went straight on through the icy assassinations of January and February. But grass grows wiser as it grows older; it temporizes with the resurrected aristocracies of the violets and crocuses."

"Here Carroll, pardonably in love with his own impromptu metaphor, threw back his head and softly laughed. "There always seems to me," his mellow voice went on, "such a delightfully sly and insidious compromise between that desperate, that green republican, as one might call grass, and the calm monarchy of summer, under which it consents to serve so long, placid days as the very carpet on which she may rest her lazy, if covetous, feet."

"He said all this dreamily, and Channing, as he listened and watched him, wondered if a man like Winthrop Rutgers would treat it with merely a ridiculous shrug."

"In the disapprobation of solitude Carroll nowadays accepted certain offers of society from those with whom his name and name brought strongly as a motive for desiring his presence. Philippa heard of his having gone here and there; and one day to her mother (whose morning remonstrances had now grown almost a torture) she said, in her old weary, indifferent voice:

"Anna Bellasaye told me yesterday that she had Carroll Courtaine there to-day."

"You?" whined Mrs. Chadwick, disbelieving her chronic novel, read rapidly by daylight and night. "So he is going out more into the world?"

"Oh, he goes out a good deal. Why shouldn't a man after a few months of seclusion? I had that they all do. It's only we women who have to obey the letter of the law in its least desirable sense, and to be the first to see the advantage of some big red roses that Rutgers had sent her on the previous day."

"I think," said Mrs. Chadwick, with a pang of querulous austerity, "that women do in their way just as men do in theirs." She gave a thin smile, and slightly added: "The laws of attraction, for example." Philippa

signed below her breath. She did not want her mother to hear that sigh. Ever since her engagement she had had trouble with her mother. Mrs. Chadwick had narrowly escaped a relapse when her engagement was announced, and now she would frequently deport herself with the most aggravated petulance.

There were times when Philippa would have given worlds to tell her that Carroll had chosen some other woman. As regarded her own deportment, she held herself very collected and firm before maternal eyes. What her mother had fervently desired, what she still took occasion to make evil that she fervently desired, Phil had burdensome and dismal reasons for ignoring.

"The laws of affection?" she now peated coldly. "Oh, mamma, how will you harp on that idea of my not being properly fond of Winthrop?"

with gloomy haste. "Very well, dear, you've made your choice."

Philippa, still leaning above her as guine-tinted roses, gave monotonously sweet response: "Dear, dear, as if I had any choice as far as concerned him?"

"You had, you had," insisted Mrs. Chadwick, across the page of her resumed book, "you liked him; you liked him exceptionally. Nothing can ever persuade me that you could not have married him if you had chosen."

"Well, let it be as you say," answered Philippa, colorlessly. "As things go I might as well be the wife of Winthrop. You told me, mamma dear, that you had done with all complaining. We've settled everything between us, have we not? I'm sorry I ever mentioned Carroll Courtaine's name. I only did so to show you that he wasn't the inconsolable as your fancy paints him."

That very afternoon a brief note came to her. She shuddered, and nearly swooned as she read it. At death's door, she said to her maid hastily, while wraps were being put on her and a carriage was being summoned.

"Have courage, Miss Philippa," came the servant's voice. "It may not be so bad. His landlady has scribbled these lines. Perhaps she is only frightened, and when you get to him all will be over."

All was over when Philippa stood beside her lover. He had died, quickly and somewhat painlessly, as so many of his family had died before him. An hour ago well and active, now mute, sallow-cheeked, stirless dead!

She dreaded the getting home and telling her mother. But when, with staggering gait and ashen face, she did impart the news to Mrs. Chadwick, that lady simply laid down her inseparable novel and answered calmly:

"How perfectly awful! But so many of the Rutgers family have gone off in just the same way!"

Philippa's reply was to fall in a dead swoon on an opportune sofa. For days afterward she was so ill as to forget her old solicitude for her mother, whose least plaint had so disturbed her. She lay in bed wholly prostrated while the funeral of Winthrop Rutgers took place. But Carroll went to it, and to the grave at Woodlawn cemetery as well. Channing also went; and when all was over, and the two turned away, Carroll said with breaking voice to his friend:

"Ah, Chalmers, Chalmers, how my heart aches for that poor girl!"

Channing, with his doubts, reserves and opinions, made answer:

"She may not, after all, be so bereaved. She may still—"

"No, no!" insisted Carroll, "she loved that one man absorbingly. I know of what I speak. God help her, poor girl, poor girl!"

He paused and dropped his head. Sudden sobs racked him. They were apart, together, in a quiet spot, engirt with the white emblems of death. At a slight distance beyond the other mourners were filing slowly from the cemetery, below a clouded sky, full of cold, grey, mutable lights.

"Carroll," exclaimed Channing, as he seized his friend's arm, "it's like fate! You love her and you'll marry her still!"

"Never, never," he spoke with very agitated voice, but in another instant he was self-controlled. Sometimes before they quitted the grounds of the graveyard he said earnestly and most meaningfully to Channing:

"I wish I were as certain of some day leaving the world a little better than I found it as I am certain that she has never loved any man but Rutgers."

"Oh, love can change so!" said Channing, with a sort of sober gaiety. "As the poet tells us, you know, it 'flies like a bird from tree to tree.' Allow that she loved him this year and the last, and the last before that. Next year—(why not?) she may give to you—"

"Hush, Chalmers!" Carroll laid his hand on the speaker's arm, and added, with tones that were decision itself, although vibrant with feeling:

"I don't want that sort of love. I would never prize it; I would never seek it; I would never accept it!"

VIII. Philippa grew gradually better. Her illness had almost defied the physicians at first; it had been a complete nervous collapse, in which vitality had flickered low, like the flame of a lamp whose defective wick no fresh oil could properly feed. But at length convalescence came; and with it came a great joy that for some blessed season her weak mother had not sunk into a fresh illness because of her own wretched attack.

"Dear mamma," she kept saying, as soon as she was well enough to think and talk rationally, "I am so glad that you took it all with such splendid firmness."

"There was nothing else for me to do," Mrs. Chadwick would reply, with that ostentatious vanity which chronically invades her when periods of strength revisit them. "There was no one but myself to nurse you, my

dear, and I rose to the occasion." Philippa soon learned from the sturdy and faithful servant, who had been her nurse since childhood, that this was all the most apocryphal sort of declaration on her mother's part, but she did not mind the harmless fairy tale; it even gratified her as a proof of the poor lady's more promising health.

As her own health improved she was forced to see several people, and Mrs. Bellasaye was almost first to pay her a courtesy call.

She had hardly been five minutes in the girl's company before she began to scold her.

"You're looking much better than I expected to find you, Philippa. I was so sorry you couldn't appear at the funeral. For, of course, my dear, it caused remark; and you know as well as I do that there is such a thing as making real, determined efforts. I'm sure I have to make them every day of my life. I have to do it with dear Jack. He's called a model husband by everybody, and—"

"Was it actually so dreadful?" signed Mrs. Bellasaye, with what her listener could not but feel an insulting dubiousness. "Well, you're all right now, and I'm so glad! By the way, Carroll Courtaine dined with us yesterday. He seems wonderfully improved."

"Improved? How?" asked Philippa.

"Oh, he's more civilized, don't you know?"

"Really, I never knew that he ate with his knife, Anna."

Mrs. Bellasaye gave an acid giggle. "No; he used it in other ways. He stabbed people with it when they were most unprepared."

"I'm thankful that I escaped unscathed."

"Very probably he spares you, Philippa. And he spoke about you with great anxiety and solicitude."

"Yes."

"He seems so convinced that you've had a blow from which you will never thoroughly recover. He said, in most distinct terms, that he felt you would live unmarried for the rest of your life."

Philippa's eyes kindled, a little irately. "So he discussed me like that, did he? Was it not, Anna, because you were in a scolding vein, and attacked me?"

"Attacked you? I?" piped Mrs. Bellasaye, turning pale and greatly scandalized. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," said Philippa, in her old weary tones. "That is, nothing and a great deal. You probably assailed me for having played ill, and Carroll Courtaine defended me by just the remark you have quoted."

"Philippa Chadwick!" exclaimed her cousin, with extreme haughtiness. And then there would probably have been some scolding in hearty earnest if the mother of the recovering invalid had not glided up and said:

"Now, dear Anna, I can't permit my poor child to get in the least excited. Twirl, I cannot!"

And Mrs. Bellasaye presently withdrew, doubtless all the more furious at her young relative because she had hit upon the exact motive for Carroll's reported speech.

"I do think," said Philippa to her mother when they were alone together, "that Anna grows more and more horrid and impossible every year of her life."

"And so do I!" assented Mrs. Chadwick, with a celerity that swiftly roused in her daughter a queer suspicion. This suspicion gathered force as Philippa's parent went on. "In her way Anna is the most jealous of women: I read her perfectly, though she may think I don't. She would hate the idea of Carroll Courtaine ever trying to take poor Winthrop's place, dear, because she wants none of her family ever to marry a single inch above herself. She'd be inconsolable if—"

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" almost shouted Philippa, coloring to her eyebrows. "When you speak like that you make me feel as if I'd refuse to see Carroll Courtaine, even though he should send me the humblest petition to come and give me his condolences!"

But Carroll, about a week later, sent no such humble petition, and yet was received with gracious welcome.

"Oh, yes, I am much better now," said Philippa, while she dropped into a chair and motioned for him to take one scarcely a yard away. "Do I show my illness?"

"Yes, you are a trifle paler and thinner. Your sorrow has had its effect—and why not? You have suffered terribly, of course. But I am glad your suffering has left upon you no more marked impress."

"The shock," said Philippa, breaking a somewhat long pause, "was naturally most acute."

"The shock—yes," Carroll answered, with his eyes on the carpet. Suddenly he looked full into the face, whose least lineament he so treasured. "But the grief. That you do not mention. You leave me to infer it. And I do! But my sympathies need not be declared. You divine them, I hope. They are best passed by silence."

"Thanks," she murmured.

"I heard from Mrs. Bellasaye that you were brighter and stronger," he went on; but with a quick toss of the head and a gesture of intolerance she interrupted him.

"Please don't speak of that insupportable woman!" she pleaded. "I felt like ailing my room the last time she left it."

"Indeed?"

I left that peaceful place. All these earlier joys will be nothing beside the few months that have followed them."

She understood him, and with quickening heartbeats. He had once told her that he loved her, and only such a brief while ago! For herself, she had never loved any man but him—the slow, dragging intimacy of her engagement had made that fact too fatally plain. All through those weeks her torment of mind had been as savage that almost suicidal moods had been begotten of it. Not grief, not bereavement, but the sudden shock of release, the realization of freedom after bitter though self-inflicted bondage, had flung her into that perilous illness.

This Carroll totally failed to perceive. What was to her the shattering of shackles meant to him the dealing of a dire blow. He watched her now in her mourning dress, which almost resembled a widow's weeds, and thought how it became her fragile, wild-flower beauty, and how different it was from the black robe which clad her when they last met. To-day these dusky and clinging folds were a symbol to him of her great spiritual melancholy, and a pang of self-reproach stung him as he thought how ill-timed was the faintest allusion to whatever pain her past unavoidable preference had caused him to suffer.

Not waiting for her to reply, he now went on: "But pray pardon me. I did not come here to speak of my own troubles. Whatever they have been and still are, I am fortunately blessed with a man's power to bear them."

She knew that her color deepened a little as she answered: "And then time has its lenitives for all our wounds. When the scar has come the pain has nearly always quite departed."

She did not like this speech, even while she was making it. But there seemed such difficulty in saying anything that would not have for his ears the wrong ring.

"With you," he quickly answered, "the scar can surely not yet have come?"

She hated the hypocrisy of letting him believe that Rutgers' death had not been a stern affliction. And yet, was not this man but lately her accepted lover? In another minute she found her lips quietly framing the response:

"I trust soon to face the future with much more courage than now. Already I find myself of better cheer. One either dies under calamity, or fights it and conquers."

"Those are brave words," he exclaimed. "It pleases me so much to hear you utter them."

His eyes were beaming toward her with their well-remembered comminglement of innocence and strength, of childlike trust and virile firmness. But she dreaded now to meet their full and fearless gaze. She had divined in him the secure depth of his own complete misunderstanding.

He would never guess the truth. Their conversation became a mockery now. She longed to end it, and yet longed to continue it. As a consequence her talk became fitful, broken, unauthentic. She said things that she did not mean, or meant but partially, or that sounded to her own ears like the very ruff-raff of platitudes. Once or twice she contradicted herself in a weak and even flourishing way. She was glad to have him go, and yet almost hysterically sorry. His last sentences, in which he told her that she must always count on him if she needed any sort of friendly aid were easily translatable as a final farewell, and equivalent to his having said that the ghost of her lost sweetheart must ever rise between them, and that her own sorrow and constancy must ever push them apart.

"He didn't make half as long a visit as I expected, dear," said her mother when she was again upstairs and had dropped into the big cushioned chair that was now almost her sole practical reminder of what a sick girl she had lately been.

"He stayed very long, I think," she answered, with lips tightened at the corners and a faint quivering of the chin. "That is, considering how I may have bored him."

"May have bored him, Philippa? Why, what are you saying?"

"And it will be his last visit for heaven knows how long," she went on, with blank eyes and a restless little slapping of one hand on the tufted arm of the chair. "He believes me heart-broken. He thinks I've sustained an irreparable loss."

"Mrs. Chadwick stared at her child. "And didn't you tell him?" she began.

"Tell him what, mamma?" cried Philippa, with a soft, wild laugh. She left her chair and slipped over to her mother's. Two rosy spots were burning on her cheeks. "Tell him I engaged myself to poor Winthrop out of pique? Tell him my illness was more than half brought on because of horror and remorse at my own relief when I heard that frightful news?"

The two plunged their looks into each other's eyes for a moment. Then Philippa caught both her mother's hands and sank down at her feet.

"Oh, mamma! I ought to be more careful. I've grown so cruel to you! And I used to watch and shield you so before I was taken ill! Soon I'll have you to nurse if I'm not more careful!"

Mrs. Chadwick's eyes had filled with tears, and she was visibly trembling.

"I—I seem to be stronger, somehow, since you have lost your strength."

"No—no; I've regained it."

"But your happiness, Philippa! You lost that when you really fell in love for the first time in your life."

"Hush, mamma," said the girl pleadingly. "If I'm madly imprudent with my tongue," she added, in a vein of satiric humor, "that isn't the least excuse for you behaving likewise."

Mrs. Chadwick's faded face grew obstinately hard. "After a while, Philippa—after a certain decorous period has elapsed, he—he ought to be told."

"Told!" flashed the answer.

"Well, hinted to," Mrs. Chadwick went on in conciliatory treble, immediately having grown timid. "If he misunderstands, if he doesn't see the truth and can't see it, my dear, the fault is with his curious bringing up, his peculiar restricted education. You remember what a woman of the world I used to be. Oh, I could put it to him, and in such an adroitly delicate manner, that it would—"

"That it would kill me, mamma, if you ever did!"

The girl had sprung to her feet and was looking down at her mother now

with a face of such effigy protest that she paled, and, without heeding the poor lady for whom she sat.

IX. "It seems, Carroll, as if I hadn't seen you in six months."

"It's nearly a week, Chalmers."

"Upon my word, I believe you're right. And Channing, with a lighted cigarette, threw himself into the chair most to his taste of those in the library of his friend. It was only a little after 8 o'clock. Carroll had just dined in solitude at home, as he now quite often did. Channing looked a most patrician figure, with some white violets bunched massively in the lapel of his evening coat.

"I thought I might find you," he said, "and have a chat before I go to the Lexington's ball. You're probably not going, by the way?"

"It seems to me that I'm not hidden," said Carroll, a little dubiously.

Channing threw his head back, with a laugh. "How like you! 'It seems to me that I'm not hidden.' You probably are, for the Courtaines and Lexingtons are somehow related, I think. And there are men in this town who would give an ear to be seen at their ball tonight."

On the table near him was a basketful of cards. Carroll turned and looked among them. "Ah, yes!" he presently said. "It's one of those 'at home' affairs, which you told me did not require an answer."

"And you've lots of other cards, I see."

"Yes, persons are kind enough to ask me a good deal. But I rarely go. First, you know, I am still in mourning; second, society rather gaddens me than enlivens, and those whom it thus affects are wise to avoid it."

"True; but isn't it wholesomer, however, Carroll, to care for the gatherings of one's kind?"

"Oh, beyond a doubt. If you could meet real society. I suppose it exists here."

"It isn't organized, you know. There's the trouble. Our fashionables have things all their own way in that respect. But, of course, there are lots of delightful people in a huge place like New York. The devil of it is to know just where to find them—as one knows just where to find the smart sets."

"The conversation of those whom you call the smart sets, Chalmers, I have mostly thought as commonplace as that of the Bowery. The only difference between the two is that one is enshrouded in refinement, and the other lacks it. But diamonds and dainty tailoring can only emphasize a poverty of ideas."

"I don't defend our society," smiled Channing. "But still, Carroll, perhaps what you affirm a poverty of ideas may quite often be a concealment of them. To-night at the Lexington's, for example, there I shall meet men and women of much intelligence, who enjoy as relaxation all the glitter, vanity and pomp."

"Ah, doubtless. Aristocracy, pretentiousness, exclusiveness, frequently have the power to influence large and even earnest minds. This, I should say, is enormously pitiable and yet true. Still, on the other hand, it is not surprising. Things that are foolish and evil are often clad in outward charm. The historic ivy that wraps a tower pleases our artistic sense none the less because racks and iron virgins may once have been sheltered behind its walls. . . . But, Chalmers, let me ask you how your gayeties do not trench more upon your literary life."

Channing uttered a droll groan. "Trench upon it. They outrage it! I stamp upon it cut its throat! They make me sleepy and tired in the daytime; they make me rush home at midnight, swearing that I will put out my lights and tumble into bed by 1 o'clock. By 1 o'clock I have accomplished a page, thinking of what nice eyes that new belle from Washington had who told me that she had read one of my stories in the Transcontinental, and cried over it, and wishing that she hadn't been so infelicitous as to confuse its title with one by Henry James. . . . But, thank heaven, the lag end of the season is at hand. There will be dinners, of course, but dinners are far less wearying."

"And your great book, Chalmers?"

"Oh, I shall never write it. How can I write it?"

"I believe you could write it."

"Dear friend, if you were only a publisher and yet believed so! You would empower me then with the dignity both of leisure and opportunity. And you, Carroll . . . how are you passing your time? In fresh and original dispositions—compassionate ones? Have you made yourself the splendid opposite of that emperor who wished to discover a new vice by lighting on a new and strange mode of being benevolent?"

Carroll stroked for a moment his airy, golden beard. "I think it will do no harm to tell you," he returned, in a slow and peculiarly measured tone, "that I have discovered a new mode of being benevolent."

"Really?" exclaimed his listener, with a show of interest, amused as it was keen.

"Stay," said Carroll, as if he were interrupting some current in his own thoughts. "I drifted into unintentional egotism there. I—"

"As if you could actually drift into it! Only the people who judge you at reckless random could ever dream of making that charge against you!"

Carroll nodded his thanks. "I had a queer, and yet commonplace, experience two days ago, Chalmers. That is, it was by nature commonplace, but I took the liberty of manipulating destiny, so to speak, and hence have made it queer."

"An odd proceeding, I should say. But please explain further. There was no more mad folly, I hope, like defending an East side vixen against her drunken sweetheart?"

(To be continued.)

Fanny Crosby, the blind Methodist hymn writer, is now 70 years of age. She has written about 3,000 Sunday school hymns, many of which are widely known. She was born at South East, N. Y., in 1823, and lost her sight when six weeks old through the ignorant application of a warm poultice to her eyes.

A spoon in a glass of hot water prevents the glass from breaking because the metal absorbs the heat more readily than the glass does.